

Hosea 11:7

My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him.

Some of you reading this know me very well, you are friends and family members to me. But some of you have never even seen me, not even on social media, so you have no idea what I look like. One thing I will tell you about my appearance is that I have very long hair, past the middle of my back. Why, because I like it like that (and I'm a musician). But, I am also not as young as I used to be, and with age, for a man and even some women, a lot of us start to lose our hair. I know guys who have started to lose their hair in their early twenties, some further on in life, and there are even some lucky ones who have hardly lost any hair, well into their 60's, 70's and even 80's.

But the rest of us have thinning hair lines. Even though my hair is long, it's not as thick as it was when I was back in my 20's or 30's. With this thinning of hair, it didn't just happen over night. I didn't wake up one morning with half of my hair on the pillow, or I didn't brush my hair one day and have half of it end up in the hairbrush. No, it was a gradual thing, that slowly happened over time.

That's just how it is with backsliding is, it slowly happens over time. No one ever woke up and said, "I think I'll backslide today." No, it happens slowly over time. How do I know this, well I have backslidden before, and I know a lot of others who have as well.

How do you know if you are backslidden? I like how pastor Chuck Smith puts it, "*If you are not as close or closer to the Lord today then you were yesterday, then you are backslidden.*" You see to backslide is to go backwards, I know that sounds like a no duh, but not a physical going backwards (but usually the physical is involved in backsliding as well) but rather it's a relationship backwards from the Lord. It could be that you find yourself too busy to read your bible today, or as subtle as "I will just read for less time today." Then it goes into less and less time, that you find yourself only opening your bible at church, if you remember to bring it. It could be with tithe, you find if you give less, you have more money to waste, and you like wasting money instead of giving it back to the Lord. You throw in a 20 dollar bill when the basket passes, when you used to give 10 or 15% of your paycheck online.

We can go on and on with the subtleties, but stop right now and ask yourself, "*Am I closer to the Lord today than I was yesterday?*" Now this is not something to freak out about unless you have backslidden to a far state of being away from the Lord, but for most of us, it's a check we should be doing with ourselves, and if we find that, "hey, today, I am not as close with the Lord as I was last week." Then stop and ask yourself, what have you replaced that closeness with the Lord with, then get rid of it.

† **Genesis 35:2-3** *And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone."*