

Going Onto Maturity

Main Text: Hebrews 5:7-6:1

- Why grow up when as babies we were so cute and adorable?
 - o People did everything for us, carried us, fed us, changed our diapers
- What would be the purpose of growing up naturally or spiritually?
 - o After a while the pampered life would get boring
 - o Our God created us with a grand purpose and plan for our life- **Jer. 29:11**
 - o We were created with an innate sense of adventure, curiosity and imagination
 - o A life full of discovery and accomplishments is a full life filled with purpose

2 Cor. 10:15, “Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand.”

- The life of a baby, both naturally and spiritually is a life mostly of taking and receiving
- As we mature, we gain skills, abilities and receive things to share with others
- We can't give what we don't have; growth implies increase- blessed to be a blessing

Matthew 10:8, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

Acts 20:34-35, “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

- Greatest pursuit in life is to know the Lord God Almighty in a personal way- **Php. 3:10**
- Our journey in spiritual maturity begins with being born into God's family- **Jn. 3:3**
- **Please Read: Ephesians 4:11-16**

1 Peter 1:23, “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

- Spiritual growth is a key ingredient to a successful Christian life.
- **Please Read: John 15:1-8; Romans 11:17-21**
- The Father God cuts off dead things in our lives so we can be more fruitful
- We are connected to Jesus through His Word and share in the nourishing sap of the vine

Stages of Development

We are not **born again** full grown Christians any more than naturally born babies become full grown adults overnight. It's a process that we all grow through stages, both naturally and spiritually.

Infants

Consider part of our text for this series in *Hebrews 5:13*, "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teachings about righteousness."

- **Hebrews 5:13** in the AMP, "...not able to talk yet"
- New believers need to learn how to speak life and bridle their tongue- **Jas. 3:1-12**

Ephesians 4:29 (AMP)

Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth, but only such [speech] as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others, as is fitting to the need and the occasion, that it may be a blessing and give grace (God's favor) to those who hear it.

Ephesians 5:4 (AMP), "Let there be no filthiness (obscenity, indecency) nor foolish and sinful (silly and corrupt) talk, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting or becoming; but instead voice your thankfulness [to God]."

Pr. 18:21- The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

- The Holy Spirit is our sanctifier; one of the first priorities is to learn to bridle our tongue
- Words are the most powerful things in the universe- our mouth is a loaded gun

Hebrews 1:3, "...upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power."

- As children of God we are to imitate our Heavenly Father- learn to talk like Him- **Eph. 5:1**
- Essence of sin is selfishness; the cause of the original sin- **Isa. 14:12-15; Ezk. 28:11-18**
- Fighting, fussing, divisions, squabbling and the like is characteristic of babies- **Gal. 5:15**
- **Please Read: 1 Cor. 3:1-4; 1 Peter 2:1-3**
- Adam and Eve were created holy in nature, but not created perfect in character- grows
- A real danger for God's people, if they don't grow in their love walk- **1 Cor. 11:17-34**
 - o We can open a door to the enemy, who'll wreak havoc in our lives- **Eph. 4:26**
- Thankfully there are spiritual leaders around to care, feed & minister to babes in Christ

Children

- What lessons can we continually learn from children that we as adults tend to forget?
- Their innocence, purity and lack of guile- always inquisitive, exploring and discovering
- They are continually learning new things and are not afraid to ask “Why”

Matthew 19:14-15, “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

- We are called to be child-like, but not to act childish
- Chronological age is no guarantee of maturity, just wrinkles
- **Please Read: 1 Corinthians 13:11-13**
 - o We once “Talked, Thought and Reasoned like a child”
- One characteristic of children is that they are naïve about life and lack discernment
 - o This is simply due to a lack of experience in life- knowledge of good and evil
- During the Millennium, the Prince of Peace will rule and children can play safely

Isaiah 11:8, “The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest.”

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

- One of the big lessons that children learn in daycare and kindergarten is how to share
- The word “Mine” is often used by toddlers, and they will take what they want- so rude
 - o Have you ever seen adults act this way?
 - o Ro. 12:13, “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

Pr. 11:24, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.”

- Children in the natural and spiritual need loving discipline to correct them from error
- It would be important for us to know how God disciplines His children
- Especially in light of all the abuse and neglect of children out there in the world
- It’s no wonder people get such a warped view of God- our God is Good!
- **Please Read: Hebrews 12:4-11 (discipline); 1 Tim. 3:6 (pride)**

It is true that the Bible says in Hebrews 12:6, “Because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

However, it does not say, “Whom the Lord loves He also makes them sick, puts them through trials and makes them broke in order to teach them a lesson!” Let’s briefly look at the Biblical use of the word “Discipline” by Dr. Robert Young, a recognized Greek scholar, and W. E. Vine, author of: “An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words”

- The word “Discipline” actually means to child train, educate and to teach
- The same Greek word for “Discipline” in **Heb. 12:6**, is used in **Eph. 6:4**

Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

NT:3811 paideuo (pahee-dyoo’-o); from NT:3816; to train up a child, i.e. educate, or (by implication) discipline (by punishment): KJV - chasten (-ise), instruct, learn, nurture, teach.

- **Greek Definition:**
 - To Train children- to be instructed, taught or learn
 - To Chastise- to chastise or castigate with words, to correct
 - Of those who are molding the character of others by reproof/admonition
- Let’s briefly examine three ways we learn from our mistakes
 - To be rebuked by the Lord: **Pr. 3:11; 15:31; 27:5; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 2:15**
 - Reap what we sow: **Job. 4:8; Ro. 6:21-22; Gal. 6:7-8; Jas. 1:13-15**
 - Judged by the Lord: To be turned over to the enemy, having failed to repent
 - God turned over rebellious Israel- **Ps. 78:61-62; Judges 2:14-15; Jer. 22:25**
 - Lord does the same in NT- **1 Cor.5:4-5;11:27-34;1Tim. 1:19-20;Rev. 2:20-23**
- Rev. 3:19, “*Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*”

A wise child of God will learn by obeying and heeding to God’s word. Experience may be a good teacher (not always), but the tuition is very expensive- consequences of sin costs.

- **Please Read: 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-17**
- Folks have gotten some goofy ideas about God from the book of Job **5:17-18; 2:7; 3:25**
- Correct Bible interpretation is needed- ‘Analogy of Faith’ – **Mt. 18:16 2 or 3 witnesses**
- Scripture interprets Scripture – consider the whole counsel of God’s Word in context
 - **Matthew 7:7-11; James 1:16-17**

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging , comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Young Men and Women

Here we come to the third level of spiritual development- young adults/college and career age

- The following passages speak of natural chronological age
- **Acts 2:17**- sons and daughter (**Acts 21:9**) will prophesy and see visions
- **Titus 2:6-8** encouraged the young men to be self-controlled
- **1 Peter 5:5** encourage the young men to be submissive and clothed with humility
- **Please Read: 1 John 2:12-17**

1 John 2:14 AMP

I write to you, young men, because you are strong and vigorous, and the Word of God is [always] abiding in you (in your hearts), and you have been victorious over the wicked one.

- As we have been saying, the natural realm often parallels the spiritual realm
- As we grow up spiritually, being young men and women in the Lord is a Biblical phase
- There is no skipping from one level to another- **Pr. 7:7**
- Academically before one can move on to another grade, they have to pass the previous

Remember when Israel was under Joshua's command to take the Promise Land? They had experienced a mighty miraculous victory against Jericho.

- The Lord expressly told them not to take any of the plunder, it belonged to the Lord
- All but one in Israel passed that test of obedience- Achan took and hid some stuff
- They were so sure of themselves in **Joshua 7:3**, they sent a small army- got whooped
- Achan's moral failure caused Israel to be defeated and innocent men died

Paul speaking of candidates for spiritual leadership said in 1 Timothy 3:6, *"He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil."*

- Israel sought the Lord and discovered that there was sin in the camp
 - o **Hebrews 12:1-2** tells us to throw off every weight and sin that slows us down
- Consecration is part of our preparation for God's great purpose for our lives
 - o Prepared: **Lk. 1:17; Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:15**
 - o Sanctified: **Jn. 17:19; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1 Th. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:22-26**

Joshua 7:13

"Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.'"

Older Men and Women

Finally we come to our elders in the faith, those who are spiritually mature and seasoned in the things of God. We're not talking about chronological age but spiritual maturity.

1 Cor. 4:15-17

Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

- **Please Read: 2 Cor. 12:14-18; 1 Th. 2:6-7, 11-12; 2 Tim. 2:10**
 - o Spiritual parents look after spiritual children- to provide, protect and nurture
 - o **Col. 4:12, 17** (Wrestling), **Gal. 4:19** (Labor), **Php. 2:4, 21** (Interests)
- Submit to your spiritual leaders in the Lord- **1 Cor. 4:6-7; Heb. 13:17; 1 Th. 5:12-13**
- Titus 1:4, *"To Titus, my true son in our common faith"*

Phil. 2:22, "But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."

Spiritual leaders have a strong sense of passing down to the next generation, all that was passed down onto them. This transference of spiritual wealth is a vital aspect of the Church.

Romans 1:11-12

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong- that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

- It's folly for those who are seasoned in age to think that they can retire from service
- This is when they are the most valuable to pass on the praise worthy deeds of the Lord
 - o **Psalms 71:8; 78:4-6; Joel 1:1-3**

2 Timothy 1:6, "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

- There is so much that the younger generations can learn from the older generation
- If we do not study and understand history, we are bound to repeat it- **1 Cor. 10:1-13**
- One of the great lessons to pass on are examples of humility- **1 Pet. 5:5**

Titus 2:6-8

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.

What makes us Grow

- Babies are cute and adorable, but if one stays that way indefinitely- loses its appeal
- The three main ingredients to any kind of growth is: Diet, Exercise and Training

Diet

Matthew 4:4, “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

- Have you heard that saying, “You are what you eat!”- **John 6:35** – Jesus the bread of life
 - o As natural food is to our physical bodies, so the Word of God is to our spirit
 - o We also need to be aware of tainted food- **Mt. 16:6-12; 1 Tim. 4:1**
- Knowing the appropriate diet for the relevant age – milk vs meat- **Heb. 5:11-14**
 - o Spiritual babies need the milk of the word- **2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 Cor. 3:2**

When folks feed their natural body three hot meals a day, but their spirit only gets one cold snack a week, and yet they wonder why they are weak and struggle spiritually. **Proverbs 18:14**, “*A man’s spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?*”

Luke 1:80, “And the child (John the Baptist) grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.”

- So how do we get to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might? **Eph. 6:10**
- 2 Tim. 2:1, “*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*”
- Acts 6:5, “*They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.*”
- Acts 6:8, “*Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great signs/wonders*”
- To be strong in the Lord is to be full of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit
 - o **Eph. 5:18-19**- be being filled with the Spirit- **Jude 20**- build your selves up-tongues

Job 23:12, “I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.”

Jer. 15:16, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight”

- So how do we eat or consume God’s Word- **Joshua 1:7-8; Ps. 1:1-3; 119:97, 148**
 - o Bible meditation- mutter/speak word; also renews our mind/thinking- **Ro. 12:2**
 - o Causes faith to come- **Ro. 10:17**; spiritual sword against the enemy- **Heb. 4:12**
- John 6:63, “*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*”

Proverbs 18:8 (Words penetrate the spirit of a person)

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man’s inmost parts.

Exercise

Isaiah 29:13

The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”

- We are called to be a doer, practice and exerciser of the Word, not religion- **Jas 1:22-27**
- **Please Read: Luke 6:46-49**- Building our spiritual house on a rock by application- doing
- As in the natural, muscle is not built by doing nothing, sitting on our lazy boy
- The religious leaders of Jesus’ day- did not practice what they preached- **Mt. 23:1-3**

Luke 8:20-21

Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.”

He replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”

- So when it comes to learning, the key is retention, how do we retain information
 - 90% of what we learn- when we teach someone else/use immediately
 - 75% of what we learn- when we practice what we learned
 - 50% of what we learn- when engaged in a group discussion
 - 30% of what we learn- when we see a demonstration
 - 20% of what we learn- from audio-visual
 - 10% of what we learn- what we’ve learned from reading
 - 5% of what we learn- when we’ve learned from lecture

So why would we retain 90% when teaching someone else or when we implement it immediately? When we implement or teach, we instantly make mistakes. So as soon as we run into difficulty and start to make mistakes, we have to learn how to correct those mistakes.

- That principle alone should free us to make lots of mistakes- don’t be afraid of failure
- As soon as we are free to fail, we are free to grow and learn from our mistakes
- We are never a failure until we give up- don’t quite, go again- **1 John 1:9**
- Thomas Edison, tested 3,000 different filament materials for the light bulb
 - With each failure, his attitude was, well that is one step closer to success
 - “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration”

So when Jesus told us to go out and make disciples of the nations, the added benefit is that we would retain the Word that we spread on to others- **Matthew 28:18-20.**

Philippians 4:9, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Training

Most professional body builders have trainers, who coach, inspire and hold them accountable. The Holy Spirit is the best trainer we have by far. He knows everything about everything!

John 14:16 AMP

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby), that He may remain with you forever.

- **Please Read: 1 Tim. 4:7-8** *Trained to distinguish good from evil- Heb. 5:14*
- Training is about being equipped; learning how to use what we know
 - o Wisdom is the application of knowledge that comes by being trained- **Jas. 1:5**
- Training is not only learning how, but receiving impartations of God's grace- **1 Tim. 1:6**
- **Please Read: 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**
- The Holy Spirit's ministry encompasses so much- one of them being our coach/manager
- He knows what to do, the how and when. He is the key to being successful in life

1 Timothy 4:7-8, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

Walking in Love

- Spiritual maturity is measured by our love walk; obeying God's Word- **Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3**
- The greatest fruit of our recreated spirit is Love- **Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Th. 1:3**
- In a critical world, being patient, merciful, and gentle is rarely seen- **Php. 2:14-16**
- We can pray for ourselves and others that God's love would grow- **Php. 1:9-11; 4:5**

1 Th. 3:12, "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you." *1 Th. 1:3- labor by love*

- Speaking the truth in love, we all grow up to be more like Jesus- **Eph. 4:14-15**
- The essence of sin is selfishness and the essence of righteousness/holiness is love
- Under the Old Covenant the best they could do is love others as themselves
- But the law of the New Covenant is to love as Jesus loved us- **John 13:34-35; 15:9-17**
- The greatest in God's Kingdom is servant of all; that's what love looks like- **Mk. 9:35**
- Phil 2:21, "*For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*"

Gal 6:1-2, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."