

Growing Up

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Eph 4:14-15 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

I. Growing Up Into Christ Implies a Previous Time of Immaturity In Spiritual Things Out of Which We Are To Grow

- Immaturity has certain evidences that we would expect to see
 - > As Children behave and think differently than adults, so new or immature believers may behave and think differently from mature Christians
 - > More oriented toward the physical, the “right now,” the pragmatic,
 - > May be more prone to making wrong spiritual choices as they move through spiritual childhood
 - > May be more prone to come to wrong conclusions about how God operates than more mature believers
 - > Can sometimes misinterpret what scripture means
 - > Sometimes when new or immature believers have no source for consultation, they will come to their own erroneous conclusions about scripture
 - Paul’s admonition to Timothy should be a powerful lesson to us about the importance of human agency in passing on the truths of God: (2Tim. 2:2) “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”
 - > New or immature Christians have a lot of questions that need answering
 - The new life in Christ is full of spiritual unknowns for new or immature believers
 - Some questions by new or immature believers can sometimes sound unusual and even stunning to old timers
 - There is a parallel to how little kids sometimes ask some pretty unusual questions
 - Why do birds fly?
 - Why does cutting onions make you cry?
 - Why is there air?
 - Why does ice melt?
 - What is paper?
 - Why does the sun go away?
 - Why can’t I see God?
 - > ANSWERS are critically important for new or immature believers
 - They form the basis for the level of service you can expect from them
 - They form the basis for the soundness of their outlook on spiritual things

- > WRONG ANSWERS can thoroughly confuse new or immature believers
 - Peter makes a statement about giving answers that certainly fits with how mature Christians should approach answering questions by immature believers: 1Pet. 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”
 - Again, the example set by God is what mature Christians should follow when giving good answers to immature believers: Jas. 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that **giveth** to all *men* **liberally, and upbraideth not**; and it shall be given him.
- > WRONG ANSWERS for the spiritually immature may come more from example than by verbal or written instruction
 - There is a saying about human children that was penned by James Baldwin: “Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”
 - Jesus, in teaching humility and service by washing His disciple’s feet had this to say about His message: (John 13:15) “**For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.** “
 - The apostle Paul, champion of the rule of being a good example wrote (Philippians 3:17) “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example.”

■ But, Despite Their Apparent Immaturity and Lack of Knowledge, New or Immature Christians Can Sometimes Provide a Fresh Outlook On the Life of Faith

- > Like children going to the zoo for the first time; seeing an eclipse of the moon or sun for the first time; going on a trip through miles of beautiful landscape and moving sights, the experience of conversion and beginning of life-service to Christ has a newness about it that can’t be matched.

II. Growing Up Has Certain Evidences Which Indicate Advancement In Development

- Less focus on the physical, more focus on the spiritual
- Beginning to develop a body of spiritual answers, while still having questions
- Developing depth of perception regarding the awe-inspiring
 - > Christ as Savior, and the experience of discovering Him is still the awe-inspiring trip of a lifetime to the maturing believer, but it has gained depth as the understanding and appreciation of it grows in them.
 - > The unfolding landscape of a trip through the Bible still carries the powerful ability to hold maturing Christians captive, but they see more than the mere landscape;
 - There is a hidden flower in every green field of bible chapter, a spiritual bird of most beautiful plumage perched in every tree of verse, a multitude of dawn colors of spiritual meaning in every sunrise lesson in the Book

III. Growing Up In Christ Results From a Certain Influence

- “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up...”
 - > Two elements; one of action, the other of attitude, are seen here
 - First, “**speaking** the truth” : Mat 12:34-35 “...**out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.** 35 **A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things....**”
 - Second, “speaking the truth **in love**”
 - > The process involves action born of the right inward attitude on the mature believers part
 - > Notice that this directive in scripture is not given as a commandment about behavior (although it should be taken as one), but is given as a formula for growing up.

IV. Growing Up Results In Some Level of Spiritual Adulthood

- Spiritual adulthood should qualify believers as teachers
 - > Heb 5:12 For when **for the time ye ought to be teachers**, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.
 - > That capacity extends beyond the church building walls and into daily living. Notice what apostle Paul instructs Titus about concerning the older church members and their role in teaching:
 - Titus 2:3-5 The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 **That they may teach the young women** to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.
 - > So, Spiritual adults have a responsibility and privilege to be teachers of the things of God
- Spiritual adults develop skill in the word of righteousness
 - > Heb 5:13-14 “For every one that useth milk *is* unskillfull in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,”
- Spiritual adults can use the meat of God’s word because they have exercised their senses to prove what is good and what is evil.
 - > Heb 5:14 “... *even* those who **by reason of use have their senses exercised** to discern both good and evil.”
- Spiritual adults develop a sense of what is spiritually important
 - 1Cor. 14:20 “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”
- Spiritual adults settle down into a more stable spiritual life
 - Col. 1:23 “If ye continue in the faith **grounded and settled**, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven;....”

Maturity is the art of living in peace with that which we cannot change. —Anonymous