

SPIRITUAL GROWTH STEP-BY-STEP

A major part of our Christian walk is to mature - 1 Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I **BECAME A MAN**, I put childish ways behind me.

- **Thought** – Limited in thinking but thinks in that limitation
- **Talked** – Innocently speaks without knowing
- **Reasoned** – Dealing with things with limited resources.

The church leadership's goal should be to lead the flock to maturity - Col 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that **WE MAY PRESENT EVERYONE MATURE IN CHRIST**. ESV

Staying immature is very dangerous

Judgement is corrupt - Prov 7:7 I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment.

Discernment is distorted - Prov 14:15 A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.

Perception is clouded - Prov 22:3 A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

The way for the Spiritually immature to become mature is through God's Word - Ps 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

WARNING...Though our intent is to make it easier to understand complex topics, we end up making complex things simple - 2 Peter 3:16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people DISTORT, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Christian growth is required

There is an expected maturity for all Christians - Heb 5:11-13-11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. **12 In fact, though by this time YOU OUGHT TO BE teachers**, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.**

Maturing is not something you do, it's what you allow God to do with you - Phil 2:12-13 - **12** Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to **WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING**, **13** for **it is God who works in you** to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Man plays a part but GOD institutes the growth - 1 Cor 3:6-7 - **6** I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but **GOD MADE IT GROW**. **7** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but **ONLY GOD**, who makes things grow.

Jesus went through the processes of maturity as an example for us - Heb 5:7-10 - **7** During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. **8 ALTHOUGH HE WAS A SON**, he LEARNED OBEDIENCE from what he suffered **9** and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him **10** and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Two items MUST exist for Spiritual growth

Reading and applying the Bible - 2 Tim 3:16-17 - **16 ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be **THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK**.

The church (which includes the ministry and the body) - Eph 4:11-16 - **11 IT WAS HE** who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **12** to prepare God's people for works of service, so that **the body** of Christ may be built up **13 UNTIL** we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **BECOME MATURE**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. **14 THEN** we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. **15 INSTEAD**, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things GROW UP INTO HIM who is the Head, that is, Christ. **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Things that are stopping Spiritual growth

Distortion of life purpose - 2 Tim 3:1-5 - **But mark this:** There will be **TERRIBLE TIMES*** in the last days. **2 PEOPLE WILL BE lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy**, **3** without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, **4** treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **5** **having a form of godliness but denying its power**. Have nothing to do with them.

Terrible Times - chalepos (khal-ep-os'); The idea of reducing the strength; difficult, dangerous, fierce, perilous.

Devaluation of the Word of God - 2 Tim 4:3-4 - **3** For the **TIME WILL COME** when men WILL NOT put up with SOUND DOCTRINE. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. **4** They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

STAGES OF GROWTH

Conception (accepting what's needed to be born again).

Just because a person says they are Born again, doesn't mean they are Born again - Matt 7:21-23 -21 "Not everyone who SAYS TO ME, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but ONLY HE WHO DOES the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

We must decide to let go in order to truly attach - Luke 14:26-35 - 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE. 28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 **IN THE SAME WAY, any of you who does not GIVE UP EVERYTHING he has CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.** 34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

- **Our family MUST BE within God**
- **Our marriage and other relationships MUST BE within God**
- **Our successes and plans MUST BE within God**

"We" can no longer be the purpose of our lives - Matt 16:24-26 - 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

We must humble ourselves to allow God to work with us - Matt 18:3-4 - 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever HUMBLIES HIMSELF like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Make no mistake, this is a clear process of change - Rom 8:12-15 - 12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, YOU WILL DIE; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, YOU WILL LIVE, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

* **Conception is deciding to totally get rid of self and totally live for God**

Infancy (Starting new with everything).

We must totally stop being influenced by the world and grow by being influenced Spiritually - Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Bible must be your life-book to keep you headed in the right direction - 2 Tim 3:14-15 - 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Make the word your main desire - 1 Peter 2:1-3 - Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, CRAVE PURE SPIRITUAL MILK, so that by it YOU MAY GROW up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Don't just hear the Word do what it says (this is the difference maker) - James 1:22-25 - 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. DO WHAT IT SAYS. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

As new Christians we must set new goals - Eph 4:17-24 - 17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that **YOU MUST NO LONGER LIVE AS THE GENTILES DO, in the futility of their thinking.** 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. 20 **YOU, HOWEVER, DID NOT COME TO KNOW CHRIST THAT WAY.** 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

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Totally and unswervingly depending on God - Prov 3:5-8 - 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. 8 This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

***Infancy is the conscious transformation from the fleshly Living to the Spiritual**

Adolescent (older but still immature)

You must make sure you are growing - Heb 6:1 - Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,

We must change our way of thinking - 1 Cor 14:20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. (*Matt 18:3-4 - be infants, *1 Cor 13:11 – thinking as adults)

Be accountable for every minute of your life - Eph 5:15-17 - 15 Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Your spiritual growth must be deeper to where there is a change in how you see & do things - Phil 1:9-10 - 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

Don't become complacent, live for the Lord DAILY - Col 1:10-12 - And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Don't be misled by ungodly people and ungodly practices - Col 2:18-19 - 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Don't become discouraged let God work you - Heb 12:4-11 – As a Child is the time when molding is done 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

***In your Spiritual life, work to be totally responsible to God**

Mature (spiritually mature and still growing).

Your primary focus will be Spirituality over everything else - 1 Tim 4:7-8 - 7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, **TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE GODLY.** 8 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.

You've matured when you are at peace all the time - Matt 11:28-30 - 28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

***Do not mistake this for emotional peace**

You will put NO confidence in the flesh - Phil 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who **PUT NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH**—

You'll be aware when the Word is misused as you continue to grow - 2 Peter 3:17-18 - 17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, **BE ON YOUR GUARD** so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

You'll rejoice in difficult situations knowing they are for your benefit - James 1:2-4 - 2 **CONSIDER IT PURE JOY,** my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

You have matured when your life is you letting go of the past and pressing towards your heavenly future - Phil 3:12-16 - 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

You will be able to receive the deep things of God and distinguish when it's from God and when it's not - 1 Cor 2:1-8 - When I came to you, brothers, I **DID NOT COME WITH eloquence or superior wisdom** as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 **SO THAT YOUR FAITH MIGHT NOT REST ON MEN'S WISDOM, BUT ON GOD'S POWER.** 6 We do, however, SPEAK A MESSAGE OF WISDOM AMONG THE MATURE, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The complex things in the Bible will become clear - Heb 5:14 But solid food is FOR THE MATURE, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

- Constant Use
- Trained self
- Distinguishing Good from evil

You know your Spiritually Mature when THE SOURCE of your life is God ONLY!

We will live "weakening self" to be "strong in HIM" - 2 Cor 12:9 But he said to me, "**MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, for my POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.**" Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

ALL previous values and goals are trashed and are now focused on one place...Christ!!! - Phil 3:7-11 - 7 But whatever WAS to my profit I now consider loss FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss COMPARED TO THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, THAT I MAY GAIN CHRIST 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

When we get saved it's not the end, just the beginning - 2 Peter 1:3-11 - 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness **THROUGH OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM** who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to **add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;** 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. **FOR IF YOU DO THESE THINGS, YOU WILL NEVER FALL,** 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*** If you are fully grown in the flesh, you are Independent and self-made. When you are fully grown in the Lord you are fully dependent on God and God Led!!!**

WARNING...Not growing could lead to death eternally

Not maturing could lead to backsliding - 2 Peter 2:20-21 - 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 **IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR THEM NOT TO HAVE KNOWN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAN TO HAVE KNOWN IT AND THEN TO TURN THEIR BACKS ON THE SACRED COMMAND THAT WAS PASSED ON TO THEM.**

Living backslid leads to eternal death - Heb 10:26-31 - 26 **IF WE DELIBERATELY** keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only **a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.** 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 **IT IS A DREADFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD.**

10. When we become Christians, we automatically live a life pleasing to God (True or False)?

11. The difference between God's discipline and the worlds discipline is God's discipline doesn't hurt? (True or False)?

12. Do we have to understand the complex thing from God in order to mature?

13. We are the strongest when we are what?

14. If we do not grow but end up living a sinful life, we are okay because we are saved. (True or false) (Explain)