



INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 5:11-14

Just about every home that has small children has a growth chart somewhere in the house. We sometimes used the inside of a closet doorjamb to mark the height of our kids and the date. Then, perhaps each year on their birthdays, we would measure them again. They were always excited to see how much they had grown!

But can you imagine how shocked and concerned we would have been if, instead of growing up, one of our children had grown down! We would have scheduled an immediate doctor's appointment to find out what was wrong. Growth is normal and a cause for joy. Shrinkage would have been bizarre and a cause for alarm.

Many of the Hebrew Christians to whom our author wrote had grown down in their Christian walk, not up. He says that they had come to need milk again, not solid food. Imagine a teenager who quit eating regular food and went back to formula and Gerber's pureed peas! Instead of being able to teach others, they now need someone to teach them the ABC's of the Christian life all over again. The author wants to talk to them about Jesus being a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, but he fears that it will be over their heads. So before he plunges into that subject, he issues the strong warning that runs from 5:11-6:20. In our text, he is saying, "Grow up, folks!"

Believers must move beyond the basics of the Christian faith and grow up in Christ.

You have no doubt been in a situation where an adult was acting like a child: throwing a temper tantrum, or not dealing with a frustrating situation in a mature way. You want to shout, "Grow up! Act your age!" That's what the author does here with the Hebrew Christians.¹

Watch It  Bible Principles

Watch Bible Principles #10; Heb. 5:11-6:8 www.villagebible.church/bibleprinciples

Open it

1. **Who was a favorite teacher or coach of yours? What made them so special to you?**

¹Sermon excerpt by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-16-grow-hebrews-511-63>

Read it

Hebrews 5:11-14

Explore it

2. What part of the Hebrews had become dull?
3. What should the Hebrews have been by now?
4. What was the spiritual food of the Hebrews? What should it have been?
5. What does solid food empower the believer to discern?

Apply it

“Celestial Navigation”

The Christian is always either growing up or going backward; he is never merely static in his spiritual development. As the late Leon Morris noted, “Always in the Christian life, one either moves forward or slips back. It is almost impossible to stand still.” It was this very concern that prompted the writer to the Hebrews to interrupt his treatise on Christ as the believer’s High Priest in order to exhort his readers to grow up.²

6. Describe a season of time where you experienced great spiritual growth? What made this time so special and allowed for you to grow?

² Sermon excerpt by Doug Van Meter found @ <http://brackenhurstbaptist.co.za/grow-up/>

7. Why is it impossible for a Christian to remain in a neutral position when it comes to our spiritual walk? What excuses do we use to try to validate our spiritual stagnation?

“Game On”

The writer has warned of the danger of neglecting so great salvation. The readers have heard the truth and it is now their responsibility to embrace the truth. Sadly, they have been sluggish in doing so, and so, rather than advancing in the faith, they are now regressing.

*This, of course, is always a lurking danger for the Christian, for if we are not like Christian in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, then we may find ourselves like Demas in a pilgrim’s regress. These verses, and the passage that follows in chapter 6, make this abundantly clear. The goal of this study is to encourage, exhort and equip us to grow up in Christ, specifically by a willingness to openly identify with Christ, regardless of the cost.³*

8. Suggest some specific, practical ways we (individually and as a church) may push one another on to spiritual growth and maturity? When it becomes necessary to confront and warn others of spiritual danger, what guidelines should govern our confrontation of others?

³ ibid

If there is spiritual life, there will be spiritual growth of some sort, but growth rates vary. Some become Christians and instantly drop the sins that have plagued their lives for years and never fall back. Others struggle to get rid of those sins for decades.⁴

9. How do we properly evaluate our spiritual progress? How do you feel about where you are at right now in your spiritual journey?

“The Wake Up Call”

The author wants to continue talking about Christ’s priesthood, but he stops. Why? Is it because Christ’s priesthood is inherently difficult to understand? The author says the priesthood of Christ is “difficult to explain,” but is it because Christ’s priesthood itself is too perplexing? No. It is difficult to explain because the people have become “too lazy to understand.” They don’t have the mature ears, minds, or hearts for grasping the concept. Those who are trained in Scripture and are progressing in the faith are better equipped to understand Christ’s priesthood, but those who shut their ears to God’s Word regress in their faith and fumble in their comprehension. Spiritual concepts like Christ’s priesthood are difficult only for the spiritually immature, those who have become “too lazy.”

The spiritually mature, on the other hand, have the energy to investigate and understand spiritual concepts that are hard to explain. Believers have a moral responsibility to know and understand Scripture. We often act as if our biblical ignorance is merely a matter of God hiding or withholding knowledge from us. Yet Scripture teaches us that our ignorance of God’s Word is a moral problem, not an intellectual one. When we deliberately ignore God’s Word for whatever reason, we sin against the Lord. In the case of the Hebrews, the congregation became intellectually sluggish by their own negligence. Their spiritual immaturity was their fault. They grew intellectually dull because they became sluggish of heart.⁵

10. What does spiritual laziness look like? How can these specific things negatively impact one’s faith?

⁴ Sermon excerpt by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-16-grow-hebrews-511-63>

⁵ Mohler, R. Albert. *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 79). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

- 11. A great many churches have sought to engage people by keeping the preaching and teaching simple and not focusing too much on weightier issues of doctrine. How does our text correct this and how is a church to engage people at varied levels of spiritual maturity?**

“Slow News Day”

Sometimes, when preaching, one gets the distinct impression that those hearing have lost interest and have become what our writer calls “dull of hearing.” Though this man is writing rather than speaking to an audience, he nevertheless seems to be having one of those moments. And so he pauses to challenge them, among other things, to pay attention and examine their interest in Christ...I suppose you could say that this condition is characterized by a disinterest, an unwillingness to listen and to learn. It is akin to being indifferent...It is clear that the writer holds them accountable for their condition. The words “you have become” highlight their culpability for this condition.⁶

- 12. Preachers carry the weekly burden of being right, relevant and rousing in their messages so as to capture the attention of the congregation. In what ways are listeners responsible for the preaching ministry within a church?**

⁶ Sermon excerpt by Doug Van Meter found @ <http://brackenhurstbaptist.co.za/grow-up/>

If Jesus is the preacher and the message isn't coming through, guess who is at fault? When hearers are dull, teaching is difficult. I'm talking here about motivation. Motivation is the key to learning. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Hunger and thirst are strong motivators! When you're hungry or thirsty, there is only one thing on your mind, to satisfy the craving for food or water. If you are driven by the hunger or thirst for righteousness, you will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). If you think, "Ho hum!" not only will you not grow; you won't even know what you're missing!⁷

13. How passionate are you about growing spiritually? What motivates you to continue on the path to maturity?

"A Proportional Response"

The ability to share spiritual truth with others is a mark of maturity. Not all Christians have the gift of teaching, but all can share what they learn from the Word. One of the hardest lessons children must learn is the lesson of sharing. The recipients of this letter had been saved long enough to be able to share God's truth with others. But, instead of helping others to grow, these Hebrew Christians were in need of learning again the simple teachings of the Christian life. They were experiencing a second childhood!⁸

14. To whom are you sharing the truth of God's word? How can this sharing with others cause even greater growth in your own life?

⁷ Sermon excerpt by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-16-grow-hebrews-511-63>

⁸ Wiersbe, Warren W.. Be Confident (Hebrews): Live by Faith, Not by Sight (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 74). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

Despite their many years in the faith, they were not ready for the solid food of the word, which nourishes those who are mature in Christ. Instead, they were living on pre-digested elementary teaching of the truth of the word of God. Thus they were not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness (5:13) or ready for solid teaching about our Lord's ministry in heaven as the pre-eminent high priest.⁹

15. How would you define the difference between spiritual “milk” and “solid food”? How does one know what their diet consists of?

16. The writer lists two things that mark maturity in verse 14. What are they and how are we to tangibly grow in these areas?

I realize that spiritual growth is more difficult to measure than your children's physical growth. But you can be sure that you're not growing if your spiritual life is running on autopilot. You are not growing if you are haphazard about Bible-reading and prayer. You are not growing if you are not making a deliberate effort to discipline your life for godliness. If you're not growing, you're shrinking! The author of Hebrews says to you, “Grow up!”¹⁰

17. In what areas have you seen growth and maturity in your spiritual walk? Where do you desire to grow? What can you do this week to fulfill that desire?

⁹ Africa Bible Commentary (pp. 3923-3924). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Sermon excerpt by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-16-grow-hebrews-511-63>

This study was compiled and questions were written by Tim Badal (Sugar Grove Campus) —www.villagebible.church/smallgroup