

GROWING UP SPIRITUALLY

WHERE THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY BEGINS

LOF1

GROWING OLD IS GIVEN.

GROWING UP IS A DECISION.

WHY DO WE NEED TO GROW INTO MATURITY?

- THE MORE MATURE YOU ARE, THE BIGGER THE CAPACITY YOU CAN HANDLE.
- THE BIGGER THE CAPACITY, THE MORE RESPONSIBILITIES YOU ARE TRUSTED WITH.

AT WORK:

- YOU ARE NOT PROMOTED BECAUSE OF YOUR AGE.
- YOUR PROMOTION IS NOT DETERMINED BY THE LENGTH OF YOUR STAY.....
- BUT BY THE CAPACITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES YOU CAN TAKE ON.

AGE IS NO GUARANTEE OF MATURITY.

OUR MATURITY IS **NOT** DEFINED BY OUR AGE AT ALL.
BECAUSE..... SOME PEOPLE JUST WILL NOT GROW UP!! =)

SO THE SAME THING WITH CHRISTIANS.....

OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS **NOT** DEFINED BY HOW LONG WE'VE BEEN CHRISTIANS

- ITS NEVER DEFINED BY HOW MANY YEARS WE HAVE BEEN COMING TO CHURCH.....
- WHETHER WE HAVE SERVED / BEEN BAPTISED, ETC.

YOU CAN BE CHRISTIANS SINCE BABIES..... BUT NEVER REALLY GROW UP SPIRITUALLY.
YOU CAN BE SITTING IN CHURCH FOR YEARS ALREADY..... KNOWS HOW TO QUOTE THE BIBLE VERSES..... AND STILL BE IMMATURE SPIRITUALLY.
BECAUSE ALL THOSE THINGS..... DO NOT GUARANTEE A PERSON AS A STRONG & MATURE DISCIPLE!!

IT'S ABOUT HOW MUCH OF THE CHARACTERS OF CHRIST THAT WE HAVE TAKEN UP.
IT'S ALL IN THE GODLY ATTITUDES THAT WE CHOOSE TO BUILD WITHIN US.
BECAUSE **GROWING UP IS A DECISION!**

OUR GOAL FOR TODAY :

- LOCATE WHERE WE ARE IN THIS DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY / IN OUR WALK WITH GOD.
- WHAT'S MY NEXT STEP?
- WHAT IS THE ONE AREA / ASPECT I NEED TO WORK ON TO GET MORE MATURE SPIRITUALLY?

WE DON'T WANT TO STAY WHERE WE ARE.
WE WANT TO GROW MORE MATURE..... ENLARGE OUR CAPACITY FOR GOD.
TO FULFILL GOD'S POTENTIAL AND CALLING IN US.
FROM LEADING A CONNECT – LEADER OF 10 – 50 – 100s!

**GROWING UP IS A PROCESS.
ITS NOT AN OVERNIGHT TRANSFORMATION.**

LOCATE OURSELVES

EPHESIANS 4:8, 11-15

Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

This was a letter that Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus.

Obviously, we can tell that Paul didn't consider the church at Ephesus to be "grown up" yet.

- Did you notice he said, "But speaking the truth in love, may **GROW UP**...."?
- And, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto A **PERFECT MAN**...."
- When it says "perfect" another translation reads, "**UNTIL WE REACH MATURITY.**"

The Amplified translation says, "**THAT WE MIGHT ARRIVE AT REALLY MATURE MANHOOD.**"

Paul is talking about **GROWING UP TO BE A MAN, OR A MATURE PERSON..... SPIRITUALLY.**
"That we should NO LONGER BE CHILDREN."

- He's talking about growing up and reaching spiritual maturity.... about becoming a full grown man spiritually.
- God wants us to grow!

And the Bible teaches that there is a striking similarity between **SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT** and **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**.

It speaks of at least **THREE STAGES IN SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT** which correspond to three stages in physical development.

They are: **BABYHOOD - CHILDHOOD - MANHOOD**

As we look at each one of these stages, you'll find that some of the **characteristics** of each natural / physical development stage are also to resemble to our spiritual development stage.

And I believe **SOMEWHERE..... WE CAN LOCATE OURSELVES.**

STAGE #1: BABYHOOD

I Peter 2:2

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby:"

Here in the Bible..... Peter speaks about Christians being **"NEWBORN BABES."**

- No one is born a full-grown human naturally and physically.
- They are born babies..... and then they grow up.
- Similarly, no one is born a full-grown Christian.
- You are born "a spiritual baby"and then you grow up.

As Pastors / Leaders....

- We are held accountable of the spiritual babies born in the family of God under our care.
- We can't expect Babies to do too much for themselves.
- Someone else needs to do something for them.

Sometimes newbies are on fire on Sunday, makes mistakes before Wednesday night.....

- We can't expect them to live perfect as Christians who took 10 years to where they are.

BABIES MUST BE ALLOWED TO BE A BABY AND GROW (spiritually also.)

- That is why it is so important to give people room to make mistakes.....
- It's understandable..... so you can teach them through the mistakes.

Think about the Brand new converts / believers to church.....

- They don't just come back by themselves.
- They had never been to church before.
- They had never heard any Full Gospel preaching before.
- They needed to be followed up and prayed with, talked to, and dealt with.
- They were newborn babies.

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR BABIES.

BABIES CAN'T TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

Babies don't know. Babies can't do for themselves.

- A newborn baby in the natural can't do much.
- He doesn't walk yet. He doesn't dress himself.

- In fact, he doesn't do anything for himself.

BABIES MUST DRINK MILK TO GROW.

- About all he does is **EAT**. And about all he eats is **MILK**.
- Spiritually there are newborn babes.
- And if they get the sincere milk of the Word, they will grow thereby.

1. INNOCENCE

BABIES DON'T HAVE A PAST

The first thing that attracts you to a baby is its **innocence**.

- *People say, "You sweet little innocent thing."*
- *No one thinks of a baby as having a past. It doesn't have one.*

If you are new born in Christ.... **YOU DON'T HAVE ANY PAST.**

- No matter how you have lived before, how bad it had been....
- When you're born again, **you become A NEW MAN in Christ Jesus** without any past, you are as innocent as a baby.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

It is one characteristic we should never outgrow.

- A new convert is **simple, full of faith, ready and willing to learn.**
- We should always maintain that **teachable spirit.**

Yet sometimes when we grow older, we sort of come to the place where we have a "**know-it-all**" attitude; a "**You-can't-tell-me-anything**" attitude. Those people no one can help, including God Himself.

It doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian, attending to church, been a leader, we don't know it all.

When you refuse to grow and learn – you will be **oldest & biggest baby in the entire church!!**

KEEP AN OPEN SPIRIT AND A TEACHABLE SPIRIT, AS WELL AS AN INNOCENT SPIRIT, TOWARDS GOD AND MAN.

2. IGNORANCE

We got 3 young kids at home, and esp. right now with Dakota who just recently turned 2 yo.

A baby seems to think everything he can get his hands on, is intended for his mouth.

- A newborn puts his hands in his mouth. As he grows a little older and learns to crawl across the floor if he finds a screw it goes in his mouth, if he finds a spoon it goes in his mouth, if he finds a spider it goes in his mouth.
- Babies are ignorant concerning these things.

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT SHOULD GO IN THEIR MOUTHS AND WHAT SHOULDN'T.

And babies have died as a result of not knowing that. They have gotten hold of something poisonous and it killed them.

The same thing is true spiritually speaking.

WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL WHAT GOES INTO OUR SPIRITUAL MOUTHS.

We need to be as careful about **WHAT WE READ** as we are about what we eat physically. Poisonous wrong doctrine that WILL ROB THEM FROM THEIR SPIRITUALITY, RUIN THEIR TESTIMONY.

"God is doing a different thing nowadays" , "We live in a New Testament Days"

"Those verses are in the Bible."

- The words are in the Bible but they may take them out of the setting / context.
- If you want to poison a rat you wouldn't just give straight poison, you'll put poison on the cheese.

Be careful no matter who you read after.

Don't read everything you can get your hands on. Unless you are a fully mature Christian and able to rightly divide it, it would be best not to read such things.

Be careful what you feed upon. There is a saying used in terms of our natural diet.... "You are what you eat."

The same thing is true spiritually..... **"YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ."**

3. **IRRITABILITY**

Babies are easily spoiled.

And when they become spoiled..... they become irritable!

But the Bible says something about babies growing up.

David said, **"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child"** (Psalm 131:2).

The Bible says concerning Isaac, "And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned" (Genesis 21:8).

It has to got to be great day..... when Christians grow enough to get off the bottle.

- But you know, it isn't. It ought to be a feast day; instead it's a cry day.
- "BUT I LIKE MY BOTTLE!!"
- *It's no wonder to me at all that we're not doing more in some of our churches than we are. If we do get a newborn baby in we don't have a bottle for it. Every bottle is in use. And the older babies are not going to give up their bottles. Every bed in the spiritual nursery is taken. And the older babies don't want to get up and give up their beds.*
- You can be saved for so long, baptised with Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues – but that doesn't make you a full grown Christian.....
- When you still need be run after, pampered, needy for attention, easily offended and hurt..... That makes them the biggest babies in the world.
- Some babies just want to stay babies.
- We got to grow enough spiritually so that instead of someone's having to come and visit us, and pump us up, and prop us up, and pray with us, and feed us all the time..... WE ARE ABLE TO BE OUT HELPING OTHERS OURSELVES.

BABIES ARE EASILY FRUSTRATED, EASILY DISTRACTED, EASILY HURT.

- The Lord wants to bring us to the place where we're not so easily frustrated.
- He wants to bring us to the place where we're not so easily distracted.
- He wants to bring us to the place where we're not so easily hurt.

STOP ACTING LIKE BABY! Time to GROW UP.

STAGE #2: CHILDHOOD

—Ephesians 4:14

"That we should no longer be children...."

Paul is talking about SPIRITUAL CHILDREN here.

He wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus and we know they had at least twelve men in that church.

- Acts 19:7 tells us about twelve men and I'm sure they had more.

- When Paul said "that we should no longer be children" he was talking about that they would be no longer spiritual children but would grow up spiritually.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILDHOOD STAGE OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT are similar to the physical.

1. **UNSTEADINESS**

CHILDREN ARE UNSTEADY AND THEY ARE NOT DEPENDABLE.

They have a TENDENCY TO WANT TO TEST BOUNDARIES.

Young kids / teenagers – sometimes we cannot fully dependable on them.

- Puberty, mood swings, tantrums.
- You give them instructions, they don't follow as is.
- You tell them what to do.... They want to do things their own way.
- You ask them to do something..... you come back and she still hasn't done a thing.
- Unsteady, you could not depend on them.
- The same thing is true spiritually.

Children in the natural are unsteady ...unreliable...impressionable...spasmodic.

Spiritual children are the same way.

If you are unreliable in the calling and responsibilities given to you.....

- *Not in the mood - "I don't feel like doing it..... I'm not coming today....I'm not serving"*
- *No consistency – on fire one day, off the grid the other day.*

TO BE MATURE....

- We need to learn to be disciplined....to be consistent.
- To stick on the things, the responsibilities that have been entrusted to us.
- To be reliable in our commitments.
- Yes is Yes....No is No....
- Not saying one thing, and doing another thing.
- That is the sign of growing up.

2. **CURIOSITY**

Children are full of curiosity.

They see, they ask, they want to know, they want to touch it.

Some of these spiritual children that have never really grown up spiritually—though they've had time and opportunity—as sure as they can catch a little bit of gossip going want to know, "Who? Who?" They're full of curiosity.

CURIOSITY IS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF A CHILD.

If you tell a child not to look in a closet, he is going to get in it as sure as the world. Curious. Spiritual children are the same way.

THEY'RE ALWAYS POKING THEIR NOSES IN THE OTHER FELLOW'S BUSINESS.

THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES US TO TEND TO OUR OWN BUSINESS. God doesn't want you poking your nose into the other fellow's business. Learn to be quiet and tend to your own business.

Curiosity is a characteristic of a child.

I'm glad that our church is not filled with nosy people..... but **BUSY people building the Kingdom of God!!**

3. TALKATIVENESS

Children have never learned the value of silence. They are talkative.

And you will find people in the childhood stage of spiritual growth are nearly always talking.

Did you know the Word of God has something to say about this?

It tells us, "In the multitude of words there wants not sin...." (Proverbs 10:19).

And, ".....a fool's voice is known by multitude of words" (Ecclesiastes 5:3).

- We need to learn to be quiet / when to speak / speak wisely.
- A child doesn't know any better so he's always blabbing.

Every day we have conversation with toddlers / young kids in our family.....

They just won't stop talking when it comes to bedtime and car ride – even when the lights out, it was dark and time to sleep already

Like natural children, spiritual children have never learned the value of silence.

WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT WE SAY.

People who are talking all the time are usually guilty of at least three sins.

- They are often guilty of **EVIL SPEAKING**—talking about and discussing the faults and failures of people not present.
- They are often guilty of **VAIN SPEAKING**—always talking about themselves: what I've done; what I'm going to do; where I've been.
- And they are often guilty of **FOOLISH SPEAKING**—jesting, joking, and things that are unprofitable.

EPHESIANS 5:4

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather **giving of thanks.**

It's okay to have fun and down time and be 'light' in our conversations and funny jokes. Because if we just go "deep" all the time people would look at us as weirdo / ineffective in our building relationships.

But we cannot grow spiritually and spend all/ too much of our time talking about natural things.

Talk about things that are **PROFITABLE** for our life, things that are **HONORABLE** AND **GIVING THANKS TO GOD!**

- Is it necessary? is it helpful?
- Is it inspiring? Is it pure?
- Is it aligned with the word of God? Does it bring glory to God?
- If it's NOT.....then we do not need to say anything about it.

Maturity is when we have control over our words..... because we know that **LIFE AND DEATH ARE IN THE POWER OF OUR TONGUE!!**

- We can use it to DESTROY, or we can use it BUILD.
- We can use it to DISCOURAGE, or we can use it ENCOURAGE
- We can use it to taint God, or we can use it to glorify God.
- It has the power to bring people away from God..... or closer to God.
-

STAGE #3: MANHOOD

There are many scriptural **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MANHOOD STAGE OF SPIRITUALITY.** In fact, this entire book is aimed at seeing this spiritual man.

But three of his characteristics we'll discuss here are:

1. ESTEEMING EARTHLY THINGS LIGHTLY
2. DEADNESS TO PRAISE OR CRITICISM
3. ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE GOD AT WORK

1. ESTEEMING EARTHLY THINGS LIGHTLY

One characteristic of growing up is to esteem earthly things lightly. We can't put earthly things above spiritual things and grow spiritually.

Serving God should come first.

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Moses, when he was come to years—that means when he grew up, when he became a man—refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

- Think about what he refused. He saw a **difference in the people of God and the people of the world**. (Egypt is a type of the world.)
- In the world he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, in line for the throne.
- He had **honor, wealth, prestige**.

He had the things the earth and the world had to offer.

Yet he regarded Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt.

God wants to prosper His children. He's concerned about us.

He wants us to have the good things of life.

He said in His Word, "**if you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19)**

But He doesn't want us to put those things first.

Some are more interested in making the dollar than in serving God. Spiritual things must come first if you are to be spiritual being. You must esteem spiritual things more than the dollar, more than earthly things.

No, it's not wrong to have money. It's wrong for money to have you. It's wrong for money to be your ruler, your master.

God wants you to prosper.

PSALM 1:1-3

**Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree
Planted by the [c]rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.**

God wants us to prosper.

But we need **Determine in your heart to put SPIRITUAL THINGS FIRST.**

First things first. Esteem earthly things lightly.

Put God before them. Put God before your own self-life. *You will be blessed spiritually, and better off physically—both you and your family as well. MAT 6:33!*

2. **DEADNESS TO PRAISE OR CRITICISM**

I Corinthians 4:3-4

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

We have a place in the Father's heart and that's enough.

Paul had grown in grace to such an extent that **HE SOUGHT ONLY TO COMMEND HIMSELF TO GOD.** He was not influenced or affected by what others thought of him.

He did not get in bondage to anybody.

"Hate me or love me, I must serve God."

Immature Christians will feel slighted or puffed up. *If they are criticized—or even imagine that they are— they are restless, uneasy, and full of self-pity.*

On the other hand, *if they are noticed and appreciated..... They feel lifted up and full of self-importance.*

Baby Christians are self-conscious. And ever conscious of what others are thinking about them. Therefore they are "tossed to and fro" childishly trying to be popular.

The mature believer is God-conscious. And ever-conscious of what God's Word says about him and to him.

GROWING INTO SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS BECOMING LESS SELF-CONSCIOUS AND MORE GOD-CONSCIOUS. (Quote)

Let's be more concerned about what GOD SAYS ABOUT US --- rather than what people say about us. Amen!!

3. **ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE GOD AT WORK**

One of the best spiritual examples of this characteristic is **JOSEPH.**

You remember how he saw certain things happening in a dream and his brothers became jealous of him. They were going to kill him, but finally just sold him into slavery. He was taken into Egypt, where eventually he stood and refused to bow to the wishes of his master's wife and was thrown into prison. **He stayed in prison seven years.**

Most people would have become bitter and said, "God has forsaken me after these seven years."

He interpreted a dream for a fellow prisoner— Pharaoh's butler—that in three days the butler would be lifted up and restored. Joseph asked the butler to make mention of him to Pharaoh when he was delivered. The butler was released as Joseph said, but he forgot Joseph. It was **two years more** before Joseph got out.

In those two years most people would have grown bitter saying, "That's the way it is. You try to help people and they won't help you."

But the time came when Joseph was brought out of prison. And eventually he was made prime minister of Egypt.

A famine back in his home country caused his father to send his brothers to Egypt in search of food. They had to be brought before him because he was prime minister.

They didn't know him. But he recognized them; the very ones who had sold him into slavery. He didn't tell them who he was but asked, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake?" They answered that he was in good health.

Benjamin hadn't come with them. So Joseph said to them, "Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither."

They went back and told their father, "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you."

Poor old Jacob didn't know that it was God. Joseph was gone. And now they were taking Benjamin. He thought all things were against him. But they weren't. They were all for him. He just didn't know it.

When you're hungry, you'll do about anything, so Benjamin went with them. When they got there, Joseph made a feast for them. And he announced, "I am Joseph."

Do you know what happened?

All those fellows hit the floor. That's what Joseph had seen in his dream—his brothers bowing before him.

Here would have been a fine opportunity for most people, who weren't spiritually mature and still babies, to have really **shown off**. Here would have been a perfect opportunity for Joseph to have stuck his thumbs and said, "Well boys, look me over. Remember those dreams I had? They came to pass."

But Joseph had magnanimity of soul. He said in effect..... **"DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, GOD DID IT."**

He said,

Genesis 45:5, 7

But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

When you can see God at work in things, you can rejoice whatever is going on!

That GOD WORKS THROUGH ALL THINGS FOR THE GOOD!

What seemed bad, **WHAT THE ENEMY PLANNED AND MEANT FOR EVIL.....GOD IS STILL TURNING IT AROUND FOR THE GOOD!**

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES:

ITS TIME TO GROW UP!!

Characteristics of **BABY**: *Innocence, Ignorance, Irritability*

Characteristics of **CHILD**: *Unsteadiness (unreliable), Curiosity, Talkativeness (Evil / Vain/ Foolish Speaking)*

Characteristics of **MATURE MAN**: *Esteeming Earthly Things Lightly, Deadness to Praise & Criticism, and Ability to Recognize God at Work.*

- **LOCATE WHERE WE ARE IN THIS DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY**
- **WHAT'S MY NEXT STEP?**
- **WHAT IS THE ONE AREA / ASPECT I NEED TO WORK ON TO GET MORE MATURE SPIRITUALLY?**