

## “Time to Grow Up”

### 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

#### Introduction

Certain things hopefully come with age as we grow and mature: more understanding, more wisdom, more responsibility and more expectations. Parents recognize this as they approach their children in different stages of development. A father would never sit his young baby down and demand that they start picking up their toys or feed the dog each day. However, as the child grows in understanding of the world around him or her, a father’s expectations increase.

In the same way, God expects every Christian to become a spiritually mature follower of Christ, using their growth and God’s wisdom to influence those around them. This principle of spiritual maturity happens when a believer consistently lives his or her life from a spiritual perspective rather than a fleshly one. When a Christian starts to function out of a divine view rather than a human one, he or she can begin to see a deeper understanding of the things of God. The apostle Paul likens it to the difference between an infant and an adult. In his letter to the church at Corinth, he said, “And I, brothers and sisters, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as fleshly, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people?” (1 Cor 3:1-3). An infant can only consume milk, not solid foods. There comes a time when the child should be eating meat rather than merely drinking milk, and that was precisely what Paul was pointing out to that church and us. They should have been further along in the process. Still, their lives were showing an immaturity that did not reflect their chronological age.

How do we move spiritually from infancy to maturity? The process begins as a Christian grows in his or her knowledge and application of God’s Word. Rather than simply consuming truth, the mature believer lives it out. This progression of growing in spiritual maturity often happens most through the struggles and trials of life. These struggles and trials offer the believer an invitation to move to the next level of spiritual growth. The process takes time, but with consistency in Scripture and its application to real-life challenges, one can heed the words of the author of Hebrews: “Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity” (Heb 6:1a).

The end result of spiritual maturity is a faith worthy of imitation. As we grow in our understanding and application of truth, we can begin to discern, having been “trained to distinguish between good and evil” (Heb 5:14b). With that depth of spiritual character, we can be part of other believers’ spiritual development through God’s wisdom that comes through time and a hearty diet of God’s Word. Ultimately, we get a deeper experience of the priesthood of Jesus Christ as we pour out and help others grow in their spiritual journey. Through this stage of our development, we understand what Jesus is doing in heaven and how that grace is poured out to us here on earth. No matter how long you’ve been a believer, there is always room to grow in spiritual maturity.

#### Getting Started

1. When you consider your faith walk right now, are you where your spiritual age suggests you should be? If you’ve been a committed follower of Jesus for some time, are you teaching truths to those around you?
  2. What are some of the signs of maturity? What are some ways that a child becoming an adult learns to become more mature?
  3. What would you say are the marks of a spiritually mature believer? Describe someone in your life who has developed in their faith.
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### Let's Get Personal

1. Would you consider yourself spiritually mature? Why or why not?
2. How can a person learn to operate from a God-centered spiritual perspective rather than a human-centered one? What are some practical ways you have learned to function from a divine perspective instead of a secular one?
3. How well do you apply God's Word to your life? In what ways do you struggle to do so? In what ways have you learned to respond to the truth appropriately?
4. How have trials matured your faith in Jesus? What struggles have grown you and taken you to the next level in your spiritual journey?

### Take the Next Step

1. In what ways do you need to mature in your faith? What are 2-3 practical, next steps you can take to grow in that way? Who can you ask to hold you accountable?
2. How committed are you to the spiritual development of others? Who can you influence and help develop in their walk with God? What is one way you can work toward that this week?
3. How can you ask the Lord to grow you spiritually? Pray and ask God to help you grow up.
4. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at these passages: Hebrews 5:11-15; Colossians 1:28-29; and 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.

### Renew Your Mind

*"I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people?"*

*1 Corinthians 3:2-3*

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