

“The Stages of Maturity”

1 John 2:12-14

Introduction

In school, children go through different stages of learning. They begin with the letters of the alphabet, sounding out words, addition, and subtraction. Once they master the basics, they move on to more difficult concepts and subjects, such as algebra and social studies. If a child wanted to stop at the alphabet, an adult would intervene to encourage the child in his educational journey. If we, as believers, never develop beyond the most basic tenets of our faith, we will miss out on the benefits of spiritual maturity. Believers are meant to mature from spiritual infancy to spiritual adulthood as we grow in applying God’s truth in our lives.

The initial stage of spiritual childhood starts at the point of salvation when we enter into union with Christ. As babies depend on others to feed, clothe, and clean them, we also completely depend upon God our Father in the same way. In this infancy period, we begin to recognize that we are in a parental relationship with God. The second stage is spiritual adolescence, which is marked by intense spiritual conflict. We face spiritual warfare through the attacks of Satan, the world, and our flesh as Satan tries to dissuade us from our spiritual direction. That is why in this stage, we must practice using God's Word to achieve spiritual victory and overcome Satan. Overcoming Satan frees us from his control and moves us forward from this teenage struggle.

The third stage is spiritual adulthood, where we have grown in an intimate relationship with God. We enjoy being in God’s company. Our spiritual discernment has increased because we have learned how to look at things spiritually first and pick up on spiritual signals. This spiritual insight eventually leads to spiritual reproduction. We have not reached spiritual adulthood if no children have been birthed and are being developed because of our relationship with Christ. If we want to reach maturity, we need to be training up the next spiritual generation. Whatever stage we find ourselves in now, we should take the next steps to move forward in our spiritual development.

Getting Started

1. What is unique and special about a parental relationship?
2. What other stages of development do children go through? What happens if they get behind developmentally?

Let’s Get Personal

1. In what spiritual stage do you currently find yourself? How long have you been in that stage?
2. How has Satan, the world, or your flesh successfully gotten you off track from God’s spiritual direction for your life?

3. Do you enjoy being in God's presence? In what area is your relationship with God lacking intimacy?

Take the Next Step

1. What practical steps can you take now to begin pursuing the next stage of spiritual maturity?
2. How can you actively help another believer grow in spiritual maturity in their life?
3. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: 1 John 2:12-14; Hebrews 5:11-14; Hebrews 6:1-11; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 1 John 2:20-29; 2 Peter 3:17-18; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Corinthians 2:9-16; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 5:16-26.

Renew Your Mind

"I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father."

1 John 2:13
