

Grow Up!

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

INTRODUCTION:

Everybody loves babies! I often hear people say, oh, they just grow up too fast! But part of what makes babies so appealing is that they are constantly growing and learning. We enjoy watching our children and for those who have grandchildren, grow up. The real shame is when a baby DOESN'T grow up. We start to worry if a baby is slow to learn. It becomes a real problem when the bay doesn't grow because it means that something is wrong.

That's also the first sign of spiritual trouble. Hebrews 5:11 says "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn."

1. How Spiritual Babies Look Hebrews 5:11-6:3

For one thing, Spiritual Babies keep jibber-jabbering a bunch of baby talk long after they should have out-grown it. Even after years of being Christians, they still can't articulate their faith. They are easily moved by every wind of doctrine. They are confused because they listen to every voice that they hear.

In fact, these fat little babies are still drinking milk out of bottles when they should be eating steak. They expect someone else to feed them when they should be able to feed themselves.

Another problem with Spiritual Babies is that they are clueless when it comes to right and wrong. In their little minds, they can't be held responsible if they do something wrong. After all --- they are just babies. Well, it's easy to spot a baby ... unless YOU're the baby.

So take a minute for a personal inventory. How is your own maturity level looking?

Are you able to talk about your faith in Christ?

Have you moved past the basics of Christianity? Are you learning deeper truths?

Do you study God's Word on your own, or do you wait for someone else to feed it to you?

Do you base your moral choices on God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit? Or are you looking for someone else to give you a list of rules that you can follow without having to think for yourself?

Growing up as a Christian is no small matter. Hebrews doesn't pull any punches when it describes the kind of damage Spiritual Babies can do.

2. What Spiritual Babies Do Hebrews 6:4-8

4It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

That is a harsh warning! In fact, it is one of the most severe warnings in the New Testament. People get into all kinds of theological arguments about these verses. They argue over whether someone can "lose their salvation" But these verses don't talk about "losing" anything.

It's not like you're going to get to the end of a day and think, "whoops, now where did I put that salvation?" We're not talking about a person who merely makes a mistake or commits a sin. You're not saved one minute and lost the next depending on how the day is going!

We're talking about a person who makes a choice FOR God, and then will fully turns AGAINST God. The writer of Hebrews used several phrases that show this person was connected to God at some point. They were enlightened. They tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the Holy Spirit. They tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age.

But after all that, they fall away. In other words, they come to know Jesus personally, but --- in the end --- they turn their back on the crucified Lord. In fact, they actually crucify the Son of God all over again and subject him to public disgrace.

This is the danger for a Christian who fails to Grow Up. You see, growing is not just an option for a Christian. Growing is the definition of a Christian. A Christian grows to be like Christ. It's transformation. It's metamorphosis.

In fact, a word that is commonly in use today describes how a Christian grows. The word is MORPH. For any of you who are technologically challenged: Morph is a term used by computer enthusiasts for melding two images into one image. You can actually buy a software program to morph two images together into one. Sometimes that can be comical. But how many of us really expect that every Christian will Morph into the image of Christ?

John Ortberg tells of a man in a church he once pastored whom he called Denny. Denny was not a happy man. He had attended church his whole life, but he had never been happy. Even the expression on his face was perpetually negative --- so much so that one day a deacon asked him, "Denny, are you happy?" Denny answered, "Yeah." The deacon replied, "Then tell your face."

Denny did not approve of many things: the new people that were coming into the church; the type of music; the seating arrangements were changed etc.

Denny's had a very bad attitude and it was no joke.

Listen to John Ortberg's observation as he looked back on this situation: "Denny is not changing. He is a cranky guy. He has been cranky his whole life. Not just about church - he does not effectively know how to love his wife; his children cannot tolerate him; and he has no joy. He's been going to church his whole life, sixty years. And nobody in the church is surprised that he stays cranky year after year. It is as if we expect a bad attitude - that's just Denny. Nobody is expecting him to be more like Jesus year after year." (John Ortberg, *The Life You've always Wanted.*)

Well, maybe no one in the church expects Christians to become like Christ. But God expects it. In fact, God demands it. Growing up is not optional! In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to sum up the message of Hebrews 6 this way: **Grow or Die.**

If that seems too harsh, look at verses 7 & 8: *7Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom*

it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

Perpetual Babies become so hardened that they can't produce anything but thorns and thistles. This scripture calls such a person worthless and in danger of being cursed. It goes on to say: In the end it will be burned.

God does not give warnings like that flippantly. And we should not take His warnings lightly. A Christian who is not growing is in imminent danger of falling away. This is so important that we need to stop and review for a minute. The writer of Hebrews did two things so we would understand how important it is to Grow Up.

First he used a psychological technique that is pretty effective. He said, I have some important things to tell you Hebrew Christians ... but you guys just aren't mature enough to understand it... kind of poked fun at them for being big babies.

After that, it gets dead serious. No more humour about babies. The warning is clear: if you won't grow up, you are in danger of falling away from Christ and being cursed.

This warning crashes down on us like thunder and lightning. Then suddenly the sun breaks through in verse 9: *9Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. In other words, don't worry. None of those terrible things I described need to happen to YOU.*

Why? Because God has better things in store for those who are saved! The next verses tell us how Spiritual Babies can Grow Up in Christ.

3. How Spiritual Babies Grow Hebrews 6:9-20

10God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

11We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

We could spend a whole sermon just on these verses. Here's what these verses tell you to do in order to Morph into the image of Christ:

Show your love of God by helping people. The most amazing thing happens to those who quit focusing on self and begin to focus on ministry to others. They not only show God how much they love Him, they also start enjoying themselves. Ministry is an acquired taste, and the sooner you develop a taste for it, the better ... for everybody!

Give diligence to the very end. A survey asked: "What qualities make a good leader?"

The responses were analysed and the following two were the most recorded.

Staying power and the second was tenacity. These are like twins. One keeps you in the arena and the other gets you up when you get knocked down. If a toddler gave up the first time they fell, he'd never end up walking at all. But too many Christians give up at the first failure. No wonder they remain wimpy Spiritual babies. **We need to learn how to keep on keeping on.**

Don't be lazy. I know we all have lazy days now and then, but some people seem to take their inspiration from Homer Simpson.

Who are your role models? When it comes to having a hero or somebody you esteem highly because of the character qualities they display?

For me, definitely somebody who, amongst other things, is not lazy!

Give me a list of people who have achieved great things in their life-time, I guarantee you, the one common factor you'll find amongst them is; they're not lazy.

They are the kind of men Hebrews has in mind when it says to...

Imitate people of great faith and patience. The next verses go on to give Abraham as a prime example of faith. Because of his faith, God promised Abraham, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."

Hebrews 7:14

Who are those descendants? YOU ARE. I AM. This is pretty amazing --- but everyone who lives a life of faith is one of the promised descendants of Abraham. (It reminds me of that children's song: Father Abraham had many sons ... and I am one of them, and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord.) Abraham was faithful to the end. Throughout his life, he GREW

in faith, and he finished well. We can do the same.

CONCLUSION:

Are you ready to take the warnings of Hebrews seriously? Hebrews 7 warns us: Grow or Die. A more positive application is to morph your mind into the mind of Christ. When it comes to Growing Up, it's Morphing time!

Hebrews 7 ends with a wonderful assurance for anyone who is growing closer to Christ: Verses 18 and 19 tell us to take hold of the hope offered to us and be greatly encouraged. For we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. If you are growing up in Christ, you have nothing to fear. Hold on to Him. He is your anchor, firm and secure.

So I say, stop drinking milk from a bottle. Get out your steak knives for some spiritual sirloin! Let's Grow Up together and get some toughness into our testimony!