

Growing Up
Striving for Punctual Spiritual Growth
Pastor Mike Fabarez

As most of you know, I have three children: a nine-year-old Matthew, a seven-year-old John. We weren't working for the whole gospel set. We just wanted the bookends. And then the three-year-old Stephanie. And of course, a lot of things we do, they're in tow; we bring them along with us.

And inevitably, when we're out and about, you find people that come up and say, "Oh, you've grown so much, Matthew. Look how big you are." And, "John, oh, you're just growing like a weed. What do you feed those kids?" And you have all that kind of stuff. And I never know exactly how to respond to that. I mean, what do you say? You say, "Well, you know, we feed them almost every day. We're working at it." I mean, you know, it's kind of a natural thing.

And the reason is you don't know what to say because it's the reaction that you expect. Now, if people came up to us and said, "Boy, your seven-year-old sure is puny." Or, "That nine-year-old, what's wrong with him? He's a lot shorter than we thought he'd be." "Boy, that Stephanie, she looks like an infant. She's not growing." Then we'd be concerned. We would definitely, I mean, that would stop you. And you'd want to, "Oh, wow."

That's, by the way, why the doctors, they're into that little, it's a little doctor conspiracy among pediatricians where they have this well check. I thought you're supposed to go to the doctor when you're sick, but they have the well check where you have the baby and then you bring them to the well check every other week, it seems. And they bring them in and they strip the baby down and they throw them in this little banana scale-looking thing and see how much they weigh. And then they lay them out like a fish on a—here—mark them off, and they stretch, and they find out how long they are, and then they pull out their little chart, or their little book, or the nurse looks at her thing, says, "Well, they're in the 65th percentile," you know, or "Johnny, he's in the 52nd percentile," and they give you that sense of where they are in terms of growth.

And I remember that was no surprise, because, of course, my wife got all those books for new moms. It tells you exactly at 18 weeks, you know, how big they were supposed to be and what they were supposed to be able to do. So moms can, you know, think all their kids are geniuses because they're doing, you know, their head is bobbing before it's supposed to or whatever. And so we kind of knew that and we tracked with that.

And the underlying assumption with all of that is that if our kids are healthy, they ought to be growing, because good physical health means good physical growth. And if you don't see it, there's a problem.

The Bible says the exact same thing about your relationship with Jesus Christ. In Hebrews chapter 5, and I want you to pull your Bibles out and open up to that text, there's a well check going on for the people that the writer of Hebrews is writing to, and he pulls out the tape measure, and he puts them in the scale, and he says, "You guys are underweight. You are not growing like you're supposed to."

And the interesting thing about how he goes about this is that he tells them, much like we would expect for a little baby, that the time really matters. That if you've been a Christian this long, you ought to be this far along. And if you've been a Christian this many years or this many months, you

ought to be accomplishing this much. It's as though there's some kind of chart on the wall of heaven where the angels look at it and say, "Well, this is what we expect from a one-year-old. This is what we expect from a five-year-old."

So I guess the one question for us before we even read the text is, How old are you? My wife's real good with dates, sometimes too good. She remembers dates of everything. But every year, there hadn't been a year that's gone by that she hasn't paused for us to recognize our spiritual birthday. And we know exactly how old we are in Christ. And I think she does it because she's about five months older than me in Christ. But she reminds me. It's my spiritual birthday. Hers is next month, and mine's in the fall. And we pause to kind of consider that. Wow.

And every time we do that, there's a little pang of conviction. I feel convicted. "Wow, I'm that old?" Because the real question for us as we read this text is not how old are you, but how's your growth in relation to that age? How old are you in Christ? Are you a year old? Are you five years old? Are you eight years old? Are you 18 years old? Do we have some 28-year-olds here?

That's an important question. And then you should consider that as darkness falls on Orange counting. That happens every week, doesn't it? That's familiar to me. My wife and I have three kids. I don't remember where we were. Yes, how old are you anyway?

Take a look at Hebrews chapter 5 because the writer of Hebrews knows how old most of these people are, and he says this in verse number 11: "We have much to say about this." What does that demonstrative pronoun point back to? Melchizedek. We have much to say about Melchizedek. We've got a lot to talk about this whole new priesthood, the Melchizedekian priesthood, but it's hard to explain.

It's not because the writer of Hebrews doesn't know about it. We'll find out in chapter 7. He knows an awful lot about Melchizedek. He says it's hard to explain because you are what? You're slow to learn, man. You're just slow to learn. "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, but you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk," verse 13 says, "still being an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness, but solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Got a lot to say about Melchizedek, but it's hard to explain. You're slow to learn. In fact, though by, and if you have your pencil out, circle this word, **time**. By this time, you ought to be teachers.

Great thing about the Greek language, as I've said many times, it's very exacting. Not only in the way it's inflected grammatically, but the words and the vocabulary itself. We see the word in English, time. There's a lot of Greek concepts you can relate to. And even in English, we use the word time in different ways.

Matter of fact, my wife will say something about cleaning the garage out, and I'll say, "Well, honey, I just haven't had the time," see? And then if she looks at her watch and says, "Well, how much time does it take?" Then we're talking about two different kinds of time. Oh, because I've had enough time. I just haven't had enough time, see? And in Greek, there's two words for that. There's the word *kairos*, which is what I mean when I say I haven't had time. I—I got a lot of stuff going on, and, you know, there's a lot happening, and American Idol's on. I just can't, I don't have time to clean the garage out. See, and she's saying, "You do have time."

What the word is here is not the opportunity, because that would let us off the hook a little too easy, because you know what my wife says in response to the garage. “You’d better make time,” right? And I can’t make time, but I can make the opportunity. And that’s what I’m getting at, is that I’m thinking about opportunity.

You can’t make *chronos*, which is the Greek word here. You can’t make that. But it’s something that ticks off the clock every single day. And what the writer of Hebrews is saying is you’ve had enough days now to be a teacher. But you’re not a teacher.

Number one on your outline, if you’re taking notes, jot this down. We need to begin to, number one, care about the calendar. Start to care about the calendar. Because God does. He cares about the calendar and he’s looking at your life and he says, “Hey, five-year-old Christian, you’ve had enough time to be here.” “Hey, 15-year-old Christian, you’ve had plenty of *chronos* to be here.” He’s got an expectation for our growth.

And what gets me is, again, the verbiage here is so exacting and so revealing that he doesn’t say you ought to in terms of you should. It’d be a good thing. More grammar lesson here. There’s two words in Greek for should. There’s the word *dei*, transliterated D-E-I, day, and that means you ought to, in relation to the kind of thing you ought to do if you were a nice person. For instance, if it’s Secretary’s Day, you ought to get her a card. You ought to get her some flowers. You ought to let her offer, maybe not all of those at one time, but you know, you ought to do something nice for your secretary on Secretary’s Day. That’s the word *dei*. That’s not the word here.

The word here, a *philo*, is a different word. It’s a strong word. It’s the word that Jesus uses when he tells stories about money being owed to someone else. Because when Visa sends me their little love note at the end of the month, it’s not, it would be really nice if you sent us some money this month. Visa says, “You a *philo*, you owe us money.” See, you sign those little slips that say, “I promise to repay.” When you’re over there at Outback and you said you’d pay us back, so we want the money now. You owe us the money. And if you don’t, Bruno’s coming out to break your legs or whatever happens, I don’t know. If you don’t pay your Visa bill, you get in trouble.

This text says, you’ve been a Christian long enough, *kronos*, that you are obligated. You have to. You have a debt to do what? In this case, to be teachers.

And a lot of people go, “Whew, I’m glad that says that because I don’t have the gift,” right? I know about this teacher thing. In the church, you got to have the spiritual gift. I’ve read the gifts list and I don’t have that one. So this must be a passage for staff people at churches.

Now remember the context. This is written not to Bible school students, not a seminary, you know, outline. This is for the rank and file who sit in church every Sunday, these young Hebrews that this apostle is writing. And he’s saying, “You ought to be teachers.”

Remember this, by the way, about the gifts list. There’s lots of things on there that all of us are called to do. And just because you’re gifted to do it doesn’t mean you’re the only people in the church that do it. Faith is on the list. Did you know that? Gifted to have faith. Now, does that mean that if I don’t have the gift of faith, I don’t have to trust Christ? Is that what it means? No. It just means that God specially endows some people with a certain kind of incredible faith that they can trust God in the most incredible situations, and wow, God gives them the gift of faith.

Or giving, that's another one. That's on the list too, you know. Gift of giving, and we don't wait to say, okay, raise your hands, gift of giving, we're going to pass the bag just to you people, right? We pass the bag to everybody. Why? Because the Bible says we all ought to give. But there's going to be people, and there are at Compass, that have a special endowment, and they're gifted by God to give, and man, they're generous. And they underwrite a lot of ministry around here.

So we understand that there are people that are endowed with a special ability to teach, and to teach really well. And we put microphones on them, and we put them on stages like this, and they teach the big crowds. But just get that little luster off of this word, because really what teaching is, the kind of teaching that all of us are obligated to do, is the passing on of information.

What God has invested in us, we are, a philo, acquired. We are required, rather, to pass it on. We have to. We have a debt. And if God has invested in us for, let's just say, 14 years, man, we are obligated to take what we've learned and pass it on. Not just the knowledge, but also the ability and the skill of living life that we've learned in Christ. We need to pass it on.

This is a little note. You remember, if you think back to the very beginning of our study of the book of Hebrews, as we work our way through it, we said this book was probably written between 60 and 68 AD. AD 65, let's just say, rough and dirty.

This book in chapter 2 revealed that the audience, this church, didn't get the message of the gospel. Didn't get the message of the gospel from Christ. It got it from the apostles who were sent out. So this wasn't something where you got a group of people that received the message early on. As a matter of fact, we're assuming that in the book of Acts somewhere, probably, I don't know, 10, 15 years into this thing, they got the gospel.

So let's just say conservatively 15 years. That would put us at 45 AD. 45. This book was written somewhere in the mid 60s. You don't have anybody in this church that's over 20 years old in Christ. And assuming the church grew like most churches do, you've probably a lot of five-year-olds, eight-year-olds, 12-year-olds, a lot of teenagers. Those are the oldest Christians in the group, the teenagers.

And the writer of Hebrews says, you've been Christians long enough to be teaching. What's that mean? Passing on what you've learned. And some will be specially endowed to teach big groups and all of that, but all of us ought to be teaching.

Care about the calendar. If you care about the calendar, you'll feel that pressure. You'll feel it.

And you know what? In verse number 11, we kind of skip by the diagnosis. Those are the symptoms. Slow growth. What's the diagnosis? You're slow to learn.

And when I hear the phrase slow to learn, I think things like dumb as a box of rocks. You know, I think dunce. I think dull. But you know, that's not what this is. As a matter of fact, this is a Greek word in the New Testament only used twice. The other time it's used is right across the page in chapter six. Take a look at this. The only other time this word is used and it's translated in context really well in verse number 12. Circle it. Put a note in the margin. It's the word nothros. It's the only other time it's used in the New Testament.



“We do not want you to become,” how’s it translated? Lazy. See, when you tell your teenager who you think is bright and you know is bright and has capacity, but they’re not applying themselves in school, you may say they’re slow. You’re slow to learn. But what you’re saying is not their capacity. You’re not commenting on their capacity. You’re talking about their disposition. It’s not that they can’t do it. It’s that they’re not doing it and they’re not applying themselves.

And the writer of Hebrew says, man, a lot of people have been Christians for a long time in that church and they’re not applying themselves. They’re slow to learn. They’re lazy. I love the way that KJV translates it. Slothful. You’re slothful. You’re slow. And the S I think says sluggish or dull.

So what’s the deal? God really needs help? Just another nursery push? We need more workers? Got to have small group leaders? This is not what this is about. Please recognize it’s not as though God is in heaven going, “Oh, I need more workers and teachers. Please, I need more workers. What am I going to do?” The issue is about the blessing that comes in usefulness.

God wants us to grow up just like you want your kids to grow up because there’s something significant, rewarding, and satisfying about growing up and maturing.

I’ve told you before, my dad bought me a tool chest for my garage. And he’s great at giving tools as presents. Matter of fact, every Christmas, every birthday, I can count on a wrench or some kind of tool for my tool chest. So it’s jam-packed full of tools.

And the thing about my dad when he gives me tools is they’re not always new in the wrapper. They’re old. From his tool chest, they’re hand-me-down tools. Sometimes he gives me new tools, but a lot of times they’re hand-me-down tools. And so my tool chest fills up with them, and I got one drawer. Don’t you guys have one drawer? It’s got nothing but screwdrivers in it.

I pull it out, and there’s all the screwdrivers. And every time I need a screwdriver, it seems I go to the same two screwdrivers every time, right? Because they work. The ends aren’t all gummed up or chewed off or whatever happened to them. The handle feels good. It works.

So then you say, “Well why don’t you get rid of all those other screwdrivers?” I wouldn’t have anything in my tool chest for one. The real reason I wouldn’t get rid of those is because a lot of them came from my dad’s tool chest and a lot of those came from my grandpa’s tool chest. I’ve got screwdrivers with my grandpa’s initials in it, right? We’re not getting rid of those. I’m not getting rid of those, but I’m not using them either. They don’t work.

In John chapter 6, verse 39, the Bible says that you are a gift from the Father to the Son. It’s an amazing truth to ponder. That the Father gives to the Son these people, and each of them is a gift from the Father to the Son. And Christ says, you will in no eyes be cast out. We’re not getting rid of you.

But when he opens his tool chest to look for someone to do something in his kingdom, it seems he’s always going back to the same two or three tools. Have you noticed that? Pastors put it this way. 10% of the people do 90% of the work. And that’s usually how it is.

Why is that? Because those are the ones that actually are sharp. They work. They’re ready. They’re the kind that have been growing and active. And when God here is in heaven looking into the tool chest, he sees those people with their hand up and they’re saying, “Here am I, send me.” I’ll do it.



And I'm ready, I'm prepped. I'm spending time in the word. I'm studying it. I'm making progress. And God goes, great.

And you know what? They are the ones that receive the blessing. It isn't that God's not gonna get his job done without you. It's that he'd love to have you participate in the blessing of being used to advance the kingdom.

Think of the guy named John Mark in the Gospel of Acts. Remember him? Acts 15, he went to his well check with the Apostle Paul, and Paul goes, "Eh, puny, not going to use you." And he was sent away as unuseful by the Apostle Paul. Because the big problem with him and Barnabas.

But you know what happened? It wasn't that Paul's ministry and what God was doing through the Apostle didn't get done in the second half of the book of Acts. It's that you had a guy named Silas step up. A guy named Timothy step up. And you have people step up whose names are inscribed at the top of a lot of the Pauline epistles in the New Testament.

And here we learn about Silas being used and in the middle of the blessing of God's work in the book of Acts. I mean, there are going to be billboards in the New Jerusalem with Silas' name on it, right? And you're going to go, "Wow, he's a big shot around here, isn't he?" Yeah, he is. Matter of fact, I mean, I'm not kidding. New Jerusalem, the foundations of the walls are going to have the apostles' names on it. I mean, we're going to have heroes there. And Silas is going to be a hero. You know why? Because he was ready and growing and ready to go.

And Timothy was a learner and ready to go. John Mark, well, he wouldn't really keep it up. He was a slow grower.

God wants to bless us. God would love us to have the participation in ministry, and he's looking for people that are on track with the growth rate. We don't care about the calendar. By this chronos, this time, we ought to be teachers.

Bottom of verse 12. Are you still there? Chapter 5? Here comes a backhanded slam. Ready? You need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again.

I thought we'd already done it, but I guess we need to go back to the beginning. You need milk, not solid food. That's not a compliment, right? That's your, you know, I thought you were too old for the bottle and the binky. Obviously not. Let's go back and we'll feed you and we'll burp you. And I guess what you need is the basics again.

I thought you were ready for some teaching about Melchizedek and to be blessed by the Melchizedekian priesthood truths. But no, you can't even handle that. I guess we got to go back to the basics.

Paul wants to leave the basics. He wants to move on from the basics. Take a look at chapter 6, verse number 1. What does he say? Very next section, which we'll get to after Easter. He says, "Let's leave it. Let's leave the elementary teachings about Christ. Let's go on to maturity."

I don't want to have to lay a foundation again of all the basics, like repentance from acts that lead to death and faith in God and instructions about baptism, all of that.



But notice the little concession in verse number 3. What does it say? Here it comes. “But God permitting, we’ll do so.” I mean, if we have to, we’ll do so. I know I’m trying to get you to grow up, but if we gotta go back to the basics, we’ll go back to the basics because you need to catch up.

Now, here’s the thing. You might be convicted from this sermon and say, “I’ve been a Christian for 12 years, but you know what? I’m feeling the conviction that maybe I’m more like a three-year-old and I need to grow.”

Here’s the thing. Some of you can’t pick up at 13, 14, and 15 and move on. You gotta go back because you can’t build in the Christian life unless you get the basics down. And some of us don’t know the basics.

We send our kids to Awana and downstairs, they’re learning stuff like the books of the Bible in order. And some of you 22-year-old Christians are going, “I don’t even know, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, I don’t know.”

And you know what the deal is? We’ve got to catch up. We’ve got to, number two on your outline, we’ve got to make up for lost time. We’ve got to make up for lost time.

And some of us, we say, “Well, you know what? I feel behind. This is convicting for me. I need to grow.” And you know what? Let’s not try and act like a 22-year-old Christian if you really slid by the last 10 years. Let’s go back and pick up the basics.

There’s a little kid in Sunday school named Harry. He was 14 years old. I guess he was a teenager, wasn’t a little kid. He’s in the youth group almost 100 years ago in his church, and he feels behind the curve.

He becomes a Christian, and he says, “You know, if I’m basing my life on this book, the Bible, I ought to read it all the way through from cover to cover.” And as a 14-year-old, he said, “I’ve never done that.” “This is the matter of fact, I think I should read it through as many times as I am old.” And he says, “I feel behind. I need to catch up.”

So little Harry went out there, and he started to read through the Bible. He spent a lot of time reading through, notating things he was learning in the Bible, and he went from Genesis 1:1 all the way to Revelation chapter 22, and he tried to play catch up. It took him seven years.

And by the time he was 21, he had read through the Bible 21 times thoughtfully as a student of God’s Word. And you know what God said? There’s a sharp tool. I can use that one. And little Harry was chosen and plucked out of his little toolbox from where he grew up and thrown into a pulpit in downtown Chicago. His last name is Ironside. Maybe you’ve heard of him. Became one of the most influential preachers at Moody Memorial Church, making a difference in that urban setting for Christ.

Because he said, “I don’t want to be behind. I don’t want on the door jamb of heaven, having my mark being way down here, and God is saying, ‘Here’s a 12-year-old Christian, and he’s pretty puny, he’s pretty short.’ Man, I want to grow.” And guys like Harry Ironside are a bit of a rebuke for a lot of us, because he said, “I got to get serious about it.”



Some of you have been a Christian for five, six, seven, eight years, some for 16, 17 years, and you've never even read through the Bible once. Time for catch-up. You don't have to read it 21 times in the next couple years, but we ought to get serious about it.

And I love that. When I started doing the read through the Bible in a year pamphlet that you guys get. I had some people, older people in Christ saying, "I'm going to read it through it twice this year." And you know why they said that? Because they were playing catch up. They felt convicted. I've never done this. I thought it was great. Do it, man. Double time it.

You know how many minutes a day it takes to read through the Bible in a year? 11. And that's if you're a pretty slow reader. 11 minutes a day.

You know, the average person that responded to a Barna survey and they asked, "Are you a frequent reader of the Bible?" The guys that said, "Yes, I'm a frequent reader of the Bible," were tracked in how much they actually did read the Bible, and it came up to seven minutes a day. Seven. That's not even a full time through the Bible in a year.

Same survey. Different set of people were asked, in the category, "Do you watch TV a lot?" And the people that say, "I do not watch much TV." Okay, ready for some conviction? "I don't watch much TV," and that's most of us because we're real godly, we don't watch much TV. Right? Two hours and 18 minutes a day was the average.

Let's invert that a little bit. Let's try and say, you know, I got to grow up. I really need to grow up. I need to make up for some lost time, and I need to get serious about my walk with Christ.

Great thing about Compass Bible Church is we've got a lot of tools to help you. Not only we have a little pamphlet that'll keep you on track, as a matter of fact, it's on the back of your worksheet so you can read through the Bible every year with us, but we got things like the Partners Program that if you've never ever done the basics, like learned how to study the Bible on your own, if you can't start like our children can downstairs with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, and go through all of the Old Testament, New Testament books in order, which they're all learning, by the way, downstairs, then you need to be involved in the Partners Program. We'll force you to do that. If you're not committing scripture to memory, yeah, Partners Program is a good start. Women's Bible study, men's Bible study, our small group program. We've got a lot going on that will help you move from wherever you're at to double-timing your Christian life, to where you get up to speed, to where when you go for your well check, the next time the angels look over the rails of heaven, they'll go, "Wow, look at that, he sure has grown."

That's what we need. But it's going to take some effort.

Keep your finger here, please, and turn with me to James chapter 1. My fear in saying what I've said is I'm feeding a certain kind of personality in our church. The kind of personality, the egghead personality: "This is great. I'm going to learn more knowledge. I want more knowledge. I can have all the Bible answers."

You know what? Bible knowledge is great, but it's half the battle, you realize. Spiritual growth is not jamming food into my kids' mouths and letting them sit there with the Nintendo all day. I got to get them off their rear ends, and they got to be active. If their bones and their muscles are going to be formed, they got to move around a little bit.



James chapter 1 says it as well as any passage in the scripture. Verse 22, you know these words, but read them again. "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves." And by the way, this is not the guy who's asleep in the back row right now, okay? This is not the guy whose inner ear vibrates because he's sitting through sermons. This is the person that's tempted to be deceived that they're growing. And those are the people that are actually taking notes and listening carefully and trying to get the message. And they go away with more knowledge.

That's the person who we're talking about here listens to the Word. Because if you have that kind of retention, you will start to become deceived that you're actually making spiritual progress when in reality you're not without the second half of it.

And here come the next four words that are very important. If they're not underlined in your Bible, they ought to be. "Do what it says."

Anyone who listens to the word but doesn't do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself he goes away immediately and forgets what he looks like.

That's still such an apropos illustration, isn't it? Because all of us have our mirrors. They're in the bathroom. They're there not for our visual enjoyment, right? You looked in the mirror this afternoon, this morning, I hope, and didn't say, "Oh, that's nice." It's there to warn you not to leave the house till you do something about what you see. That's what the mirror is for. Y'all put a little red flashing lights there. Action required, right? Because if I say to you, "I've stared into the mirror for two hours this morning," that doesn't really matter.

Unless, of course, I spend a little time picking up my brush, brushing my teeth, combing my hair, washing my face. Now all of a sudden, hey, the mirror's doing its job.

Just because you go through Partners, just because you and your kids learn all the Bible verses in Awana, just because you're learning some Bible information or theology doesn't mean you're growing spiritually. It's half the battle. You've got to do what it says.

And if again you think we're just trying to laden you with responsibility and God just needs some ogres in the bottom of the machinery making things work and God just looking for more slaves, keep reading.

Verse number 25, here's the promise attached to it. "The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he's heard, but doing it," look at these wonderful promises right here. "He will be blessed in what he does."

Just like God isn't just trying to look for a worker to fill a gap. He's looking for you to participate in the blessing of ministry. He wants you to grow up. Not because he wants you just to work out and feel the strain of trying to grow. It's because growing is good and it has its rewards.

As a matter of fact, when you're more mature and more adult in your Christian life, man, what happens in your life is you do things that God blesses. You'll be blessed in what you do.

We don't have time to look at it, but in 2 Timothy 2, this will be a good homework assignment, verses 20 through 22. The illustration of the toolbox, at least in the first century, is given for us.



That in a house, there's lots of articles. There's some that are for noble use and some for ignoble use, some that are just common. But he says, if you're willing to clear yourself from the things that were spoken of earlier, from verses 15 to 20, then you will be useful. That's a great word, very rare word. Useful to the master. You will be the kind of article that God says, "I love to use this one." He's just looking for maturity.

If you're behind the curve, just catch up. Let's just start investing in it. Let's say no to some things for a season. Let's unplug the TV. Let's stop reading the fiction. Let's cancel the magazines. Whatever. Let's play catch up until we're up to speed.

If you need the milk, drink it. But don't live on it, verse 13, Hebrews chapter 5. Because if you keep just living on it, you'll just stay an infant.

You know, it's not about, you know, just having the basic verses down and having the basic knowledge down and doing the basic steps of obedience. And I'm doing it. If you live on milk, still being an infant, you will never really get acquainted with the teachings about righteousness, the kind of teachings that he's about to unfold in this book.

Solid food. There's the great comparative analogy. Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. They decide the better things over against the not so good things. They decide the best things over against the good things. They are making wise decisions. But it happens by moving from milk to meat, so to speak, the easy stuff and the elementary stuff to the stuff of maturity and putting into action regularly.

This is a bit of a wordy point, but put it down. Number three, you and I, we need to shoot for a better spiritual diet, increase it, raise the bar, make it better, and more exercise. We've got to exercise more. We can't just do what we've been doing.

Well, I volunteer in that ministry, or I'll do a little bit of that, or I do this. Great, let's do more. You need more.

As a matter of fact, when it comes to what you're learning, you need to move from the elementary principles of what I like to call the bumper sticker theology, and we need to start moving into solid food, which, by the way, will make you a counter-cultural group of Christians. And I don't mean counter to the culture of the world. I'm talking about counter to the Christian culture, because all you got to do is go down to the bookstore and look at the top 10 best-selling Christian books, and you know what you got there? Milk. Two percent. Some of it skim milk. Really. It's not the good stuff. It's really not.

Because Christians love to hear the same old refrain over and over again. Give me the simple stuff. Give me that old time. Tell me Jesus loves me one more time. Okay? Great. Get it. Plumb it. Move on. Get on to the deeper stuff.

Which means the books that you and I need to start reading as six, seven, eight, nine, ten-year-old Christians are not the books you're going to find nicely displayed on the end cap at the Christian bookstore. They're going to be the books collecting dust in the back of some warehouse in some Christian book distributor place. And we need to start ingesting that stuff. We need to move from the milk to the meat.



And some people think that's their calling, to make things as simple and milky as possible. Boy, that's not it. Oh, we serve milk and we love to chase down the meat with the milk. That's fine. Periodically, milk is great, but God is pushing us on to maturity. Can we leave the elementary principles behind and move on? That's what the writer of Hebrews is saying. Let's grow up.

Don't get me started again on Christian radio, right? Have we been there on that one? Stock picks for Christians and herbal tea for new believers and, you know, softball for disciples. I don't understand Christian radio anymore. What are we doing?

If you compare Christian radio in the lineup today to what it used to be, okay? It's frightening. We haven't increased in our Christian culture in desiring and hungering for the meat. We've declined. And the thing that proves that to me every time I go to my bookshelf is just when the publication date of the Christian book was. That's all it takes.

Consider my bookshelf when it comes to commentaries on Hebrews. There's a good example. If I go to the bookshelf and pull a book off that was published in the last 10 years, you know what I get? Big print and lots of pictures, right? I mean, it's basic stuff. They assume I'm an idiot, and they tell me the basics, and here you want to learn to teach this passage. Well, here's what the passage means, right? And it's basic stuff.

I go to the bookshelf, and I pull a book off that was printed a hundred years ago for people that want to teach the passage here. You know what they're going to expect from me? A lot. They're going to expect that I actually remember some of my Greek courses that I took in seminary. They're going to expect that my Hebrew vocabulary is still up to par. They're going to assume that I know the basic Latin grammar that most of us learned in school to understand the last 19 centuries of theological writings. They expect that from me. The bar is high.

But you know, in the last 100 years, last 10 years, it's scary. We don't expect you to know anything because, you know, a lot of good TV shows to watch right now.

Time for us to grow up. Time to push yourself further. Time to say the same old theme is not enough. I've got to plummet deeper. I've got to understand it.

And again, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying once we understand that God loves us, we never talk about the love of God again. As a matter of fact, this is worth looking at. You've got to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians chapter 3.

Here's an example based on our study and understanding of the love of God. The Bible and the apostle that wrote this book, I'm confident, is all for us studying the love of God, but not at this little insipid Sunday school level that's just going to get us into saying, "Oh, isn't that a nice, cute little doctrine?"

Take a look at this text. Ephesians chapter 3. Jump into the middle of verse 17. Here is the prayer of the apostle. "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love," you're living it out. You're not just listeners of the word, not hearing it only. You're doing it. "I pray that you may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide, how long, how high, and how deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to the measure of all the fullness of God."



You know what that means? Full-grown maturity.

I've suggested books, for instance, like, here's an example, a book on the love of God. Here's one that Carson wrote, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*. And they go, "I don't understand that. What does that mean?" You see, we like the simple truths that fit nicely as a soundbite in our back pocket so we can whistle our way on into our work week. And the scripture says, can we start to really plumb the depths of this stuff?

It's a little deeper than just a sticker. We ought to be able to learn, I love it, to grasp how wide, how long, how high, and how deep is the love of God. The love that surpasses knowledge. I mean, we got a lot to learn. I'm not for saying we never talk about grace and love and all that. It's just, can we go a few layers deeper on this? God would have us do that.

Again, what's this all about? Just so we can be laden with the burden of growth. One more passage. Let me just quote it for you. You know it already. Psalm 1.

Psalm 1, if you are willing to be immersed in this, to, as the scripture says, delight in the law of the Lord, meditate on it day and night, then you will be like, I love this image, a tree that's planted by the streams of water. It will yield its fruit in season. Its leaf will not wither. And then here comes, here's the promise: whatever he does, it prospers.

Do you get it? God wants us to grow up because there's a lot that goes with maturity, and it's a good thing.

Got to shoot for a better spiritual diet.

I know you Sunday school grads think, well, that's not fair the way you made John Mark sound like a bad guy, you know, because I know what happens to John Mark, and you know what? If you don't know, let me inform you, and if you do know, I know too, okay?

After he passed his well check with the Apostle Paul in Acts 15, I got to think that was devastating, right? There was some frustration there. John Mark apparently went back and said, "I gotta eat. I gotta grow. I gotta mature. I gotta strengthen my walk. I gotta be able to choose better and best and good and bad. I gotta have—I gotta train my senses to know good."

And he grew up so much so that the last chapter of the last book that the Apostle Paul ever wrote, 2 Timothy chapter 4, you know what he says? "I need a few things. I need a few things. I need my parchments. I need this. I need that." And by the way, if there's one guy that's going to be useful in this thing, he uses the word useful, same one used earlier in the book of 2 Timothy. He says, "You know who I need that's useful? John Mark. Send him." I love that.

I love that that he goes to the well check and the doctor goes, "Oh, 10th percentile. Need some food here, guy." And you know what? By the end of Paul's life, if there's a giant, if there's someone towering over his contemporaries that Paul needs on his team, guess who it is? John Mark. He did some accelerated growing.

Here's the great thing you may not know about John Mark. Mark was his Hellenized name, his Greek name. Johan, John, was his Hebrew name. You know what John means in Hebrew? Johan, it means Yahweh is gracious.



I love that about John. Yahweh is gracious. God didn't pull him in front of the x-ray machine and show that his bones were malnourished and say, "Ah, forget it." He said, "No, God, I want to grow. I want to grow." And God was gracious. He said, "You want to grow? I'll help you grow. Matter of fact, I'll help you grow if you're serious about it," so much so that the greatest apostle of the New Testament, saved Jesus Christ himself, is going to say, "If I got to pick one guy that's useful in the kingdom, in just a few short years, he'll be looking at you and calling your name."

That's good stuff. The redemptive, wonderful grace of Christ, to take puny people and make them giants.

You know, when Josiah was cleaning out the temple, he found the book of the law. Remember that story? 2 Chronicles 34? He was like 26 years old when he found the book of the law. What's insightful about that story is when he discovered their deficiency and basically got the wake-up call, "Hey, well check, you're puny," you know what he does? He doesn't take the book of the law, come to the people and say, "Hey, I found the law. Let's read this and start studying it and start growing up."

You know what the first thing that he does that the Lord commends him for? The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 34, he repented. He repented.

And you know when the Lord commends him and takes him into a whole new level of reform and godliness in Israel, do you know what he commends him for? That when he saw that he was deficient, he was quick to repent.

And you know what? If you feel a little puny, because I did studying this passage this week, I feel pretty small because I read about a lot of Christian pastors that have been in this thing a lot less than I have. Throughout church history, we've done a lot more than I've ever accomplished, who understand the scripture a lot better than I do. I start feeling small.

First thing I need to do is repent. "God, forgive me." Because I've had enough chronos, and I haven't made enough kairos to be the kind of person I need to be. "God, forgive me. I repent."

And then you know what God does? Just like John Mark, he'll give us grace, and he'll help us grow. Let's grow up in Christ.

Let's pray. God, help us, please, to be the kinds of people that want to grow in Christ. We're not satisfied with the same old song, the same old truth, the same old slogan. We want to go deeper. We want to understand you on a different level. We want to know what it is to grasp this love that's even beyond comprehension, just that one doctrine, let alone your holiness or your grace or your omnipotence, or your omniscience. There's so much we need to understand about you.

God, help us to grow in Christ. Help us to be people that are willing to set aside the junk food that is so pervasive in our Christian culture and say, you know what? We've got to move on from that and we've got to move into something more demanding. We've got to explore passages we've never explored. We need to become familiar with characters in Scripture that minister to our heart that we've never even learned to pronounce their names before.



God, let us go deeper in Christ. Help us in this, I pray. Give us the grace, just like John Mark, to years from now, you'll be able to have angels say of us, "Man, look how they've grown."

In Jesus' name I pray, amen.