

How Do We Mature As Believers?

[Hebrews 5:11-14](#)

Hebrews, Day 18

Audio Version

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

- Hebrews 5:11-14, ESV

Seeing a little baby drinking formula out of a bottle is cute. Seeing a small toddler with a bottle of milk is still adorable. Seeing a ten-year-old with the same bottle is less cute, and seeing a grown man desiring only milk from a bottle is a sign of a serious problem. Yet what is an even more serious problem is a baby who is not growing out of infancy.

In our spiritual lives, we sadly see this phenomenon all too frequently. Many Christians who have been believers for 5, 10, or 20 years or longer are still drinking milk and are not ready for solid food. Why? Because they have not matured. The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews had been stuck in basic infancy for so long they were in danger of showing they were not really alive, for growth is a key indicator of true life.

So, how can we grow? How can we mature as believers? How can we demonstrate that we have real spiritual life and are growing in that life?

The author of Hebrews describes the immature as those who are "*unskilled in the word of righteousness.*" He then says, "*Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good and evil.*"

I used to believe that people grew spiritually by studying doctrine and growing in knowledge. But Hebrews says something different. It says solid food is for the mature, meaning growth in doctrinal understanding will come to those who are maturing. Maturing itself is not as much a matter of knowledge as it is of applying and living out the knowledge you've been given.

When God gives us basic instruction in the Gospel and in biblical morality, we need to take what He gives us and apply it to our lives. We need to be trained by constant practice to distinguish between good and evil. If we will not take and apply what God has told us, how can we expect God to teach us still more?

Sadly, I have known many Christians who seemed to have advanced theological knowledge, but whose lives demonstrated that they had never applied the basics of the Gospel and biblical truth to their lives. They did not show the fruit of repentance and faith, though they had a head full of doctrinal information. Unsurprisingly, once I dug below the surface, I usually found their doctrinal knowledge to be badly twisted and unfaithful.

God is not interested in filling our heads with facts and information. His desire is to see our hearts and lives conformed to the image of Christ. As Christ is formed in us and we grow to be more like Him in our character, this is real maturity, this is the growth God seeks. It comes by receiving, believing and

applying the truth of God's word by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is shown in the fruit of the Spirit, beginning with love, love for God and for neighbor.

If we belong to Jesus, we must be seeking to grow in Him. If not, we risk remaining immature and unstable, or worse, as we will see in chapter 6. Thankfully, the God who saved us by His grace is growing us by His grace, too. His grace will persevere in us to do His work in growing us until we see Jesus face to face.