


## 10.27.2024 Getting Older or Growing Up?

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[0:00]



I've been going through 1 John, and now we're up to this section here.

There's an old saying that says, most people get older, but some never grow up. And I think you know what I mean.

And it's the same that's true with Christians in our spiritual walk. And I'm going to use these three verses here to kind of use that as a stepping stone to show where the different levels of Christianity are.

Sadly, some people get stuck in one place and stay there. They've been saved for years, and literally they've gotten older, but they haven't grown up spiritually.

And that's a sad place to be. God expects us to grow spiritually. Remember the Apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, he said, Brethren, I could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

[1:56] You know, when Paul wrote, and even when John's writing, he's just saying, listen, there's a lot of good stuff I want to tell you, but you're too much of a baby Christian, even though you may have been saved for years, to even understand what I'm saying.

That's why it's so important that we see these steps and ask ourselves, what level am I? Am I where I'm supposed to be?

The first one here is children. Verse 12, I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his namesake. So, here he starts talking about spiritual children.

These, in fact, in verse 12, and also in verse 14, I'm sorry, verse 13, where he says, I write unto you, little children, because you've known the Father.

It's two different words for children here, but basically it means from an infant to a toddler, maybe a child. Think about children. You know, we see little William running up and down here.

[ 3 : 10 ]      What's his biggest concern? Food? Happiness? It's all self-centered, isn't it? You know, he's worried about being safe.

If, you know, you put him in a room by himself, he'll probably blast out crying. Why? Because that's the way children are.

Children, they think about what they need. What satisfies me? I need food. I need changed. You put him in a crowd with other kids, lots of times it's, you know, you put one toy in there and there'll be a fight over who gets the toy.

Because whoever grabs it first, it's mine. No matter who it belongs to. And spiritual children are much the same way. If we're not careful.

Spiritual children care only about themselves. Their problems. Am I okay? But we need to grow beyond that.

- [ 4 : 23 ] Yes, they have faith. In fact, that's what he tells them. As a spiritual child, this is what you have to remember, first of all. That your sins are forgiven you for his namesake. As a spiritual child, sometimes we want to satisfy ourself, but we forget we are born again.
- We've had our sins forgiven. For what? For his namesake. See, God had made a promise through Jesus Christ. And what was this promise?
- You trust him, I'll free you of your sins. And that's another thing about kids. Be careful what you promise them. Because they will remember it forever.
- And if you break that promise, they will remember it forever. That you broke the promise. And it's the same thing with us as spiritual children.
- If you're a spiritual child, the thing to remember is the promise. You trusted Jesus Christ your Savior. You believed he died on that cross for your sins, was buried and rose the third day.
- [ 5 : 33 ] Your sins are forgiven. Why? It's a promise. But the great thing about God is what? Because he did it for his namesake? That promise will never be broken.
- So even if you're going to act like a baby, always remember, a spiritual baby, always remember your sins are forgiven. You are part of the family. You may be one of the younger ones acting, but you're still part of the family.
- In fact, kids too, also care a lot about being around dad. Knowing they're safe because dad is there.
- Amen? And it's the same thing with spiritual children. That's why he said, I write into you, little children, because you've known the Father. You know who God the Father is.
- Yeah, you were saved because of Jesus Christ, but I've noticed in a lot of young Christians, and even older Christians who are still acting young, they talk a lot about God the Father and about the Father and all of that, but they forget about Jesus Christ the Son.
- [ 6 : 45 ] They forget about, as we talked about in Sunday school, they forget about the Holy Spirit. As young Christians, regardless of how old they've been, long they've been saved, if they're acting like a baby Christian, like a child, they are only concerned with the Father.
- Is my dad there to watch over me? Abba Father. Is he there? Well, yes, he is. And what happens?
- Just like a little kid, if you feel like you're not in the presence of the Father, what happens? You become scared or angry or lash out.
- But that's okay because your sins are forgiven you for his namesake. But God never expected us to remain spiritual babies.
- He wants us to learn from his word. And that's why, and 1 Peter says, as newborn babe, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.
- [ 7 : 57 ] How does a spiritual baby, a spiritual child, grow, feed on the word of God?
- Because isn't that what makes kids grow? First babies, you feed them milk and then you start giving them a little rougher stuff and a little rougher stuff. Can you imagine if by the time you're 18, 18, all you're still drinking is milk?
- It wouldn't be too healthy. But that's the way a lot of spiritual Christians are. They're still still in the milk of the word.
- But that's okay, but they need to get farther. How does a baby grow? Milk. Food. How does a spiritual child grow?
- The word of God. Now, very young Christians, they need to be fed it just like a baby needs to be fed.

[ 9 : 04 ] That's why it's so important for discipleship. When you teach young Christians, this is what the word of God says. This is what God says in this subject.

This is what God says in that subject. And discipleship when they're young, just like we hand feed a baby. Give them the bottle. They can't go fix the milk by themselves.

They need to be fed. And spiritual babies, new Christians, they need to be fed other than just say, all right, you're saved, go read.

Now, there are some that they could prosper doing that. But most won't. Because the first time they hit something they don't understand, they're going to stop.

Why? Because they're kids. That's what kids do. You hit something hard, you stop. That's why it's so important. When you lead somebody to the Lord, don't just leave them.

[ 10 : 06 ] They need to be taught. Just like a baby needs to be fed, a new Christian needs to be taught to disciple. That's part of our job. To teach them, to feed them the word of God until they get to a point where they can start feeding themselves.

whose job is that? Normally, the adults. Who feeds adults?

Here, he talks about young men. I'm just going to say young adults. The term young man, actually, I looked it up, you know, and it's like anybody from just past teenager years to about 40 years old during this time period.

Maybe a little older. The active years of being an adult. So what's it say? What should adults do? These are people who are, you know, when you're talking spiritual children who have fed on the word of God and been fed and grown up.

Started learning more about God. Now they become an adult. In verse 13 in the middle, it says, I write unto you young men because you've overcome the wicked one.

[ 11 : 22 ] And in verse 14, he says, I've written. Notice for the young men and for the fathers or the older, the elders. He says, first of all, I wrote, I write to you.

Then he says, I've written to you. This means they've gotten this message before. He says, I've written to you that you've overcome the wicked one. And in verse 14, the last part, I've written to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abideth in you and you have overcome the wicked one.

Young adults, young adult Christians, adult Christians are those who have learned to overcome Satan.

You can't expect a little kid to fight against any enemies. They need protected by the father. But when you get older, you need to learn to fight against Satan, against the evil one, by yourself.

That's why he says, you are strong. You are brave. That's what that means. You want to be brave?

[ 12 : 36 ] That's what we all need to be, brave. Stand up. It takes a lot of bravery to stand up to the devil, to Satan, the evil one.

And how do we do that? Well, he says here, you've overcome because you're strong and the word of God abides in you. There used to be an old saying, you should know so much Bible that if you, if you get cut, you bleed Bible verses.

That's being filled with the word of God. And that's what he's talking about. The word of God lives in you. You have, first of all, as a child, people fed you and then you started learning to feed yourself.

Not just the milk of the word, but the meat, the strong things. So when Satan tries to get you, you can stand up to him.

And I'll be honest, the thought of standing up against the devil does make me quiver a little bit because he knows a whole lot more.

[ 14 : 00 ] Tricky things to deceive me. He knows about me. And I think that's what scares us the most when we realize we need to fight against the devil is the devil knows about you and all of your faults and all of your sins and all of your past and you're afraid that he's going to tell somebody.

And he's going to tell you, what if they find out you used to do this? Who cares? The blood of Jesus Christ has washed all my sins away.

God's forgot about them. You should forget about them except for the experience not to do it again. And so we can stand up to the devil.

He says, you have overcome not just fought the wicked one, you beat him. That's where God wants us to be.

So strong in the word of God that no matter what the devil throws at you, you can say, but the word of God says this. When you're feeling kind of alone and he says, where's God now?

[ 15 : 22 ] Word of God says, he'll never leave me nor forsake me. He said, well, it looks like he's putting you through some hard times.

He's tempting you with all these evil things to see how strong you are. No, the word of God says God will never tempt you with evil. He may test you with other things, but never with evil.

Oh, boy. You may be sick, prayed for healing, he didn't heal you. The devil says, well, if he loved you, he'd heal you. And you can say, yeah, well, the apostle Paul loved God.

He prayed. God said, nah, not this time. My grace is sufficient for you. You see, as a spiritual adult, you learn the word of God, you can stand up and defeat anything Satan has to throw at you.

And sadly, there are many Christians that haven't reached that stage yet. As soon as Satan starts beating on their door and convincing their mind, they fall.

[ 16 : 34 ] That's because they're still spiritual children. We need to get to be spiritual adults. Learn the word of God, to be strong. let the word of God abide in you.

There shouldn't be, when you get to be a spiritual adult, there should not be a single instance that Satan can throw at you in which you can't come back with a Bible verse.

We're going to cover it a little bit next week, but when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, every time Satan tempted, I mean, you've got to hand it to Satan.

He's tempting God. If he could tempt God, he's going to tempt you. But what happened? Every time he tempted Jesus, Jesus came back with a Bible verse.

That's why it's so important that the word of God abides in you. It just pops out when you need it. That's why it's so important we come and we meet and we learn it, but we also go home and feed ourselves.

[ 17 : 42 ] That's the difference between a spiritual child and a spiritual adult. A spiritual child has to be fed. A spiritual adult will feed themselves and learn more and more and start to ask themselves questions about the hard areas.

Sometimes we skip places and that's one of the reasons I like preaching through books, the whole book, because sometimes you run across things as like, I don't want to cover that.

And God says, well, you told them you're going to preach through the book, you're going to have to figure it out. And force ourselves to eat the meat of the word, not just the milk, to learn, because it's the adults that have to take care of the kids.

And if the adults don't keep strong, if the adults don't learn to overcome Satan, the adults are not abiding in the word of God, the kids are going to have a lot of problems.

And I believe in America, that's one of the reasons the American church is failing, is because those that should be adults, they're still acting like kids and just teaching the kids to be bigger kids.

[ 19 : 01 ] They're not being strong. We need strong believers. Amen? Ones that will stand up. And how do we do that?

Well, Ephesians 6, 10, 11 tells us that. When we're supposed to be strong, it says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

How do we become abiding in the word? Well, we learn we need to put on the whole armor of God, which is, in the armor of God, what's the word of God?

The sword. The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. So, as we learned this morning in Sunday school about the spirit, how we're to walk in the spirit and you're not walking the flesh, whereas you're walking in the spirit, he's helping you with the word of God to fight against those things of the flesh.

That's what God wants us to be, spiritual adults, amen? And if you're not there yet, no matter how long you've been saved, you need to get there because there are younger Christians relying on you.

[ 20 : 21 ] There are unsaved people relying on you. The truth is, spiritual Christians will probably not lead anybody to the Lord because they're still trying to figure it out themselves.

It's the spiritual adults that will lead people to the Lord. They will tell people, you need, Jesus Christ in your life.

Watch what our country needs, isn't it? A good dose of Jesus Christ in people's lives. And it's going to take spiritual adults to make that happen.

But then you have spiritual elders of the fathers. The young men, the young adults, they're mainly characterized by bravery, standing up to the devil, standing up for what's right, learning the word of God.

But the spiritual fathers are characterized more by knowledge. In verse 13, the first part, I write unto you fathers because you have known him from the beginning. In verse 14, I've written unto you fathers because you have known him that is from the beginning.

[ 21 : 42 ] See, where spiritual children, they are concerned more with how is the father watching over me. Spiritual fathers have come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, him that was from the beginning.

We know that from 1 John 1.1, it says, that which was from the beginning, which we've heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, our hands have handled, of the word of life.

Spiritual fathers are characterized by knowledge, not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing him. Have you ever had a good friend, maybe a spouse, maybe a family member, where you know so much about them, you know what they expect from you before you even do it.

You know what they're going to do before they even do it. You're that close. And that's knowing him that is from the beginning.

Having such a knowledge of Jesus Christ, we never have to ask the question anymore when faced with a situation, is this right or is this wrong?

[ 23 : 06 ] Your knowledge of Christ is so strong by the time you reach maturity of an elder, maximum maturity, that you never have to ask that question.

You just know. You know how Jesus thinks. You know what Jesus would do in that situation. You just know because you've been with him so much in prayer, so much in his word, so much in the experiences you've gone together with.

And the important thing about the elders is there to, I don't know, fortunately, unfortunately, I'm getting to be an elder myself.

Happy birthday to Janet. she had a birthday last week. I turn the same age next week. But you know what?

Just because we get old doesn't mean we get smarter, unless we study the right things. And spiritually, when we get older in the Lord, we should be studying his word and being with him in prayer and allowing it's just our faith is so strong, nothing for a spiritual elder, nothing will upset him.

[ 24 : 34 ] Oh, this person got elected. Well, I hate that, but you know, the Lord's still in control. people, we need to stop being spiritual children, move on to being spiritual adults, with the goal of being spiritual elders, because what is their purpose?

Well, the Bible says the elders, the young ones, the young men are supposed to learn from the elders. elders. So when a young Christian, an adult Christian, so to speak, we talk about, when they have questions, what does God really mean by this?

We can go to the elders, the ones who have lived a life of following Christ, a one who've been through different situations. Last week I had the opportunity to go to veteran services training, the annual training.

And what's interesting is all of us old guys stand around and tell sea stories. And suddenly we realize, man, we've done some stuff.

We've been some places. We've experienced some things that a lot of people haven't. And it's true also in this Christian life.

[ 26 : 00 ] As we get older as Christians, as we learn to be an adult and learn from the word of God and go through these things and stand up to the devil. So when we get older, we've been through some things.

So when we see a younger Christian, a younger adult, or even a child, start to go through something similar, we can use the wisdom that we have through Christ to help them out.

and the truth is very few Christians reach this mature status. But if you can get to that adult Christian status, that's the place to be.

So John wrote to the children for what they should know and remind them, your sins are forgiven, and you know the father, so you know who you can go to for protection.

Then he wrote to the adults, you're brave, you stand up to the devil, and the word of God abides in you.

[ 27 : 13 ] And he wrote to the elders, the mature, you've known Christ, you know him very well. So the question, where do you fall in those?

If you're saying, well I'm not sure, maybe you ought to find out. Because I can tell you right now, if you're still in that children's spot, you need to get out of there.

You need to start studying the word of God, learning, being around other believers. Because Christ is coming soon.

And the more mature we are in Christ, the better, because I believe that's part of what is going to determine whether we hear, well done, now good and faithful servant, is how we've lived as a child of God.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Lord, Lord, we know that you love us and we're thankful for the salvation we have through Jesus Christ.

[ 28 : 35 ] And Lord, as we looked at this, we noticed that one of the center things for whether we're spiritual children or adults or elders, is the word of God, how much we use your word to learn from, whether we have to be fed it, or whether we're devouring it on our own, or whether, Lord, we reach the point where your word has become a part of us.

Help us, Lord, to learn your word more. And help us, Lord, to serve you by telling other people about your love, about the salvation they can have through you.

Lord, we have a world that has slowly fallen apart, but your word said it was going to do that. And Lord, we're looking forward to your return. And I don't know about others, Lord, but when you return, my desire is that you find me serving you.

Help us, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.