

# Are You Ready for Solid Food?

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Date: 12 January 2014

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[ 0 : 00 ] Would you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 5, verse 11. We are starting up our series, or restarting up our series in the book of Hebrews. If you were with us last semester, you know that we worked through basically almost the full first five chapters of the book of Hebrews.

And what we saw there is that the writer of the book of Hebrews was laying a foundation of Jesus Christ as a supreme, unique, majestic Son of God who had come down to be our high priest.

And that's where we ended last semester with this thought ringing in our ears that Jesus has come to be our high priest. And today we're going to pick up right where we left off in Hebrews chapter 5, verse 11.

It's page 1003 in your pew Bible if you want to turn there. Let me read this for us. We're going to read through chapter 6, verse 3. Having just talked about Christ as our high priest, he says, 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.

[ 1 : 19 ] 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.

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

And this we will do if God permits. If you're a fan of TV sitcoms, you might remember last spring as the time when the offbeat, mockumentary *Arrested Development* returned for a fourth season.

Anybody here an *Arrested Development* fan? Uh-oh, true confessions, we're in church. Put your hands down. No, I'm kidding. It was actually, well, I probably shouldn't say this. It was actually an elder of Trinity at the time that let me borrow all three seasons of *Arrested Development* on DVD.

A great sign of our need of congregational sanctification. Anyway, after being canceled seven years earlier by Fox, in May of last year, Netflix released the newly filmed fourth season all at once for online streaming.

[ 2 : 37 ] And if you missed it, the show follows the dysfunctional Bluth family and their attempts to save the family business from bankruptcy and all sorts of legal trouble. And as the title of the show suggests, nearly all of the adult characters in one way or another have failed to grow up.

There's Job, one of the brothers, who instead of helping to run the family business, rides a Segway and tries to make it as a magician. Or an illusionist, as he's so apt to point out.

And then there's socially awkward Buster, another brother who pursues various scholarly pursuits like African drumming and anthropology while still living at home with his overbearing mom.

And then there's George Sr., the sort of paterfamilias who ends up in prison because he's suspected of fraud and thinks it's a good idea to hide large amounts of cash in the walls of the family's banana stand down on the pier.

Creating the unforgettable line, there's always money in the banana stand. And what's fascinating is that the show actually grew in popularity over the seven years after it was canceled.

[ 3 : 47 ] And of course, the show is incredibly funny if you like stupid humor and the mockumentary style was perhaps a bit ahead of its time. But I think that the very idea of a family unable to grow up, being stuck in perpetual arrested development, I think has somehow resonated with our culture more and more.

There was something about the silly Bluth family that just maybe struck a chord closer and closer to home. After all, for more than a decade, sociologists have been increasingly aware of a phenomenon that they're calling and have called emerging adulthood, right?

No longer are young adults moving smoothly from adolescence into traditional adulthood. Things like getting married or having children or settling into a profession or owning a home. All of these traditional cultural markers that made someone an adult are all being postponed.

Now someone in their mid to late 20s is just as likely to be single, living at home, struggling to find their life's purpose, having a hard time nailing down a job, and most likely in their free time, streaming season four of Arrested Development on their parents' Netflix account.

Now I'm not going to say that the phenomenon of emerging adulthood is good or bad. In some sense it just is. But there does come a point when we realize that we can't remain children forever.

[ 5 : 14 ] That we have to go on to maturity. That at some point, it's time to grow up. Now our text this morning from Hebrews is a challenge, a challenge spiritually to do just that.

The main point is right there in chapter 6, verse 1. Let us go on to maturity. This passage is telling us that it's possible for us as Christians to get stuck in a sort of spiritual Arrested Development.

To remain as children, as it were, and to never grow up. But like a good pastor or teacher, like a good spiritual parent, Hebrews is here challenging us, chiding us to grow up and to go on to maturity.

As we said, he's getting ready to embark on one of the richest in-depth discussions of the high priesthood of Christ. That will be for their eternal good and for their endurance and for their growth.

And yet he's afraid that they're not going to get it. Now there are three points we need to see here in our text about this call to maturity.

[ 6 : 23 ] And here's the outline of what I want us to do this morning. First, we see what kind of maturity we ought to be seeking. Second, why we should be seeking it. And last, how we go after it.

So what kind of maturity? Why we should be going after it? And then lastly, how do we do it? So first then, what kind of maturity are we talking about here? What exactly are we to grow up in?

And the nanotext is actually pretty specific. It's not just a general kind of spiritual maturity he's talking about. And you see this in verse 11. You see that he wants to explain something to them, but he's afraid they won't understand it because they become dull of hearing or sluggish.

In other words, he's afraid their minds aren't sharp and ready to understand what he's going to explain. So that means what we're talking about here is growing up in our knowledge, grasping something with our minds.

And then he goes on to tell us what kind of knowledge. And he uses a couple of phrases to describe it. And in each case, he's saying this is something where you're only at the elementary level, but you need to go on.

[ 7 : 26 ] And what is it? In verse 12, how does he describe it? The oracles of God. Now, an oracle is just something that's spoken. This is a common way of referring to the scriptures. He says you're at a basic level, but you need to become more advanced.

And then in verse 13, he calls it the word of righteousness. That is the message about God's transforming, saving justice.

You're unskilled, he says, but you need to become more and more proficient. And then in 6.1, he calls it the doctrine of Christ, the teaching about Christ.

You're just elementary, he says, but you need to go on to maturity. So how do we sum this up? I think like this. This passage is telling us that every Christian ought to make it their business to diligently study the things of God.

To be ever increasing in their knowledge of the Christian faith. To be making it our diligent business to be growing in the knowledge of the things of God.

[ 8 : 37 ] Or you might call it our knowledge of Christian theology. Theology just means the study of God. Or you might call it Christian doctrine. Doctrine are things that are taught and things that are believed. This is the kind of maturity that he wants us to pursue.

Maturity in our grasp, our knowledge of Christian faith, doctrine, theology. Now clarify. This knowledge that we're being challenged to pursue here isn't something that's disconnected from the central gospel message.

It's not as if he's saying that, oh, the gospel is sort of the mere ABC. And then you sort of leave it behind and move on to something else when you want to get really mature. You know, you'll start, I don't know, going into all weird sort of esoteric stuff.

No. You know, when he says in verse 6-1, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ. He doesn't mean leave it behind for something else altogether. But to go deeper into it. It's more like a math teacher telling their class, okay, let's leave algebra 1 and go on to algebra 2.

And of course, when you get to algebra 2, you're not forgetting all the stuff you learned in algebra 1. But you're expanding it. You're going deeper. You're unpacking its implications. You're seeing more and more and more of what the subject has to hold.

[ 9 : 53 ] And that's what a diligent study of the things of God of Christian doctrine is meant to do. It's meant to take you deeper and deeper into what you've come to know in the gospel.

Now consider the gospel, the central message of Christianity of the Bible. Let's just consider it for a second. That there is one true and living God who is holy, just, and good.

And that this God created everything to display his beauty and grace and perfections. And that he made you and I, human beings, in his image to especially know him and enjoy him and glorify him.

But we've rebelled against our good and just God and have gone our own way. And because God is perfectly just and good, he condemns us to eternal death because of our sin.

And will one day come and judge righteously all the earth. But in his great mercy and in his great grace and with the great love with which he loved us, God sent his son, Jesus Christ, who is fully God from all eternity.

[ 11 : 11 ] And he came and became fully human in the incarnation. And on the cross, he died in the place of sinners as their substitute, taking the penalty they deserve.

And on the third day, God raised him from the dead to prove that the full payment for sin had been paid. And that everyone who turns from their sin and trusts in him, who takes him by faith as their Lord and Savior, will have their sins forgiven and be brought into the family of God and be made a part of God's new creation work in the world.

Friends, that is the gospel. And when the writer of the book of Hebrews is telling us to go on in maturity in our Christian knowledge, how could he possibly be telling us to leave that behind?

There wasn't a sentence of that that was scratching the surface of the depths of its riches. Thomas Goodwin, the 17th century pastor and theologian, once said, The things of the gospel are depths.

The things of the gospel are the deep things of God. Too often we're like the Hebrews. We fail to sharpen our minds so that we can plumb the depths of this great good news.

[ 12 : 34 ] We fail to see that what we have as Christians in the gospel is like an ever-radiant jewel that as you turn it and turn it and turn it, more and more brilliance and light and wonders come as the light shines in.

Or to use the metaphor in the second half of 6.1, it's like the foundation of a building. And when you're ready to build the first and second stories of a building, you don't just sort of leave the foundation behind, laying in the field, and then build somewhere else.

No! You take your start from that foundation. You follow its lines up. And friends, the gospel is solid and secure and deep enough to propel us to the heights of God.

Real Christian maturity. Real growth and understanding in Christian doctrine will always be following those foundation lines of gazing into the jewel of the great work of redemption that God has wrought in Christ.

Paul says in Corinthians 2.2, he says, he endeavored to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And that's because Christ crucified, the heart of the gospel, is the wisdom of God and the power of God and the glory of God.

[ 13 : 59 ] And Peter says that the things of the gospel are things into which even angels long and desire to look. And John in Revelation tells us that at the center of the new heavens and the new earth, that in the middle of heaven's praise, where there is ceaseless delight and joy, stands the Lamb, Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

You see, friends, Thomas Goodwin was right. The things of the gospel are the deep things of God. And it is the duty of all of us to apply our minds to know it more and more and deeper and deeper.

So before we move on, let's hear the challenge of Hebrews this morning. Ask yourself, am I making it my business to diligently study the things of God?

Am I making efforts to grow in my knowledge of Christian truth? Or if I'm honest, am I unskilled? Have I not progressed beyond the basic principles?

Have I even become dull of hearing? When I think about how I invest my time, does any of my concentrated effort go toward growing in my Christian knowledge?

[ 15 : 21 ] Or am I still, as it were, sort of skiing down the bunny slope and taking the T-bar to the top? When, friends, what God is calling us to is to get into the gondola and go to the top where there's fresh powder and views like you could never imagine.

How could we be content with just staying on the bunny slope when that's before us? Let's go on to maturity. Let's make it our business to diligently study the things of God.

Every one of us. You'll notice here that he's not just talking to the teachers and the pastors in the midst of the congregation. He's talking to all of them, young and old, male and female, those who have formal education and those who don't.

It's addressed to the whole church. Now let's ask the question, why? Why should this be our diligent pursuit?

Well, I think the text points us to three reasons why we ought to be doing this. First, it's our nature. He says in verse 12, by this time, you ought to be teachers. By this time, you ought to have grown up.

[ 16 : 28 ] You see, he's pointing us to the fact that it's a natural trajectory in the Christian life that as time passes, our knowledge should be increasing and increasing such that we could even eventually instruct others. You see, when the Holy Spirit does a work of conversion in us, when we come to faith in Christ, a whole new principle gets planted within us.

A principle that is a desire within us to want to grow and learn and feast on God's word. You see this in the early church in Acts. The earliest disciples, what were they doing when Peter preaches that first message and then Luke turns and starts describing the church?

What's the first thing he says? He says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. It was just part of their nature as disciples. And after all, the word disciple, what does it mean?

A student, a learner. To be a Christian by nature, by the nature that the Holy Spirit puts in us, means that we are to seek deeper knowledge of the things of God, to learn and to grow.

Isn't that true of the other callings that we have in our lives? If your profession is to be a doctor, don't you want to naturally excel in the knowledge of medicine and the human body? You're always learning.

[ 17 : 38 ] Or if you're in business, you want to keep learning whatever field that you're in, whatever aspect of the commercial world that you're in, you keep learning and growing and studying. If your profession is to be an auto mechanic, you keep learning and growing and studying how cars work.

If your profession is to be a stay-at-home parent, then you're wanting to excel in the knowledge of raising kids and in child development and all those great things. It's just in the nature of our everyday callings that we seek to know more and more about it.

How much more ought that to be the case with our calling to follow Christ? Friends, this is the greatest calling that any human being could have.

To be a child of God. To be an ambassador of the King. That's the privilege of every believer. And that means it's the privilege of each and every one of us and the natural impulse in us to want to grow in our knowledge of the things of God.

It's not just for pastors. It's not just for elders. It's for all of us. If you're a Christian and you're not going after an increase in this kind of knowledge, then friends, you're actually living out of line with your nature.

[ 18 : 56 ] And don't think this is just for people with a high IQ. Maybe some of you are sitting there thinking, man, we're just talking about head knowledge and book learning. I mean, is this just for the smart people around? No. It's for all of us.

You see, friends, God is faithful to his children. He will grant you rich insights into his word. He promises to faithfully reward your study.

Wasn't it Jesus that taught us to ask and it will be given to you and to seek and you will find and the knock and the door will be open to you. Of course, a sharp intellect is a great gift of God and a means that he can use and something that we should steward well if we find that God has given it to us.

But each and every Christian has something even better than a sharp intellect. God's Holy Spirit within you. The natural mind can't even really grasp these things.

And yet, God pours his own self into you so that you can know him. It's God, the Holy Spirit, who brought us to faith and he'll work in us to cause us to grow in our knowledge of the faith.

[ 20 : 05 ] And that is the deposit that each and every one of us has. So it's in our nature as Christians to pursue this kind of maturity. That's why we should go after it. But there's a second reason that we see here.

The second reason why we should go after this kind of maturity is actually, I struggle to find a word for this, but I'm going to say it's our protection. Now, here's what I mean by this. In verse 14, he says that this sort of maturity is such that we come to distinguish good from evil.

And that means two things. On the one hand, it means that an increasing knowledge of Christian doctrine helps us to live life well. Christian theology was always meant to be practical in its outflow.

Doctrine is meant for life. You see this over and over again in the pastoral epistles in 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus. Paul speaks again and again of sound doctrine. And by that, he doesn't just mean true doctrine. He means the kind of doctrine that brings soundness, that brings health, that brings rightness to our lives.

It's actually kind of funny that we don't see it this way. We often see theology as very impractical, don't we? But imagine trying to set off on an expedition through a mountain range without a map, without any sort of GPS or map to guide you.

[ 21 : 27 ] Of course, you know that would be incredibly foolish. After all, what is a map? It's a description of what's real. It's a way of helping us to grasp and understand what's before us and to put it in perspective so that we know how to proceed.

And because maps are incredibly, you know, descriptive of what's real, that means they're practical and they're useful. Friends, don't you see that if in Scripture we have the description of what's ultimately real, and if Christian theology is helping us to understand this better and better, then surely it's one of the most practical, the most practical thing we could ever learn.

Because it's not just a map for this or that city or this or that mountain range. It's the very description of existence and reality itself.

That's what Paul means when he says that, when he says in 2 Timothy 3.16 that all Scripture is God-breathed and useful, not just inspired, but eminently practical and useful.

Have you ever seen old maps from like, you know, the 13th, 14th century? You know, they're kind of funny, aren't they? Because you can usually tell that whatever perspective they're drawn from, right?

[ 22 : 48 ] You look at an old map and you see sort of Western Europe and it's all incredibly defined and you think, oh, that could, you know, that could be any old map. And then you sort of go over and there's some white parts and then there's this sort of blob.

You're like, oh, that must be North America. I don't know. It looked like a turkey or whatever, you know, they've sort of drawn it as. And of course, now we have satellites that can give us a perspective like no one would have imagined in the 1400s, you know?

It gives us the perspective to know reality rightly. And don't you see, friends, that's why Scripture is eminently useful. Because if it's God's Word, then its perspective is not limited.

It doesn't have the confines or the skewed perspective of every other life map that we try to use. So you see, the more and more we grow in our knowledge of Christian doctrine, the more equipped we are to live life well.

It's our protection in that sense. It keeps us from foolish living. It keeps us from stumbling into error. And it allows us to live life well. But it's also our protection in this sense.

[ 24 : 00 ] A second sense. Growing in the knowledge of the things of God also is a protection to help us distinguish good from evil when it comes to false gospels and false teaching.

When something comes to you masquerading as true Christian belief, when you hear a preacher on TV or online, or when you read something on a blog or a magazine, or when you talk to a friend about something they've been reading or hearing, friends, all of us need to have our powers of discernment sharp to be able to distinguish true gospels from false gospels, true biblical beliefs from false ones.

And again, you and I both know this isn't just a job of pastors, right? In fact, in your everyday life out in the world, you probably encountered just as much weird and wacky stuff as I do.

We all need to be growing in our discernment. Otherwise, Paul says in Ephesians, we'll just be blown and tossed by every wind of doctrine.

And you know, what's very interesting in the New Testament is that it's not just pastors, although they are especially held accountable for this, but it's not just pastors that are held accountable for the doctrinal purity of the church. It's the whole congregation.

[ 25 : 13 ] Think about the book of Galatians. A false teaching has crept into the church. And who does Paul write to in that letter? Who does he issue his challenges to? Not just the teachers, the whole congregation.

He says, all of you are responsible to guard the doctrinal purity of your congregation. All of you have a share in this to make sure that we're staying rooted and grounded in what's life-giving and true and beautiful.

So you see, an increasing knowledge of Christian doctrine then is our protection. It doesn't just protect us in our own personal lives from foolishness and disaster, but it protects the life of the church and keeps it healthy. Okay, so why should we pursue this maturity?

Because it's our nature, because it's our protection. But lastly then, we should make it our business to increase in this kind of knowledge. Because frankly, friends, it's our joy.

You see that in the metaphor of milk and solid food, don't you? He says, children are just fit for milk, he says. But, solid food is for the mature.

[ 26 : 24 ] Now, of course, milk is a wonderful thing, right? It's refreshing, it's got some protein in there, my kids love it, I think they could probably actually live on milk if we let them. But imagine, imagine a friend takes you downtown to a nice restaurant.

Imagine your favorite restaurant, whatever it is, Heirloom, Union League, Barcelona, whatever. And you sit down and your friend says, hey, let me treat tonight, order anything on the menu. And you look at the menu and the waiter comes and you say, you know what, I think I'll just have a glass of milk, thanks.

How absurd. Just imagine what you're missing out on. You see, friends, God in the gospel is inviting us to a feast, to solid food that will satisfy you and delight you the way only real solid food can.

God wants us to grow up, as it were, so we can start digging in, so we can taste and see that the Lord is good. How many of us are trying to find soul satisfaction in so many other things?

Trying to find our heart's delight in work or in relationships or in human approval? And of course, we know that when we start sinking into those things, it never works and nothing tastes.

[ 27 : 43 ] And then how often do we come to God's table, to God who is the fountain of delights and we're just content with milk when he could serve up for us the very thing that would feed and satisfy our souls.

God has given you a mind at all is so that you can know him, so that you can behold him and know him and love him and be awestruck at the wonder of who he is.

just like our mouths are made to eventually grow up and eat solid food, our minds were given to us so that we might grow up and start enjoying the knowledge of God.

And you know, sometimes we think as if our increase in the knowledge of Christian doctrine and theology will somehow sort of hinder our ability to enjoy God. Don't we sometimes think that, ah, if I get caught up in those dusty books, if I just spend all my time thinking, my heart gets sort of taken away, right?

I mean, am I the only one who sort of has heard that? No. It's so boring. It will just kill my relationship. But friends, don't you see how silly that is when you step back and think about it? The way that God has constituted us as humans is that yes, there is head knowledge and there is heart knowledge.

[ 29 : 18 ] There's speculative knowledge. There's intellect and there is experiential knowledge and knowing something in the depth of your bones and tasting it. Of course. But the way God has made us is that the pathway to the heart is through our heads.

The things that we know are then the things that we can really enjoy. It's like building a fire, isn't it? You see, growing in our knowledge of the faith is like stacking wood for a bonfire.

fire, and once the Holy Spirit lights the flame, then we'll be glad that we learned as much as we possibly could. And we'll want to keep throwing logs onto the fire as it gets brighter and brighter and hotter and hotter.

as we stand and wonder of God's perfections, of His work on the cross, of the things that He's doing in us and through us by His Spirit.

How often do we think our relationship with God has grown cold when in reality we haven't been putting any fuel into the furnace? No, friends, we should delight in learning more and more about God, not so our heads can be puffed up, but so that our hearts can burn brighter and truer with love for Him.

[ 30 : 36 ] You see, friends, you pursue this kind of maturity, this increasing knowledge of the faith, and it's ultimately for your joy in God. So let's wrap up then.

We've seen what, we've seen why, let's end with how. How do we pursue this kind of maturity? How do we grow up in this way? And three basic things, three sort of headings.

The first is the diligent study of God's Word. This is evident from the passage, isn't it? The very thing He's rebuking them for is that they're still mere babes in their understanding of God's Word and the Gospel.

So if we're going to remedy this, we have to do it to devote ourselves to diligent study of the Word. And for starters, that means taking advantage of any opportunity where the Word of God is being opened and taught rightly.



You're obviously here for our 10 o'clock service. This is a good place to start. You're here, but think about it. How can you make even better use of this time? Let me suggest two very simple things.

- [ 31 : 38 ] One, take the sermon card in the pew home with you. We just printed them out this week. They're fresh off the presses. Take it home with you. Read the upcoming sermon text at least once in the week before the service.

And start asking yourself as you read the passage that's coming up, what does it reveal about God? What does it reveal God has, what God has done for us in Christ?

And what would it mean to live in response to those things? And then, during the service, or right after our services, mark down one or two things that God is teaching you.

Maybe it's a truth about Him that's become especially real to your heart. Maybe it's a question you have, a line for further inquiry. Maybe it's an action you need to take.

Maybe it's a sin you need to confess to God and to someone that you've wronged. I guarantee you that you will get more out of these services by doing those two simple things.

- [ 32 : 41 ] It will only take you not a lot of time. But of course, if you start doing that, why stop with the 10 o'clock service, right? Why not come at 9 o'clock to Sunday school?

I mean, think about it. We got a new class starting up next week. It's about walking in the Spirit. I mean, how many of you think you're proficient and experts at walking in the Spirit?

None of us. Come and learn about this most central topic. It's vital to your life. I mean, most of us have to be at work earlier than 9 a.m., right?

How many of you have to be in the office before 9 a.m.? Okay, you all have awesome offices. I'm going to go work where you work. It's nice.

Man, what a lazy culture. No, and not only does it start at 9 o'clock, there's child care next door for all ages.

- [ 33 : 42 ] I mean, if you've got little kids, that's practically a date, right? It's like a TED Talk for your soul. Show up at 9. And of course, once you fill up on Sunday mornings, here's a crazy thought.

why not come back on Sunday nights when we dig into another passage of Scripture? There's even a Q&A; time after the sermon on Sunday nights so you can try to stump the preacher.

Come on, come. We can sharpen one another and keep our edge as we engage the Word of God. You see, the place to start, too often we jump straight to, you know, do your quiet time.

But you know, the place to start is to start availing yourself of the opportunities when God's Word is being opened and being taught so you can come and be prepared to come. But of course, second, once we're availing ourselves of those opportunities, start reading the Word on your own.

I know many of you are doing this and it's so encouraging to me when I meet with many of you and you're telling me about how you're reading the Word on your own. Keep up the good work, brothers and sisters.

- [ 34 : 47 ] But if you haven't started this, start there are plenty of reading plans out there if you need structure or you can just start by reading the New Testament. It's not rocket science. Just get in and start reading.

But of course, where we do need some guidance sometimes is that we shouldn't just be reading it but we should be taking it in. We need to be making observations about what we read, making connections, asking questions, sharpening our minds for the task.

When we read, we ought to be asking things like, what's the flow of thought here? What ideas or words are repeated? What's the main theme? What's the main idea of this section?

How does it fit in the context of the book? How does it fit in the context of the whole Bible? What's unfamiliar? What don't I understand? What's confusing? And then, friends, once you get an insight, once you get a question answered, mark it down and meditate on what you've read.

I remember reading an old Puritan on that practice of biblical meditation and he used this awesome illustration. I couldn't forget it because it was so graphic. Living in agricultural culture, right? He said, you know, when you get the manure for your fields, you've got to spread it around.

[ 36 : 00 ] And he says, it's the same way with reading the word. When you get something, you've got to spread it around. I know it's a little graphic. We live in a city. We don't like manure. But that's it, friends. You need to take it in and you need to start spreading it around, thinking on it, mulling it over, going deep with it.

And then remember that maturity means the ability to distinguish good from evil. Theology is meant to flow into practice. Start asking yourselves questions.

This is probably one of the most important questions you can ask as you're reading the Bible. Why is God showing me this today? Why do I need to hear this right now? Is there a command I need to obey?

Is there an example I need to follow? Is there a warning that I need to heed? A promise I need to take heart? A truth about God that I've just seemed to forget that I need to remember?

And again, write it down. Begin logging the things that God is teaching you. And you know, while we're thinking about diligently studying God's Word, let me recommend to you reading good Christian books.

[ 37 : 07 ] This is another way of engaging God's Word. If you want a recommendation, that's why we've got the bookstall downstairs. Or talk to one of the pastors. Or talk to your small group leader. Ask them for a good book that will help you grow in your knowledge of the things of God.

If you want just one quick recommendation, let me recommend to all of you, J.I. Packer's Knowing God. If you haven't read that book, or if it's been a while since you've read it, get a copy and read it and mark it up and find a friend to read it with.

You will be blessed by it. The point in reading good Christian books is to learn from brothers and sisters who are further along than we are, who can help us see things in the Word that we might not see for ourselves.

And of course, I know, I know, finding the time is always the great hurdle in reading Scripture for ourselves and digging into good Christian literature.

But you know, I'm sure, I kind of did a little experiment this week as I was getting ready for this sermon. I'm sure that if each of us looked through our day, we could probably identify 15 to 20 minutes that we could start redirecting towards these kind of practices.

[ 38 : 21 ] Just think of how easy it is to spend 15 or 20 minutes playing Candy Crush on your iPhone or Clash of Clans. Any Clash of Clanners out there? Nope. Okay, I'm the only one.

All right. I mean, it's easy, right? You're waiting for the bus. You know, you just come home from work.

You're on your coffee break. Whatever. Why not get a good book to read? Why not get the Bible on your device? Greg talked about that last week. Of course, it's not wrong to play a game on your phone.

It's not wrong to do a little bit of diversion now and then. But friends, the reality is growth in this kind of maturity is going to take some effort. In fact, in verse 14, did you notice how he describes it in verse 14?

Training by constant practice. It's an athletic imagery. It's going to take some sweat and hard work to get into a new routine. It's going to feel difficult at times. Just like training for an athletic event.

[ 39 : 18 ] At times, you're going to want to stop and just do something else. But just like athletes, you need to keep your eyes on the fact that it's worth it. The joy of knowing God is before you, friends.

Of sitting down at his table and feasting on solid food. The joy of looking to Jesus and running the race with endurance. Friends, this is the path of eternal satisfaction.

And just like a good workout makes us feel more alive. Don't you feel better after you've been on the stupid treadmill for 20 minutes? So hard spent time in the Word will make us feel more alive to God.

I guarantee it. So how do we get this kind of maturity? We devote ourselves to studying the Word. I said there's three things. The last two are going to be quick. Second, we have to study the Word in community. Notice how the author says, let us go to maturity.

And this we will do if God permits. Our growth is a community project. And that's why it is important if at all possible to be gathering together in smaller groups that you can meet with to regularly discuss the things of God.

[ 40 : 25 ] Maybe it's a midweek small group like you can find on the back of the bulletin. Maybe it's a standing date that you have with a few Christian friends where you're committed to talking about the Word. Whatever it is, you won't grow in maturity without it.

It's like a rowing team, right? You put one guy out there in one of those boats and he's only going to be able to row so fast. But you get a whole team in one of those long, thin boats and you get them in unison and they're gliding across the water.

It's the same in our life together with God. We need to get into a boat together and it takes a little work to get into unison. I get it. But once you hit a stride, oh friends, the deeper and deeper you'll go.

But second, we also need to put what we're learning to use. By this time, you ought to be teachers, he says. Are you seeking ways to share what you're learning with others?

Every educational theorist will tell you that one of the best ways to learn is by having to teach it to other people. And you especially learn best, I found, when you have to teach it to other people who aren't necessarily like you, who are at a different age or from a different walk of life.

[ 41 : 37 ] Friends, I can assure you that if you jump in to the children's church rotation or the youth ministry Sunday school rotation, even once a month, God will use it to grow you in maturity in your knowledge of Christian doctrine.

It's easy to make simple things complex, but take the complex and deep things of God and make them simple and you will grow like fire. But even if you don't get involved there, are you looking for ways to be building into other Christians, to be doing good to them spiritually?

Is there even just one person right now that you could be intentionally taking the time to meet with, to talk about spiritual things? It doesn't have to be forced.

You can talk about other stuff too. That's okay. But be intentional about asking one or two just good questions about what you're reading in the Word, what God's teaching you in your life so that you can encourage one another and grow in your maturity.

So in order to start moving forward in this kind of depth of the knowledge of God, we have to be devoted to the Word and we have to be doing it in community. But lastly, we have to do it in dependence on God.

[ 42 : 48 ] Do you see how the passage ends? He says, this we will do, that is go on to maturity, if God permits. At the end of the day, our knowledge of God comes from God and it depends upon Him.

We are dependent upon Him, you see. We can't learn anything about God unless He reveals it to us. But you see, that doesn't put us in a helpless state because God has given us His Holy Spirit and He wants us to know Him.

From the cross of Christ flows the Spirit of Christ for all who believe and the Spirit will help us overcome our inertia and our dullness of hearing and He'll help us to make and even find the time to devote to the Word and commit to community.

He'll help us. We can depend on Him and we ought to be prayerfully dependent on Him as we move forward. So let us pray.

Let us depend on Him. And as Paul promised elsewhere, He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

[ 44 : 00 ] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.