

Studies in Christianity Spiritual Maturity #1

S#1.

Spiritual Maturity

S#2.

Text : Eph. 4: 7-16 ; II Pet. 1: 2-11

A. We're studying the Christian religion from its most elemental components. S#3.

1. We have seen how one becomes a new creature in Jesus who is Christ.
2. Jesus described the experience as such a radical change it is like being born again.
3. We observed that this isn't just a philosophical change, but a changed lifestyle..
4. The last lesson pointed out this change alters our relationship with God in many ways
 - a. When born again one becomes a member of God's family.
 - b. When one is born again he is born as a citizen of God's kingdom.
 - c. When one is born again God places him into His church.
 - d. When one is a family member, citizen of the kingdom he is a companion of God.
 - e. Those who are born again are the ambassadors of God on the earth.

B. So you have been born again thus becoming a new creature, what's next ? S#4.

1. Parents expect their newborn child to grow on an established schedule.
 - a. The child's physical development is easy to observe and to monitor.
 - b. The mental development of a child is much more difficult to monitor at a young age
2. Our heavenly Father also expects that we will grow and develop spiritually.
 - a. Spiritual growth is much more difficult to monitor than physical development.
 - b. At birth, all physical infants start at the same point so monitoring is simplified.
 - c. Spiritual children are each born at different points in their development.

S#5.

C. With this lesson we will see that God both expects and monitors spiritual growth.

1. God requires spiritual growth.
2. Growth prevents falling away.
3. God expects growth on a schedule.
4. Growth does not just happen.

I. God requires each Christian to grow spiritually.**S#6.****A. The Apostle Peter ends his writings with a command to grow.****S#7.**

II Pet. 3: 17 – You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, **18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

B. Those who are not well versed in the teachings about Jesus are easily led astray.

1. Vs. **3: 17.** – be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, **S#8..**

- a. The young in the faith are particularly vulnerable to attacks by Satan.

I Pet. 5: 8 – Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

- b. Lions prey on the weak and the young and Satan does likewise.

- c. Satan uses “unprincipled men” to lead the young astray from their salvation.

2. Peter had earlier commanded that we use the word to develop our spiritual strength.

I Pet. 2: 1 – Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **3** if ... **S#9..**

- a. The healthy Christian DESIRES the word of God.

- b. Knowledge of the word is essential to spiritual growth.

C. Through Peter, God requires the new Christian to develop a new heart.

1. The Christian must purge the sins of the heart. **S#10.**

I Pet. 2: 1 – ... putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word,

- a. Notice these are all sins of the heart. *One must flush worldly thoughts from ...*

- b. Thus, the “new things” includes a new attitude of heart.

2. The “transformation” to which Paul refers in Romans begins with one’s heart.

Rom. 12: 2 – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- a. In order to change one’s life he must first change his heart.

- b. Remember : “Repentance” is a change of mind resulting in a change of life.

3. Changing the way one thinks about things is a normal part of growing up.

I Cor. 13: 11 – When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. **S#11.**

II. The Christian must grow in order to prevent himself from falling away.

S#12.

A. God expects each Christian to perform his stewardship.

S#13.

1. **Eph. 2: 10** – For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
 - a. When one is made a “new creature” he is created for action, not as an audience.
 - b. Those born into the family of God walk (*live*) in the family business.
2. God organized His church to be self-sustaining in every way.

Eph. 4: 11 – And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some **S14.** as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ

 - a. All offices in the church are for developing the members, (*not for ruling them*)
 - b. Each / every member is to be equipped for service, **i.e.**, for actively doing things.
 - c. Members are to be built up .. encouraged, faith strengthened, confidence developed
 - d. The trainees eventually become trainers.

B. The training has clear immediate goals.

1. “until” It’s not just a class, **but** a training course to develop skills.

Eph. 4: 13 – until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
2. Notice the four goals of the training. **S#15.**
 - a. Develop strong faith that directs life “attain to the unity of the faith”
 - 1) *enoikeō* : to dwell in and influence for Good
 - 2) Train until they have *faith that influences* their life.
 - b. Knowledge of the Son of God : *epignōsis* : precise and correct knowledge
 - c. to a mature man The Hebrew writer describes a mature man as : **S#16.**

Heb. 5: 14 – But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil
 - d. of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ .. Live like Jesus. **S#17.**

C. The result of this maturing process to make the Christian steadfast in faith.

1. **Eph. 4: 14** – As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;
2. Satan is at work trying to lead the vulnerable astray.

I Pet. 5: 8 – Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

3. Satan does not advertise who he is using to deceive you.
 - a. Jesus foretold of many false teachers trying to lead us away from the true faith.
Mark 13: 22 – ... do not believe him; **22** for false Christs and false prophets **S#18.**
will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. **23** But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.
 - b. The Apostle Paul warned us that many false teachers would try to lead us astray.
II Cor 11:13 – For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising **S#19.**
 themselves as apostles of Christ. **14** No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. **15** Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.
 - c. The Apostle John warned us to be on guard against false teachers.
I John 4: 1 – Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits **S#20.**
 to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

D. Thus, spiritual maturity is essential for spiritual survival.

- * 1. Eve was easy prey for Satan because she was naïve.
- * 2. **Likewise**, the immature Christian is easy prey for the scheming tempter.

III. God monitors and expects growth on a time table. S#21.

A. The Hebrew write scolds those Christians who are slow to mature.

1. **Heb. 5: 11**– Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, **S#22.**
 since you have become dull of hearing. **12** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. **13** For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
2. by this **time** you ought to be teachers, God is aware of how long it takes us to mature.

B. God anticipates that you will develop the ability to understand more complicated spiritual material. (Compare ... Heb. 6) S#23.

1. One never matures past milk without learning to chew other foods.
2. We train our children to eat solid food as they develop teeth.
3. A normal child wants to learn to eat more than just milk

C. The one who does not grow, loses what he has.

1. **Heb. 5: 11**– Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*
2. Spiritual zeal will wane if not fed. *SPIRITUAL ATROPHY*
3. **Matt. 25: 26-28** ... *Parable* : The Lord took the gold from the unproductive servant.

D. There is a time when every child of God should be able to teach others how to be saved. The trainee becomes the trainer. S#24.

1. **Heb. 5: 12** ... For though by this time you ought to be teachers,
2. **Matt. 28 : 19 / Mark 16: 15** ... Every Christians is commanded to share the gospel.
3. **II Cor. 5: 20** ... Jesus makes His appeal to the world through us – His ambassadors.
4. **I Pet. 3: 15** ... Each one of us must prepare ourselves to explain our faith.

IV. Unlike physical growth, spiritual growth doesn't just happen.

S#25.

A. Many are exposed to knowledge, but not all absorb it.

S#26.

1. In our public educational system many go through and learn little while others profit immensely by the experience.
 - a. *The difference is attitude, desire to learn.*
 - b. You can lead a horse to water, **but** you can't make him drink.
2. All are exposes to spiritual water, **but** not all drink of it.
 - a. *The difference is attitude.*
 - b. **I Pet. 2: 2** – like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation
 - c. It is very difficult to feed an infant something he does not want.

B. We have seen that

S#27.

1. God requires spiritual growth.
2. Growth prevents falling away.
3. God expects growth on a schedule.
4. Growth does not just happen.

C. Next we will consider some things that must be added. (II Pet. 1)

S#28.

INVITATION : No one can mature until he is born. Have you been born again.

S#29. ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**Ephesians 4: 11-16**

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. **14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

II Peter 1: 2-11

2 A Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; **3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. **4** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **5** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; **11** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.