

Stages of Christian Growth

1 John 2:12-14

Introduction (Sanctification)

- Sanctification is growing so we become spiritually mature (holy) and be like Christ

Note: Sanctification is a direction, a progress to holiness.

- Reading and applying Scripture is how we grow

1 Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

- Clearing up sanctification (spiritual growth):

Note: Sometimes we have misconceptions about what a spiritually mature person looks like or how they are better than others. Sometimes people believe that sanctification is a process of being perfect. Again, John says that we have sin in our life that we need to confess and that His blood covers our sins. Peter says that we are equal heirs of grace. Jesus gave the parable of the landowner hiring workers at different times with the same wages, and this is exactly what we should be aware of when we talk about sanctification.

- Spiritual growth does not increase your position with God

Philippians 3:9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- Spiritual growth does not increase God's love for you

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

loved them

- Spiritual growth has nothing to do with time

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to and even now you are still not able

receive it,

Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Note: has nothing to do with how long you've been a Christian. Sometimes a person has been a Christian for a long time but has not grown—immature Christian. Contrast this with a new Christian—this person is growing even though s/he does not know much—they are learning and growing.

- Spiritual growth has nothing to do with Christian activity

Note: Sometimes people think that the amount you do in church...activities mean that you are spiritually mature...this is not always the case. Martha is an example of a busybody who did not sit at Jesus' feet to listen.

- Spiritual growth has nothing to do with earthly successes

Note: Paul counted poverty, suffering as a mark of successful growth. Sometimes churches that show rapid growth in numbers and size...this does not always equate to spiritual maturity.

I. 3 Stages of Christian Growth

Note: Life is always about growth to a certain maturity. We see it in children growing into adults. We see it in puppies growing into adult dogs. We see it in seeds growing into plants. It is also true in our own spiritual life. We are growing as well. And this growth is different in everyone. Some Christians grow fast, learning everything there is to learn about God, Scripture, etc, and some other Christians grow slower. John shows our spiritual growth...our different stages in our walk with the Lord.

- Purpose of this passage: I write to you—I want you to know that you are saved

Note: John does not want his readers to think that he doubts their Christian faith. He writes 6 times that purpose of his letter. 6 times he writes "I write to you" and 6 times he answers this with "because". He is reminding them of their Christian assurances.

- Our sins have been forgiven in His name—Salvation is outside of us

Note: perfect tense—have been forgiven and remain forgiven. A Christian is a person who knows that their sins are forgiven. Salvation is based on the Person and His work...not ours. We are saved in His name's sake. We are made holy in His name's sake.

II. Little Children

- New believers that need to be trained—little knowledge
- What does a new believer know?
 - He is forgiven
 - Knows the Father

- This is a person who wants to know more (understanding in mind)
- Like children—new believers do not have discernment
Ephesians 4:14 *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*
Illustration: Harold Camping and false cults

III. Young Men

- Like a child that grows into a young adult—from attachment to knowledge
- What does this young men look like?
 - Overcomes the evil one
Note: Mastered Satan! How? Note the perfect tense...we have overcome the evil one and will keep overcoming the evil one.
 - Strong—why? Because they are in the Word of God
Note: Satan's domain has always been false religion or false systems of thought. Every false teaching is the teaching of demons (**1 Timothy 4:1**). This person has learned the word of God to resist the false teaching and not allow it a foothold in their lives. Not only that is true, we also are able to resist sin more through the word of God (**Psalm 119:11**).
- This is a person who knows the biblical truths (conviction in will)
- This is a person who recognizes the truth and resists the devil's false religion and sin

IV. Fathers

- This is a mature person in care of others
- What does this father look like?
 - He knows God who is from the beginning
- This is a person who goes from knowing about God to knowing God
Note: Knowledge that has ripened over the years. This knowledge is about knowing God and His character from a lifetime of study and prayer and growing. This is a relationship where this person enjoys God
- He takes pleasure in God (affection in soul)

Conclusion