

# Becoming Grown-Ups

(James 1:1-12)

The gospels show us that following Jesus involves our *heads* (there are things we need to know) AND it involves our *hands* (there is stuff we are called to go and do), but centrally it involves our *hearts* (there is a deep transformation we must undergo) That's discipleship—embarking on a lifelong journey of “spiritual growth” (*see reverse*). Unlike physical growth, spiritual growth doesn't *automatically* happen with the passage of time. God is the One who transforms us, but we have a role to play too.

Today at The Bridge we begin a new sermon series from the *Book of James*. The half-brother of Jesus, James wrote to challenge followers of Jesus: Are you growing in your faith? Beginning with the subject of suffering, he urges: Live out the truths you say you believe!

## ***How do followers of Jesus respond in life's trials and troubles?***

We \_\_\_\_\_ suffering in a radically different way.

We \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ suffering in a radically different way.

- \_\_\_\_\_ to the process.

- \_\_\_\_\_ from above.

**Trials make—not break—the faith of a growing disciple.**

This 1<sup>st</sup> message in The Bridge's sermon series, *James* is by Len Woods [6-30-13].

# The Process of Spiritual Growth

The Bible uses physical maturity as a metaphor for how spiritual life and growth is to occur. Each stage is necessary and prepares the way for the next. Thus, there's no shame in being a "newborn believer" or a "spiritual child." What *is* troubling—and (spiritually) abnormal—is for a Christian to remain for an excessive length of time in spiritual infancy or childhood. *When a person is active in church for years (perhaps even decades!) and yet remains spiritually immature, something is wrong!* Healthy things (and people) grow and mature. In the physical realm, babies naturally become kids, then teens, young adults, and, often, parents. In the spiritual realm, healthy disciples grow—(super)naturally maturing in the faith and ultimately reproducing.

## Spiritual Death

And *you were dead* in your trespasses and sins<sup>1</sup> (Ephesians 2:1 NASB)—see note at below right

## Spiritual Birth

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:7 NASB)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has *caused us to be born again* to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3 NASB; see also James 1:18; 1 John 3:9)

## Spiritual "Infancy"

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to *infants in Christ*. (1 Corinthians 3:1 NASB)

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*. (Hebrews 5:12 NASB)

## Spiritual "Childhood"

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*. (1 Corinthians 13:11 NASB)

Brethren, *do not be children in your thinking*; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. (1 Corinthians 14:20 NASB)

As a result, *we are no longer to be children*, tossed here and there by waves and carried about every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of

men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; (Ephesians 4:14 NASB)

## Spiritual "Young Adulthood"

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. *I am writing to you, young men*, because you have overcome the evil one. 14 I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. (1 John 2:13–14 NIV)

## Spiritual "Parenthood"

To Timothy, *my true child in the faith*: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:2 NASB)

But we proved to be gentle among you, as a *nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children*. (1 Thessalonians 2:7 NASB)

<sup>1</sup>The Bible tells us that because of sin, all humans (Romans 3:23) begin life in a state of spiritual death—i.e., separation from God, the Author and Giver of life. This is *terrible* news! But the gospel is the incredibly *good* news that "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8)—even God's "enemies" (Romans 5:10), God graciously loved us enough to send His Son Jesus (John 3:16) to "seek and save" us (Luke 19:10). How? Jesus lived a perfect life (the life we should have lived). He then took the punishment we deserved because of our willful rebellion against God! He died in our place, the just for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). Then He emerged from the grave, victorious over sin and death. Now, All who believe in Him are forgiven and graciously receive the free gift of new, eternal life (John 3:16). Those who trust in Christ alone to make them right with God **are** reconciled to God, and actually become God's beloved children (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1)!

