

Growing Up in Faith

Moving from Childish to Mature Christianity

When Jesus entered ministry at 30 years of age, He wasn't immediately ready for the cross. He had three years of preparation—preaching, healing, and delivering people. His ultimate calling required growth in faith and spiritual strength to endure what was ahead.

Like Jesus, we too need to grow in our spiritual endurance. We should be able to handle more challenges without being overwhelmed by little things that once knocked us down.

Why Do We Need to Grow Spiritually?

In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul writes: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Notice it doesn't say childish things "fell away" naturally—Paul actively put them away. Spiritual growth requires intentional action. There are things we must deliberately set aside to advance and keep getting better.

Many people are physically adults but remain children in their thinking and behavior. They're trapped in adult bodies but still think and act like children. This isn't God's plan for us.

What Does Jesus Teach Us About Growth?

In John 8:28-29, Jesus says: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

This reveals something surprising—Jesus had to be taught! He didn't automatically know everything just because He was the Son of God. He became fully human and needed to learn, just as we do.

If Jesus needed to be taught, how much more do we? We must take the place of humility, recognizing where we've missed it and where we need the Father's help.

How Do We Learn and Grow?

We learn in two primary ways:

- Through teaching - Some things can be learned by being told
- Through experience - Some things must be learned by going through them

The Bible says Jesus "learned obedience by the things He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Some lessons can only come through experience—through trial and error.

Think about a baby learning to walk. Parents can't just explain the mechanics of walking—the child must try, fall, and try again. That's why Scripture tells us to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). We must put our faith into practice.

What Happens When We Fall?

Falling isn't the real problem—it's what you do after the fall that matters. When you stumble in your spiritual walk:

- Confess your sins
- Accept God's forgiveness and cleansing
- Get back up and start again

God gets joy from watching His children learn to walk spiritually, even when they stumble. What pleases Him is not perfection but persistence—getting back up and not giving up.

Why Do Many Christians Stay Spiritually Immature?

Pride is our biggest obstacle to growth. It makes our failures feel more painful than they need to be. When we fall, our pride gets hurt, and we may want to quit rather than face our mistakes.

Humility is the ability to recognize where you've missed it, where you're weak, and how you need help. It allows you to understand you're a work in progress without being shocked by your own mistakes or the mistakes of others.

Many Christians hide behind the saying, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." But this misses the point entirely. We weren't forgiven so we could continue living like "forgiven animals." We were forgiven so we could move on and grow into Christ's likeness.

How Can I Break Free from Spiritual Bondage?

Brandon's testimony illustrates the power of transformation. After 20+ years of addiction, he's been sober for 14 years. When faced with the very substance that once enslaved him, he found it had no power over him anymore.

Jesus said in John 8:31-32: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The path to freedom comes through:

- Abiding in God's Word
- Knowing the truth
- Allowing that truth to transform you

Most things that bring people into bondage are counterfeits of something genuine, real, and good for you. Don't settle for the counterfeit when God offers the real path to peace, joy, and pleasure forevermore.

What Does the Path Forward Look Like?

The Bible says "the path of the just grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). We're meant to keep advancing, not staying where we are.

To move forward:

- Take responsibility for your life instead of blaming others
- Identify what needs to change
- Replace harmful habits with better alternatives
- Keep confessing who you are in Christ

Life Application

This week, identify one "childish thing" in your spiritual life that's holding you back from maturity. It might be:

- A habit of blaming others instead of taking responsibility
- A pattern of giving up when things get difficult
- A tendency to react emotionally rather than responding in faith
- An area where you've been content with forgiveness but not transformation

Once you've identified it, make a deliberate decision to "put it away" as Paul did. Replace it with a mature alternative that reflects who you are in Christ.

Ask yourself:

- What specific area of my life is God calling me to grow up in right now?
- What would it look like if I responded to challenges in this area with spiritual maturity?
- What truth from God's Word do I need to abide in to experience freedom in this area?
- Who can I ask to help hold me accountable as I work to put away this childish thing?

Remember, you're not just forgiven—you're called to walk like Jesus. You're blessed coming in and going out. You're too blessed to be cursed. Keep that faith attitude, and no devil will be able to mess with you!

Verses

1. 1 Corinthians 13:11
2. Matthew 8:17
3. John 8:28
4. John 8:31
5. Philippians 2:12

Quotes

1. I'm not a statistic—I'm a saint. I don't expect my outcome to mirror those who have no promise of deliverance.
2. You can't earn sainthood in God's Kingdom—it's bestowed upon you.
3. I'm not called to free myself; the truth sets me free.
4. Choose the path of humility.
5. If Jesus had to be taught, how much more do we?
6. It's not bad to learn through suffering or trial and error—it's necessary.
7. Learn every lesson—big or small—and grow from it all.
8. I'm supposed to be getting better and better, smarter and wiser.
9. Grow in endurance—you should be able to handle more.
10. What I do can either build up or tear down my faith.
11. If I'm headed to Heaven, my life should be moving upward. Up is right—down is wrong.
12. "I am not a lowlife; I am upright."
13. If I love God, I love His Word. Loving God = Doing His commandments.
14. To grow up, I have to put some things away. When do I become a man? When I put away childish things. To keep growing, I have to keep letting things go.
15. Many people live in denial—don't be one of them.
16. Don't take the Father's presence for granted.
17. God would rather you walk and fall than sit safely in your playpen.

18. What you do after you fall matters. A sign of spiritual maturity: you get up quicker and complain less.
19. Pride makes pain more painful.
20. I'm a work in progress—so I'm not shocked by my own or others' stupidity.
21. Expect big things from yourself. Don't stay stuck in the same cycles.
22. To have better, you must do better.
23. I have to become better in order to receive better.
24. Don't just sit there saying, "I'm forgiven"—get up and grow into perfection.
25. I was forgiven so I could move on from what I was forgiven for.

Summary

Growing in faith requires intentional action, not just passive development. Like Jesus, who needed to learn and grow during His ministry, we must actively put away childish thinking and behaviors to mature spiritually. Pride often blocks our growth, while humility enables us to recognize our weaknesses and seek help. True spiritual maturity comes through both teaching and experience, with Scripture emphasizing that we must 'work out our salvation.' The path forward involves taking responsibility, identifying needed changes, replacing harmful habits, and consistently affirming our identity in Christ. God delights not in our perfection but in our persistence—our willingness to get back up when we fall.