

What Does It Take To Be Growing Roots of Maturity Throughout The Seasons?

Listening Guide—Hebrews 5:11-6:3

Where am In My Spiritual Growth?

INTRODUCTION: What is the ultimate goal of the Christian faith? Evangelical and liberal Christians might have a difference of opinion. Is it evangelism, world peace, universal justice? Or...?

- I. **What is God after? The ultimate GOAL is to be like Jesus in word, thought and DEED.**
Eph. 4:13-16; Rom. 8:29—“...to be conformed to the likeness of His Son...” Eph. 4:15—“...we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

In order to help us arrive at this ultimate goal, we need to go on to maturity.

- II. **What does immaturity/maturity look like?** How do we grow up in our faith so that we REFLECT the Lord?

Here are **three** important observations about the problem of immaturity from Heb. 5:11-6:3.

- A. **First observation: Immaturity is not reduced by age alone.** Hebrews 5: 11-12:
11] “We have much to say about this, but it is **HARD** to make it clear to you because you **no longer TRY to understand.** **12]** “In fact, **by this time you ought to be teachers,** you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word **all over AGAIN.** You need milk, not solid food!”
- B. **Second observation: Immaturity is self-identifying; it has CLEAR MARKS.**
 1. **The first mark: The inability to learn and retain spiritual ABC’s**—vv. 11-12.
They are moving backward. They have **FORGOTTEN** what they were taught.
 2. **The second mark of immaturity: The inability to instruct others or themselves.**
“**You ought to be teachers...**”—v. 12. Immaturity is often covered up and it’s not easily spotted in us. We develop sophisticated cover-ups, e.g., stock answers, referrals, etc.
 3. **The third mark of immaturity: The inability to discern good from evil**—v. 14. Result?
 - a. **They (the immature) are doctrinally undiscerning**—Eph. 4:14. They don’t know good doctrine from bad, nor are they able to discern good from evil.
 - b. **They are also emotionally gullible**—Eph. 4:14.
 - c. **They are vulnerable to false prophets and sin**—2 Tim. 3:6; Jude 1:3-4,12-13,16-22; Gal. 1:6; 3:1; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; Eph. 4:13-14.
 - d. **They are totally dependent on their teachers**—Heb. 5:12; 1 Cor. 3:1-4,21-23.

Review: Wow! That’s a lot to THINK ABOUT in a few minutes, and we’ve only been talking about the results of the third clear mark of immaturity. There’s more:

4. **The fourth mark: The inability to control childish reactions.** *"...being still an infant..."*—Heb. 5:13; 1 Cor. 3:3. This means the immature are acting like children!
5. **The fifth mark: The inability to take solid food.** Spiritual infants are still on milk—Heb. 5:12; 6:1-2. If we are mature, we understand these teachings and can explain them.

1] *"Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2]* *instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3]* *And God permitting, we will do so."*

- a. **They are the elementary teachings**—6:1-3.
- b. **They are milk**—v. 12b; 1 Pet. 2:2-3. These teachings are appropriate for babies, but very inadequate for anyone wishing to go on to maturity.
- c. **They are easily broken into three groups/foundations.**
 - 1) Repentance and faith in God—Heb. 6:1a
 - 2) Baptism and the laying on of hands—Heb. 6:2
 - 3) Resurrection and eternal judgment (teachings on death, heaven, the second return of Christ, and hell)—v. 2b. (See summary sheet of Elementary Teachings.)

As we look at this passage, there's another major observation to make:

- C. **Third observation:** Immaturity is costly and frustrating to others. *"...it is hard to make it clear (explain)..."* Hebrews 5:11—*"We have much to say about this, but it is **HARD** to make it clear to you because you **no longer TRY to understand.**"*

III. **How do we grow into maturity?** We find two simple ways in the text:

- A. **First**, by understanding and applying the elementary teachings about Christ—6:1-3; Heb. 5:13.
- B. **Second**, by training ourselves to distinguish good from evil, by constantly using and applying solid food (the teaching about righteousness)—Heb. 5:14; James 1:22-25; Matt. 7:24-27. Heb. 5:14—*"But solid food is for the mature, who **by constant use** have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."*

The secret to maturity is to hear (listen carefully) and obey! What we don't use, we lose. The constant use of the Word is the training that leads to maturity and eliminates instability, gullibility and immaturity. Therefore, review (read and apply) the Word often.

Application Questions

1. Why do some people seem to have a greater desire to learn the basics of the faith and others are slow to learn?
2. Why is doctrine important to a believer? Why should it be the basis for what we do?
3. Why is it that reactions, outbursts, bad attitudes, quarrels, disregard for authority are symptomatic of immaturity? What is the best way to react when you find yourself acting immature?
4. Brainstorm ways you might apply the Scripture, i.e., teaching, personal study, more consistently.
5. What help do you need in order to be more consistent in applying the Scripture?
6. What is your prayer regarding Heb. 5:11-6:3?
7. What will be your practice the next time you are taught/study the scriptures?

Elementary Teachings

HEBREWS 6:1-3

INTRODUCTION: One of the prominent marks of immaturity is the inability to take solid food. Spiritual infants are still on milk. Heb. 6:1a—*“Let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ...”*; 5:12—*“You need milk, not solid food!”* This is a very revealing mark. Some will quickly acknowledge the need for maturity, but interestingly, won't see themselves as immature. So let's evaluate ourselves again by this mark. If we're mature, we will understand the following teachings and be able to teach (explain) them to others. They are the elementary teachings about Christ, the first principles of God's Word.

Heb. 6:1-3—*“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2] instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3] And God permitting, we will do so.”*

These elementary teachings fall into **three interesting groups:** _____

1. The foundation of repentance and faith in God.
2. The foundation of instruction about baptism and the laying on of hands.
3. The foundation of resurrection and eternal judgment.

If we say we don't understand these teachings, let alone teach or explain them, the author of Hebrews is saying we are immature, because they are “milk.” These teachings are appropriate for babies, but very inadequate for anyone wishing to go on to maturity, to full growth in the Christian life—Hebrews 5: 12b. This passage doesn't mean that these areas are to be forgotten, denied, or neglected. They are, however, no longer to be the chief center of attention; that's the point.

When a person first comes to know the Lord, it's appropriate to crave pure spiritual milk—1 Peter 2:2-3. When a person matures, however, it is important that he hunger and thirst after righteousness—Matthew 5:6; Hebrews 5:13b. It's interesting to me that these elementary teachings are often the sole topics many pastors and/or churches dwell on in their preaching. Unfortunately, it's all many people can take due to their immaturity. If this milk is preached continuously, the congregation will stay weak, childish, and become even more immature. **BUT SOMETIMES THESE TEACHINGS MUST BE PREACHED CONTINUOUSLY, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WILL NOT, OR EVEN REFUSE TO GO ON TO MATURITY.**

Let's look a little closer at each one. **They are easily categorized into three groups.**

1. **The introductory items include the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and faith in God**—Hebrews 6:1; Acts 2:8; 20:21. These two items are absolutely essential to the Christian life.
 - a. **Repentance** means turning our back on sin and going the opposite direction—2 Cor. 7:10-11.
 - b. **Faith** is the ability to trust in God's promises. Hebrews 11:6—*“He who comes to God must first believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”* These two are very necessary milk for babies. **Faith** means we choose to believe God rather than Satan, no matter what the cost— Matthew 4:1-11; 1 John 5:4-5,10; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:6.

2. **The instruction about baptisms and the laying on of hands.** Notice these are just figures (pictures) of reality, not reality itself. They are empty forms if they have no content and no faith-filled heart response.
- a. **Water baptism** is commanded and is an outward sign of an inward reality—Rom. 6:1-7. (Note: “Baptism” is plural and may refer to the baptism of the Spirit, too. Or it could refer to a return to instructions about Jewish customs and cleansing rites.)
 - b. **Laying on of hands** implies a number of things:
 - 1) It means an identification and relationship with spiritual leaders—Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 5:22
 - 2) It means to communicate and confirm by the Spirit, God's intention for a person—1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6.
 - 3) The laying on of hands is often seen in initiating the filling of the Spirit—Acts 8:17; 19:6.
 - 4) The laying on of hands by the elders/pastors/apostles of a church is also a vehicle used in the releasing of God's healing power in ministry—Acts 28:8.

These symbols should be understood by new believers: 1) They are to be baptized in water as soon as possible—Acts 2:38. 2) They are to be in relationship to their spiritual leaders. Initially, they might want to solicit prayers and insight from their leaders regarding their walk with the Lord, and the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit might have for them.

3. **The last two items, resurrection and eternal judgment, obviously have to do with teachings on death, heaven, the second return of Christ, and hell--“...the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”**

They would include questions like:

- What will be the condition of the world when Christ returns? 1 Thess. 4:11-5:1; 2 Thess. 1:5-2:12; Matt. 24-25
- How will we be judged, and what will be our rewards or judgment? When and where will the judgment occur? Rev. 20:11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 24-25
- It also includes the significance of Christ's and our resurrection—2 Cor. 4:14; Col. 2:12; 3:1.

SUMMARY: These are the elementary teachings that infants in Christ should know. Do we understand these teachings? If not, Scripture is encouraging us to LEARN AND RETAIN THEM, AND WE SHOULD GO ON TO MATURITY, ON TO SOLID FOOD!

Hebrews 5:11—We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. **12]** In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **13]** Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. **14]** But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 6:1—Therefore **let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death and of faith in God, **2]** instruction about cleansing rites (baptisms), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3]** And God permitting, we will do so.