



HOW TO BE A GROWING CHRISTIAN

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





How to be a Growing Christian

ADRIAN ROGERS

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide this transcript produced from a live sermon preached by Adrian Rogers while serving as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. This transcript is intended for your personal, non-commercial use.

Note: Though it has been transcribed from a version used for broadcast, it may contain stutters, stammers, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

In order to ensure our ability to be good stewards of Adrian Rogers' messages, Love Worth Finding has reserved all rights to this content.

Except for your personal, non-commercial use and except for brief quotations in printed reviews, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—without the prior permission of the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Love Worth Finding Ministries, Inc.

Transcripts are used by permission of the Rogers Family Trust.



How to be a Growing Christian

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 John 2:12-14

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2105

A growing Christian is a maturing Christian because spiritual maturity is becoming more like Jesus. Some Christians are saved but aren't growing. We will never know true victory and joy unless we learn how to be growing Christians.

In 1 John 2, the Apostle John compares spiritual maturity to three stages in our physical lives.

"I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

New Christians experience the thrilling wonders of spiritual childhood. They are "all tomorrows; no yesterdays." However, children live in the realm of their feelings. They can be selfish and self-centered; uncooperative. We are only young once; but if we aren't careful, we can be spiritually immature for a long time.

If we grow, we'll experience the triumphant warfare of manhood. Abiding in the Word of God strengthens us for warfare. Obeying God and serving others transforms us into workers and warriors, equipped to combat the enemy.

Next comes the tested wisdom of fatherhood.

Adrian Rogers says, "When we spend time with someone, we become like that someone."

Because we view God as our Father, the goal of spiritual maturity is to become spiritual fathers (and mothers). Mature Christians reproduce through soul-winning and discipleship.

What are the means of maturity?

- There must be the miracle of life; we must be saved.
- It takes time. There is no instant maturity; we experience growth through time spent with Jesus Christ.
- Growth requires nourishment; we have to feed on the Word of God.
- Growth demands discipline and exercise through serving God and others.

Remember: we don't substitute fatherhood for young manhood, nor young manhood for childhood. In a father, there ought to be the vision and zeal of a young man. In a young man, there ought to be the wonder of childhood. All three stages are legitimate; a mature Christian is a composite of them all.

Life Application

It takes life, time, nourishment, and exercise to grow.

Adrian Rogers offers this advice: "Don't worry about what you can't do. Find out what you can do and begin to do it, and you will grow."



How to Be a Growing Christian

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 John 2:12-14

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2105

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Are you a growing Christian?
 - i) Are you moving toward maturity?
 - (1) You can only be young once, but you can be immature for a long, long time.
 - ii) The problem in many of our churches is that there are people who have been born again, but they cease to grow.
- b) Fellowship in churches comes when we grow.
- c) 1 John 2:12-14
 - i) Three categories of persons are mentioned in these verses:
 - (1) Children
 - (2) Young men
 - (3) Fathers
 - ii) John is talking about growing into maturity; coming from childhood into fatherhood.
- d) What are the marks of maturity?
 - i) Spiritual health is not necessarily a mark of maturity.
 - (1) A young child can be perfectly healthy, but he's not mature.
 - (2) A person can have spiritual health but not be mature.
 - ii) Having spiritual gifts is not necessarily a mark of maturity.
 - (1) A person can be greatly gifted and not be mature.
 - (2) Samson was a man with great gifts, but he was very immature.
 - (3) Paul spoke of the immaturity of the gifted Corinthian church.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 1:7
 - (b) 1 Corinthians 3:1
 - iii) Maturity is not the same thing as spirituality.
 - (1) A person can get their heart right with God and be filled with the Holy Spirit and be instantly spiritual, but that does not make them a mature Christian.
 - iv) Maturity is Christ-likeness.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:13
 - (a) The word "perfect" here does not mean sinless but mature.
 - (2) Maturity is measured by whether we are becoming more like Jesus.
 - (a) This was the goal of Paul's ministry.
 - (b) Colossians 1:28
 - (i) The word "perfect" here also means "mature."
- e) Maturity is a lifelong process.
 - i) No one is instantly mature.
- f) In our Scripture today, the Apostle John shows us how to move into maturity, from childhood to adolescence to fatherhood.

**2) THE THRILLING WONDERS OF CHILDHOOD (1 John 12:1)**

- a) There are joys, thrills and excitement when God brings a baby into a home.
- b) Things we know about little children and babies:
 - i) They are selfish.
 - (1) If you take something from them, they can go into a rage.
 - ii) They are crude and rude.
 - iii) They are lazy.
 - (1) They lie around the house and don't help clean or cook.
 - iv) They are inconsiderate.
 - (1) They'll wake up their parents in the middle of the night.
 - v) They are mean.
 - (1) They will bite one another.
- c) Have you ever heard anyone who looked at a little child say that if that's a human being, then they didn't want to be one?
 - i) Some people look at a baby Christian and say, "If that is a Christian, then they don't want to be one."
 - ii) Baby Christians have to grow up.
 - (1) No one is saved full grown.
 - (a) Regardless of our age when we get saved, we are a babe in Christ.
- d) A great church is not a church where everybody is a mature Christian.
 - i) This would be a failing church.
 - ii) We need to make baby Christians who come to Jesus feel at home in our churches; we need to love them.
 - iii) The problem is when some people stay baby Christians and don't mature.
 - (1) They don't grow, don't serve and don't work.
 - (a) Instead, they have to be served and are still selfish, unthoughtful, etc.
 - (2) There is a legitimate childhood, but we are to grow.
- e) 1 Corinthians 1:7, 3:1
 - i) The Corinthian Christians were using spiritual gifts as toys, not tools.
 - (1) They did not understand what it means to be spiritual in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- f) 1 John 2:12
 - i) The blessing of getting saved is that our sins are forgiven, and we are on our way to Heaven.
 - (1) Getting to heaven is the main thing that a little child is concerned about.

3) THE TRIUMPHANT WARFARE OF MANHOOD (1 John 2:13-14)

- a) John addresses the young men in these verses.
 - i) No longer milk bottles, but now, mighty battles.
 - ii) These have moved to become workers and warriors.
 - (1) They are no longer being served, but they are servants.
- b) Some in our churches think they do God a wild favor by simply going to church.
 - i) They're not workers, they're not warriors, and they're not in the battle.



- (1) They have been saved and are thankful that their sins are forgiven, but that's where they stopped.
- ii) 1 John 2:14
 - (1) When we move to the next stage, we overcome the wicked one.
 - (a) The question is not whether or not you are afraid of the devil, but is the devil afraid of you?
 - (b) Are you a threat to Satan's kingdom?
 - (c) Have you overcome the wicked one?
 - (2) James 4:7
- iii) In an average church, members are not strong, and do not know anything about the battle.
 - (1) Satan is having his way because it is like he is fighting against an army of children.
- c) 1 John 2:14
 - i) But young men are strong, and they have overcome the wicked one.
 - (1) Are you a victor or a victim?
 - (2) Are you an overcomer, or are you overcome?
 - (3) Are you strong, and does the Word of God abide in you?
- d) Delayed growth is a shame to Almighty God.

4) THE TESTED WISDOM OF FATHERHOOD (1 John 2:13-14)

- a) This is the stage that the Lord is moving us to.
- b) The idea of a father is a person who has come to mature wisdom.
 - i) He knows, he understands, and he has moved beyond building and battling.
 - ii) He has wisdom and a God-likeness.
 - (1) He has been with the Lord so long that his life is beginning to manifest the likeness of God.
 - (2) He has become a father.
 - (a) We speak of God as our Father.
 - iii) This passage is not referring to chronological age or gender.
 - (1) The wording in this passage is an illustration.
 - (a) This passage is referring to both men and women.
 - (b) A person can be a spiritual father and be a teenager.
 - (2) This passage is referring to spiritual maturity.
- c) A father is someone who has children.
 - i) Do you have any spiritual children?
 - ii) Paul spoke of Timothy as his son in the faith.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 1:2
 - iii) Paul spoke of himself as a spiritual father to the church in Corinth.
 - iv) We should strive to have spiritual children and grandchildren.
 - (1) Those whom we have won to Jesus who have also won other people to Jesus.
 - (2) Are you going to Heaven empty-handed?
 - (a) Will you have any spiritual children there?
- d) A father is known for his wisdom and his ability to give.



- i) One of the great joys of life is to give to your children and grandchildren.
- ii) When you become a spiritual father in the Lord, you will want to give to your spiritual children to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- e) In these Scriptures, God is not saying that we should substitute fatherhood for manhood or manhood for childlikeness.
 - i) A father is a composite of all of these things.
 - ii) Never lose the wonder of childhood.
 - (1) The Bible says to put away childish things, but it also says to still be childlike.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 13:11
 - (2) Keep the wonder, excitement and the joy inside you.
 - (3) Never forget that your sins have been forgiven.
 - (a) 1 John 1:12
 - iii) 1 John 2:13
 - (1) When you become a father, you do not cease in the battle and you do not step out of the warfare.
 - (a) You add all these things in until you become a full-grown man.
 - iv) There should still be a little boy in every man and a little girl in every woman.
 - f) When we think of the apostle John, who wrote the book of 1 John, we think of the beloved disciple.
 - i) He was the disciple whom Jesus loved.
 - (1) John 13:23
 - (2) John 20:2
 - (3) John 21:7
 - ii) He wrote about love and told us to love one another.
 - (1) 1 John 3:11
 - (2) 1 John 4:7
 - iii) John was very different as a young man.
 - (1) His nickname was "Son of Thunder."
 - (a) Mark 3:17
 - (b) He had a quick temper.
 - (2) He was selfish.
 - (a) He and his brother James wanted to sit on either side of Jesus in Heaven.
 - (i) Mark 10:35-37
 - (b) When the Samaritans did not receive Jesus, John wanted to call down fire from Heaven on them.
 - (i) Luke 9:51-56
 - (3) John grew in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (a) Later on, he was called the beloved disciple.
 - (b) When he went to Samaria the second time, he was the one who led revival there.
 - (i) It wasn't consuming fire but Holy Ghost fire that he brought down upon them the second time he came.



- (c) John was no longer trying to be first, but he was the one who taught us to love one another.
- g) Are you a growing Christian?
 - i) To fail to grow is a sin.
 - ii) If you don't love Jesus Christ more today than yesterday, then you are backslidden.
- h) What are the means of growth?
 - i) A growing church is healthy and a happy church.
 - ii) Growth requires the miracle of life.
 - (1) 1 John 2:12
 - (a) John calls them "little children."
 - (b) John uses two words for "little children" in this passage.
 - (i) One word means "born ones," and the other word means "children under discipline."
 - (2) We must be a born one.
 - (a) We cannot grow up and then get born.
 - (i) Some people say that they want to get some things in their life straightened out before them come to Christ.
 - 1. That is like saying, "I'm going to grow up, and then I'll get born."
 - (b) Birth precedes growth.
 - (3) We must give our heart to Jesus Christ.
 - (a) We must be born from above in order to grow.
 - (i) Are you saved?
 - iii) Growth requires the passage of time.
 - (1) We will not be instantly mature.
 - (2) There are no shortcuts.
 - iv) Growth requires the receiving of nourishment.
 - (1) 1 Peter 2:2
 - (a) Don't take a new Christian and give him a study in Revelation, Ezekiel or Leviticus.
 - (b) Get them in the Gospel of John, the milk of the Word, so that they may grow thereby.
 - (c) The word "desire" in this passage means "to crave."
 - (i) This word is also in the imperative form.
 - 1. We are commanded to crave the Word of God.
 - (2) We have to feed day by day on the Word of God.
 - (a) That is where the strength comes.
 - (3) We must get the Word of God in our heart and life if we are going to grow.
 - (a) We have to be constantly feeding on the Word of God.
 - (4) Little babies will eat junk food and put anything in their mouths.
 - (a) Baby Christians will sometimes have literature from a cult in their homes.
 - (i) They don't understand; they don't have discernment.
 - (b) They need to feed on the Word.
 - v) Growth requires discipline and exercise.
 - (1) Hebrews 5:14



- (a) The word here for “exercise” is the word from which we get our word “gymnasium.”
- (2) We have many flabby Christians in our churches because they get saved and baptized, but then they come to church each Sunday to sit, soak and sour.
 - (a) They do not exercise.
 - (b) To go on to maturity, they need to find a place of service, something to do in the church.
- (3) We need to get busy for the Lord Jesus Christ.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) Are you a growing Christian?
 - i) If you’re a child, then be thankful to God that you’ve been born into the family.
 - ii) But you need to become a young man.
 - (1) There is a battle, and there’s work to be done.
- b) Are you a young man, a worker and a warrior?
 - i) Then, you need to become a spiritual father.
 - (1) Remind others of God.
 - (2) Become a giving person.
 - (3) Be a person who has the knowledge of God so that when someone else has a problem, they can come to you.
 - (4) Spend so much time with God that you begin to act and look like Him.
- c) The first step is being born, becoming a little child.
 - i) Are you saved?
 - ii) If not, you can be saved today.
 - (1) God will forgive your sin.
 - (2) Trust Him today.
- d) Pray to Him and ask Him to come into your life.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



How to Be a Growing Christian

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 John 2:12-14

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2105

Take God's Word, First John, the second chapter, and in just a moment we're going to begin looking where we left off last week and that is with verse 12. Now here's what I want to talk to you about today. Listen carefully, "How to Be a Growing Christian." May I ask you a frank and a personal question? Are you a growing Christian? I didn't ask if you are a Christian. I asked are you a growing Christian, are you moving toward maturity? You can be young only once but you can be immature for a long, long time, and the problem in many of our churches is that we have people who've been born but they cease to grow, so we want to talk to you a little bit about how to be a growing Christian. Because fellowship in churches comes about when we grow.

Now look in First John 2 verse 12 through 14, "I write unto you little children," now underscore the word little children, "because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you fathers," underscore the word fathers, "because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you young men," underscore the phrase young men, "because you have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you little children because you have known the Father, I have written unto you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning, I have written unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one." Now he mentions three categories of persons: children, young men, and fathers, and what he's talking about here is growing into maturity, coming from children to fatherhood.

Now what are the marks of maturity? Well, you say, "Spiritual health is a mark of maturity." Not necessarily. A five-year-old can be perfectly healthy; he's not mature. So, you can have spiritual health and not be mature. Well, you say, "Having spiritual gifts, that's a mark of maturity." Oh, no. You can be greatly gifted and not be mature and not grow up. Samson was mighty gifted, Samson was a man that had great gifts, but he was so immature. Paul had to talk to the Corinthian church. He said to the Corinthian church in First Corinthians 1:7, "You come behind in no gift," but he said First Corinthians 3:1, "I could not speak unto you as spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Now we're talking now about not even spirituality. You can be instantly spiritual, I mean, you can get your heart right with God this morning and be filled with the Holy Spirit, be as clean as the driven snow, but that does not mean that you are a mature Christian. We're talking about going on to maturity. What is maturity? Maturity is Christ-likeness. Put this verse in your margin, Ephesians 4 verse 13. Paul says, "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man," and the word perfect here does not mean sinless, it means mature, "unto a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Do you know how I measure my ministry? Not the size of the buildings or the Love Offering or the Sunday School attendance; are you becoming more and more like Jesus? Are you becoming more and more like Jesus? That was the goal of Paul's ministry. Put this verse down, Colossians 1 and verse 28, Paul says, "Whom we preach," that is Jesus, "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." And again the word perfect means mature.

Now maturity is a lifelong process, folks, it's not a hundred-yard dash, it is a marathon. Nobody is instantly mature. A wise man has said if you want to grow a squash, you can do that in forty days. If you want to grow an oak you can do that in forty years. You can be instantly spiritual, you can be gifted, you can be healthy, but



you cannot be mature. So I'm trying to teach you now how to move into maturity, to go from childhood to adolescence to fatherhood, that's what John is talking about.

Now first of all, he talks about the childhood stage. Look if you will in First John 2 verse 12, "I write unto you, little children." Now write this word down, **the thrilling wonders of childhood**. Oh, it's so wonderful, little babies are so wonderful, we love little babies, we love little children, little children are wonderful. The joys, the thrills, the excitement when God brings a baby into a home. But now let me tell you something, folks, I've been doing a survey of little children.

By the way, I am a bona fide grandfather, and you learn things by being a grandfather that you don't learn by being a father. Because when you're a grandfather you can back yourself out and study a little bit and you can watch. And do you know what I have learned through my very scientific study as a bona fide grandfather through my humble but accurate opinion? Let me tell you about little children, these wonderful little children. They're selfish, the most selfish creatures on Earth is a baby. I mean, every movement is this way. You take something away from him and he'll go into a rage. Not only are they selfish but they're crude and rude. They will burp in your face and think nothing of it. Now I'll tell you something else about them, they're lazy, they just lie around the house, they don't do anything, they don't help cook, they don't help clean, they don't bring anything in, they are lazy and unproductive. These precious little children. I'll tell you something else about them, they are totally inconsiderate. They'll wake you up in the middle of the night and don't think. And I'm going to tell you something else about it, you won't agree with this, but they're mean, they're mean.

We have two grandsons; Andrew, that I affectionately call Throckmorton and Stephen Paul. When Stephen Paul was approximately one and Andrew was approximately two we were thinking how wonderful that is when the little cousins can get together, so the first time we put them down there, here's Andrew, he was beginning to look like a sumo wrestler, and here is Stephen Paul and we say, "Isn't this wonderful?" We've got our little grandsons together. I mean, they have not been on the floor for thirty seconds before Stephen Paul moved over and bit Andrew, I mean good, took a chunk out of Andrew. Mean! Mean, little kids. Now, we think about these sweet little darlings. I'm telling you, friend, they're selfish, they're rude, they're inconsiderate, they're lazy, they're unproductive and sometimes mean.

Now, let me tell you something, if you look at a little child like that and say, "Hey, if that's a human being I don't want to be one." Have you ever heard anybody say, "If that's a Christian I don't want to be one?" They look at a little baby Christian. You know, thank God for little baby Christians, but little baby Christians have to grow up! And when you get saved, nobody is saved full grown and I don't care what age you are when you get saved, you are a babe in Christ and John is writing to some and he calls them little children. Now thank God for little children, thank God for people like this, folks, I mean, I'm grateful for this. But don't find some baby in our church and say, "Well, now, if that's what being a Christian is, I don't want to be a Christian." No, that's a baby Christian. They have to grow up.

And, you know, I used to think that a great church was a church where everybody was a mature Christian. That's not a great church, that's a failing church. That would be like saying a great home is a home where they're all adults and there are no children and no grandchildren. See, that's not a great home, that's not a great home. Thank God for the spilled milk, thank God for the dirty diapers, thank God for, listen, all of that comes with it and we need to make these baby Christians who come to Jesus feel at home, we need to love them. And our church is in one sense is a maternity ward. Now the problem is, some stay in the maternity ward far too long. I mean, suppose we're to go to the love building we built for these children over here and we find a forty-year-old man being rocked with this thumb in his mouth and say, "Well, what about you,



why are you here?" He said, "Well, I used to be here forty years ago and I liked it so much I've just decided to stay right here." That's what we call arrested development, that's what happens. Sometimes it happens physically. Sometimes little children do not develop physically and our hearts go out to parents like that and we have a very special ministry to children like that in our church and I thank God for that. But friend when it can be different, when you could choose to be different but when you are a great big baby still on the bottle, still sucking your thumb, not growing, not serving, not working, having to be served and still selfish and still rude and still crude and still lazy and still unthoughtful, may God have mercy upon you. You're to grow. There is a legitimate childhood.

But, you know Paul said to the Corinthian Christians in First Corinthians 1:7, "You come behind in no gift," but in First Corinthians 3:1 he says, "I couldn't speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as to babes in Christ." They were using spiritual gifts as toys, not tools. They didn't understand what it means to be spiritual in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the very first thing I want you to see is the thrilling wonders of childhood. What's the main thing about a new Christian? What does he think about? Look if you will in First John 2 verse 12, "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." That's the blessing of getting saved. Say, "Thank God, my sins are forgiven, I'm on my way to Heaven." That's the main thing that a little child is concerned about, getting to Heaven. And when a little child gives his testimony, by and large he'll go all the way back to the only testimony he has, about how he got saved and how his sins are forgiven and that is wonderful.

Now here is the second stage. The first stage is the thrilling wonders of childhood. Second stage, **the triumphant warfare of manhood**. Look if you will now in First John 2 verse 13 and 14, he says, "I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one." Look in the last part of verse 14, "I have written unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abideth in you." No longer milk bottles but mighty battles. These have moved to become workers and warriors. I wonder, are you a worker, are you a warrior, are you no longer being served but are you a servant? I mean many, many in this building are still being served. You don't do one blessed thing, you don't, folks, I don't want to hurt your feeling, but you come up and sit here on Sunday morning and think you've done God a wild favor. I mean, if the ongoing of this church depended upon you, folks, it'd be sad around here for many folks. I mean, you're saved, but you're not a worker, you're not a warrior, you're not in the battle. You have simply gotten saved and said, "Hallelujah, thank God, my sins are forgiven," and there you have stopped. Now I wonder, folks, are you a warrior?

You see, when you really go on, you move to the next stage and John says, "The Word of God has made you strong and you've overcome the wicked one." Well, you say, "Pastor, I'm not afraid of the devil." Well, that's not even the question. The question is, is the devil afraid of you? I mean, are you any threat to Satan's kingdom? Have you, are you overcoming the wicked one? The Bible says in James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Do you know what the devil wants? Let me tell you what the devil wants. The devil wants to line up like the Green Bay Packers against kindergarten class, that's what he wants. And, friend, in the average church, that's what happens. He calls the play and right up the middle they go because what you've got out here is a lot of little kindergartners, they're not strong, they don't know anything about the battle, and Satan is having his way because he is fighting against an army of children. But young men are strong, they've overcome the wicked one. Are you a victor or a victim? Are you an overcomer or overcome? Are you strong, does the Word of God abide in you? Can you honestly, literally say that you're an overcomer? If not, if you've been saved for a while, shame on you. If you're a little baby, yes, welcome into the nursery. But this delayed growth is a shame to Almighty God.

Now, here's the third stage. Watch it. First of all, there's the thrilling wonders of childhood, secondly the triumphant warfare of manhood. Thirdly, **the tested wisdom of fatherhood**. Because here's where the Lord



is moving us to. Look in First John 2 verse 13, "I write unto you Fathers, because you've known Him from the beginning." Verse 14, "Again I have written unto you fathers because ye have known Him." The idea of a father is a person who has come to mature wisdom, he knows, he understands, he is even moved beyond building and battling. He has this wisdom, he has this God-likeness. He has been with the Lord so long that his life is beginning to manifest the likeness of God. He is God-like, he has become a father. We speak of God as a father, our Father. And by the way, he's not talking here about chronological age and he's not talking here about gender, this is true, this is only an illustration. If you're a woman this applies to you, if you're a young person this applies to you. I mean, you can be a spiritual father and be a teenager. What he's talking about here is spiritual maturity. And so, there are the thrilling wonders of childhood. There's the triumphant warfare of manhood. But there is the tested wisdom of fatherhood.

You see, a father is somebody who has children. Have you reproduced? Do you have any spiritual children? Paul talked of Timothy as his son in the faith. He said to the church of Corinth in First Corinthians 4:15, he said, "I'm your spiritual father." You know, I am a physical father but I thank God that God has given me the privilege of being a spiritual father. Did you know that, I have a lot of spiritual children, I have some grandchildren, I have some great grandchildren, spiritually? People that I've won to Jesus who've won people to Jesus who've won people to Jesus. Are you going to go to Heaven empty-handed? Are there going to be any children there, I'm talking about spiritual children, when you come to the throne, when you stand at Jesus' feet? Will you say, "Father, this is my spiritual family because I have become like You, I have become a father." You see, a father is known for his wisdom. A father is known for his ability to give. Do you know one of the great joys of my life, this stage of life, is to give to my children and to my grandchildren. That is one of the greatest joys of my life. And when you become a father in the Lord, you're going to want to give to the spiritual children, these little babes, to help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to listen very, very carefully. God is not trying to say that you substitute fatherhood for manhood or that you substitute manhood for childlikeness. No. A father is a composite of all of these things. Never lose the wonder of childhood. Now the Bible says in First Corinthians 13 verse 11, "Put away childish things," but the Bible says still be childlike. You know, a child has that wonder, that sweetness. Keep that in you, keep the wonder, keep the excitement, keep the joy. Remember when your sins were forgiven you. Never forget it, never forget it. First John 2 verses 12 and 13, "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven you." Thank God for that. "I write unto you young men because you're strong and the Word of God abides in you, you've overcome the wicked one." When you get to be a father, you don't cease in the battle, you don't lose the wonder, you don't step out of the warfare, you just add all of these things to it until you become a full-grown man. And that's the reason that a person who is really mature in the Lord; did you know that little children enjoy these kind of people? Because they themselves still have their childhood; they've never lost the wonder. Did you know there ought to be a little boy in every man, a little girl in every woman who's full-grown? Still love to laugh, to play, to rollick, to have the good times. And I don't care who you are, there ought to be that manhood, you ought to stay in the battle, you ought to stay in the warfare, the Word of God ought to be in you. You just simply add all these things together until you become a full-orbed individual, what the Bible calls a father, and then you are at home in any crowd, with little children. You know, little children love Jesus, they'd come sit in His lap. And the apostle John, when he was old, he loved to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, what we're talking here about is growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

Now let me ask you an obvious question. Who wrote this book of First John? What's his name? John. John wrote five books. By the way, this is just parenthetical but I was on the airplane going to a board



meeting and I sat beside a sweet little old grandmother, and I was reading First John and some books about First John. She looked over at me. She said, "Oh, I see by your materials," said, "Who are you with?" I said, "Well, I'm connected to the Lord Jesus Christ." But I said, "I'm a Baptist by denomination." And she said, well, I wasn't ready for this one, "Well, who wrote the Johannan materials?" I said, "Well, if you mean the books," I said, "John wrote five of them, he wrote the Gospel, he wrote First, Second, Third John, and the book of the Revelation." She said, "Not everybody agrees with that." I said, "Good night, who am I sitting by?" I thought she was some sweet little grandmother. That's all a side, But anyway, it has absolutely nothing to do whatever, I've wasted three minutes right here with what I have to say. But, John wrote this, that's what I'm trying to say, John wrote this.

And if you say, "Oh, dear sweet old John, the beloved disciple." You know, when we think of John, don't you have just sort of a nice idea of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who wrote about love and told us to love one another? I want to tell you, friend, if you'd been around John when he was a young man you would not have wanted to be around John. Let me tell what John was like. Do you want to know what John was like by nature? Do you know what his nickname was? Son of Thunder! That was his nickname. He had a hair trigger. Do you know what he was by his natural disposition? Selfish as all get-out. In Mark 10:37, James and John came to Jesus and said, "Lord, when you come into Your kingdom, I'd like to sit on Your right hand and my brother over here wants to sit on Your left hand." That's what he said. In Luke 9 verses 54 and 55, when they were there going through Samaria and the Samaritans would not receive them, you know what John said? He said, "Lord, you want us to call down some fire from Heaven? Lord, a little heavenly napalm, that'll fix these folks here. God, let's nuke them until they glow and then we can shoot them in the dark. Lord, oh, God, let's get them!" Jesus had to say, "John, you don't know what spirit you're of." I mean, don't get the idea that John was Mr. Nice Guy. John was not Mr. Nice Guy when Jesus got hold of him, but he grew in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And you see him later on, he's called beloved apostle.

You see him later on when he went to Samaria, he was the one who led that revival there, it wasn't consuming fire, but Holy Ghost fire that he brought down upon them the second time when he came. He was the one who wasn't trying to be first but he was the one who taught us to love one another. You see, what John is talking about now, the apostle John, he has experienced, he has grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that means if there was hope for old John there's hope for you. You can grow. Now I want to ask you another question. Are you a growing Christian? I didn't ask if you are you saved; are you a growing Christian? I mean, listen, to fail to grow is a sin. If you don't love Jesus Christ more today than you did yesterday, you're backslidden. You need to be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, how are you going to grow? **What are the means of growth**, because a growing church is a healthy and a happy church. That's where the fellowship is sweet. Well number one, **there must be the miracle of life**. Now he calls them little children in verse 12. Actually, he uses two words for little children in this same passage of Scripture. He uses one word which just simply means born ones and then he uses another word which means children under discipline. Technia and hadeia. You've got to be a born one, I mean you cannot grow up and then get born. Have you ever talked to somebody and you try to lead them to Christ and they say, "Well, I've got some things in my life I need to straighten out and when I get all that done then I'll become a Christian." You know, that's, pardon me, but that's not very bright. That's like saying I'm going to grow up and then I'll get born. No, you see, it is birth that precedes growth.

When we were here many, many, many years ago in the old church building downtown, I had all the boys and girls, I was trying to teach a lesson on growth and so we got some little potted plants and we gave



them to different Sunday School classes and we told one, "Give this plant water, sunlight, and fertilizer." We told others, "Give this plant water and fertilizer but no sunlight." Another one, "Give this sunlight but no water and fertilizer." Until we had all of the different combinations that you could get. And some plants were growing like this and some were like this and some were like this and some were kind of like this. And then we gave the kids a stick, just a plain wooden stick in a pot and we said to them, "Give it light, give it water, and give it fertilizer." And so the kids would bring their different plants Sunday morning, we may do this again, it was a real good thing. They'd bring their plants to the platform on Sunday morning. But you know what, those kids that had a stick, their sticks never grew at all. It just wouldn't grow. Because the stick had no life.

Now, don't try to grow up before you get born. Give your heart to Jesus Christ and first of all, you have to be born from above in order to grow. Are you saved? I mean, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have that life in you? First thing, growth requires the miracle of life. Second thing, **growth requires the passage of time**. You will not be instantly mature. There are no shortcuts. Now, I did a little reading, I found out that a mouse reaches maturity in three months, cats and dogs are able to reproduce in twelve to eighteen months, gorillas and chimpanzees when they're ten years old, but human beings mature and become self-sufficient almost the slowest of all species. That's very interesting about those of us who think we are the smartest. But there's no instant maturity and just keep plodding along and you'll find out that you will grow.

Here's a third thing that growth requires. It requires the **receiving of nourishment**. Now I want to stop right here and talk a little bit. You know, the Bible says in First Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby." You don't take a new Christian and give him a study in Revelation, Ezekiel or Leviticus. You get him in the Gospel of John, other places. You get him in the milk of the Word so that he may grow thereby. And the word desire here means to crave, to crave the milk of the Word. And it's in the imperative form. You're commanded to crave the Word of God. You know what a newborn baby in the physical realm is interested in? Not the print on the curtains and not that wonderful little mobile that you hung over his bed. He's oblivious to that. It's the bottle or it's that ho-mom-enized milk, whichever one he's on. But I want you to know that he is interested in that milk and that's what Peter is saying in First Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby."

You know, if I were to come to you and I say, "How are you doing in your Christian life?" "Well, Pastor Rogers, I'm not doing very good. Hey, I'm not winning any battles, I'm not getting my prayers answered, nothing is making sense. Very frankly, I'm discouraged." Well, I'd say, "Well, tell me about your Bible study." "Oh, well, I come and hear you preach on Sunday morning, Pastor, if company doesn't come, if it's not raining I'm there to hear you preach. You ought to be happy at that." Friend, that'd be like giving a newborn baby four gallons of milk on weekends. That's just not going to get it done. You have got to be feeding day by day on the Word of God. That's where the strength comes.

Now you can grow very fast. Ethel Barrett wrote about Dwight L. Moody. Many of you don't know Dwight L. Moody, but I mean, well, he's dead, you couldn't know him, but you could've known about him. He was the Billy Graham of his day and here's what she said about Moody. You know Moody didn't have a theological education. She said this. "When Dwight L. Moody became a Christian, he developed such a hunger for God's Word, spent so much time reading it and was so quick to obey it, that he became a menace," listen to this, "to some believers. His rapid spiritual growth was an embarrassment to certain people who, though they had been saved for years, never grew up in Christ. Week after week in the church Moody attended, he would share a new experience that he'd had with the Lord. Finally, some of the older saints who couldn't stand feeling humiliated by his exemplary life, went to Moody's uncle and urged him to quiet down his



nephew.” And then Ethel Barrett said this, “His robust spiritual health and bounding energy disturbed their napping; he was just too much. So while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing until he left them far behind. He grew more in a few years than they did in thirty because he saturated his life with the Word of God. You’ve got to get the Word of God in your heart and in your life if you’re going to grow. Now watch it. What does it take to grow? Listen, you’ve got to have a birth. Number two, it takes time. Number three, you have to be constantly feeding on the Word of God.

Now let me tell you something else about little babies. Little babies will eat junk food if you’ll give it to them and little babies will put anything in their mouth, I mean a cigarette butt, a roach, or anything else. I’m telling you. They’ll put anything in their mouth. I am surprised at what some people who are members of this church, I’ll come into their home and they’ll have Jehovah’s Witness literature and not even know it’s Jehovah’s Witness literature in their home. I talked to a lady, bless her heart, I met her at the airport and she’s, I hope she’s not listening to this right now, lady, I’m sorry, but listen, I hope she is listening. She was telling me about visiting the Mormon Temple and how wonderful it was and she did not understand the basic things, folks. Little babies will put anything in their mouth, in their head, they don’t understand. The Bible says they don’t have discernment. You have to feed on the Word of God.

Listen, precious friend. It takes life, it takes time, it takes nourishment. And I’ll tell you something else, it takes discipline and exercise if you are to develop and not be a flabby Christian. Hebrews 5 verse 14, “But strong meat belongeth to them who are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised, to discern both good and evil.” And the word there for exercise is the word we get our English word gymnasium from. You know why we have so many flabby Christians? They come down the aisle of the church, they get baptized, then they come Sunday after Sunday, sit, soak, and sour. They do not exercise.

Now, you want to go on to maturity? Get a job. I mean, find something to do in this church. There’s a place of service for you. You say, “Well Pastor, I can’t teach.” Well maybe you can help with a ball club. Maybe you can help in the gymnasium. Maybe you can help in the dining hall. Maybe you can help in the bookstore. Maybe you can help in the office. Maybe you can help in the Sunday School class. Maybe you can help in jail ministry. Begin to exercise and don’t just sit around like a turtle on a log. Get busy for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a shame and a disgrace that so many people have been Christians so long and are still sitting in the nursery being rocked, sucking their thumb. Now say, Amen, you know it is true.

Are you a growing Christian? If you’re a child, thank God that you’ve been born into the family. Praise God! But I want you to become a young man. There’s a battle, there’s some work to be done. Are you a young man, a worker and a warrior? Thank God! But I want you to become a spiritual father. I want you to remind others of God. I want you to become a giving person. I want you to become a reproducing person. I want you to be a person that has the knowledge of God, when somebody has a problem they can come to you. And you’ve been so much with God that you begin to act and look like Him. Did you know that you spend enough time with somebody you begin to look like them and act like them? Joyce is getting worried. Listen, folks, we become like God.

Now, the first step is being born, becoming a little child. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Have you been born into the family of God? Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? God wants to save you, He wants to forgive your sin and He will do it. Will you pray a prayer like this? “Oh, God. Thank You for loving me so much. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins. Thank You for paying my sin debt and taking the judgment that I deserve. You told me if I would trust You, Lord Jesus, You would save me. I trust You right now. Forgive my sin, cleanse me, make me your child. Save me, Lord, and help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen.



2941 Kate Bond Road | Memphis TN 38183 | (901)382-7900