

THE FIVE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Where Are You Spiritually?

*"Till we all come... unto a perfect man..."
That we henceforth be no more children..."*

Ephesians 4:13-15



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Ephesians 4:13–15

"Till we all come... unto a perfect man... That we henceforth be no more children..."

Every Christian begins as a spiritual infant, but God never intends us to stay there.

Growth is expected.

Not everyone grows at the same speed, but everyone should be growing.

Stage 1 — The Spiritual Infant

1 Peter 2:2

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

Characteristics

Everything is new.

Hungry for God's presence.

Needs constant encouragement.

Easily influenced.

Emotionally unstable.

Requires protection from false doctrine.

Still learning basic Christian living.

Needs

1. Basic Bible teaching
 2. Fellowship
 3. Encouragement
 4. Loving correction
- Spiritual examples

Danger

Remaining dependent on everyone else.

Stage 2 — The Spiritual Child

1 Corinthians 13:11

"When I was a child..."

Paul understood children eventually grow up.

Characteristics

Growing in knowledge.
Learning obedience.
Beginning to serve.
Still struggles with emotions.
Can become easily offended.
Learning discipline.

Often asks,
"What can God do for me?"

Danger

Self-centered Christianity.
Living by feelings instead of truth.

Stage 3 — The Spiritual Young Adult

1 John 2:13-14

"I write unto you, young men... because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Notice three marks:

Strength
The Word lives in them.
Victory over temptation.

Characteristics

Faithful.
Dependable.
Actively serving.
Growing discernment.
Developing consistency.
Learning spiritual warfare.

Danger

Pride.
Thinking they no longer need instruction.

Stage 4 — The Spiritual Parent

1 Corinthians 4:15

"For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

Also,

2 Timothy 2:2

"The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach

others also."

Parents reproduce.

Characteristics

Invests in others.

Disciples new believers.

Patient.

Encouraging.

Lives beyond personal needs.

Thinks about future generations.

Understands people develop slowly.

Questions They Ask

Who am I helping grow?

Who am I discipling?

Who can replace me someday?

Danger

Trying to do everything themselves instead of developing others.

The question is often asked how long does someone take to grow

Growth Takes Time

Mark 4:26–29

"First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear..."

Jesus describes spiritual growth as gradual and progressive. It doesn't happen overnight.

But Growth Should Be Noticeable

Hebrews 5:12

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers..."

The writer expected that **enough time had passed** for them to have matured.

There wasn't an excuse for remaining infants indefinitely.

Paul Was Patient

Paul spent:

- About **18 months** in Corinth (Acts 18:11).

About **3 years** in Ephesus (Acts 20:31).

Even after years of teaching, many believers were still growing and needed correction.

Jesus Was Patient

Jesus invested approximately 3½ years with the Twelve.

By the end, they still misunderstood some things, argued over

greatness, and Peter denied Him.
Yet after Pentecost they matured dramatically.
That reminds us that God often works over years, not weeks.

A Good Principle

Instead of asking:

"How long should it take?"

Ask:

"Are they further along than they were a year ago?"

Healthy growth isn't measured by speed but by direction.

Spiritual parents understand that discipleship is usually measured in years, not weeks.

They don't expect instant maturity because they remember how patiently God dealt with them.

Like a gardener, they water, cultivate, encourage, correct, and trust God to give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

Having said that you can attend church for twenty years and still be spiritually immature if you never allow God's Word to change you.

For example some may understand holiness teaching intellectually but take longer to apply it consistently.

Our role is to teach the whole counsel of God patiently (2 Timothy 2:24–25), while still affirming that God expects His people to grow in holiness (1 Peter 1:15–16).

That balances truth with grace.

Stage 5 — The Spiritual Elder (Mature Believer)

(Not necessarily the church office, but the highest level of spiritual maturity.)

Hebrews 5:14

"Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age..."

1 John 2:13

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning."

Notice John doesn't praise fathers for their strength.

He praises them for knowing God.

That is maturity.

Characteristics

Wisdom.
Humility.
Peace.
Discernment.
Stability.
Produces fruit.
Teaches naturally.
Leads by example.
Rarely offended.
Slow to speak.
Quick to forgive.
Trusted by others.
Sees the big picture.

Danger

Becoming comfortable.

Philippians 3:12–14

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect... forgetting those things which are behind... I press toward the mark..."

If Paul refused to become comfortable after decades of ministry, neither should we.

Principle:

Mature believers never stop pursuing Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

"But grow in grace..."

Notice Peter writes this to believers who had already matured.

Growth never stops.

Failing to invest in younger believers.

2 Timothy 2:2

"The things that thou hast heard of me... commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

This is the biblical pattern:

Paul → Timothy → Faithful Men → Others

Four generations of disciples.

One of the saddest verses in Scripture.

"There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD..."

Judges 2:10

Why?

One generation failed to pass the truth on effectively.

A mature believer's greatest accomplishment is not what they have done for God—it is who will continue serving God because they invested in them.

Comparing the Five Stages

Infant	Child	Young Adult	Parent	Spiritual Elder
Needs milk	Learning obedience	Serving faithfully	Reproducing disciples	Leaving a legacy
Receives	Learns	Serves	Invests	Multiplies
Needs care	Needs guidance	Needs opportunities	Needs disciples	Needs successors
Emotion-driven	Growing discipline	Developing consistency	Helping others	Stable wisdom

How Do We Move Forward?

Growth happens through:

God's Word

Acts 20:32

"...able to build you up..."

Prayer

Luke 18:1

Prayer develops dependence upon God.

Obedience

Knowledge without obedience produces pride.

Obedience produces maturity.

Trials

James 1:2-4

Pressure develops perseverance.

Correction

Hebrews 12:8 AMP

8 Now if you are exempt from correction and left without discipline in which all share, then you are illegitimate offspring and not true sons.

Receiving correction proves sonship.

Service

Serving stretches us.

Ministry reveals weaknesses that comfort never exposes.

Important Truth

Every stage is necessary.

No one is born spiritually mature.

Do not despise infancy.

Do not remain there.

God's purpose is continual growth.

Final Challenge

Ask yourself honestly:

- Am I growing?
- Am I becoming more like Jesus?
- Who is helping me grow?
- Who am I helping grow?

If every Christian were as spiritually mature as I am, what kind of church would we have?