

## **Owning Our Responsibility to Grow In Grace**

Series: Following Jesus: Growing & Maturing

Hebrews 5:11-6:12 NLT (0920)

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MAY SARTON *Growth is demanding and may seem dangerous, for there is loss as well as gain in growth.*

OSWALD CHAMBERS *Maturity is the stage where the whole life has been brought under the control of God.*

### **I. God expects his children to mature**

#### **a. Too many Christians have normalized “spiritual anorexia”**

1 Peter 2:2-3 NIV <sup>2</sup>*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,* <sup>3</sup>*now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Hebrews 5:11-12 NLT <sup>11</sup>*There is so much more we would like to say about this. But you don't seem to listen, so it's hard to make you understand.* <sup>12</sup>*You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food.*

#### **b. Spiritual growth is not a passive endeavor**

Hebrews 5:13-14 NLT <sup>13</sup>*And a person who is living on milk isn't very far along in the Christian life and doesn't know much about doing what is right.* <sup>14</sup>*Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right.*

### **II. Some of the pitfalls that hinder spiritual growth**

#### **a. Repeating negative experiences without learning from them**

Hebrews 6:1-3 NLT <sup>1</sup>*So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start all over again with the importance of turning away from evil deeds and placing our faith in God.* <sup>2</sup>*You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.* <sup>3</sup>*And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.*

### **b. Pushing God to the margins of your life**

Hebrews 6:4-6 NLT <sup>4</sup>For it is impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come—<sup>6</sup>and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people to repentance again because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross again by rejecting him, holding him up to public shame.

IVP Bible Background Commentary—The point here is not that God does not accept the repentant, but that some hearts become too hard to consider repenting, because they refuse to acknowledge Christ, the only means of repentance. By willfully choosing the kind of belief that nailed Jesus to the cross, they accept responsibility again for killing him.

### **c. Failing to take discipleship seriously**

Hebrews 6:7-8 NLT <sup>7</sup>When the ground soaks up the rain that falls on it and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has the blessing of God. <sup>8</sup>But if a field bears thistles and thorns, it is useless. The farmer will condemn that field and burn it.

### **d. Turning inward and becoming self-focused**

Hebrews 6:9-12a NLT <sup>9</sup>Dear friends, even though we are talking like this, we really don't believe that it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. <sup>10</sup>For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians, as you still do. <sup>11</sup>Our great desire is that you will keep right on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. <sup>12</sup>Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent.

### **e. Failing to take responsibility for feeding yourself**

Hebrews 6:12b NLT Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and patience.

Hebrews 11:33-40 NLT <sup>33</sup>By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. <sup>35</sup>Women received their loved ones back again from death. But others trusted God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life. <sup>36</sup>Some were mocked, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in dungeons. <sup>37</sup>Some died by stoning, and some were sawed in half; others were killed with the sword. Some went about in skins of sheep and goats, hungry and oppressed and mistreated. <sup>38</sup>They were too good for this world. They wandered over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. <sup>39</sup>All of these people we have mentioned received God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. <sup>40</sup>For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race.