

Many of the Hebrew Christians to whom our author wrote had grown down in their Christian walk, not up. Believers must move beyond the basics of the Christian faith and grow up in Christ.

Hebrews 5:14: “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”

- **Grammatical Usage:** “**solid**” or in the Greek, “sterea” an adjective meaning, solid (firm); referring to what is immovable (will not budge); stable (not changeable), standing fast without buckling or giving way (steadfast).
- **Literal Interpretation:** But the firm, immovable unchanging Word is for the mature—for those whose spiritual senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. There are five lessons here on Christian growth:

1. It is possible to be a Christian, but to be slow to grow.
If there is spiritual life, there will be spiritual growth of some sort, but growth rates vary. Some become Christians and instantly drop the sins that have plagued their lives for years and never fall back. Others struggle to get rid of those sins for decades. The author hits the Hebrews with the fact that they “**have become dull of hearing**” (5:11). They didn’t used to be that way, but they have developed this spiritual malady.

If Jesus is the preacher and the message isn’t coming through, guess who is at fault? When hearers are dull, teaching is difficult. Motivation is the key to learning. Jesus said, “**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied**” (Matt. 5:6). Hunger and thirst are strong motivators! When you’re hungry or thirsty, there is only one thing on your mind, to satisfy the craving for food or water. If you are driven by the hunger or thirst for righteousness, you will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). If you think, “Ho hum!” not only will you not grow; you won’t even know what you’re missing!

2. Christian growth means moving on to deeper levels of understanding.
He says, “**For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles** (the Greek word means, the ABC’s) **of the oracles of God.**” The last phrase is parallel to “**the elementary teaching about the Christ**” (6:1), and refers to the basic truths about the Christian faith: who Jesus Christ is, what He came to do, how we enter into a relationship with Him, how we live the Christian life, etc. But beyond these basic truths, there is so much more in Scripture that is deep and nourishing.

When the author says that by this time, the Hebrews should have been teachers, it does not mean that he was writing to a select group of leaders in the church. Rather, every Christian who has been a believer for a few years should be knowledgeable enough in the teachings of Scripture to instruct a younger believer. Not all are gifted as teachers for the whole church (James 3:1; Eph. 4:11-12), but all should know enough to present the gospel, to teach the basics about God, man, salvation, and the Christian life. If you

cannot do that, either you are a relatively new believer, or you're one of the older believers that this section of Scripture confronts. Grow up!

3. Christian growth is directly related to obedience to the truth that we have already learned.
The author says, **“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness” (5:13)**. He describes the spiritually mature as those who eat solid food, **“who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”** He uses the phrase **“word of righteousness”** for the Scriptures, which are designed to produce God's righteousness in those who believe and obey. Bible doctrine is not just to fill your head or help you defend some theological system. It is always intended to make you a more godly person.
4. Christian growth requires laying a foundation of doctrine and then building on it. In **6:1**, the author exhorts his readers to leave **“the elementary teaching about the Christ” and “press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation....”** Then he mentions six things that comprise the foundational, elementary teachings, arranged in three pairs:
 - a) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God: If the Jew boasted of keeping the ceremonial law, or even the Ten Commandments thinking that those works would gain him eternal life, he was wrong (**Mark 10:17-22; Matt. 5:27-48**)
 - b) Instruction about washings and laying on of hands: ceremonial cleansing was negated by the shed blood of Christ
 - c) The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment: These are basic teachings of the gospel, that everyone will be raised, either to eternal life or to eternal judgment (**John 5:24-29**)
5. Christian growth does not happen automatically; it takes deliberate effort along with God's enabling.
“Practice” (5:14) refers to a habit that is formed by deliberate effort. For the Christian, the goal is godliness or holiness. We should cut everything out of our lives that detracts from godliness and do everything that we can to move us towards godliness.

The command, **“press on to maturity” (6:1)**, is a passive verb that has the nuance of “being borne by God toward maturity.” It is the same word that Peter uses (**2 Pet. 1:21**) when he says that the men who wrote Scripture were **“moved by the Holy Spirit.”** This word was used of a ship at sea being borne by the wind in its sails. It means that while spiritual growth is our responsibility and requires our effort, beneath the whole process is God's power which is emphasized in **6:3** where the author says, **“we will”** move on to the deeper teaching, **“if God permits.”**

You can be sure that you're not growing if your spiritual life is running on autopilot. You are not growing if you are haphazard about Bible-reading and prayer. You are not growing if you are not making a deliberate effort to discipline your life for godliness. If you're not growing, you're shrinking! The author of Hebrews says to you, “Grow up!”

- **Conclusion:** The call of Christ is to grow up spiritually...will I?