

J.J.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1 John 2:12-14

*1 John 2: ¹²I write to you, dear children
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.
¹³I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.
I write to you, dear children
because you have known the Father.
¹⁴I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.*

INTRODUCTION

We are still in “Rooted In Christ” series where we started showing you the four stages of Spiritual Growth : Infancy, Children, Young Men and Fathers.

We started with Young Men last week and we’ll finish it today by God’s grace. And then next week, we’ll talk about “Fathers”

STORY : An elderly lady was amazed at how nice the young man was next door. Everyday he would help her gather things from her car or help her in her yard. One day the old lady finally asked the young man, “Son, how did you become such a fine young man?”

The young man replied, “Well, when I was a boy, I had a drug problem.”

The old lady was shocked, “I can’t believe that.”

The young man replied, “It’s true, my parents drug me to church on Sunday morning, drug me to pray on Wednesday night and drug me to Friday Bible study”

Remember, God’s will is for us to grow in our spiritual life :

Ephesians 4: 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

*14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, **we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.***

Review :

I. INFANTS

1 Corinthians 3: 1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

(Show chart)

Quote : *Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God – Oswald Chambers*

II. CHILDREN

1 John 2: 13... I write to you, dear children because you have known the Father.

Etymology : (paidion – young child), a child that still needs to be trained by his or her father

Quote : A spiritual life cannot be formed without discipline, practice, and accountability.” – Henri Nouwen, (Spiritual Direction)

(Show Chart)

What is the purpose of God’s discipline? To increase our faith.
because you have known the Father.

That’s what children to a father is. They are not afraid of anything or worry about anything because the father is with them.

Quote : “You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one’s holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

‘Father’ is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.”
– J.I. Packer

So if we understand and you’re starting to trust in God as our Father, then you know you are starting to grow in the Lord.

III. YOUNG MEN

*1 John 2:13... I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one*

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.*

Etymology : young men “neaniskos”; it is used to describe men between 24 to 40 years old.

Spiritual young men are spiritually strong

- **STRONG**

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,*

Etymology : strong “ischyros” is-khu-ras, from is-khus - strong, mighty, from one who has the skills to do something.

(Show chart)

How do you know that a person is spiritually strong?

Observe this :

*1 John 2:13... I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one*

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,*

- **OVERCOMER**

So a spiritually strong person is one who has overcome (nikao) the evil one.

Etymology : nikao root word “nike” victory.

A spiritually strong person is one who has won against the evil one.

Remember, we have an enemy of our soul who plans to defeat us.

*Ephesians 6: 10 **Finally, be strong in the Lord** and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Note : Remember, when Jesus Christ died on the cross Satan has already been defeated. But it doesn't mean that the devil won't still attack you. In fact, that's the time he will attack you more because you have become friends with God. Before you were friends with the devil, now God is your father.

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

So the question is :

How does the evil one (Satan) try to defeat us?

- **Discouragement**

I mentioned last week, that this the devil's most effective tool and yet not a lot of people know that this is his tool.

When do you become discouraged? It's not when everything is alright in this world. It's when you are undergoing trials and sufferings.

And last week, we gave you the Biblical illustration of Job where God allowed Satan to take away everything from Job – his wealth, his family and his health.. God called Job righteous and blameless and yet God allowed Satan to test Job and see if he will be discouraged from trusting God, from worshipping Him. And yet Job, continued to praise the Lord and trust in the Lord.

I read somewhere this quote :

"The enemy thought he had taken "everything" from Job. But Job's everything was God."

That shows spiritual maturity. We'll talk about that next week.

So the question is : If the devil wants to defeat us, how can we overcome the evil one?

Illustration : Remember the movie of Karate Kid. Daniel was a newcomer in the city. He moved from Boston to California. And since he was new, he was bullied by these kids who knew karate. He wanted to learn karate but the only school there is where the bullies go. So he chanced upon Mr. Miyagi, where he saw Mr. Miyagi used karate to defend himself. So he asked Mr. Miyagi to train him and Mr. Miyagi agreed and asked Daniel to go to his house. But instead of asking Daniel to do kata or other karate stuff, he asked Daniel to scrub the floor but do it in a certain way, then wax his many cars with the famous "wax on and wax off" and then paint the fence with up, down and side to side movements.

It's almost like free labour for Mr. Miyagi and Daniel wanted to quit because his arm now hurts and etc until Mr. Miyagi showed how it can be applied in a fight to defend himself (show video)

Connect : You see, as “infants” and “children” being trained in God’s Word and why the Word is No.1 in the church and why we are encouraging to read the Bible yourself, it’s because when the enemy attacks, WE ARE EQUIPPED TO DEFEAT HIM!

Listen carefully : The reason why we can overcome the evil one is because just like Daniel San, where that “wax in and wax off” thing has become part of him because of practice... THE WORD OF GOD BECOMES PART OF US THROUGH CONSTANT STUDY, MEDITATION, MEMORIZATION OF IT.

Look at what John wrote :

*I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you, (becomes part of you)
and you have overcome the evil one.*

That is the only way, we can defeat the attacks of the devil, THROUGH GOD’S WORD!

Now remember again, how must infants grow?

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Why again?

Ephesians 4: 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

And as we are being trained in God’s Word, look at what happens.

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.

Milk just goes straight in... but solid food, you need to chew it yourself and taste and enjoy how good it is.

We can never become spiritually mature without God’s Word.

Quotes :

Christians who neglect the Bible simply do not mature - John Stott

The Bible is the divine means of developing spiritual maturity. There is no other way. - Howard G. Hendricks

Biblical Illustration : Look at our Lord Jesus Himself.

Now what is the first thing that Satan would like to do when you become a Christian?

For you not to walk with God. For you to forget who you are and put your trust in your self and in the world.

That's how he tried to tempt our Lord?

Matthew 4: 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. (this time Satan uses Psalm 91 to say that angels will catch him)

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." (How dare the devil say this to the very God Himself but we have to remember, Jesus is fully God but was fully human at that point...he feels hunger, loneliness and the devil is tempting to make Him doubt who He is, that He is very God Himself by what making Him follow His appetites.)

The devil is saying, "If you are the Son of God..." when our Lord is already truly the Son of God

Application : THAT'S WHAT THE DEVIL TRIES TO DO WITH US. He will try to pull you away and ignore or neglect that you are a child of God or a follower of Christ. He will deceive you not to worship God, to put yourself first instead of God and etc.

What are the temptations?

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

- **Lust of the flesh** - *tell these stones to become bread."*

What is the lust of the flesh? It's putting your personal needs and desires more than God's will.

Remember, our Lord just ended his fast for 40 days, "he was hungry". You know this yourself, when you're hungry, you don't care about anything else, except for food.

God knows the call of the flesh is stronger sometimes than our love for Him. That's why we emphasize joining in prayer meetings in this church.

Matthew 26: 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Illustration : Recently, Mica woke up on a Sunday morning with a huge body ache because she came from a hard workout on Saturday and her head was aching. She then said to me, that she will not go to church even if she's slated to play the piano. My wife and I looked at each other but we did not say a thing. After a few minutes, she came back and said to us, "I'm going to church. I'm being such a "softie", (she used a more inappropriate word). This is just only a body ache and a headache and I'm using that excuse not to go to church."

- **Pride of life** - *the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down*

What is the pride of life? It's making people see how great you are instead of how great God is.

That's why the Bible says,

1 Corinthians 10: 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Illustration : That's why you see a lot of Christian athletes, after a victory, that's what they do...they give glory to Jesus Christ. Manny Pacquiao, after the fight, said last night when asked where he gets his strength since he's already 46 years old., "God is the one who gave me the strength." Why? It's because after you've won, the temptation is to say, "I did this." That was the downfall of Satan. God has made him the most beautiful of angels, full of wisdom and a model of perfection (Ezekiel 28) and yet his pride got the better of him and he was thrown from heaven (Isaiah 14)

- **Lust of the eyes** - *took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor 9 "All this I will give you he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

What is the lust of the eyes? The ambition to be rich and powerful and to be respected

What do you notice about all of these temptations? IT'S TARGETED TO OUR FLESH, OUR WANTS, OUR DESIRES AND ETC.

That's why in order to follow Christ, this is what our Lord said :

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said unto His disciples, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Listen carefully : That's why prosperity gospel is a false gospel because IT FEEDS THE FLESH. IT FEEDS WHAT WE WANT BY DISGUIISING THAT IS WHAT GOD WANTS FOR OUR LIVES.

Now, but let's look at how our Lord replied to Satan's attempt to tempt Him.

Look at how the Lord answered :

*Matthew 4 : 4 Jesus answered, **"It is written:** 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

*7 Jesus answered him, **"It is also written:** 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'*

*10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! **For it is written:** 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only*

Our Lord answered with Scriptures.

You remember our study in Spiritual Warfare? The Bible asks us to wear the full armor of God in Ephesians.

Ephesians 6 : 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

That's designed so you will not be defeated or overcome. You're defending yourself. How do we overcome or be victorious over the enemy? By going on the offense with God's Word. That's why Paul wrote :

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Illustration : You saw that last night. What was Barrios trainer telling him, be more aggressive in. You can never win a fight by defense. You win by offense!

This is why a spiritual strong person, one who is victorious...look...

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,*

It lives in him. It means, the Word of God has become part of him.

So if we're going to chart this again,

Infants – Worldly – controlled by their feelings and appetites

Children – Growing - Learning about God's Word

Young Men - Strong – Living God's Word

Illustration: We have a family friend, in fact, Chicay and I consider him as one of our kids and when we eat out in a restaurant, he introduces himself as our adopted child. He is very close to our family. He is very strong in the Lord and loves the Lord and His Word. He attends church faithfully. He got transferred far away from his family and the first thing he did was to find a church he could be part of and then he even started a small group of other young men and women for fellowship and study God's Word.

One day, he gave us the news that he now has a girlfriend. The girlfriend is also a Christian. In fact, they are already both serious that the girl met the family who and this young man met the girl's family. But when they were talking about marriage, he found out that there were some doctrinal issues that they did not agree on. For example, the girl did not believe that homosexuality is a sin and abortion is a sin. They talked about it for months and looking at the Bible on it but the girl wouldn't budge on her stand.

This young man had to make a painful decision of breaking up their relationship because of this. It was very painful to him and he cried and cried about it and was even thinking if he did the right thing.

There was a time that he was so exhausted with his emotions, that after eating BBB (brunch) in our house, he lied down in our couch and fell asleep for a long time with Baxter comforting him.

But the point is this, he acted maturely. He did not put his own feelings or needs or emotions first but put God's will first.

Then 2 years ago, God gave him a new girlfriend where they both agree on what God's Word says and he'll be introducing this new girlfriend to us.

We recently attended their wonderful wedding two months ago.

This is the "young man" that John was talking about.

S.G.D.