

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

Last week we started the series on Rooted In Christ.

Quote : If root strong, tree survive – Mr. Miyagi (Karate Kid)

Illustration : That quote comes from the movie Karate Kid Part 3. That's one of the quotes that I remember in my life. The story in the movie was that Daniel (Karate Kid) was taking care of bonsai together with his mentor but then Daniel's enemies came and broke the bonsai tree. Daniel went to his mentor and they immediately repaired the tree and Daniel asked Miyagi if that tree will survive and that's when the famous quote was said.

It's just like us, the devil will try to destroy us, problems will try to bring us down but if we are rooted in Christ...we will survive, not only survive, we will come out victorious.

We're talking about the stages of Spiritual Growth and then we'll talk about how to grow in Christ.

We shared with you the FOUR STAGES IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

There are four stages : Infants, Children, Young Men, Father

Last week, we talked about the Infant stage in baby growth.

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.

So who are baby Christians? It's not necessarily new Christians. There are people who have been saved for a long time and yet they are still babies, spiritually speaking.

According to God's Word, **baby Christians are people who are still worldly.**

What does it mean to be worldly?

KJV : "carnal" "sarkikos" governed by animal nature or animal appetites.

Let's look at it this way.

What characterizes a baby from an adult. A baby is all about themselves. A baby is selfish and it will only react base on what it feels.

The baby gets hungry. It cries. The baby feels irritated, it throws a tantrum. Baby gets easily distracted by toys and anything that glitters.

How do we grow up from babies?

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

And as we discussed last week, SPIRITUAL MILK IS THE WORD OF GOD

KJV version

1 Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, (KJV)

By God's grace, allow me to go deeper so we will understand this.

Etymology : word "logikos", where we get the word logos

The word logikos, means "reason" where we get "logic".

This means, we should be thinking about, meditating, reasoning with God's word.

Does it make sense? Is it logical? Because if you really think and study God's Word, IT MAKES SENSE!

Examples :

In terms of religion : Why should I pray to saint when I can go directly to Jesus. IT MAKES SENSE and also the Scriptures also tell us so (the ultimate authority is Scriptures)

Our Lord taught us to pray directly "Our Father" (Matthew 6:19)

In Hebrews 4 it says, because of Jesus

"Hebrews 4: 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

In terms of creation : There is order and design in the world. If there's a design, there's a Designer. For example : you find watch inside the forest, you can't just say, oh, it just appeared there.

That's why the Bible says :

Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Remember, that's when you know a baby is growing, it starts thinking.

That's why Martin Luther when asked to recant his teaching in the Reformation, this is what he said,

Quote : Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason...my conscience is captive to the Word of God. – Martin Luther

That's how we grow as Christians, it's through Scriptures and through plain reason. So if what you are believing is not in Scripture which is the Word of God and doesn't stand to plain reason, reject it.

That's why by God's grace, that's what I encourage you in this church, THINK. Think about what I'm preaching...Is it Biblical? Does it make sense?

That's why in Acts, it is written :

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Noble : eugenes "well (eu) finished"

In the Philippines, we sometimes call it "masa"... politicians love the masa because they only follow what others do or as people say, they are given 1000 pesos and they vote for crooked politician.

Readiness of mind : enthusiasm, eagerness, ready to think about it.

Searched : "anakrino" examined, "ana" in the midst "krino" pick out, separate, judge Scriptures daily...

We don't have Bible study for this summer. But do you open your Bible app or your Bible everyday and reflect on what you have read?

That's how we grow.

Let's go to the next stage of spiritual growth

II. CHILDREN

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

Now, as I mentioned last week. The two words for children here are two different words in Greek :

*¹²I write to you, **dear children**
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name*

THE FIRST ONE IN VERSE 12 : Etymology : Teknion – child (like even if I’m 40, I will always be a child of my father and mother), it’s a term used of a teacher to his disciples. So, the first part, John is addressing ALL FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST!
That’s why John follows with, according to context : *because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name*

THE SECOND ONE IN VERSE 13:

Etymology : (paidion – young child), a child that still needs to be trained by his or her father, ONE WHO IS NOT A BABY ANYMORE BUT GROWING IN INTELLECT BUT STILL NEEDS TO BE TRAINED

So a child in their spiritual growth is growing but still needs to be trained

In short : In order for a young Christian to grow, he needs to be trained and disciplined.

*Hebrews 12:6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”*

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.

Illustration : Who is this in the photo?



That's Manny Pacquiao when he was a teenager, training to become a boxer. Who knew at that time that one of these days, he would win twelve world titles in eight different weight divisions.



He cannot have achieved this without training and without a mentor.

Side note : As you can see, when Manny became born again, you can how he grew quickly in his faith? It was Reuben who told me this, it's because he believes that the same training and discipline that he learned in boxing, he also applied it in studying the Word of God! He started attending Bible studies and reads the Bible regularly and brings his family to worship services every Sunday.

Quote : (when being interviewed) Read the Bible continually. Pray continually. Until when? Until you're still alive here on this earth. Because you are forming your destiny, which way you go. – Manny Pacquiao

It's the same with Spiritual growth.

Do you know that the Bible shows that it's the other way around with people who are not God's children? There's no discipline or training.

Romans 1: 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts.

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

Remember : Discipline is not only correcting bad behaviour but more importantly it is forming good spiritual habits

Example : We teach a child to brush their teeth everyday; to do their homework...it's forming good habits

SO for a Christian, examples of good habits in order to grow :

- establishing an "alone" time with God,
- to read your Bible everyday,
- to attend Bible study and bringing their Bibles,
- to worship every Sunday,
- giving your tithes and offerings,
- joining in prayer meetings...that is IF you want to grow in your Christian life.

Note : Do you have an "alone" time with God? When was the last time? When was the last time you read the Bible on your own? Are you still trying to finish the entire Bible? Are you joining the prayer meetings? Are you tithing? Are you giving sacrificially? You know why tithing is important, it's not because of the promise of the return. It's because tithing and sacrificial giving trains and disciplines a follower of Christ to trust in God more than they trust their money.

Illustration : I believe it was Chuck Swindoll who gave this example that a Christian was saying that I have "faith" in God. I put my trust in Him. But ask him if he really trust Him enough to give 10% of what he earns, then that's how you know where they really put their trust in.

Beloved, there's no other way for us to grow in the Christian life unless we form these good habits.

QUOTE : BE AN INTENTIONAL CHRISTIANS : If you stop and ask yourself why you are not so devoted as the (early) Christians, your own heart will tell you that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it." - William Law (ginusto in tagalog)

In short, do you really want to know more about our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you really want to have a deeper personal relationship with our Lord? Do you really want to grow in your faith?

Everything starts with intention "gusto mo ba?"

Illustration : Do you really want to lose weight? Then you have to be disciplined in your calorie intake, you start to exercise and etc.

IT'S THE SAME WITH OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH, IT STARTS WITH INTENTION THEN THE DISCIPLINE AND TRAINING TO STAY ON WITH IT.

And what happens when you start doing this. YOU START TO REALLY KNOW WHO GOD IS... AS YOUR FATHER.

That's why John wrote :

because you have known the Father.

Etymology : known "ginosko" intimate knowledge

The more you're starting to put your faith and trust in God that HE IS YOUR FATHER.

LISTEN: You can only trust someone whom you know intimately. These testings, trainings, disciplines are all designed in order for us to know more and more our Father more.

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

When writing this, John must have remember how our Lord described our Father in heaven.

Matthew 6: 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

We know we have grown in our spiritual life when we know that we have a Father in heaven that will take care of us.

The RESULT? . you begin to stress less more or panic or become angry when things aren't going the way it's supposed to be... BECAUSE YOU REALLY KNOW DEEP IN YOUR HEART WHO GOD IS AS YOUR FATHER!!!

That's why the Psalmist wrote :

*Psalm 131: 2 But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.*

What is a weaned child? A weaned child has survived the fragile stage of infancy and can now eat solid food rather than breastfeed from his or her mother.

According to Jewish custom, they celebrate that occasion.

Genesis 21: 8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.

1 Samuel 1: 24 After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh.

This means that the child now has more chance of maturing, surviving because he can now eat more than milk but now solid food.

At the end of the day, IF THE INFANT CHRISTIAN is someone who follows their own appetites and feelings and it's all about me.

The Child Christian is the one who is being trained and disciplined not to follow their own appetites and feelings and is being trained and disciplined to follow AND TRUST Christ rather than themselves.

Remember what Paul says regarding infants or baby Christians...

1 Corinthians 3: 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

What Paul is saying symbolically here is that the Corinthians are still like babies who is still about themselves, all about what feels good and acts on their feeling and so they are not yet ready to grow.

A Christian who has become a child has passed that stage. They have grown from about just looking after themselves from being disciplined and trained to have faith in God.

And as they continue to do that they will grow to become young men and fathers.

We'll continue that next week :

But let me live you with this story that will help you grow as a Christian.

Illustration : I have a work mate and we used to travel for business. In my first travel with him, I noticed that during take-off, he would be closing his eyes and mumbling something. I thought he was praying. When the seatbelt signs were turned off, I asked him what he was mumbling. He explained to me that he was saying to himself, "30,000 ft...30,000 ft." And he explained to me why. It's because his father was a commercial airline pilot and he would sometimes be with him and his father explained that the most dangerous part of a flight is the take off or the landing. In the take-off, if the engine stalls or anything can happen. It's only at 36,000 ft for a big airplane when it's on cruising altitude that they can relax because it's the wind that's carrying the airplane. But it's also during take-off that the greatest amount of discipline, fuel, force and effort is needed to make the plane fly.

It's like the Christian life. In order for us to grow, we need to be disciplined and committed in our devotion time, reading the Bible, going to church, giving our tithes and

offering, sharing the Gospel to others, having fellowship with other Christians. These are basic stuff but we need to be committed to it in order for us to grow spiritually.

CHRISTIANS, WE NEED TO LIFT OFF

S.G.D.