

GROWING IN GRACE
"The Objective of Spiritual Growth"
2 Peter 3:18

INTRODUCTION:

1. Over the past couple of decades, child development experts, both Christian and secular, have come forward to identify a unique problem in the Western World.

a) The problem or Syndrome is often called the Hurried Child Syndrome.

b) Hurried child syndrome, a term proposed by [David Elkind](#), is characterized by a child's exposure to pressures and demands that exceed their natural developmental stages.

Children with this syndrome are often pushed to behave and perform like mini-adults. This rushing can manifest in various forms, such as accelerated academic programs, over-scheduling of extracurricular activities, and early exposure to adult issues and media content leading to unrealistic expectations and pressure to mature quickly.

The constant drive to achieve and compete can leave little room for play, relaxation, and natural growth. A recent [study](#) revealed that hurried children often suffer from anxiety and depression and feel unworthy when they fail to meet their parents' expectations.

The impacts aren't just mental; these children also face physical health issues. They often lack adequate sleep, have poor eating habits, and don't get enough physical activity, which can lead to various health problems. Hurrying through childhood also impedes emotional growth, making it harder for them to manage their emotions and form healthy relationships.

2. THE SAME IS TRUE with the process of our **Spiritual Growth** toward MATURITY. Spiritual BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, and ADOLESCENCE are stages along the way to our becoming MATURE ADULTS in Christ.

3. ***Ephesians 4:13***

4. ***1 Corinthians 14:20***

5. **VERY IMPORTANT:** Spiritual Maturity is the ability to consistently view and live life from the perspective of the **SPIRIT and NOT THE FLESH**.

a) With the result that we maximize our God-Given Capacity to bring Him Glory.

6. Our quest for Spiritual Maturity is seen in this amazing passage - **1 John 1:1-3**

7. TODAY we are not missing anything because Jesus is not here.

a) **John 14:17**

8. **Hebrews 6:1**

a) "and go on to maturity"

THERE ARE THREE LEVELS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

I. LEVEL 1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD

1. 1 **John 2:12**

a) "I am writing to you little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake."

2. 1 **John 2:13**

a) New Christians know God as their Father, but not in the intimate way that is characteristic of MATURE Christians.

3. The Gk word for "*little children*" refers to a "*toddler*" and so this is probably referring to a baby Christian who has recently been "*Born Again*."

a) People at this stage of Spiritual Growth are still coming to grips with their Salvation.

4. A BABY CHRISTIAN IS DEPENDENT

a) A baby Christian cannot function on his own.

1) They are dependent of OTHERS.

2) They need someone to FEED them.

5. SPIRITUAL INFANCY IS MARKED BY INSTABILITY

a) This instability is related to Circumstances.

a) If things are fine...their fine.

b) If things are tough, their not fine.

b) **James 1:2**

6. If you have been a Christian for years and you are still dependent on someone else to feed you, your Growth is going to be severely limited unless some changes are made.

7. 1 **Corinthians 3:1-3**

a) Paul was chastising them because by this time they had been saved for at least 5 years yet still needed their diapers changed.

8. 1 **Peter 2:2**

II. LEVEL 2 - ADOLESCENCE

1. 1 *John 2:13-14*

2. This would be from the teen years to young adulthood.

3. These are the years when Satan is really on the prowl and young believers are in a **BATTLE**.

4. It is during these years of the Christian life that we learn to use **THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, GOD'S WORD**, to counter the attacks of the Enemy.

5. While young Christians are learning to be strong and overcome the devil with the **WORD**, they still need the support and guidance of **MATURE CHRISTIANS** to help them handle conflicts, whether **THEY THINK SO OR NOT**.

6. *Hebrews 5:11-14*

III. LEVEL 3 - ADULTHOOD

1. The **OBJECTIVE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS TO REACH** A level of **MATURITY** that John described in text we're studying as being a father.

2. 1 *John 2:13-14*

3. What makes you a spiritual adult or mature Believer?

a) **Answer:** The mature be knows God!!

b) The Mature Believer knows God in the depth of intimacy that has been developing over time - through the growth process and the scars obtained in **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**.

4. A mature believer has a personal testimony of God's faithfulness and goodness.

5. So how do you know when you know God intimately?

a) When a person gets saved a union occurs between your spirit and the Holy Spirit, who made you alive in Christ.

b) And over time a Mature Believer enters a higher level of Spiritual Awareness.

6. 1 *Corinthians 2:9-11, 15-16*

a) A Spiritual Christian **SEES** things that the human eye can't see.

b) They **HEAR** things that the human eye can't hear.

c) They **THINK THOUGHTS** that the **HOLY SPIRIT** gives to them.

1) **1 Corinthians 2:12**

7. THIS ONLY COMES THROUGH INTIMACY WITH GOD.

a) This intimacy comes through Spiritual Maturity that allows you to hear *God* speaking directly to you through His **WORD**.

8. When *God's Word* is coming alive for you in ways that change your life and take you in a direction you would never have discovered yourself, you know what its like to be on the same wavelength as the **HOLY SPIRIT**.

CONCLUSION:

1. Spiritually mature Christians have a passion to pursue and know *God*, and they aren't satisfied until they are in intimate fellowship with Him. **WOW!!**

2. **2 Peter 3:18**