

GROWING UP OR GROWING OLD?

Heb. 5:11-14

Age alone doesn't produce maturity!

A principal promoted a teacher with 10 years experience to a position of administrative leadership .

Another teacher complained: "You promoted this teacher with 10 years experience and by-passed me. I have 25 years of experience."

"No. The teacher I promoted has 10 years teaching experience; you have 1 year of experience, repeated 25 times."

We have inward urge to grow up, to become more mature & wiser.

It's insult to accuse someone of being childish; not acting their age. Act of getting older, isn't necessarily accompanied by becoming more mature—By growing wiser.

It's possible to grow old, without growing up!

This principle is true in *spiritual* life.

Writer interrupts his logical presentation to deal with spiritual maturity in Heb 5:11-14

Their inability to understand 5:11-6:20

Author's presenting Christ as our High Priest.

He interrupts to point out problem explaining this doctrine because they can't understand.

The problem 5:11-14

While they've believed long enough to be teachers, they haven't used what they've learned.

3 problems keep people from understanding difficult truth 5:11-12

1. We become hard of hearing 5:11 *"About this we have much to say, & it is hard to explain, since you've become dull of hearing."*

Their ability to hear has grown dull.

lit., “you’ve become *sluggish* in the ears!”

They weren’t naturally deficient; they’d *become* spiritually lazy.

They didn’t start out that way. They started with enthusiasm.

But they’ve lost it!

Original eagerness to hear & respond to God’s Word had cooled.

We’ve all seen new Christians who, before they know better, are enthusiastic about what God says; they sop up every word.

Then we learn how we’re *supposed to* respond to Scripture.

It becomes common.

Accusation sounds insulting, but he’s pointing out that the reason truth isn’t sinking in isn’t because of the presenter.

It’s because listeners are hard of hearing.

No preacher would dare say that today!

Preachers cry together about response to preaching: “*I’m not getting anything out of your messages. I’m not being spiritually fed!*”

This preacher pulls no punches. “If we’re not being fed, the problem is our hearing!”

Writer wants us to understand; it’s not always *the preacher* who’s dull!

Sometimes it’s *our hearing* that’s dull!

We don’t always *want* to hear what God is trying to tell us.

That’s characteristic of immature—always complaining about how little food we’re getting because we aren’t ready to hear what God wants to tell us.

Like the small child who refuses the casserole served; and then complains of being hungry all evening!

Writer wants to explain some things but we aren’t ready. We are dull hearers.

2. We need someone to teach us basic truths of God's Word all over again

We're old enough. We should be teaching others **5:12a** *"Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God."*

Instead, we need to be taught basic truth of God's Word.

"Basic principles" refers to ABCs; basic principles science or system of thought operates by.

Writer's concern: readers haven't gone beyond that starting point.

They haven't moved on to more serious implications of God's truth.

3. We need milk (=>"baby food") NOT solid food

5:12b *"You need milk, not solid food"*

Choice for older people—for those who've been around a while 5:13-14

Hebrews isn't addressed to unsaved people

You can't possibly grow up before you're born.

Spiritual truth will *never* make sense until you trust Christ.

Hebrews isn't addressed to newborns

One thing that being around babies will teach you is that *babies make messes*.

You have to learn to crawl before you can walk.

You have to learn to eat baby food before T-bone steaks!

That's the way babies come!

True of newborn Christians too!

Nothing wrong with starting out as a newborn.

It's the only way to get here!

Hebrews is addressed to older people—those who've been around a while.

If you've been around for 5 or 10 years, or 40-50 years, you fall into one of two categories:

1. Older mature saints—who walk with God and act like it.
2. Older babies

The writer's concern is based on the assumption that *it's possible to be around good Bible teaching for a long time and never grow up.*

You become older, but not more mature.

You become older, but not wiser.

He describes what these two kinds of people look like:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Food</u>	<u>Result</u>
<u>Older babies</u>	<u>Milk</u>	<u>“unacquainted with the Word of righteousness”</u>

13 *“Everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he’s a child.”*

“Unacquainted with” or *“not accustomed to”* means “without experience” or “unskilled.” They haven’t learned what it feels like to live by the Word of righteousness.

Babies don’t understand the truth about righteousness

Don’t know how to live a godly lifestyle

Act like everyone else around them.

Mature saints **Solid food**

1. Practice what God’s Word teaches

Something you can sink your teeth into.

14 *“Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”*

2. Train themselves

Get spiritual exercise

They are “in training”

3. Have discernment

Recognize evil from
God's perspective
when they see it.

Recognize good when they see it.

Which kind are you? Are you satisfied?

If you're having trouble understanding & practicing God's Word . . .

If you seem to keep falling into the world's mold . . .

Maybe you've never trusted Christ. . . .

Maybe you're a newborn Christian and that's normal! . . .

But if you're growing old, . . .

You had better decide to enter training camp!

It's never too late!

No matter how out of shape you may be,
you can start training today.

Like aerobics. When you're out of shape, you start a little at
a time.

Start now! Make a decision to go into training for maturity.

Then, when God speaks to you about an issue in your life,

Just do it! Decide to obey Him. Start practicing.

Get on a proper diet of food from God's Word.

Get off the junk food.

Stop pouring stuff into your system that doesn't make you
stronger.

Good eating promotes good health—for growing spiritually, as
physically.

Adult feeding doesn't depend on parents. Have to feed yourself!

Likewise, *your* feeding doesn't depend on me.

If the main food you get comes from this pulpit, you are going
to starve.

Eat during the week.

Learn to feed yourself.

Learn to digest solid food & live by energy it provides.

No teacher can do that for you.

3 characteristics of person who has grown up rather than just grown old.

1. Nourishing diet of solid food

2. Sufficient exercise—*practicing* what God has said

3. Discernment to recognize right and wrong.

But there's **an order** to these three:

Discernment is result of exercise.

You won't learn to distinguish right from wrong, until you begin to put into practice what you already know.

Other sequential point may surprise you:

We'll gag on solid food, if we try to swallow it before we're ready!

Solid food is for the mature—not for babies.

If you aren't living by what you know, don't be surprised if you choke when you try to absorb the deeper truth of God!

Exercise. Practice. Use of the truth you know comes first.

Then you can absorb deeper things.

Otherwise presentation of truth will seem confusing & dull.

But dullness isn't in *presentation of truth*; it's dullness of *hearing*.

If you're not obeying what you know God has told you, don't be surprised if you find biblical teaching boring and irrelevant.

So writer concludes with a warning in 6:1.

It's not a bawling out. It's an exhortation:

"Let's get going!" Let's go on to maturity! Let's grow up!