

## **“How Do I Know I Am Growing at a Proper Rate?”**

We may have been a Christian for years, even decades. Does that mean we are automatically mature fathers/mothers in the faith? Growing to maturity (from a child in the faith to a young man/woman in the faith to a father/mother in the faith) is not a matter of time; it is a matter of making the most of the time. How do we really know when we have reached those spiritual milestones? How do we measure our progress? We are not left alone to guess. The apostle John addressed this specifically in 1 John 2:12-17. It's time to identify how old in the Lord we really are?

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

#### **I. THE DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

##### **A. SPIRITUALITY**

Gal. 5:16-18 “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”

##### **B. SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

2 Cor. 3:18 “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

#### **II. THE LEVELS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

1 John 2:12-14 “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

##### **A. THE CHILD IN THE FAITH**

###### **1. His Characteristics**

## **2. His Greatest Danger**

Eph. 4:14 “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;”

### **B. THE YOUNG MAN IN THE FAITH**

#### **1. His Characteristics**

#### **2. His Greatest Danger**

1 John 2:15-16 “ Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

- a. The lust of the flesh
- b. The lust of the eyes
- c. The boastful pride of life

### **C. THE FATHER IN THE FAITH**

#### **1. His Characteristics**

#### **2. His Greatest Danger**

Phil. 3:12-14 “ Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

## **III. THE HINDRANCES TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

### **A. MALNUTRITION: Lack of Proper Food**

1 Pet. 2:2 “...like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,”

Heb. 5:12-14 “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes {only} of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

### **B. POISON: Eating the Wrong Food**

2 Tim. 4:3-4 “ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in

accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.”

### **C. INJURY: Doing Things That Harm Us**

Gal. 5:19-21 “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

### **D. ATROPHY: Lack of Proper Exercise**

Eph. 4:16 “... from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

### **E. OVER-EXERTION: Too Much Exercise**

Prov. 3:5-7 “ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the \Lord\ and turn away from evil.”

Ps. 46:10 "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

### **F. ISOLATION: Lack of Proper Fellowship**

Heb. 10:24-25 “... and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging {one another}; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

## **IV. THE CHALLENGE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Eph. 4:11-16 “And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

2 Pet. 3:18 “... Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity, Amen”