

## Spiritually Mature

I Corinthians 1:1-9

10/ 02/ 05

### Intro

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, a church he loves because he was used of the Lord to bring it to birth. But now the church is in trouble. There are divisions and strife, jealousy and bickering. They are not growing into the godly mature Christians he had hoped.

Paul knows the answer is for them to grow out of fleshliness and into spiritual maturity. So he writes and encourages them to become like Christ, to grow beyond being spiritual babes.

**These are the principles of growing in spiritual maturity. Christians who are growing spiritually have the following characteristics in their lives.**

### I. **Desire Solid Food**

#### A. More than milk toast

- Milk toast was the precursor of modern day cereal. You could take toast, put it in a bowl, sprinkle sugar on it and then add warm milk.
- It made you feel warm and fuzzy inside, was easy to digest, and didn't have hardly any nutritional value.
- Paul writes that he must address them as babes in Christ; he gave them milk because they couldn't receive solid food.

- The writer to the Hebrews wrote something very similar to them:

**Hebrews 5:12-13, "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 an infant."**

- We are to be infants in regards to evil...

**I Corinthians 14:20, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature."**

#### B. Desire deeper things

- As we grow in spiritual ways, we desire deeper things in the Lord.

**Illus – When our children were younger, they were happy to play in simple ways (like being thrown up into the air), but as they grow they desire deeper things to think about and deeper things to do with their lives.**

**I Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."**

- The purpose of the church is to help people grow into spiritual maturity.

**Ephesians 4:12-16 Growing up into the maturity of Christ.**

C. Hunger and thirst after righteousness

- There is a change in desires that comes as we grow in the Lord.
- Jesus said that you are blessed if you desire these things.

**Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”**

- They also have a desire to be able to run with the horses, that is to say, to desire more than just know truth, but to live it in deeper and deeper ways.

**Jeremiah 12:5, “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?”**

**II. Be More Than Mere Men**

A. Move beyond fleshly

- Paul admonished them that they were still fleshly, they were not growing.
- Being believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should bring change in our lives.
- The word “fleshly” in Greek is translated “carnal” in Latin, so we get the phrase, “carnal Christians” from this verse. They were Christians, but they were still making decisions and operating their lives according to the flesh.

**II Peter 2:22, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”**

- You can’t just wash the outside of a pig and expect it to stay that way, there must be change on the inside.
- Paul is challenging them to move beyond fleshly, but how do we do this? Not by worldly means...

**Colossians 2:20-23 False teaching is of no value**

B. Abide in Christ

- This is the answer to growing in Christ. When we are abiding in the source of life, we will be changed.

**John 15:4-5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”**

- Even in old age, we can bear much fruit.

**Psalm 92:13-14, “Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green,”**

C. Become more like Christ

- The change that will be seen in our lives is that we will look less like the world and more like Jesus Christ, who shows us the Father in heaven.

**Ephesians 4:22-24, “that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”**

**Matthew 20:26-28, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

### **III. Know That God Causes the Increase**

#### A. The Lord gives opportunities

- The problem in the church that Paul was addressing was that there were divisions because some were saying they were of Paul, and some of Apollos.
- Paul responds by saying that these men are just servants. God is the one who gave opportunity.

**Illus – Some say they follow this preacher or that one. Some take great pride in the fact that they were in the tent with Chuck Smith. Yet God is the one who gives opportunity.**

- This is important for us to remember when trying to order our own lives; God is the One who opens doors.

**Revelation 3:7-8, And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: “I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”**

#### B. God causes the growth

- Paul wrote that he planted, and Apollos watered, but it is God that causes the growth. In other words, no one can take credit for what God does.
- In our own lives it’s vital for us to remember that God is the One who causes growth in whatever we are doing.

**Psalm 127:1-2, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.”**

**Isaiah 55:10-11, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”**

C. We are God's fellow workers

- This is just an awesome thought, that God would allow us to be His fellow workers, yet that is exactly what the Lord wrote through Paul.

**Mark 16:20, "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed."**

- We will receive a reward according to how we work together with the Lord.

Conclusion

**God's desire for us is that we would change. He makes all things new, the old has passed away. He wants us to not be like the world, how we used to be, but like Christ in all we say and do. Be more than mere men.**