

Pastor Chris Carr: LIVING IN THE LIGHT - Pt. 6 September 21, 2025

Sermon Title: Are You Maturing In Your Faith? Are you building on the foundation that Christ has provided?

Main Point Today: We are called to mature in our faith in Christ. And while this is certainly an *invitation*, it is also an expectation!

A phrase that perhaps captures this: we can called to be *childlike*, not *childish*!

Heb. 6:1-3, *"Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to MATURITY, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so."*

How do we succeed? Through Childlike Faith. Simple Trust & Dependence On Christ, His life, death, and the power of His Resurrection. Simply put, we abide. HE DOES THE WORK, but asks us to participate!

- **How would we fail?** Through Childish Obstinance. By refusing to mature through complacency, compromise or stubborn self-reliance. **To be childish is to refuse to grow.**
 - **Augustine said, "Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not."**

Today's teaching text is 1 John 2:12-14 In this passage John notes three broad stages (or categories) found within the Spiritual maturation journey. John uses these three categories as a framework;

- **Children** – beginning stages of construction (1 John 2:12, 14)
- **Fathers** – the vision of a completed building (1 John 2:13, 14)
- **Young Men** – the in-between stage where the work is being carried out (1 John 2:13, 14)

"I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know 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." **1 John 2:12-14**

Recap: Reasons For Writing

- **Who wrote the book?** Almost certainly John, the disciple and Apostle of Christ, the same man who wrote the Gospel of John. This is seen in the writing style as well as the introduction.
- **Who is the intended audience? Simple: THE CHURCH.** Specifically, some suggest that John was *living in & writing to* the believers in Ephesus. But this book is for **THE CHURCH** – including us!
 - John expresses his desire **for fellowship** (unity, agreement, harmony) with those he is writing to in order to; *"make our joy complete..."* v4. Its **GOOD NEWS**, hence, the **JOY**!
 - **John states that "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all."** v5, then urges the believers to walk in the light as God is in the light. **THIS IS FELLOWSHIP** – unity with God & fellow believers as we walk in the light. **Notice: no unity between light & dark.**
 - *"...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, // and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."* **1 John 1:7**
- **That's a KEY THOUGHT:** John is contrasting LIGHT & DARKNESS; sin & righteousness, truth & lie, good & evil. How can we walk in the light when we are so stained by sin and filled with darkness?
 - **The solution is... the blood of Jesus which purifies us!**

- John gives two “IF WE” statements: “***IF WE claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. IF WE confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness...***” 1 John 1:8-9
 - Living in the light doesn’t mean perfection – NOT YET at least.
 - Again, what are we to do? **CONFESS OUR SINS!**
 - “***My dear children, I write this to you so that you will NOT SIN.***” 1 John 2:1
 - John is saying... **HOLINESS MATTERS!**
 - “***But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.***” 1 John 2:2
 - Refuse the right for shadows to reign in your life – rather, expose your sin to the light. Trust in Jesus. Confess your sin. Repent & walk in the light.
- And lastly, John explains what Knowing God looks like... producing fruit:
 - **KEEPING HIS COMANDS** – faith expressed through acts of love towards God! “*We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.*” 1 John 2:3
 - **LOVING OTHERS** – faith expressed through acts of love towards others! “*Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light...*” 1 John 2:10
 - Fruit = Love God, Love People (obedience in both!)
 - Just as we expect an apple tree to produce apples, we should expect a Child of God to produce fruit (aka mature in their faith)!

A | A Framework For Spiritual Maturity

- Focus In: “I am writing to you, **dear children**, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one...” 1 John 2:12-13
 - **Children** – beginning stages of construction/the foundation (1 John 2:12, 14)
 - **Fathers** – the vision of a completed building (1 John 2:13, 14)
 - **Young Men** – the in-between stage where the work is being carried out (1 John 2:13, 14)
- John starts with **CHILDREN (childhood stage)**: “I am writing to you, **dear children**, because your **sins have been forgiven on account of his name.**” 1 John 2:12
 - “Dear Children” seems to be John’s favourite way to address the church.
 - “**Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.**” 1 John 5:21
 - Further, note that John also saw HIMSELF and ALL BELIEVERS as Children of God. “*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called **children of God!** And that is what we are!*” 1 John 3:1
 - John associates the childhood stage with the central truth of the gospel, that our sins have been forgiven on account of Jesus’ name... that is, His atoning death for us!
 - **This is FOUNDATIONAL.** As previously mentioned, John has brought up this promise a few times already in the opening chapter and a half of this Epistle (see 1 John 1:7, 2:1-2).
 - No matter what season of life or stage of Christian journey you’re in, this amazing truth is timeless and precious! We have been forgiven because of what Christ did for us.
 - Has this truth become mundane to you?
- Next, John addresses **FATHERS (paternal stage)**: “I am writing to you, fathers, because **you know him** who is from the beginning.” 1 John 2:13

- Why the strange order (children, fathers, young men)? Simple answer: I have no clue! I speculate, but it's almost as though John is casting a vision for maturity. As though to say, "Church, here is your aim!". Think of it like GPS coordinates on your phone. Most of the time your starting point is assumed (your phone automatically puts that in). Next we need what?? A DESTINATION. In this case, John presents the Father stage, our "aim".
- John associates this stage with perspective regarding life's ultimate goal: **TO KNOW GOD**.
 - *"Now this is eternal life: that they **know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3*
 - *"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ** Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ..." Philippians 3:7-8*
- According to John, the life of a mature follower of Christ can be summarized as someone who **knows God**, the one who is from "the beginning...".
- "Know God... that's it?? That's all the vision we get?"** But remember what we have already said: John has already concluded that the fruit (evidence) of knowing God is...
 - **KEEPING HIS COMMANDS** – **faith expressed through acts of love towards God!** *"We know that we have come to **know him** if we keep his commands."* 1 John 2:3
 - **LOVING OTHERS** – **faith expressed through acts of love towards others!** *"Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light..."* 1 John 2:10
 - **Fruit = Love God, Love People** (obedience in both!)
 - **Important Note:** This is the PATERNAL STAGE. We need parents in order to have children. We need Fathers (& Mothers) to raise children and bring them into maturity.
 - Parents in this room, including grandparents and foster and adoptive parents and spiritual parents – that is to say, all those in this room that are well seasoned in your walk with Christ, mature, strong and steady... **WE NEED YOU!**
- **And lastly, John writes to the YOUNG MEN (adolescent stage):** *"I am writing to you, young men, because you have **overcome the evil one**."* 1 John 2:13
 - John associates this stage with the war against Satan, evil, and sin as the disciple learns to stand against the tendencies & temptations of the flesh, and grow in Christlikeness.
 - This particular stage is unique as it gets a further description when John repeats himself in v14. *"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."* 1 John 2:14
 - John is providing a description of HOW those in "the in-between" fight their battles and mature in their faith; they do so by the strength of God and the Word of God within them. **Truly, the battle is the Lords!**
- **To the young people:** *"You **are strong**... and _____ lives in you". Can I ask you a question, young person? **WHAT LIVES IN YOU?** (pursuit of worldly pleasure? Netflix? Instagram?) Childlike, not childish! Your strength to overcome is not found from within yourself, but from what you invite in.

 - *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.* 1 Tim. 4:12*
- **WHY DOES JOHN ELABORATE ON THIS STAGE?**

B | Maturity Requires Perseverance

- Remember, John is casting the vision – He wants these disciples & The Church to press forward to maturity. To be men and women that KNOW GOD – sturdy, unshakable, and firm.
 - **But that kind of maturity requires perseverance!**
- Jesus told a story known as The Parable of The Sower (or of the soils)... in it he told of a farmer that went out to scatter seeds. As the farmer scattered the seed, it fell on various places (different soil conditions; the path, the rocky ground, among the thorns, and on the rich fertile soil). **Thankfully, Jesus went on to provide a thorough explanation of this parable:**
 - *“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God (note: what did the young men have within them? See 1 Jn 2:14). Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes (note: who did the young men overcome? See 1 Jn 2:14). and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they DO NOT MATURE. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.” Luke 8:11-15*
 - Many people hear the Word preached and even respond to it initially, but few will retain it and persevere to produce a crop. **It is as though John is highlighting those in the middle and urging them to persevere!**

C | Warning... No Shortcuts Or Sitting Stagnant

- Again, we are *expected* to mature in our faith in Christ. Here are two important warnings:
 - **No Shortcuts:** We can’t skip the hard stuff, nor should we want to!
 - **No Sitting Stagnant:** it is *EASY* to slip into idleness.
 - **I used to repeat this statement to at BETA:** *“We need people that are ready to move beyond identifying the problems, onward towards being a part of the solution.”*
 - And Christians... may I remind us all that we have been given the solution – Jesus, the hope of the world!
 - **What is my excuse?** Consider the boldness of Charlie Kirk once again... I have been very humbled by his boldness and courage to speak truth in such a public way. To add to this humbling, he was 3 years longer than me! What is my excuse for staying stagnant? I don’t have one! Do you? **In a time such as this, I can think of no greater thing to do than to mature in our faith! We need this, church.**

D | Childlike, Not Childish

- **As we mature, we are called to remain childlike!** This is a call to HUMILITY, as well as a reminder to hold to the foundational truths we have mentioned.
- **Consider the words of Jesus;** *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.” Mark 10:14-16*
- **Childlike faith is...** Humble... Honest... Teachable... Trusting... Bold... Joyful... Loving... Dependent... Innocent... Pure... etc.