

Spiritual Maturity

Steve Durham—November 12, 2016

I had the week off and thought I would have a good week, an enjoyable week and relax. I decided to clean out the garage. That's not recreational. Once you get into it, you've got to finish it. I knew the rain was coming and I had everything out in the driveway, because there was no place for it in the garage. I went down to Wal-Mart and bought ten buckets, big canister things with lids. I set them all out at the edge of the driveway right by the garage and I took things and threw them into each one—sorting.

What I was doing, and didn't realize it, I guess I'm a packrat. I would do a job and couldn't find the tool, so I'd go buy one. You know you've got one in the garage but you can't find it, so you go down and buy one. I had a entire container full of scrapers; I probably had 50 of them. That kind of shows what we're like sometime and don't know it. My mom and dad were sort of that way; never throw anything away; the Great Depression mindset.

I also was able to go and visit my first grandson, my very first grandchild. We spend one day a week over there babysitting; eight weeks ago Jude Emerson was born. You have all of these stats: There are 7.4-billion people in the world. By 2020 we're supposed to have around ten billion. The planet is going to get to the point where it's going to be hard to sustain if something is not done. If greed and everything else doesn't get out of the way, we're going to have a problem.

There are 250 babies born every minute, and this year alone there are 90-million-plus babies born so far this year. But my little grandson is special! I know you think that same way with your children.

Isn't it amazing that God looks down on us and thinks the same thing? He looks at all the people in the world, but when a child of God is begotten He sees that child as special, elect and precious. It says something about that in the Bible

So, I was sort of thinking about that and I wanted to talk about our calling. What is the process as God calls us and starts working with us. Some of us have been many years at it, and some of us have just recently come to an understanding, and it's exciting. It doesn't matter whether you've been at it a long time or a short time, we're all growing.

It's interesting how Jude won't stop. He can't just stay a eight weeks, he's going to grow physically. You give him water, food and love, and he's going to grow. He's going to grow emotionally, too. The last thing we do is grow spiritually.

A lot of people in the world have not had the opportunity to do that. So, this is a special calling that we have. I want to talk a little bit about the process of growing up.

When Jude was firstborn, he was all wrinkled, red and like a prune. He didn't really move a whole lot and barely could get his eyes open. He cried a little bit, not much. The next time we saw him—a week later—he had lost the redness. They don't have eye/hand coordination and their hands are all over the place. So, he couldn't focus, his hands couldn't grip, but now his color is good, he's put on weight, he looks at you and can follow you now. Before his eyes would kind of cross and go all over the place. Now he looks right at you and focuses.

He hears sounds and knows what those sounds are. His grip has gotten better, he grips things tightly. He's progressing very well, but he's still on his mother's milk.

That's the way we are when we're first called and come into the Truth, into the knowledge that there's something God is doing. It's called a *mystery*.

There's the mystery of iniquity in the world, and there's the mystery of Godliness that the Bible talks about. When God calls us, He calls us into the understanding of what His plan is, what He's doing. It's amazing that the more you understand it, it's just absolutely amazing what He's doing.

The interesting thing about mother's milk is that it contains antibodies to keep the child from getting viruses and bad bacteria. It's sort of an agent that protects the child. It lowers the risk of asthma, allergies, fewer ear infections and respiratory illnesses and bouts with diarrhea. Higher IQ records are shown later on in life of children who are breast fed. Bonding and a feeling of security increases with the mother's touch—skin against skin and eyeball-to-eyeball looking at one another.

All of that is part of God's plan. It's all part of the process and purpose that God has for us and humanity.

Our expectation of Jude—my little grandson—is that he'll grow up into a fine Godly, a moral and ethical child, a young man and eventually adult with good character. That's my expectations of him, a loving environment and that he'll love other people.

He will grow up, that's going to happen. He's going to eat solid food, meat and will get away from his mother's milk. He's going to crawl, walk

and run. He's going to learn how to speak and communicate, instead of those cooing sound that he makes now. He'll actually be able to take those sounds that are phonemes. There are 150 phonemes in language; 6,500 languages in the world. They're broken up into parts of those sounds. In the English language we have 44 of those phonemes.

What he'll be able to do is separate those sounds that don't relate to English, the language that he's going to communicate in. So, he'll learn over the years how to speak properly. He'll say a few words, and then he'll put sentences together, and then those sentences will make sense and be complex.

That's kind of the way that God does with us. He gives us a language, He gives us His Word, He speaks to us, communicates with us, and in the future He'll change that language and give us new language. It talks about it in Revelation.

God's expectations of us, when He calls us, is pretty much a husband, wife and grandparent; but it's even more than that. He has a lot expectations for us.

There is a *called out* group—'ekklesia'—but it doesn't make you special, that you're better than anyone. We don't understand why God picks someone, calls them and gives them the understanding that He does at this time.

1-Corinthians 1:26: "For you see your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many who are wise according to the flesh, not many who are powerful, not many who are highborn *among you*." So, we're not anything to brag about in the world's eyes.

Verse 27: "Rather, God has chosen the foolish things of the world so that He might put to shame those who are wise..." That's what we're do at some point with the understanding that we have. It's an understanding that surpasses the intelligence of the world, and the wisdom. There's a Godly wisdom, and there's the world's wisdom. God's wisdom far surpasses the world's wisdom. We've been given an opportunity to tap into God's wisdom, and see darkly a little bit.

1-Corinthians 2:9: "But according as it is written, '*The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*' But God has revealed *them* to us..." (vs 9-10).

How does He do that? Some people can read the Bible and it's like talking to a cow in the field. They just don't get it. But some people actually understand. It says:

"...by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all

things—even the deep things of God. For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man..." (vs 10-11).

There is a spirit in man that's different that the Holy Spirit. It's what give man intellect and makes him different from the animals. That's couples with the Holy Spirit upon baptism.

"...which *is* in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except *by* the Spirit of God" (v 11)—revealing that to him.

Paul tells us a little bit about the process of growth and how we grow in God into the spiritual maturity.

1-Corinthians 1:5: "And that you have been *spiritually* enriched in Him in everything, in all discourse and knowledge, according as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that you do not lack *even* one *spiritual* gift while you are awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will also strengthen you to *the* end..." (vs 5-8).

In other words, when Christ starts something, He's going to finish it. He's going to make sure that you end up—at the end—with spiritual maturity, if you're willing and you do the things you're supposed to do. He's going to confirm you to the end.

"...*that you may be* unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, **by Whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord" (vs 8-9). He puts us together in a group. That's what 'ekklesia' is, a *called out group*.

Paul talks about assembling together even more so as you see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25-26). To get together to edify one another, encourage one another, to bear one another's burdens and that's part of the purpose. He calls us *the Body of Christ*.

Verse 10: "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing..." This is amazing! We all learn to speak—God teaches us His Word—the same thing. In other words, we learn to speak the same doctrine.

I've talked to people in Brussels, in England, Canada, New Zealand and Australia and they all had one thing in common: *the Holy Spirit!* That Holy Spirit teaches you the same thing.

It doesn't matter if you've met them before or not. They understand the same thing. He says, "...that you all speak the same thing and *that* there be no divisions..." (v 10). The body cannot be divided. If Jude were to somehow have an issue or something happened, he wouldn't live. The body cannot be divided.

“...among you; rather, *that* you be knit together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (v 10). He’s talking about divisions. Those are a no-no in the Body of Christ. They’re a killer. They break it up and split it. Once you’re out there on your own you’re pretty much cut away from the umbilical cord and life-giving nutrients and breath and air and you die.

- What is that mind that we’re developing?
- Who is our Teacher?
- Who is the One Who is teaching us?
- What Spirit?
- Where does that Spirit come from?

Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus.” So, you have the mind of Jesus Christ if you have God’s Holy Spirit. That is what should be leading you.

Verse 6: “Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant; and being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross” (vs 6-8). He is our example.

1-Peter 2:21: “For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us...” If you knew that ahead of time you probably wouldn’t. If you knew you were going to suffer, you probably wouldn’t join.

“...leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps” (v 21). Whatever Christ said and did, that’s what He wants us to do. The same attitude and spiritual maturity that He had, that’s what He wants us to do.

Those really are the doctrines, the teachings. In Heb. 6 it talks about the doctrines. But everything that Christ said is a teaching that we should follow. All of His steps; He’s our example.

Verse 22: “Who committed no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; *when* suffering, He threatened not...” (v s 22-23). He said, ‘God, they don’t know what they’re doing; don’t hold this to their charge, they just don’t understand.’

“...but committed *Himself* to Him Who judges righteously; Who Himself bore our sins within His own body on the tree, so that we, being dead to sins, may live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes you were healed” (vs 23-24).

We are to live unto righteousness, and that righteousness is not our own. It’s God’s righteousness in us. That’s basically where we’re supposed to be going with our growth.

As we’ve seen, there’s a parallel between the physical and the spiritual in growth. God uses these parallels between physical and spiritual all through His Word to teach us what His plan for mankind is. Ask a man in the street:

- What we are to be doing with our calling?
- Where we’re going to grow to?
- Where we’re headed?
- What is our focus?
- What is the purpose?
- What is the purpose of man?
- Why did God make man?
- Why did He create man?

There may be some people who get close, but they don’t understand the plan of man, and it’s all right here. That understanding comes from the Holy Spirit and through obedience to what Jesus taught us, by following in His steps.

2-Peter 3:18: “Rather, **be growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To Him *be* glory both now and into *the* day of eternity. Amen.”

We’re given a mandate. It’s not difficult as a physical body to grow. But as a spiritual body, spiritual maturity doesn’t necessarily come with years. It does and it can if you’re doing these things:

- being taught
- listening
- being teachable
- you’re humble
- you’re submissive to what you hear
- you yield to that
- you do what God says to do
- you sincerely seek the Truth and want to know

Not for your own gain or for your own self, but to really know what God wants you to do, what He’s saying to you! Then you will grow spiritually, in spiritual maturity.

I’ve known the Truth for 50 years. Does that mean I’m spiritually mature? *Not necessarily!* That means that I could have been. I could have been doing it over and over again and not getting it, and we’ve seen people like that, where they’ve been around the Body of Christ and in the Church and they’re hung up on something—stuck. They’re not really doing what God says to do:

- they don’t show the love of God to others
- they don’t understand what that is
- they don’t understand that that’s what the commandments are based on

Love to God and to Christ and your fellow man!

(Matt. 2:36-39).

So, you can be years in a calling and have God's Holy Spirit and not be growing. It's different than physical growth. This is the goal that Christ gives us, that the apostles write about:

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers **for the perfecting of the saints...**" (vs 11-12).

- feed My sheep
- teach them about the Truth
- help them grow
- care for them
- be a pastor and take care of them

"...for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying... [growth] ...of the Body of Christ... **[the goal]: ...until we all come into** the unity of the faith..." (vs 12-13).

That's difficult to do without divisions. The "...unity of the faith..." is Christ in us (Gal. 2:20).

"...and of the knowledge... [being taught] ...of the Son of God, unto a perfect man... [complete and mature] ...unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ" (v 13).

Isn't that to Whom we are to follow. He's our example. We are to come to that point. In this life we're probably not going to make it completely. If we were we would be spirit, changed, and when that happens we will be. Our purpose is to grow to that point.

Verse 14: "So that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error."

James 1:8: "*He is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Verse 6: "But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of *the* sea that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord" (vs 6-7).

James talks about how the double-mindedness, not understanding and not standing firm and being fully rooted and grounded in the faith.

That's our goal and measuring stick. This is the purpose of our calling: *to be sons of God, children of God in the Family of God!* It is for the growth process; it is a process to grow to *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ.* To develop Holy righteous character.

We don't do anything of ourselves to be righteous. It's God in us! That's the 'good works.'

We do physical works, but God in us does 'good works.' We're doing the work of God in us. We're doing that work that Christ is doing in us. That's what makes it righteousness. People see His righteousness in us. We're not to be anything big or fancy or think that we're anything (1-Cor. 1:20). That's not who He has called.

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are **His** workmanship, being created in Christ Jesus unto *the good works* that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them." He and Jesus Christ—the Word, the Logos—before this age of man, before the foundation of the earth, They sat down and made a covenant to have this work out this way. This was setup before man was even begun.

We would be the workmanship of God. He would dwell in us through the Holy Spirit to good works. We would be changed and He would have a family at the other end of it; established before the foundation of the earth.

We see that we have:

- a purpose
- a calling
- a goal
- to learn certain things
- to be taught certain things

We are taught by God:

- through His Word
- through the ministry
- through teachers
- through articles
- through experiences
- through trials

'The trying of your faith be much more precious than gold that perishes.' It talks about how that is very important, that suffering that happens through trials.

Paul said that he was finding that he was rejoicing in trials. That's difficult to do when you're going through a trial or difficulty. He knew what the outcome would be: *spiritual growth! spiritual maturity!* He would be growing to that measure of the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ. So, Paul saw that as a good thing.

Peter gave his first sermon, filled with the Holy Spirit, and there were about 5,000 people there. He told them what happened, Who Jesus Christ was, and the result of that was:

Acts 2:37: "Now, after hearing *this*, they were cut to the heart; and they said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?'" *We have killed Christ; we need Christ's sacrifice, the blood of Christ.*

Verse 38: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent...’”—of what? He just showed them what they were like, what they had done.

Each and every one of us, no matter how good we think we are, we are all in a state of sin, we’re all carnal. We’re deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). That’s the state of man.

When we understand that, we need to repent of that, “...and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall... [with the laying on of hand] ...receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v 38)—and begin the growth process of spiritual maturity. It begins at that time.

Romans 8:12: “So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to *the* flesh; because if you are living according to *the* flesh, you shall die... [he second death] ...but if by *the* Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.... [that’s what repentance is about] ...For as many as are **led** by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God. Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit... [spirit of man] ...*testifying* that we are *the* children of God” (vs 12-16)—a family relationship.

Just like my daughter is going to take care of Jude, God is going to take care of us! He is going to meet all of our needs and everything we need. If we just call out to Him and want a relationship with Him and stick with it and stay the course. He’s going to make sure that we make it to the end.

Man has been very good about understanding how to send a man to the moon and all the technical things. But when it comes to relationships, we’re sorely in trouble; we’re in bad shape. My wife is a women’s advocate and she could tell you stories that are just not good relationships. Man has not figured out how to love his neighbor, to care for others and think of others first. Man is self-centered.

When we have God’s Spirit and do that, we manifest spiritual immaturity. We are children! Heb. 5:14 is the thing that helps us move on into understanding and growth.

Hebrews 5:12: “For truly, by this time you ought to be teachers, *but instead* you need to have *someone* teach you again what *are* the beginning principles of the oracles of God, and have become those in need of milk, and not of solid food.” You couldn’t feed Jude strong meat; you couldn’t give him a steak. He couldn’t digest it; couldn’t chew it.

Verse 13: “For everyone who is partaking of

milk *is* unskilled in *the* Word of Righteousness because he is an infant. But solid food is for those who are fully grown, who through repeated **practice have had their senses trained to discern between good and evil**” (vs 13-14).

Through the Holy Spirit you have discernment. You have a way of looking at things that’s completely different. You’re on a different plane, you’re on the love of God in you and the peace, joy and happiness. If you tap into that and get out of the way and let it flow, it’s like a hose that has a rock or kink in it; the water doesn’t come out like it should. If you get the kink or rock out, the impediment, then that water can flow. If you do that then you’ll have discernment, to discern good from evil. You’ll be able to do the things that you’re learning, that you know that you should do—that are very difficult to do as carnal individuals—but with God’s Spirit it’s a lot easier to do.

I won’t say that you can do it perfectly, but it makes it a lot easier to do. Then we have Christ and His sacrifice when we make a mistake, which we will do everyday. So, we need that sacrifice and the blood of Christ everyday.

The definition of maturity is a condition of being fully developed. We are never fully developed in a spiritual sense, until we’re changed to spirit (1-Cor. 15; 1-Thess. 4), the incorruptible. Then we’re fully developed.

Another definition: the state of being old, aged, elderly or mature—meaning complete—and would put us at the other end.

So, we’re always in a state of growth, no matter who we are. But it’s really awful to see and elderly person... I saw this at the Feast about 15 years ago. We went to a convenience store and there was an elderly gentleman had an elderly wife who was on a walker, and he was pushing her to get going. My wife and sister finally went over and gave him a hard time and told him to stop. It was awful, very disconcerting and unpleasant and horrible to see that. It wasn’t something you would expect from an elderly person. Maybe a child, but not somebody like that.

So, when you see things like that going on, it’s out of character. The same thing when we have God’s Holy Spirit and we’re asking God to lead us with that Spirit—and we’re doing things that are awful or distasteful—it’s out of character; it’s not Holy righteous character. In that sense it’s spiritual immaturity; we’re still grappling with things.

I’m not trying to make a statement here that anyone is spiritually mature, that they’ve made and they glow. It’s not going to happen right now. We get better at it, and we grow and grow more and

more as we put the carnality out. Again, we would expect that from a child.

Matthew 5:48: “Therefore, you shall be perfect... [complete] ...even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect.” We have Christ and we have the Father in heaven Who are perfect, complete. Those are our goals; that’s where we’re headed. The Family of God is going to be there.

There’s nothing wrong with being a baby or infant. That’s where we all start out, but God doesn’t want us to stay there; He wants us to move on, go forward, grow.

Babies are loving, kind and childlike. They’re a joy to be around. That’s that first love, and sometimes we lose that over the years; we lose that fire and excitement. That should stay with us all the way. Rekindle that and allow God’s Spirit to rekindle that attitude and mentality to keep going toward the goal.

The reason we’re in Corinthians so much is that Paul had a really hard time with the Corinthian Church. They were something! Quite a group of people.

1-Cor. 13 is the love chapter; 1-Corinthians 13:11: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child...” Not only going back to when he was a child, Paul is making a parallel to the spiritual.

“...I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I set aside the things of a child. For now we see through a glass darkly...” (vs 11-12). We have some understanding—God teaches us and we learn—but we really don’t have it all; it’s not like the doors have been opened.

“...but then... [when we are changed and in God’s Family] ...we shall see face-to-face; now I know in part, but then I shall know exactly as I have been known. And now, these three remain: faith, hope *and* love; but the greatest of these *is* love” (vs 12-13).

These spiritual things hang around. They’re eternal. We have the physical parallel—gravity, inertia—physical laws. It’s the same way with spiritual laws that are laws of relationships. Christ said, ‘If you love Me, you’ll love your brother.’ Show those kinds of things.

Galatians 5:22 tells us what a spiritually mature individual will look like; “But the fruit...” When you have an apple tree and it’s time to bear fruit it bears an apple, not a watermelon. It bears what it is, an apple. You have to work with it sometimes, dung it and dig it.

I read in *Mother Earth* one time that a guy did all those things and finally the third year he said,

‘What should I do?’ A guy said to shoot I with a shotgun, and he did and the sap came up into the trunk and it started to bear fruit.

So, sometimes what God does to us is to really slam us on the pavement to get our attention. Those are needed to get the end result that He wants.

Paul says, v 22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law. But those who *are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. If we live by *the* Spirit, we should also be walking by *the* Spirit” (vs 22-25).

God calls things what they will be. He calls us *sons of God*. He sees us as being there. He knows that if you hang in there, stick with and give it a little effort, He’s going to make sure that you’re there. But if you choose not to... It’s a choice! You can choose not to do what it says:

Verse 19: “Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*... [we have the flesh working in us, but we have to do what is right] ...adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strifes, jealousies, indignations, contentions, divisions, sects, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such things as these; concerning which I am telling you beforehand, even as I have also said in the past, that **those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God**” (vs 19-21).

Whoa! That’s pretty important! That’s serious stuff! If you do those things in vs 19-21 you’re not going to inherit the Kingdom of God. So, if we hang on to these and we practice them—not just once in a while—every day, every moment then we’re not going to inherit the Kingdom of God. We have to move away from that to spiritual maturity, away from immaturity through the growth process. Christ is in us to help us.

How do we grow up into Christ, into spiritual maturity? We do through learning, being taught, and through the five senses:

Taste:

Psalm 34:8: “O taste and see that the LORD is good...” Christ said, ‘I’m the Bread of Life’ (John 6). If you don’t ‘eat Christ’ you won’t have eternal life. They were wondering what He was talking about. He was talking about the Passover, but also all His teachings, everything that He said. ‘If you don’t take in—it’s your food and meat—what I’m saying and process it, you’re not going to be there. I’m the Bread of Life; taste Me, I’m good. This is the way, walk you in it. I’m the Way, the Truth and the Life.’ He’s everything! He’s the One that all knees will bow to. You can’t come to salvation, the

Kingdom of God or the Family of God through any other name; that's the only name.

It's very important that we follow that example, and we do it through learning. We have knowledge, understanding and wisdom. A child like Jude will get knowledge. He'll look with his eyes, he'll feel, touch, smell, hear and he will gather information.

That's knowledge and information, an understanding skill that you get from experience. But children are like sponges. In understanding, they take that knowledge and they process it. They gather understanding through having insight or good judgment. You can also have bad judgment.

Titus 1:16 talks about being reprobate or void of Godly judgment. That's what the world is, void of Godly judgment. It's not popular to have morals today or to talk about God. You'll be laughed at in certain circles, you'll be put down, booed. It's getting worse and worse and is not popular.

Godly judgment: To live this way of life; to live by His laws, ordinances, statutes, principles and teachings. That's where we get Godly judgment. We don't get it from the world.

Wisdom: If you lack wisdom, ask God for it. He'll bring those experiences around with that information and understanding, and pretty soon you'll gain wisdom. God will give you that wisdom. It's the quality of having experience, knowledge and good judgment. The quality of being wise. Read Prov. 2, 8 and it talks about wisdom.

Wisdom is gained by having many trials and suffering. Going through what life gives us and faces us with choices to make. When we apply what we know, what God says and Christ says, we ask God to step in and help and put our trust in Him. Then making the right choice, because we have something in it.

God doesn't want a bunch of automatons and robots. You have a choice to make, and He leaves it to you to make that choice. You get the benefits: blessings or cursings from it (Deut. 28-30). There are blessings for doing right. There are cursings for doing something else. It's based upon the laws, statutes and principles.

'Wisdom is the natural ability to understand things that people cannot understand.' I thought that was a pretty good definition of wisdom.

If you look at it from God's view, that's true; things that people cannot understand (1-Cor.) It's a mystery.

1-Corinthians 2:7: "Rather, **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom** that God foreordained before the ages unto

our glory."

Ephesians 3:4: "So that when you read *this*, **you will be able to comprehend my understanding in the mystery of Christ.**"

Those are mysteries, talking about the mystery of Godliness. He also talks about *the man of sin and the mystery of iniquity*. There is a mystery in the world, the way the world works, that God reveals to people who have His Spirit that see.

2-Corinthians 4:4: "In whom **the god of this age** has blinded the minds of those who do not believe..."

Ephesians 2:2: "...according to **the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience.**"

That's how he broadcasts, through moods. You're driving down the road and all of a sudden you get mad about something. You don't know why you're that way. He broadcasts through moods, through the airwaves. He generates emotions that are wrong. We wonder where they come from; they come from Satan. There's a mystery of iniquity that's out there.

You can kind of do a profile of spiritual immaturity. I think we can all understand from reading what we've read that one of the main things is that it's *self-centered*. One of the things that Christ was tempted with—Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3—it talks about Him being the Bread of Life.

Self-centeredness:

Jesus was tempted with self! He was taken up to the pinnacle and told to jump off; feed Yourself and I [Satan] will give you all that you see. It was all incoming, all self-centered, self-gratification, self-perpetuation, self-determination. We're wired that way.

Satan knew that Christ, being a man, was wired that way; those were temptations for Him. That's like being a billionaire and somebody puts a \$5 bill out there. Are you tempted to take it? *No!*

So, we resist giving, sharing, serving and loving when we're self-centered and wanting to do our own thing. Like Cain, he wanted to worship God, but *his own way*. He brought a sacrifice, but the way *he wanted* to bring it. God said that if Cain had just done what He asked his sacrifice would have been accepted. But Cain wanted to do it *his own way*.

If you don't cooperate, lack submission to others (1-Peter). When you have God's love and you're thinking about the other person, and you have the mind of Christ in you:

1-Peter 5:5: “In the same manner, *you younger men be subject to the older men...*”

I taught my girls to stand when anyone was older, and elderly person, comes into the room and give them their chair. They still do that today as adults. It's basic.

“...and all *of you* be subject to one another being clothed with humility...” (v 5). Don't think of yourself as better than the other person. Show some forbearance. Christ said, ‘They don't know what they're doing; don't hold this to their charge.’ Let it go. That's difficult to do. It takes a lot of asking God to help you with it. It takes a lot of spiritual effort.

“...because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble” (v 5). Remember that we're to grow in grace. What is grace? We grow in that? The more we put into action the knowledge that we have and how God lived His life, we start seeing benefits and results. God gives us grace. We become more humble through God's Spirit, and we're able to do it more and be in favor with God even more.

Verse 6: “Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time; casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you. Be sober!... [serious minded] ...Be vigilant!... [watching] ...For your adversary *the* devil is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour” (vs 6-8). There is a ‘god of this world’ out there—*Satan!* He is ready to devour those who are not paying attention. He has most of the world in his hands now anyway; he wants you!

Verse 9: “Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions... [sufferings] ...are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in *the* world. Now, may the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *you* have suffered a little while, Himself perfect you, establish, strengthen, *and* settle *you*. To Him *be* the glory and the power into the ages of eternity. Amen.” (vs 9-11).

He promises that we will have this glory that Christ has. We see that basically that this just touching the ‘tip of the iceberg’ in our personal growth.

Don't be ‘dull of hearing.’ What happens is that after years of being in the Church you think you know it all. It's important to have these things refreshed. Know these things, hear these things and hear them again. You're going to catch something different the next time you hear it. It's new stuff every time we hear it. The Word of God is living. As you go through life and experiences, that section that you read 20 years ago is going to come alive.

What you're going through right now that

pertains to, but it didn't before when you read it. So, it's a living Word of God. Never take it for granted; never become ‘dull of hearing.’ Don't let those things happen to where we fall away.

Heb. 6 is where Paul lays out the teachings or the doctrines, but he tells us something else that we should be doing.

Hebrews 6:1: “Therefore, advancing beyond the beginning principles of the doctrines of Christ...” Remember that Christ came to magnify. He didn't come to do away with. He came to fill it up, to make a spiritual application.

“...we should go on to perfection; not laying again *the* foundation of repentance from dead works, and *of* faith in God, of *the* doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of *the* resurrection of *the* dead, and of eternal judgment. And we will do this, if indeed God permits. For *it is* impossible...” (vs 1-4).

Here's the seriousness of this. We grow physically, but spiritual maturity is a choice. Remember that we read that if we did certain things we would not be in the kingdom.

Verse 4: “For *it is impossible for those who were once enlightened*... [have that veil taken off their eyes and they see the mystery] ...and who personally obtained the heavenly gift... [the Holy Spirit and have been baptized] ... and became partakers of *the* Holy Spirit, and who have tasted *the* good Word of God, and *the* powers of *the* world to come, if they have fallen away, to renew *them* again unto repentance; *seeing that* they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves, and are publicly holding *Him* in contempt” (vs 4-6). So, it's pretty serious!

Verse 18: “So that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible *for* God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope *that has been* set before *us*; which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul...” (vs 18-19). That's important!

Hope is an anchor; it hold us in the wind, in the suffering and trials and things that go on. If we're on the other side of that, if we've become mature and changed, we don't have hope anymore, we've got it. On this side of it we're hoping for the glory that's coming. We have faith that it's coming and that God *is* and that He is real. He is a faithful God and will make it happen.

My firstborn grandson Jude is very special. We are also firstborn, as Christ was the first of the firstborn. There's something going on in this world that not many people—very, very few—are being used to do. That's by design. But coming in the future the entire world is going to have this same opportunity to understand this and to be sons of

God. We get to prepare for that; be on the ground floor to usher in that Kingdom of God, to help that happen, as firstfruits!

Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion, and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; *to the* joyous festival gathering; and to *the* Church of *the* Firstborn, registered in *the* Book of *Life* in heaven... [book of Rev.] ...and to God, *the* Judge of all; and to *the* spirits of the just who have been perfected” (vs 22-23).

That’s what we’ve been talking about, the *spiritual maturity of the Church of the Firstborn*, and God’s Kingdom coming to the earth. It talks about we being kings and priests on the earth (Rev. 5:10). We will inherit the earth; the meek shall inherit the earth. That’s coming! It’s going to be here! We get to help with that!

It’s very important to continue to grow physically and spiritually. Serious stuff and it’s fantastic stuff. A great opportunity and God will make it happen if we stick with it and endure to the end!

- 1 Corinthians 1:20
- Jeremiah 17:9
- 1 Corinthians 15
- 1 Thessalonians 4
- John 6
- Titus 1:16
- Proverbs 2; 8
- Deuteronomy 28-30
- Matthew 4:4
- Luke 4:4
- Deuteronomy 8:3
- Revelation 5:10

SD: bo
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All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1-Corinthians 1:26-27
- 2) 1 Corinthians 2:9-11
- 3) 1 Corinthians 1:5-10
- 4) Philippians 2:5-8
- 5) 2 Peter 2:21-24
- 6) 2 Peter 3:18
- 7) Ephesians 4:11-14
- 8) James 1:8, 6-7
- 9) Ephesians 2:10
- 10) Acts 2:37-38
- 11) Romans 8:12-16
- 12) Hebrews 5:12-14
- 13) Matthew 5:48
- 14) 1 Corinthians 13:11-13
- 15) Galatians 5:22-25, 19
- 16) Psalm 34:8
- 17) 1 Corinthians 2:7
- 18) Ephesians 3:4
- 19) 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 20) Ephesians 2:2
- 21) 1 Peter 5:5-11
- 22) Hebrews 6:1-6, 19
- 23) Hebrews 12:22-23

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 10:25-26
- Matthew 22:36-39
- Galatians 2:20