

Casas Adobes Baptist Church
Sunday Morning, August 14, 2005
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Stages of spiritual growth
SG Series #1
S-1681

Jesus used many metaphors to describe His office and character, but He loved best to paint Himself as a shepherd.

Jesus chose to give this same title to Peter, the leader of His apostles when He commissioned him to establish the church (John 21): "Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep." In other words, do a shepherd's work. The history of the Christian church began with Jesus saying to the leader who is to head up the work of disciplining the nations: "I am a shepherd, you be a shepherd, too."

The heart of a man or woman is like the heart of a sheep. It beats at the sight of its shepherd.

We don't begin the Christian life as shepherds; we begin as lambs.

"What is God's will for my life?" Of all the things that God's will might include for your life, I can tell you one thing for certain. It Is God's Will For You To Grow Up To Full Maturity In Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-15: It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach ... the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, ... 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Romans 8:29: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, ...

God is concerned that His image be visible on earth.

When Christ was in one body, He could only be in one place at one time. By indwelling Christians the image of God is visible, not just in one place, but in hundreds and thousands of locales throughout our world.

Unfortunately, too many of us don't look much like Jesus.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3: Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly-mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for

it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

There are several levels of spiritual maturity. We are not all capable of hearing God with the same clarity and discernment. We are not all equally ready to fight the good fight of faith. Some Christian soldiers are ready for front line combat. Unfortunately, some don't even know what their armor and weapons are. Many are confused about who the real enemy is. Some are struggling to submit to the Commander in Chief.

The New Testament talks about spiritual growth in multiple terms!

Romans 6:4 - Walk in newness of life

Romans 12:2 - Be transformed

Ephesians 4:15 - Grow up into Christ

Philippians 3:14 - Press toward the mark

Colossians 2:7 - Be built up in faith

2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in grace

SOME REASONS CHRISTIANS REFUSE TO GROW UP MIGHT INCLUDE:

They Are Proud.

Major Ian Thomas: "I have discovered an interesting thing about American Christians. They do not usually come to church to learn anything. Whatever they do not yet know themselves they think is not really necessary."

They Are Lazy.

Hebrews 5:11-14: We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

They've Not Seen Much Of What Spiritual Maturity Might Look Like.

The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:3-10

The Fruit Of The Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23

The Victory (ὑπερνικωμεν): Romans 8:37

The Intimacy With God The Father: 1 John 2:12-14

They Need A Mentor—A Spiritual Mother and/or Father To Give Them Nurture and

Spiritual Care.

Spiritual mothers and fathers are in short supply today! Nothing is as incumbent upon us as to grow spiritually so that we may care for others less far along in the Christian life than we are.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8: But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

Our Bible Fellowship curriculum this Fall will focus on Spiritual Growth.

“God Make Me A Spiritual Man Or Woman At Any Price” Is One Prayer God Guarantees He Will Answer.

Tapes and CDs of today’s message are available at the Shepherd’s Heart Ministry table on the Plaza immediately after this service.