

Casas Adobes Baptist Church
Sunday Morning, August 14, 2005
Roger Barrier, Senior Pastor

Stages of spiritual growth
SG Series #1
R4-1681

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

- Crowds in Galilee reminded Him of sheep without a shepherd.
- Sent to gather and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- Pictured future judgment and there He is seated on a throne with the nations assembled before Him separating sheep from goats 8
- "I know every sheep by name."
- "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

SLIDE #: 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.

SLIDE #: 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."

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

video: Doris and Wendy

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

OVERHEAD: Jesus encounter with Peter on seashore: Lambs; Sheep; Shepherds. Three levels of growth.

SLIDE #: "What is God's will for my life?"

I can tell you one thing for certain that is God's will.

SLIDE #: It Is God's Will For Every Christ Follower To Grow Up To Full Maturity.

SLIDE #: 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.

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

SLIDE #: God is concerned that His image be visible on earth.

In Genesis 2 God says, "Let us make man in our own image." He is not referring to His physical image, of course. God is a spirit. More than likely He is referring to His moral image.

SLIDE #: ADAM IN GOD'S IMAGE; SETH IN MAN'S IMAGE

If anyone had been around in those days and wanted to know what God the Father was like, all they had to do was look at Adam because Adam was the "spitting image" of the Father.

Turn the page to Genesis 3:1-6 and Adam sinned and it was like a bomb went off. No longer was He in the image of God.

In Genesis 5:1-3 Adam and Eve conceived a son named Seth. Seth was not born in God's image. Seth comes forth in man's image.

No longer can people see God's image on earth because no longer were men and women born in God's image. For thousands of years, nobody had the slightest idea what God was like.

SLIDE #: JESUS IN GOD'S IMAGE; CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL

Ultimately, Jesus was born. Once more the image of God was walking on the face of the earth.

In John 14 Jesus is making the final "handoff" to the Disciples before the crucifixion. Philip seemed a little overwhelmed. The disciple turned to Jesus Christ and said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." It must have been a broken-hearted Jesus to said to Philip, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:8-11).

Then they crucified the image of God. For three days He was inside the tomb, and once again there was no one alive people could look to in order to see the nature of God represented on earth.

SLIDE #: RESURRECTION, BACK FOR 40 DAYS, ascension

Three days later Jesus came back to life, and for forty days He walked upon the face of the earth. For forty days, anybody who wanted to know what God looked like could take a look at Jesus. Jesus Christ is the “exact representation” of the Father. But then He ascended into the heavens. The image of God was again no where to be seen on earth.

SLIDE #: PENTECOST AND 120 IN IMAGE OF GOD

Then, on Pentecost, ten days after the ascension, the Holy Spirit indwelt one hundred and twenty believers. Once again the image of God was back on earth.

SLIDE #: In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul wrote: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

When He was in one body, He could only be in one place at one time. Now, it is His design for the Holy Spirit to be involved in all of our lives so that wherever we are, at the office or in the school room, at home or at church, we all live out the life of Jesus Christ. God wants the world to see what He is like. He delights that the image of God is back upon the earth, not just in one locale, but in hundreds and thousands of locales, all throughout our world.

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

Dallas last Sunday with mom.

SLIDE #: Went to MacDonald's early Sunday AM for breakfast before returning to hospital. Got my order, sitting to eat, nicely dressed couple about my age, obviously dressed for church.

Husband greeted my quite graciously. They sat to eat.

Presently, I heard him complain to his wife that his Egg McMuffin was not fresh. Went back to counter. “This egg McMuffin is not fresh.” The young lady behind the counter obviously reached to get him another one.

He raised his voice and spoke in a voice that reminded me of one of the girls in Mean Girls: “Has that bee sitting there long? If the one I have is stale what makes you think that I would want that one? Get me a fresh one!” he demanded.

He returned with his fresh egg sandwich and I overheard him boasting to his wife of the encounter and how he had shown her.

I cringed. I felt sorry for the poor high school girl behind the counter. I felt sorry for him. I felt sorry that his spiritual growth was so shallow.

I felt sorry for Christianity. I hoped that some how in his Sunday best the little girl behind the counter did not connect him with Christ. We don't need that kind of advertising.

How could I have made that judgment call about him? He revealed his heart. His was the heart of a spiritual child—an immature lamb—he needed to grow up.

SLIDE #: 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?

The man in MacDonald's had quarreling in his heart. He was acting out Paul's description of a spiritual child—a lamb who needed to grow up.

SLIDE #: soft baby skin

SLIDE #: Woman with wrinkled, leather-like skin

God teaches clearly that 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 still confused about who the real enemy is.

Some still seem to be struggling with whether or not they are willing to submit to the Commander in Chief. We're all on different levels of spirituality.

SLIDE #: SOME REASONS CHRISTIANS REFUSE TO GROW UP

SLIDE #: THEY ARE PROUD.

SLIDE #: 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." How tragic! How true!

SLIDE #: Mom knows better than the physical therapist.

Idiot, I thought you were a good son.

Pray to die. Three days and nights. I had had enough.

She remembered none of it.

Mom under the influence of drugs. I understood.

Too many of us are under the influence of self.

SLIDE #: Some refuse to grow up because THEY ARE LAZY.

SLIDE #: 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!

"Slow to learn" = slothful. The Hebrews had become too lazy to make any effort at improvement. They were spiritual goof-offs.

SLIDE #: Many of us are spiritually lazy.

We are not lazy at work...home...hobbies...games. But we are lazy and inattentive with spiritual things.

The Bible is to be studied and learned diligently.

God will not force feed His children so that they will grow. He waits until His children are hungry, and then he feeds them.

SLIDE #: Some refuse to grow up because THEY'VE NOT SEE MUCH OF WHAT SPIRITUAL MATURITY MIGHT LOOK LIKE.

Youth: How many of you want to have a perfect marriage?
How many of you have ever seen one?

SLIDE #: The fruit of the spirit: Galatians 5:22-23

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let's add another dimension to this: victory. Many verses on the concept of victory.
Here's one.

SLIDE #: Romans 8:37: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

SLIDE #: ὑπερνικωμεν: The Greek word translated "more than conquerors" is difficult to translate adequately. The word conveys the idea of super- and supra-conquerors. The Christian doesn't merely conquer – he overwhelmingly conquers.

Most Christians believe we'll win in the end. The Lord is going to be victorious finally. But it's going to be close! It's like a soccer game played to a draw. In overtime he'll be awarded a penalty kick and beat the devil 1 to 0. No, that's not what Paul says. It's not the Christians 1 and the devil 0; it's the Christians 100 and the devil 0.

Buck Craven bankruptcy story.

SLIDE #: The Intimacy With God The Father (1 John 2:12-14)

Next week

SLIDE #: Some refuse to grow up because THEY NEED A MENTOR.

NEWSWEEK December 7, 1992; "Dear Dads: Save Your Sons;" By Christopher N. Bacorn
I had seen a hundred like him. He sat back on the couch, silently staring out the window,
an unmistakable air of sullen anger about him. He was 15 and big for his age.

His mother, a woman in her mid-30s, on the edge of tears, described the boy's
heartbreaking descent into alcohol, gang membership, failing grades, and violence.
She had lost control of him. Ever since his father had left she had had trouble with
him. He had become more and more unmanageable and then, recently, he had hurt
someone in a fight. Charges had been filed, counseling recommended.

I listened to the mother's anguished story. "Are there any men in his life?" I asked.

There was no one. She looked up at me, her eyes hopeful. "Will you talk with him?" she
asked. "Just speak with him about what he's doing. Maybe if it came from a
professional..." she added, her voice trailing off. "It couldn't hurt."

I did speak with him. Maybe it didn't hurt, but like most counseling with 15-year-old boys,
it didn't seem to help, either. He denied having any problems. Everyone else had
them, but he didn't. After half an hour of futility, I gave up.

SLIDE #: "I have come to believe that most adolescent boys can't make use of
professional counseling. What a boy can use, and all too often doesn't have, is the
fellowship of men - at least one man who pays attention to him, who spends time
with him, who admires him. A boy needs a man he can look up to. What he doesn't
need is a shrink."

Not many spiritual fathers today either! Nothing is as incumbent upon us as to grow
spiritually. We need Spiritual Fathers in this generation.

SLIDE #: 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."

Mothers and fathers understand the double truth of 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8. Not only do
they minister lovingly and gently like a nursing mother caring for her children, they
share themselves as well as the Word. If all we do is share the Word then we share
only one-half of the message. "Our very lives as well," is the other half of the
message.

The reason Paul could say things like, "if you don't work, you don't eat," and "cast him
outside to Satan," was because of the deep relationships he had developed with
those folks. When we share our lives we can say some things that we can't say if
all we are doing is sharing the Word.

DORIS AND ROGER TESTIMONY

roger: Introduce Doris.

What' the most important thing you do in trying to help less mature Christians grow up?

Doris: Give them hope

Most have been hurt: physically abuse, emotional and sexual abuse, discouraged, sense of helplessness and hopelessness; alone; no one to listen.

roger: Does it matter to you how they got this way?

Doris: No, some is their own doing; often a lack of family or because of their family
The important thing is that they are here.

roger: They need a safe place, don't' they?

Doris: Safe place with me. Able to trust me. First time they have ever trusted anyone.

roger: How many have you personally helped and shepherded?

Doris: During the last thirty years over 300. Lists and faces.

All over the country and overseas.

75 still at Casas—matured and grown up here.

Keep private journals—stories in my journals

Safe and secure there. Bury them with me—Roger, be sure that happens.

roger: Where do you want them?

How do people get to you?

Doris: Person to person, referrals from pastoral care ministry, other pastors, see me
around campus, word of mouth from folks I have helped.

roger: Who else helps you with this?

Doris: Our teachers: Judy, Judy; Karen. Others like Elaine, and Carol and Oleta, etc.
Main agenda in our Shepherding meetings once per month. Crisis cases and prayer

roger: Who shepherded you?

Doris: Dr. and Mrs. Lott

roger: Explain who the Lotts were.

Doris: Wish I'd spent more time with them.

Mrs. Lott: spiritual warfare, etc.

Dr. Lott: truth, etc.

Spiritual potential in me.

roger: Thank you, Doris

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

Go to ABF's. Curriculum of Spiritual Growth all Fall: Jerry and I put it together. I have taught this for years. 100 per year won't do it.

Prayer God guarantees to answer.

SLIDE #: "God Make Me A Spiritual Man Or Woman At Any Price."