

Hebrews 5:11-12 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE
To go directly to that verse

- [Hebrews 5:1](#)
- [Hebrews 5:2](#)
- [Hebrews 5:3](#)
- [Hebrews 5:4](#)
- [Hebrews 5:5](#)
- [Hebrews 5:6](#)
- [Hebrews 5:7](#)
- [Hebrews 5:8](#)
- [Hebrews 5:9](#)
- [Hebrews 5:10](#)
- [Hebrews 5:11](#)
- [Hebrews 5:12](#)
- [Hebrews 5:13](#)
- [Hebrews 5:14](#)

CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Swindoll's Chart](#), [Interesting Pictorial Chart of Hebrews](#), [Another Chart](#)

| The Epistle to the Hebrews | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18 | | | EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25 | |
| Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13 | Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18 | | | Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25 |
| BETTER THAN PERSON Hebrews 1:1-4:13 | BETTER PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28 | BETTER COVENANT Heb 8:1-13 | BETTER SACRIFICE Heb 9:1-10:18 | BETTER LIFE |
| MAJESTY OF CHRIST | MINISTRY OF CHRIST | | | MINISTERS FOR CHRIST |
| DOCTRINE | | | DUTY | |
| DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68AD | | | | |

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)
(See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

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Hebrews 5:11 [Concerning](#) him we have [much](#) to [say](#), and it is [hard](#) to [explain](#), [since](#) you have [become dull](#) of [hearing](#).
([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [Peri ou polus hemin o logos kai dusermeneutos legein.](#) ([PAN](#)) [epei nothroi gegonate](#) ([2PRAI](#)) [tais](#)

[akoais.](#)

Amplified: Concerning this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull in your [spiritual] hearing and sluggish [even slothful in achieving spiritual insight]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: The story which has been laid upon me to tell you about this matter is a long story, difficult to tell and difficult to grasp, for your ears have become dull. ([Westminster Press](#))

KJV: Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

NLT: There is so much more we would like to say about this. But you don't seem to listen, so it's hard to make you understand. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: There is a great deal that we should like to say about this high priesthood, but it is not easy to explain to you since you seem so slow to grasp spiritual truth. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: concerning which there is much that we can be saying, yet when it comes to the saying of it, one finds it difficult to explain, because you have become those who are in a settled state of sluggishness, yes, of stupidity, in your apprehension of the same.

Young's Literal: concerning whom we have much discourse and of hard explanation to say, since ye have become dull of hearing,

FIVE WARNING SECTIONS IN HEBREWS

Take Heed

Hebrews 2:1-4-note

Do Not Miss His Rest

Hebrews 3:7-4:13-note

Beware of Dullness & Apostasy

Hebrews 5:11-6:12 (notes)

Beware of Willful Sinning

Hebrews 10:19-39 (notes)

Beware of Refusing Christ

Hebrews 12:14-29 (notes)

Wilmington has another way of looking at the warning passages...

The Better Notes

Don't disregard his Word He 2:1-4

Don't doubt his Word He 3:12, 13; 4:11

Don't depart from his Word He 6:4-6

Don't despise his Word He 10:26-29

Don't disagree with his Word He 12:25

OT PASSAGES QUOTED IN HEBREWS 5 - Click for complete list of OT Quotations/Allusions

He 5:5 <> Ps 2:7

He 5:6 <> Ps 110:4

He 5:10 <> Ps 110:4

KEY WORDS IN HEBREWS 5 - Click for complete list of Key Words in Hebrews

Eternal - He 5:9

Sacrifice - He 5:1, 3

Priest - He 5:1, 5, 6, 10

**CONSIDER JESUS
OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST**

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| INSTRUCTION He 1:1-10:18 | | EXHORTATION He 10:19-13:25 | |
| REVELATION He 1:1-10:18 | | RESPONSE He 10:19-13:25 | |
| PRECEPTS He 1:1-10:18 | | PRACTICE He 10:19-13:25 | |
| DOCTRINE He 1:1-10:18 | | DUTY He 10:19-13:25 | |
| SUPERIORITY of CHRIST'S PERSON He 1:1-7:28 | | SUPERIORITY of CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD He 8:1-10:18 | SUPERIORITY of the CHRISTIAN'S PRACTICE He 10:19-13:25 |
| MAJESTY OF CHRIST He 1:1-4:13 | MINISTRY OF CHRIST He 4:14-10:18 | | MINISTERS FOR CHRIST He 10:19-13:25 |
| SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST He 1:1-4:13 | SUPERIORITY OF PRIESTHOOD He 4:14-10:18 | | SUPERIORITY OF THE POWER OF CHRIST He 10:19-13:25 |
| Christ the Son of God He 1:1-2:4 | Christ the Son of Man He 2:5-4:13 | Christ the High Priest He 4:14-10:18 | Christ the Way He 10:19-13:25 |

This chart is adapted in part from Jensen's Survey of the NT and Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible

Kenneth Wuest has an excellent introduction to this next section of Hebrews 5:11-6:2...

Before beginning a study of this difficult section, we must indicate its analytical structure. The section consists of a description of the spiritual status of the Jew whom the writer wishes to reach, of a warning not to go back to the abrogated sacrifices of the Levitical system, and of an exhortation to put a heart faith in the New Testament sacrifice, the Messiah. It is one of the passages found throughout the book containing a warning not to go back to the **type** but to go on to faith in the **reality**. (see chart on **Old** versus **New**)

This individual is described as hard to teach and dull of hearing (He 5:11), one who ought to be able to teach but cannot (He 5:12), one who is a babe (He 5:13-note), who was enlightened, who tasted of the heavenly gift and had been made a partaker of the Holy Ghost (He 6:4-note), one who had tasted the Word of God and the powers of the age to come (He 6:5-note), and who had been brought to repentance (He 6:6-note).

He is exhorted to put off once for all any dependence upon the Levitical sacrifices and to go on to faith in the New Testament Sacrifice (He 6:1-note). The first part of this exhortation is strengthened by the warning that should he fall away, that is, renounce his professed faith in Messiah as the High Priest of the New Testament and return to the abrogated sacrifices of the First Testament, he would be crucifying the Son of God. This would be an act which would make it impossible to restore him again to that place of repentance to which he had been brought (He 6:6-note). The second part of the exhortation is repeated in the words, "that ye be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (He 6:12-note), this second exhortation to faith being strengthened by the example of the saved among these Jews who showed by their lives that they really had exercised saving faith, the "beloved" of He 6:9-note. We must be careful to note that this letter to the Hebrews is written to the professing church made up of saved and unsaved, but the concern of the writer is with reference to the unsaved. We are now ready for an exegetical study of the Greek text of the passage under discussion, based upon the analysis of the entire epistle, the only scientific way of going about our work. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Harry Ironside introduces this next interpretatively difficult section from Hebrews 5:11-6:20 with this note of caution...

We are now to consider one of those portions of the writings of "our beloved brother Paul," **Ed note:** I do not think Paul wrote Hebrews) as Peter called him, "in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest... unto their own destruction" (2Peter 3:16-note). Probably there is no part of the Word of God that has stumbled immature and uninstructed Christians like Hebrews 5:11-6:20. Therefore the need of examining it with the utmost care. (Ironside Expository Commentary on Hebrews)

Ray Stedman introduces this section writing that...

It has been quite evident thus far in Hebrews that the pastor's heart of the author has been deeply troubled over the spiritual state of some of his readers. Twice he has warned them at some length that they are in danger of repeating the unbelief of the Israelites in the wilderness and failing, therefore, to enter into the spiritual rest which they had been promised. Once again he confronts them with their perilous state.

They are slow to learn, he declares, and because of this dullness, he has difficulty in explaining to them the extraordinary advantages of the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus. If they had been growing as they should, they ought by now to be able to pass the great truths of the faith along to others. They would no longer be learning elementary truths of God's word for themselves but could be teachers of those coming after them. The high priestly ministry which Jesus wants them to learn represents an advance on the introductory truths of the Christian faith. But instead of responding to his exhortations they seem to require those basic truths to be explained to them again.

At best, they are spiritual infants who need to be taught over and over the elementary truths as a baby needs to be fed milk and is not ready for solid food. **At worst**, they are not Christians at all, but are like many of the Israelites in the wilderness. They also are in danger of failing to act in faith on the teaching they have received. Fear that this may be their condition is what leads the author to issue the solemn warning of He 6:4,5-note; He 6:6-note, though in He 6:9-note, he indicates that he does not yet believe they are all in such a fearful state. ([Hebrews 5:11-14 The Spiritual State of the Readers](#))

CONCERNING HIM WE HAVE MUCH TO SAY: peri ou polus hemin o logoslegein (PAN):

- 1Kings 10:1; John 6:6; 16:12; 2Peter 3:16
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

CONCERNING HIM: MELCHIZEDEK

Concerning him - Some translate this as "concerning this", thus **Vincent** says "*Not Melchisedec, but the topic that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, a topic to which great importance is attached.*" The writer wanted to dive into a "meaty" discussion of this personage, but their spiritual condition was an impediment as he now explains.

Wuest - The words "concerning him" of Heb 5:11 are from a preposition and a relative pronoun, which latter is in a case form that indicates either the masculine or neuter gender. The last named individual to which a masculine pronoun could point, is **Melchisedec**. But the writer is not concerned with him in what he has to say in Heb 5:11-6:12. Therefore, the pronoun is neuter, referring to the teaching of the Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus Christ, a thing which these Jewish readers who were still unsaved, needed to be convinced of if they were to leave the Aaronic priesthood and its system of Levitical sacrifices. The superiority of the New Testament sacrifice over the Levitical offerings is the very thing which the writer is seeking to prove. He shows that Melchisedec is better than Aaron. Therefore, the sacrifice of Christ is better than the Levitical sacrifices. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Spurgeon - The apostle was about to allegorize upon Melchizedek. He had intended to set forth that that venerable and priestly king was, so far as scriptural information goes, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of years nor end of life, and that he was superior to Levi, seeing that Levi's progenitor paid tithes to him and received his blessing. The apostle was about to show that Melchizedek was a type of Jesus, who, as a priest, is without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of years, but is a priest forever according to the power of an endless life. But the apostle paused, for he felt that this allegory of Melchizedek was too strong meat for those who were not full-grown men. We have all heard, I dare say, of the divine who was foolish enough to take the three baskets full of sweet meats that were upon the head of Pharaoh's baker and to say that they represented the Trinity. I have heard of another who preached from this passage in Ezra 1:9—"twenty-nine knives"—and went to show that they were types of the twenty-four elders. What he did with the surplus five I don't know. Was God's Book ever meant to be a toy for the amusement of childish imagination? Surely, no. The strong meat of allegory must be for half-

inspired saints like John Bunyan, and those masters in Israel who are not to be carried away upon the back of every figure, but who can ride their figures like good horsemen, with a bit in the mouth of the allegory, and make it keep in a straight road and bear them safely on to their destination.

Concerning (4012) (*peri*) means around, about this, concerning or regarding this. About what? It could be translated about this or about him, the latter fitting the context better.

He is ready to discuss **Melchizedek** but for the fear that the reader may fail to grasp his meaning, for he will run counter to the usual Jewish ideas. (Compare He 13:22 [note] "bear with" = endure 2Ti 4:3 - note) Hence he pauses to stir up the interest of the readers before going on with the argument. "I still have a lot of things to say." As it turned out, his subsequent discussion was indeed lengthy (Hebrews 7:1-10:18) as well as deep.

It is one of the tragedies of the Church that there is so little attempt to teach new knowledge and new thought - notice I am not referring to "new revelation" for the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation is complete and is all we need for life and godliness. Be very wary of those who claim to have new revelations from God. The Spirit as our Teacher gives illumination to our heart and mind as we diligently study and meditate on the Word of Truth, but He does not give us new divine revelation. Stated another way, the Bible is the completed record and nothing is to be added to it. John records these sobering words...

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (See **notes** [Revelation 22:18; 22:19](#))

We - The writer refers to himself.

Much to say (*polus... ha logos*) was a well known literary idiom that served to draw attention to the importance of the subject under discussion. The writer of Hebrews is clearly a teacher and here he explains his problem is that he has much to teach but **little time** (cp "written... briefly" He 13:22-note) and they have **little capacity** - they have become dull hearers of deeper truths.

Steven Cole gives a good illustration of the problem the facing our ancient writer...

Just about every home that has small children has a growth chart somewhere in the house. We sometimes used the inside of a closet doorjamb to mark the height of our kids and the date. Then, perhaps each year on their birthdays, we would measure them again. They were always excited to see how much they had grown! But can you imagine how shocked and concerned we would have been if, instead of growing up, one of our children had grown down! We would have scheduled an immediate doctor's appointment to find out what was wrong. Growth is normal and a cause for joy. Shrinkage would have been bizarre and a cause for alarm.

Many of the Hebrew Christians to whom our author wrote had **grown down** in their Christian walk, not up. He says that they had come to need milk again, not solid food. Imagine a teenager who quit eating regular food and went back to formula and Gerber's pureed peas! Instead of being able to teach others, they now need someone to teach them the ABC's of the Christian life all over again. The author wants to talk to them about Jesus being a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, but he fears that it will be over their heads. So before he plunges into that subject, he issues the strong warning that runs from He 5:11-6:20. In our text, he is saying, "Grow up, folks!" Believers must move beyond the basics of the Christian faith and grow up in Christ. You have no doubt been in a situation where an adult was acting like a child: throwing a temper tantrum, or not dealing with a frustrating situation in a mature way. You want to shout, "Grow up! Act your age!" That's what the author does here with the Hebrew Christians. ([Hebrews 5:11-6:3 Grow Up!](#)) (Bolding added)

AND IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN SINCE YOU HAVE BECOME DULL OF HEARING: kai dusermêneutos epei nothroi gegonate (2PRAI) tais akoais:

- Isaiah 6:10; Matthew 13:15; Mark 8:17,18,21; Luke 24:25; Acts 28:27
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SPIRITUAL DULLNESS: ARRESTED SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Wuest - The words **hard to explain** are literally "hard of interpretation to be speaking." It is difficult to make this teaching intelligible to these unsaved Hebrews. The difficulty is experienced by the writer. However, it is not found in any lack in the writer, but in the

spiritual condition of the subjects of this warning and exhortation. They are dull of hearing. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Hard to explain (1421) (**dusermeneutos** [dysermeneutos] from **dus** [dys] = hard + **hermeneuo** [word study] = interpret) means literally hard to interpret. It conveys the ideas of hard or difficult to explain or not easy to make clear. The idea is it is difficult to tell someone the meaning of something.

Vincent says literally this reads "hard of interpretation to speak".

As an aside the root verb **hermeneuo** (Jn 1:38, 42, 9:7, He 7:2) gives us the familiar theological term, **hermeneutics**, which deals with the principles of biblical interpretation. Let me call your attention to an excellent resource (online as of Dec, 2010) by Dr Stephen R Lewis' who has compiled a 152 page Pdf monograph on **Hermeneutics**. Even if you are not interested in "hermeneutics" per se, you might consider perusing pages 22-45 which will give you a very insightful summary of the history of Bible interpretation through the ages. [Hermeneutics: The Study of the Interpretation of the Scriptures](#)

Dusermeneutos means hard to explain because of the strange (to Jews) line taken, but still more because of their dullness. It is not hard or difficult in itself, but hard to present in such a way that the readers will understand. The fault lies with the hearers not the presenter.

In Luke 24:27 Jesus **"explained"** Old Testament Messianic passages to some disciples on the road to Emmaus. **"Explained"** is the Greek verb **dihermeneuo** (from **dia** = an intensifier + **hermeneuo** = to interpret) which means to explain thoroughly; translate, expound, interpret, explain from one language into another.

It was difficult to expound the theological point concerning the high priesthood of Jesus and how it finds its Biblical roots in that of **Melchizedek** because the readers were not accustomed to thinking in such terms. They were only accustomed to the **"elementary principles of the oracles of God."** This was clearly not a commendation of those to whom it was addressed.

You have become dull - **"Become"** implies a deterioration on the hearers' part. The thought is that they had once been alert and interested to learn more of God's Word. They did not start out dull but became that way. At one time they had been stirred and moved and open, but they had sunk into a settled state of relative spiritual stupor. In the spiritual realm a good saying is to...

Never look back unless you want to go that way!

Wuest on **become dull of hearing** - These Hebrews were slow, sluggish, stupid, numbed, in their apprehension of the teaching of New Testament truth. This made it difficult to teach them. The difficulty lay therefore not in the writer but in them. But they had not always been in that condition, as is shown by the word translated... **become**. It is in the perfect tense which tense speaks of a process completed in past time having present results. **These Hebrews had at one time a spiritual apprehension of New Testament truth sufficiently clear that they saw that the New Testament Sacrifice displaced the First Testament offerings.** The writer tells us that also in the words, "who were once enlightened" (Heb 6:4). The inability to apprehend was not a natural, inherent, and pardonable weakness, but a culpable incapacity which was the result of past neglect of and a gradual working away from New Testament truth (Heb 2:1-3). **It was the hardening of the heart against the ministrations of the Holy Spirit** (Heb 3:7, 8). **It was a deterioration of spiritual apprehension on the part of these unsaved Hebrews who had been the recipients of the pre-salvation ministry of the Holy Spirit, who had been leading them on step by step toward the act of faith in the New Testament sacrifice, the Messiah.** The use of the perfect tense here tells us that the process had gone on to the point of completion, with finished results. Their neglect had done its work, and they as a result were in a settled state of spiritual stupidity so far as their ability to apprehend New Testament truth was concerned. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Become (1096) (**ginomai**) means to come to acquire or experience a state. **Become** is in the **second person plural perfect active indicative** indicating that they **had become** and **still were** in a state of spiritual stupor.

Donald Grey Barnhouse warned that... Withering is a slow process, barely perceptible at first either to one who is being withered or to those who look on.

It is not a question of what they were **by nature**, but of what they had become **by choice**. But what happened at some point of time in the past that would cause them to have become so dull? To be sure persecution from without must have played some role and must have caused them to begin to doubt the "Jesus way" over the "Judaistic way". But applying this personally, we need to ask what happens in our own life that makes us become lethargic toward God's Word? And if we are honest, we will confess that sadly it is usually sin in one of its manifold, seductive, subtle (often not so subtle) forms. Sometimes it is being attracted to worldly pursuits, not necessarily sinful ones but not God's best ("the tyranny of the urgent"), not His will for my short day on earth (1Pe 1:17-note).

As **Puritan William Gurnall** said...

A declining Christian must needs be

A doubting Christian.

The readers were spiritually immature, though they were not recent converts. Hebrews has as one of its main goals the challenge to press on to spiritual maturity.

One of the first symptoms of spiritual regression, or backsliding, is a dullness toward the Bible.

Sunday School class is dull (many churches in modern evangelicalism no longer even have such an entity as "Sunday School", opting for "home groups" where the Word of God may or may not be taught accurately), the preaching is dull, and/or anything spiritual is dull. The problem is usually not with the teacher or the pastor, but with the believer himself or herself.

Ask yourself beloved (and be honest with God and yourself)...

"Is the Bible my joy and the delight of my heart?" (Jer 15:16)

"Is God's Word my love which I seek to meditate in all day?" (Ps 119:97)

"Is God's Word sweet to my taste, sweeter even than honey?" (Ps 119:101)

As Thomas Guthrie soberly warned... If you find yourself loving any pleasure more than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, any house better than the house of the Lord, any table better than the Lord's table, any persons better than Christ, or any indulgence better than the hope of heaven—**be alarmed**.

Matthew Poole wrote that they "**dull of hearing** because the ears of their mind were not created nor proportioned to it: they were babes and children in understanding; the difficulty was in themselves, not in the word or mystery; their intellective faculty was slow to discern, perceive, and judge of this doctrine, and their hearts were averse to it, being so conceited concerning the Levitical priesthood: such were the apostles at the first, John 16:12 (Jesus declared "*I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*"). (Matthew Poole's Commentary)

Spurgeon - It is true of many Christians that they learn very little to any purpose, and always need to be going over the A B C of the gospel. They never get into the classics, the deep things of God; they are afraid of the doctrine of election, and of the doctrine of the eternal covenant, and of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, for these truths are meant for men of full age, and these poor puny babes have not cut their teeth yet. They want some softer and more childlike food. Well, it is a mercy that they are children of God; it would be better, however, for them to grow so as to become teachers of others.

Thomas Hewitt feels that **dull of hearing** indicates "his readers had become confused and limited in their minds through apathy and mental listlessness. They had become dull of hearing, which was a common Greek ethical term for a sluggish intelligence.

Robert Gromacki makes some important distinctions... There is a difference between **maturity** and **spirituality** and between **immaturity** and **carnality**. **Maturity** involves time, growth, and experience, whereas **spirituality** stresses a believer's momentary relationship to the Holy Spirit. A believer who is walking in the Spirit is spiritual because he wants to be controlled by Him, but that same Christian may be immature if he has just been saved for a short time (Gal 5:16). A **carnal** child of God is one who responds to a problem out of his sinful human nature (1Co 3:3, 4). Believers in their practice and disposition can thus possess these characteristics in pairs. The goal of each saint should be **maturity** and **spirituality**. The worst position would be **immaturity** and **carnality**. He could however be mature and carnal or immature and spiritual. The readers (of the letter of Hebrews) were basically immature with periodic lapses into carnality. ([Gromacki, R., Dr. Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews. The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications](#))

Dull ([3576](#)) (**nothros** from negative **nê** = no + **ôtheô** = to push means no push in the hearing) is literally "no push" and thus means slow, sluggish, "numbed" in mind as well as in the ears. The idea is they are slow, slow to move, slothful, slack, obtuse, languid, lazy, sluggish, indolent.

Indolence is an inclination to laziness, which is bad enough in the physical world but can be deadly in the spiritual realm! Idleness is the enemy of the soul. As **Henry Ward Beecher** once said... If you are idle, you are on the road to ruin, and there are few stopping-places upon it. It is rather a precipice than a road.

The insightful Puritan writer **Thomas Brooks** wrote that... A lazy Christian will always lack four things: comfort, content, confidence and assurance... (adding that) an idle life and a holy heart are a contradiction.

In short, the readers of this letter (at least some of them) had no "push" or no "drive" in their spiritual life! They had no appetite or desire to hear deeper teaching. Instead of quickening the powers of their understanding and the susceptibilities of their heart by the

regular intake and serious study of God's word, many of the Hebrew readers had become dull in their apprehension of spiritual truths. **Beloved, does this describe your/my present spiritual life?** Arrested development is a pathetic thing to behold - how sad to see a grown man acting like a small child! This is never a "pretty sight"! Thus we begin to get a sense of the frustration the writer must have felt as he wrote the sobering warning in this section.

In NT **nothros** is found only here and He 6:12 where the write desires of his readers

that (they) may not be **sluggish** (nothros), but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (note)

Girdwood comments: "In He 6:12, the word "**slow**" (nothros) will be contrasted with those who operate "through faith and long-suffering." This suggests a meaning like "distrusting and easily discouraged."" (The College Press NIV commentary)

Nothros was used in secular Greek to describe the numbed limbs of a sick lion and the stupid hopes of the wolf that heard the nurse threaten to throw the child to the wolves! In the Greek papyri the corresponding verb is used of sickness. Plutarch notes that Parmenion was **sluggish and lazy** in battle; the term could also be used of an athlete who was **slow** because he was out of shape physically. In both the Wisdom literature and Greek literature generally, **nothros** connotes the failure to follow through with work or a responsibility because of being dull or slow in some aspect of life.

Barclay - nothros is full of meaning. It means slow-moving in mind, torpid in understanding, dull of hearing, witlessly forgetful. It can be used of the numbed limbs of an animal which is ill. It can be used of a person who has the imperceptive nature of a stone. Now this has something to say to everyone whose business it is to preach and to teach; in fact, it has something to say to everyone whose business it is to think and that means that it has something to say to everyone who is a real person. It often happens that we dodge teaching something because it is difficult; we defend ourselves by saying that our hearers would never grasp it. It is one of the tragedies of the Church that there is so little attempt to teach new knowledge and new thought. It is true that such teaching is difficult. It is true that often it means meeting the lethargy of the lazy mind and the embattled prejudice of the shut mind. But the task remains. The writer to the Hebrews did not shirk to bring his message, even if it was difficult and the minds of his hearers were slow. He regarded it as his supreme responsibility to pass on the truth he knew. ([Hebrews 5 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Plato calls some students **nôthroi** (stupid). - When they have to face study they are **stupid** (nothroi) and cannot remember. (Theaet. 144 B)

In the **Septuagint (LXX)** **nothros** is used only in Pr 22:29.

The author cannot deal with profounder themes (like Melchizedek) because his readers have become slow to hear and learn. **Nothros** however does not mean that the readers are in a permanent state of low intelligence. They have had time to understand, but they still do not and thus are in danger of falling into a state worse than the one they were in before they heard these truths (He 6:6-note)

Phil Newton writes that...

Dull ears make for scant understanding and little practice. Without a steady diet of God's Word a believer's ability to make wise decisions and live like a believer will be stymied. Andrew Fuller was right.

Christians should not rest satisfied in having attained to a knowledge of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but should go on unto perfection [The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller, vol. 1, 161].

To be satisfied with only an introduction to Christ calls into question the reality of his faith. We must leave the elementary diet of milk for the solid food of God's Word. This alone can sustain us and assure us in our faith as we journey through the trials and demands of life...

The writer uses this word (**nothros**) one other time in the Epistle in He 6:12 where it is translated, "sluggish." As we consider He 6:11, 12 we find what he means by "dull" in noting its opposite description.

And we desire that each of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The opposite of **dullness** is **diligence**. It is a pursuit of full assurance in Christ. It is a dogged, unrelenting desire to know the hope of Christ filling your bosom to the brim. Dullness is really not an ear problem but a heart problem. Something in the heart seems to reject the idea of hearing and heeding the Word.

John Piper comments,

The promises come to the ear, but there is no passion for them, no lover's embrace, no cherishing or treasuring; and so no faith and no patience and-if things don't change-no inheritance of eternal life! ([By This Time You Ought to Be Teachers](#))

How does this happen to those of us who have professed faith in Christ? How can we become "dull of hearing"?

At least three things might possibly occur.

First, to neglect hearing the Word increases dullness of hearing. Reading and studying Scripture is an acquired taste. The Word cuts against the grain of the natural man, exposing him and laying bare his depravity (He 4:12-note, He 4:13-note). Apart from a changed heart and a renewed mind, a person has little desire to expose himself to the Word, either by reading or listening to it (Ro 12:1-note, Ro 12:2-note; Ep 4:20, 21, 22-note, Ep 4:23, 24-note). This is one reason why our writer exhorts these believers to **"not forsake our own assembling together,"** for as we neglect hearing the Word and sitting under its counsel, we dull our own hearing (He 10:25).

Second, we become dulled when we take for granted the Word of God. If the Word is one of those things that you will eventually get-around-to, then you are in the process of being dulled. If you have become familiar to the Word without paying heed to its application, then you are being dulled. The train tracks run directly behind our home. Frankly, we don't even notice the roaring of the train as it rumbles through our backyard every day. But when someone visits us, they are often startled when they hear the train! We have taken it for granted and grown so familiar with it that we do not notice it. Has that happened with you and the preaching, reading, studying, and teaching of God's Word?

Third, when we ignore obeying the Word we become dulled in our hearing James warns that we deceive ourselves when we are merely hearers without being doers of the Word (Jas 1:22-note). If you are given to **disobedience**, do not complain about what you are hearing of God's Word. It is no question why you do not hear. You have no intention to obey so do not expect God to make his Word plain to you if you want it only to satisfy your pride. ([Leaving Milk for Meat](#))

Adam Clarke on "dull of hearing"... Your souls do not keep pace with the doctrines and exhortations delivered to you. As **nothros** signifies a person who walks heavily and makes little speed, it is here elegantly applied to those who are called to the Christian race, have the road laid down plain before them, how to proceed specified, and the blessings to be obtained enumerated, and yet make no exertions to get on, but are always learning, and never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

Nida writes that... The readers have become less keen in their understanding of the Christian faith and are in danger of abandoning their faith completely. ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series](#))

Steven Cole notes that...

The author hits the Hebrews with the fact that they **have become dull of hearing** (Hebrews 5:11). They didn't used to be that way, but they have developed this spiritual malady. **Dull** is used only here and in He 6:12 (note) in the New Testament, and has the nuance of sluggish or slow. It is used in the Greek papyri of someone being sick and therefore lacking energy. So the word has the idea of spiritual laziness or lethargy.

When there is an opportunity to get into God's Word, this person says, "Nah, let's see what's on the tube."

When there is occasion to go and hear the Word taught, he says, "I'm tired. I think I'll stay home and go to bed early."

Heb 5:11 shows that teaching God's Word is a two-way matter. There is the knowledge and ability of the teacher to explain things clearly and in an interesting manner. But also, there is the receptivity of the hearers. It is significant that the best teacher who has ever lived used to exhort His audience,

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." "Take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him" (Luke 8:8, 18).

If Jesus is the preacher and the message isn't coming through, guess who is at fault? When hearers are dull, teaching is difficult.

I'm talking here about motivation. Motivation is the key to learning. Jesus said,

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Mt 5:6-note)

Hunger and thirst are strong motivators! When you're hungry or thirsty, there is only one thing on your mind, to satisfy the craving for food or water. If you are driven by the hunger or thirst for righteousness, you will be satisfied (Mt 5:6-note). If you think, "Ho hum!" not only will you not grow; you won't even know what you're missing! There is one other lesson in He 5:11:

**There is no neutral in the Christian life.
Either you are growing or you're shrinking.**

Which is it for you right now? We fool ourselves into thinking that we're just treading water, but the strong current of the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil** carries us backwards if we're not striving to move ahead. Let me shoot straight:

**if you're not making time daily
to spend in God's Word and in prayer,
you're not growing, you're shrinking!**

You're going from eating meat back to the formula and pureed peas. That stuff is great for babies, but it won't sustain a growing teenager or adult.

The author wanted to teach them about the significance of Jesus being a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, but they can't handle it. It's like trying to get a student to read Shakespeare, but he can't even recognize the letters of the alphabet! In terms of their years as believers, they should have been capable, but they needed to go back to spiritual kindergarten. ([Hebrews 5:11-6:3](#))

Phil Newton asks "How satisfying and deep is the Word of God? Jonathan Edwards declared, "The word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world." He added, "There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity" [The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 2, 160]. More than enough, we might say of the Word of God... But the question that might be more pertinent for us is personally applied. "Are you growing in your knowledge and practice of the Word of God?" ([Leaving Milk for Meat](#))

Adoniram Judson wrote: "A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity... the same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. All the marks which we put upon it, it will exhibit forever... each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny... How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness... ! It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. Let us, then, each morning, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone, indelibly marked." (from E. Judson "The Life of Adoniram Judson" published in 1883) (**See biography**)

HEARING IN HEBREWS

Hearing ([189](#)) (**akoe** from **akoúo** = to hear; see related verb **hupakouo**) is the act, the sense or the thing heard.

Dull of hearing - (idiom = 'lazy as to one's ears') slow to understand. Slow to the hearings and so slow to respond to the teaching sessions. Lest his readers think that the writer is "labeling" every one of them with this disgraceful assessment, elsewhere he singles out those who should be commended (see Heb 6:9, 10, 11, 12 and He 10:32, 33, 34, 35, 56).

The implication of **dull of hearing** is that a grasp of deep spiritual truth is dependent in part on the diligence of the believer in listening.

The idea of **hearing** is a key idea in Hebrews...

Hebrews 2:1 (note) For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what **we have heard**, lest we drift away from it.

Hebrews 3:7 (note) Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, 8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS

Hebrews 3:15 (note) while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

Hebrews 4:7 (note) He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as

has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

Hebrews 5:9 (note) And having been made perfect, He became to all those who **obey** (literally "**hear under**", listen attentively **hupakouo** = hupo + akouo) Him the source of eternal salvation,

Hebrews 5:11 (note) Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of **hearing**.

Hebrews 11:8 (note) By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed (literally "**hear under**", listen attentively **hupakouo** = hupo + akouo) by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Why might they be dull of hearing? Drifting, neglecting (unconcerned, paying no attention to) (He 2:1-note, He 2:3-note), doubting (He 3:7, 8, 9ff-note), hardening their hearts (He 3:7, 8-note, He 4:7-note), not obeying (He 5:9-note). All of these attitudes and actions might explain their dullness. They had **heard** but they were not obeying and thus not growing.

Jesus emphasized this important principle of **spiritual growth** in John declaring...

If any man is willing (present tense) to do (present tense) His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself." (John 7:17)

Comment: "*If any man sincerely wants to do God's will, he shall know...*" The first prerequisite to ascertaining God's leading or the truth about some doctrine, is a genuine willingness to **believe** the truth and to **do** (obey) the truth which one does understand. To **know** and not to **do** (obey) runs the danger of being hardened to that truth and thus becoming dull of hearing!

The problem was not that the writer was a **dull teacher**, but that they are **dull hearers**! Think of a slug! Slothful, sluggish, lazy, stupid, a condition of spiritual apathy and laziness that prevents spiritual development. This is an instructive passage in terms of studying Scripture. The writer says he's got a lot to say, but its "**hard to explain**." Why? Is it the **difficulty** of the **revelation**? No, it's the **density** of those **receiving**. There's a "**learning disability**" so to speak.

Spurgeon... It may be hard going forward, but it is worse going back... Backsliders begin with dusty Bibles and end with filthy garments... It is dangerous to backslide in any degree, for we know not to what may lead.

Spiritual lethargy and slow response to God's truth prevented additional teaching at this time on "**him**" (Melchizedek), so the writer delays until He 6:20 (note) to mention Melchizedek again. There is an important principle in this section - Failure to appropriate the truth produces stagnation in spiritual advancement and the inability to understand or assimilate additional teaching (Jn 16:12 "but you cannot bear them now.")

The problem with the Hebrew readers of this letter reminds one of the situation that existed among the Gentiles who had received God's truth of natural (general) revelation in His creation and yet chosen to reject that revelation resulting in their hearts being progressively darkened, even becoming fools, and idol worshippers who were eventually given over by God to the power of their own innate lusts.

Ro 1:18 (note) For the wrath of God is revealed (continuously) from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who (continually, actively) suppress (hold down) the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them (How? He will explain).

Ro 1:20 (note) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that **they are without excuse**.²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile (empty, vain) in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened (**Note well:** The human soul abhors a spiritual vacuum. If we reject the spiritual light God provides, we will be given over to spiritual darkness! This is an immutable spiritual axiom! Such a person no longer discerns right from wrong [see more discernment in Hebrews 5:14], but actually begins to think that right is wrong! [cp Jdg 21:25-note] Note the "way back" is also shown in this passage - **Know** God, **Honor** Him as God, **Give Thanks** to Him! We read the Scriptures to grow to **know** which grows our love for Him and causes us to **honor** Him with our daily choice that seek His glory not ours and as we grow in our knowing of Him we begin to gain a greater appreciation of His sovereign, total control of everything, and we are motivated by that truth to genuinely **give thanks** in everything! This is the way back home beloved!).

Ro 1:22 (note) Professing to be wise, they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Study

ancient godless civilizations and you see abundant archaeological evidence of people who were desperate to worship something they could see or touch or feel -- idols -- rather than to submit and bow to the only true and Living God! This must break God's heart! Ex 20:2, 3, 5)

Ro 1:24 (note) Therefore (term of conclusion) God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts (i.e., into the power of and enslavement to **Sin**) to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. (Ro 1:18-24)

These Hebrew readers had not only received natural revelation (God's Creation), but also special revelation (God's Word - Ps 19:7ff-see commentary on site) consisting of the OT Scriptures (Ro 9:4-note), the Messiah Himself (Ro 9:5-note), and the teaching of the apostles (Heb 2:2-note; He 2:3-note). Until the Hebrews **obeyed** the revelation they had received, additional teaching about the Messiah's priesthood would be of no profit to them.

Evangelical Ear trouble is still a problem today!

Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek is a difficult subject, and the writer is going to deal with it forthrightly. To understand the subject requires sharp spiritual perception. It requires hearers to be spiritually alert and to have a knowledge of the Word of God.

J Vernon McGee quips that... The Hebrew believers who are being addressed here had a low **SQ**—not **IQ**, but **SQ**—spiritual quotient. It was hard to teach them because they had "lazy ears" (~"lazy hearts") and it was difficult to make them understand. They were babies, as many of the saints are today, and they wanted "baby talk" from the preacher. They did not want to hear anything that was difficult to understand. This is the reason some preachers are getting by with murder in the pulpit—they murder the Word of God. They absolutely kill it and substitute something from their own viewpoint, and the congregations like that kind of baby talk. ([Hebrews 5:11 Mp3](#)) ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) or [Logos](#) or [Wordsearch](#))

Guzik makes a cogent observation and application regarding **dull of hearing** writing that... The dullness usually comes first, then the desire to give up. Watch out when the Word of God starts seeming dull to you! (Ibid)

AN INABILITY TO LISTEN TO TRUTH

Hughes explains...

Therefore we understand that their problem was an acquired condition characterized by an **inability to listen to spiritual truth**. They were not naturally "slow," they were not intellectually deficient, but they had become **spiritually lazy**. They listened with the attentiveness of a slug. They had become unreceptive and closed.

When people truly come to Christ, their initial posture is one of **intense listening**. Though only a boy, I was "all ears" after I met Christ. I listened as best I could—and even took notes. God's Word was alive! My experience was not unique.

Webber, in his massive three-volume "**A History of Preaching in Britain and America**", writes that one of the by-products of the Awakening was an interest in shorthand...

Men and women studied shorthand in order that they might take down the sermons that were stirring the English-speaking countries. This had happened once before in Scotland, and it made its appearance once more in all countries where the influence of the Awakening was felt. It was not at all unusual to see men with a portable inkwell strapped about them, and a quill pen thrust over an ear, hastening to join the throng assembling on the village green.

But as the newness of it all died down, so did the listening—just as with the Hebrews centuries before, and as with so many in the church today. To such people it is "hard to explain" the deep, needful doctrines of the faith.

Richard Baxter in his "Directions for Profitably Hearing the Word Preached" gives this wise advice... Make it your work with diligence to apply the word as you are hearing it... Cast not all upon the minister, as those that will go no further than they are carried as by force... You have work to do as well as the preacher, and should all the time be as busy as he... you must open your mouths, and digest it, for another cannot digest it for you... therefore be all the while at work, and abhor an idle heart in hearing, as well as an idle minister. ([Hughes, R. K. Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul. Volume 1. Crossway Books, Volume 2](#))

Hebrews 5:12 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**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [kai gar opheilontes \(PAPMPN\) einai \(PAN\) didaskaloi dia ton chronon, palin chreian echete \(2PPAI\) tou didaskein \(PAN\) umas tina ta stoicheia tes arches ton logion tou theou, kai gegonate \(2PRAI\) chreian echontes \(PAPMPN\) galaktos, \[kai\] ou stereas trophes.](#)

Amplified: For even though by this time you ought to be teaching others, you actually need someone to teach you over again the very first principles of God's Word. You have come to need milk, not solid food. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: For, indeed, at a stage when you ought to be teachers because of the length of time that has passed since you first heard the gospel, you still need someone to tell you the simple elements of the very beginning of the message of God. You have sunk into a state when you need milk and not solid food; ([Westminster Press](#))

KJV: For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

NLT: You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: At a time when you should be teaching others, you need teachers yourselves to repeat to you the ABC of God's Revelation to men. You have become people who need a milk diet and cannot face solid food! ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: In fact, when at this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers by reason of the extent of time, again you are in need of someone to be teaching you what are the rudimentary things of the very beginning in the oracles of God, and have become and still are such as have need of milk, not of solid food. (

Young's Literal: for even owing to be teachers, because of the time, again ye have need that one teach you what are the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God, and ye have become having need of milk, and not of strong food,

FOR THOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS: [kai gar opheilontes \(PAPMPN\) einai \(PAN\) didaskaloi dia ton chronon:](#)

- Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19)
- Ezra 7:10; Ps 34:11; 1Corinthians 14:19; Colossians 3:16; Titus 2:3,4
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For though by this time - Considering the length of time since they had received Christ.

McGee quips... Some of them want a D. D. degree, but they don't even know their ABCs. ([Hebrews 5:12-14 Mp3](#))

Marcus Dods speculates writing... how long they had professed Christianity we do not know, but quite possibly for twenty or thirty years. ([Hebrews 5 Commentary - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Spurgeon - They should have become men, but they remain babes in grace. They are sadly slow in reaching the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. How many are quite unable to bear arms against the foe; for they need to be themselves guarded from the enemy!

They had professed faith in Christ but were still "**babes**," needing spiritual milk (1Cor 3:1, 2, 3). It often happens that we dodge teaching something because it is difficult; we defend ourselves by saying that our hearers would never grasp it. It is one of the tragedies of the Church that there is so little attempt to teach new truth from Scripture (new in the sense that most have never heard it taught).

It is right and good for a baby to nurse from its mother's breast for a reasonable period of time, but if someone is an adult and still nursing, this indicates a serious problem! The writer is using this analogy to describe the condition of the Hebrews as what we might call "arrested development"!

The key word in this passage is time. Underline it in your Bible. The writer tells his readers, when by virtue of the passing of time

you ought to go on to the college department, you've got to go back to kindergarten and learn your ABCs all over again. When you should be communicating the truth to others, you need to have someone communicate the truth to you. In fact, he says, you still need milk, not solid food. Solid food is for the mature. Who are the mature? Are they the people who go to seminary? Who can whip anyone in a theological duel? Who know the most Bible verses? No, the writer says you are mature if you've trained yourself through constant use of Scripture to distinguish **good from evil**.

**The mark of spiritual maturity is
not how much you understand,
but how much you use.**

**In the spiritual realm,
the opposite of ignorance
is not knowledge but obedience.**

The Bible is the primary means God has provided for saints to develop spiritual maturity. There are no shortcuts and yet tragically many modern churches (even "Bible" churches) are jettisoning the pure milk of the Word and substituting the preaching of *sermonettes* for *Christianettes*! Paul prophetic warning (his last recorded words - emphasizing their absolute importance!) to Timothy tragically appears to be coming all too true in modern Christendom...

the time (**kairos**) will come (**It has come beloved!**) when they will not endure (**anechomai**) sound (**hugiaino** ~ English "hygienic") doctrine (**didaskalia**); but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate (**episoreuo**) for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires (or "lusts" = **epithumia**); and will turn away (**NB**: This is active voice = they make a choice of their will) their ears from the truth, and will turn aside (**NB**: This verb is passive voice = they have no choice, but will be turned aside) to myths **Upshot?** If one chooses to reject truth, they will be given over to error. Reject light and you will receive darkness. Our soul "abhors" a spiritual vacuum! Beware! Be in the Word. Better yet, let it be in you, transforming you from glory to glory, 2Co 3:18!). (2Ti4:3, 4-note)

And then we wonder why so many of the marriages in our congregation are in trouble! So then they have a marital seminar (which I am not against) in an attempt to heal the marital rifts. And yet one wonders if more proclamation (and practicing) of solid food would not be the "balm of Gilead" for many of those hurting marriages. I have more than once seen marriages "miraculously" healed by "simply" teaching the Word of God, not even with a focus on passages dealing with marriage! Our times remind me of the passage in Jeremiah...

Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for **the ancient paths**, where the **good way is**, and **walk in it**; and you shall find **rest for your souls**. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' (Jer 6:16)

Time (5550)(**chronos**) perceives time quantitatively as a period measured by the succession of objects and events and denotes the passing of moments. **Kairos** in contrast refers to a season, the time of accomplishment, and considers time qualitatively as a period characterized by the influence or prevalence of something. **Chronos** is a period of measured time, not a period of accomplishment as kairos. Chronos embraces all possible kairos, and is often used as the larger and more inclusive term, but not the converse. Now are you really confused?

Wuest - "**Time**" is from **chronos**, speaking of time contemplated merely as the succession of moments, not from the word referring to a definite portion of time having limits. The word is in a construction which refers to extension. Thus because of the length of time in which these Hebrews had been under the instruction of teachers presenting New Testament truth, they ought to be teaching the same. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Ought (3784)(**opheilo** [word study] from **ophelos** = Increase, profit, advantage thru idea of accruing) conveys the basic meaning of owing a debt or having a strong obligation, especially a moral obligation and personal duty. It is not being forced to do something because of outward pressure but implies a special personal obligation ("he is bound") The use of the **present tense** conveys the idea that we are continually obligated to perform this duty. In short, **opheilo** is a strong word, meaning "we have a duty." (cp Lk 12:48)

Opheilo is used earlier in this letter -- Jesus "**had**" (**opheilo**) to become like us (incarnation) in order to be a "merciful and faithful high priest" (He 2:17-note). The Jewish priests were "**obligated**" (**opheilo**) to offer sacrifices for sins" for themselves and the people (He 5:3-note)

Opheilo - 35x in 34v in the **NAS** - Matt 18:28, 30, 34; 23:16, 18; Luke 7:41; 11:4; 16:5, 7; 17:10; John 13:14; 19:7; Acts 17:29; Rom 13:8; 15:1, 27; 1 Cor 5:10; 7:36; 9:10; 11:7, 10; 2 Cor 12:11, 14; Eph 5:28; 2 Thess 1:3; 2:13; Philemon 1:18; Heb 2:17; 5:3, 12; 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 4:11; 3 John 1:8. **NAS** = had(1), have(1), indebted(2), must(1), obligated(3), ought(15), owe(4), owed(4), owes(1),

responsible(1), should(2).

What ought his readers to have become by this time? Teachers. Teachers are those who are like torches lighting other torches ablaze with truth of Gospel, so that the world might see a "proper opinion" (the glory) of our great God and Father Whom they cannot now see except through us! (Mt 5:16-note, Php 2:14-note, see also Paul's description of the Corinthian believers to a "letter... known and read by all men" - 2Co 3:2, 3)

Marcus Dods... Those who had for a time themselves been Christians were expected to have made such attainment in knowledge as to become **teachers**. This advance was their duty (opheilo). Instead of thus accumulating Christian knowledge, they had let slip even the rudiments, so far at any rate as to allow them to fall into the background of their mind and to become inoperative. Their primal need of instruction had recurred. ([Hebrews 5 Expositor's Greek Commentary - Online](#))

Morris writes... The Jewish Christians to whom the author was writing were still involved in legalism and in speculations about the nature of Christ. They had professed faith in Christ but were still "babes," needing spiritual milk (1Co 3:1).

Wuest - The **ought** is one of moral obligation. The Greek word is used of a necessity imposed either by law or duty, or by the matter under consideration. "**Again**" is in an emphatic position in the Greek and is to be construed with "**need**," not "**teach**." **They again have need that someone be teaching them**, the word "teach" showing a continuous process. These Hebrews had grown so sluggish in their apprehension of New Testament truth that it would require many lessons to do anything with them. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Teachers (1320)(**didaskalos** from **didasko** = teach to shape will of one being taught by content of what is taught) is either the act of teaching or the thing taught and in this use denotes doctrine or what is taught) (See study on related word **didaskalia**) means instructors, teachers, those whose one whose occupation is to instruct. A didaskalos is one who shapes the will of the student by the content of what is taught.

Jesus is our example of the Master Teacher, so it is not surprising that **didaskalos** is used to describe Him in 41 of the 59 uses in the NT. The message from the NT is clear -- Keep your eyes on Jesus as the Author and Perfecter of the faith (He 12:2-note, cp He 3:1-note).

The tragedy in the modern church in America is Christians without Christian minds, not only not able to teach, but in need someone to teach the ABC's of God's Word. Why are the elders not teaching in so many churches (1Ti 3:2b, Titus 1:9-note)? Why are older, more mature men not actively discipling younger men (or older women teaching younger women - Titus 2:3,4, 5-note)? Why are elders not weekly making "rounds" through the Sunday School classes to monitor what is being taught. In too many situations classes are being "taught" by some video series which may make mention of a few Scriptures while focusing most of the attention on "felt needs" rather than the serving babes the pure milk of the Word of God (1Pe 2:2-note).

Didaskalos - 59x in 58v in the **NAS** - Matt 8:19; 9:11; 10:24f; 12:38; 17:24; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36; 23:8; 26:18; Mark 4:38; 5:35; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1; 14:14; Luke 2:46; 3:12; 6:40; 7:40; 8:49; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7; 22:11; John 1:38; 3:2, 10; 8:4; 11:28; 13:13f; 20:16; Acts 13:1; Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 12:28f; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; 4:3; Heb 5:12; Jas 3:1. NAS =

The ability to share spiritual truth with others is a mark of maturity. Not all Christians have the gift of teaching, but all can share what they learn from the Word. The recipients of this letter had been saved long enough to be able to share God's truth with others.

Every believer is to be a teacher (Col 3:16-note; 2Ti 3:15-note, 1Pe 3:15-note, Dt 6:7). If these Hebrews had really obeyed the gospel of Christ, they would have been passing that message on to others. The Jews were instructed in the law and prided themselves because they taught the law, but had not really understood or appropriated its truths to themselves (Ro 2:17 18 19 20 21 22 23 - see **notes** Ro 2:17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23).

Constable sums up 4 marks of spiritual immaturity in this section... laziness (dullness) toward the Word (He 5:11), inability to teach the Word to others (He 5:12), a diet of only elementary truths in the Word (He 5:12, 13), and lack of skill in applying the Word (He 5:14). As with the muscles in our bodies, if we do not use what we have gained spiritually we will lose it (cf. 2Pe 3:18). ([Hebrews 5 Commentary](#))

Doctrine is important! When the precepts of men are taught as if they were the doctrines of God, man's wisdom is elevated above God's and this is the very root of all sin. It was Satan's inducing Eve to trust her own wisdom above God's that led to the Fall and to every subsequent sin and evil in the world. It follows that every believer must

E xamine everything carefully; **Hold fast** to that which is good. **Abstain** from every form of evil" (1Th 5 :21, 22-note) (Note that all three verbs are present imperative = commands calling for these actions/attitudes to be our lifestyle, something only possible enabled by God's grace and His Spirit!)

We must be paying careful heed to all that is taught (or even more frightening what is not being taught!) in our local churches. And don't forget the music -- Are the praise choruses doctrinally sound or do they simply sound good and make us "feel good" (man centered rather than Christ centered). There is a tragic decline in singing of doctrinally rich hymns in many modern churches and an entire generation of believers is being raised up that does not know the great old hymns and their great theology.

Ray Stedman has this illustration... I read of a principal in a high school who had an administrative post to fill. He promoted one of his teachers with ten years of teaching experience to the job. When the announcement was made, another teacher in this school came to him terribly upset. She said, 'Why did you put that teacher in this position? He has only had ten years of experience and I've had twenty-five years, yet you passed me over in favor of him.' And the principal said, 'I'm sorry; you're wrong. You haven't had twenty-five years of experience. You have had one year's experience twenty-five times.' (What More Can God Say?)

Barclay - There are people who have never grown up in behaviour. It may be forgivable in a child to sulk or to be liable to fits of temper, but there are many adults who are just as childish in their behaviour. A case of arrested development is always a pathetic thing; and the world is full of people whose religious development has been arrested. They stopped learning years ago and their conduct is that of a child. It is true that Jesus said the greatest thing in the world is the childlike spirit; but there is a tremendous difference between the childlike and the childish spirit. Peter Pan makes a charming play on the stage; but the man who will not grow up makes a tragedy in real life. Let us have a care lest we are still in the religion of childhood when we should have reached the faith of maturity. ([Hebrews 5 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

YOU HAVE NEED AGAIN FOR SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD AND YOU HAVE COME TO NEED MILK SOLID FOOD: palin chreian echete (2PPAI) tou didaskein (PAN) humas tou didaskein humas tina ta stoicheia tês archês tôn logiôn tou theou kai gegonate (2PRAI) chreian echontes (PAPMPN) kai ou stereastrophes:

- Isaiah 28:9,10,13; Philippians 3:1
- Hebrews 6:1
- 2Sa 16:23; Acts 7:38; Ro 3:2; 1Peter 4:11
- He 5:13; Is 55:1; 1Co 3:1, 2, 3; 1Pe 2:2
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Instead of helping others to grow, these Hebrew Christians were in need of learning again the simple teachings of the Christian life. They were experiencing a second childhood!

Need ([5532](#)) (**chreia** from **chraomai** = to use, make use of or **chreos** = a debt) means a necessity, what is needed or the occasion of need.

Vincent on **again**... The position of the word is emphatic. **Again** ye have need of being taught the very rudiments of divine truth which ye were taught long ago.

Teach ([1321](#)) (**didasko** from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see study of related noun **didaskalia** and the adjective **didaktikos**) (**present tense**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting.

In the present context to **teach** means to pass on the truth about the Word of God, the God of the Word and the faith of the saints, with the goal of influencing the understanding and stimulating Spirit energized obedience to the truth taught which results in increasing Christ-likeness. The essence of a disciple in fact is that he or she is a learner. The teacher teaches and the disciple hears and processes what is heard so that this truth affects his or her innermost being. Ultimately the purpose of **didasko** is to shape the will of the one taught.

Elementary principles ([4747](#)) (**stoicheion** [word study] from **stoicheo** = march in (military) rank from **stoichos** =row) refers to something orderly in arrangement. It is one of a row, hence a letter (of the alphabet), by extension the elements of knowledge. It is always in the plural (*tá stoicheia*), the basic parts, rudiments, elements, or components of something. Among ancient Greek philosophers, designated 4 basic and essential elements of universe earth, water, air, and fire. This meaning is conveyed in the following verses (2Pe 3:10-note, 2Pe 3:12- note) Figuratively it refers to the elements or first principles of Christian doctrine. The writer is referring to the "ABCs" of Christian life. To be sure the plain things are the main things, and the main things are the plain things but that does not mean we should not progress further than the plain things.

Stoicheion - 7x in 7v in the **NAS** - Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20; Heb 5:12; 2 Pet 3:10, 12. **NAS** = elemental things(2), elementary principles(2), elementary*(1), elements(2), principles(1).

Oracles (3051) (**logion** from **lógios** = an orator) refers to sayings, pronouncements, declarations. In Classical Greek **logion** was used to describe oracular utterances of heathen deities but that is clearly not the sense in this present use. Instead **logion** refers to an utterance of the very words of God (Ro 3:2-note) and in other contexts is a synonym for the Holy Scriptures. **Oracles** in the OT Scripture laid the foundation for the gospel and had been committed into the care of the Hebrews (Ro 3:1,2-note). The ABC's of the law tutored the Hebrews in order to lead them to faith in the Messiah (Gal 3:23,24). These readers had also heard the Gospel (He 2:2, 3, 4-see notes He 2:2; 2:3; 2:4).

Logion - 4x in 4v in the NAS - Acts 7:38; Ro 3:2; Heb 5:12; 1Pe 4:11

MacArthur writes that... **Logion** (oracles) is a diminutive of **logos** (note), which is most commonly translated **word**. **Logion** generally referred to important sayings or messages, especially supernatural utterances ([MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Wuest - "**Oracles**" is from the Greek word used also in Romans 3:2, and Acts 7:38, and refers to divine utterances. Thus, these Hebrews again needed someone to be teaching them, and the start should be made with the rudiments of the very beginning of the divine utterances in New Testament truth ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

The "**oracles of God**" is a synonym for the Scriptures in (Ro 3:2; 1Pe 4:11; Acts 7:38).

Bob DeWaay feels in the present context that... The "**oracles**" to which the author of Hebrews refers are probably brief, easily understood sayings such as the ten commandments. As A. T. Robertson states, "*Logion is a diminutive of logos, divine oracles being usually brief....*" Hewitt says that oracle (**logion**), "*originally meant a `brief, condensed, divine saying`"* Babies never progress beyond briefly stated basics of the faith. These elementary principles are necessary, as Hebrews 6:1,2, 3 shows, but it is wrong to consider them all that is necessary for spiritual maturity. The babe knows John 3:16, the Lord's Prayer, perhaps the 10 Commandments, and little else. He understands only the most basic summary of the Christian message and has no hunger for more. Sometimes, slogans or formulas loosely based on Scripture serve as trite answers to every question, effectively cutting off serious theological discussion. ([Critical Issues Commentary](#))

Have come - This is more literally "you have become", and is the same verb as in the previous verse.

Become (1096) (**ginomai**) means to come to acquire or experience a state. "**Become**" as in the previous verse is in the **second person plural perfect active indicative** indicating that they **had become** and **still were** in a state of need for "baby food"! The point is clear that at one time they were more advanced but now have slipped backward. It bears repeating that failure to move forward in the Christian life invariably will result in slipping backward. There is no "coasting" gear in the Christian life. These readers were clear testimony to this principle. And as such they now needed to be "bottle fed" again with the elementary instructions about the Christian life.

Need (5532) (**chreia** from **chraomai** = to use, make use of or **chreos** = a debt) means a necessity, what is needed or the occasion of need.

Milk (1051) (**gala**) is literal milk but is used here figuratively to refer to the Word of God. In context the writer is referring to a need to move on to deeper truths. He uses milk in this verse to refer to the beginning truths of Christianity. Peter uses **milk** to refer to the Word of God in general (1Pe 2:2-note)

Solid (4731) (**stereos**) means stable (firmly established), steadfast or solid like a foundation. In a physical sense this word describes something as firm, hard, solid and compact like a rock.

Wuest on their **need** for **milk** - Thus, only a liquid diet, milk, the very beginning of the rudimentary teachings of the New Testament could be administered, not solid food, the deeper teachings of the Word. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Food (5160) (**trophe** from **trépho** = to feed, eat) refers to nourishment or sustenance and here is used figuratively of food for soul.

A lot of saints today sit and listen to truths that amount to "baby talk" from the pulpit. It is tragic indeed that they have to endure this, but they do. It's like the pastor I once asked to consider teaching us deeper truths in his sermons to which he replied "**They couldn't handle it!**". To an extent that might be true, but how can they ever grow to handle it, if they are never even challenged? And remember the Holy Spirit is the ultimate Teacher and the Word is such that it never returns void without accomplishing what God intended!

Spurgeon - Do not be frightened, you who have lately been brought into the Lord's family. We are not going to feed you with meat yet; we shall be glad enough to serve you with milk for the present. At the same time, let us all be praying the Lord to make us grow, that we may know more, and do more, and be more what the Lord would have us to be.

Arnold notes that...

In educational contexts the imagery of “**milk and solid food**” was a common means of delineating basic from advanced teachings.

The rabbis sometimes called their young students “*sucklings*.”

Epictetus, a crippled Greek slave during the reign of Nero, uses the **milk/meat imagery** to comment on the immaturity of the person who demands life be a certain way in order to be happy. He states,

Are you not willing, at this late date, like children, to be weaned and to partake of more solid food, and not to cry for mammies and nurses—old wives’ lamentations?”

Having challenged the young man to get out into the world and taste widely of the challenges God brings in life, he laments,

Nay, you will not; sit rather in the house as girls do and wait for your mammy until she feeds you!

Speaking of education, Philo of Alexandria writes that **milk** is the food of babies and suited for the time of childhood (i. e., the beginning stages of education), but grown men should partake of more substantial fare that leads to wisdom, self-control, and virtue. ([Arnold, C. E. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 4: Hebrews to Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan](#))

Disciple's Study Bible... Not all church members are qualified to be teachers. Many are immature in the faith. They have not learned to live righteous lives or discuss mature questions. All Christians need to mature in the faith so they can distinguish good from evil. Maturity comes from constant study and practice of the faith. Perhaps the shortage of qualified teachers in many churches today is related to a failure to grow in Christian knowledge. As leaders look in vain for persons capable of teaching others, they can only find babes in Christ, fixated in the kindergarten stages of faith development. Each Christian with teaching gifts should exercise those gifts at the present stage of maturity while seeking constantly for greater knowledge and maturity.

Steven Cole writes that...

beyond these basic truths, there is much in Scripture that is deep and nourishing. Someone has said that the Bible is like an ocean, deep enough to drown an elephant, but shallow enough at the shore for a toddler to play. If you want to see how spiritually dull you really are, read the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Keep in mind that all children in Reformed homes used to be required to memorize this before they could be confirmed and join the church. You all know the first question and answer: “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” There is a lifetime of practical content in that short answer!

But do you know Question 4: “What is God?” Answer: “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” Question 5: “Are there more Gods than one?” Answer: “There is but One only, the living and true God.” Question 6: “How many persons are there in the Godhead?” Answer: “There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” Could you have explained the nature of God and the Trinity so well? Question 7: “What are the decrees of God?” Answer: “The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

The Shorter Catechism has 107 questions like that. I dare say that if we Baptists learned that sort of thing, we would be light years ahead in our understanding of sound doctrine, and we would not be tossed around by all of the foolish things being taught in the Christian world today. I recommend, *A Faith to Confess*, subtitled, “The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, Rewritten in Modern English” [Carey Publications]. It is essentially a modification of the Westminster Confession in accordance with a Baptist understanding of the ordinances. Teach these things to your children!

When the author says that by this time, the Hebrews should have been teachers, it does not mean that he was writing to a select group of leaders in the church. Rather, every Christian who has been a believer for a few years should be knowledgeable enough in the teachings of Scripture to instruct a younger believer. Not all are gifted as teachers for the whole church (Jas 3:1; Ep 4:11-note, Ep 4:12-note), but all should know enough to present the gospel, to teach the basics about God, man, salvation, and the Christian life. If you cannot do that, either you are a relatively new believer, or you’re one of the older believers that this section of Scripture confronts. Grow up!

DUMBED-DOWN CHRISTIANITY

Let me add that we live in a day of dumbed-down Christianity, where we have an aversion to sound doctrine. The mantra of our day, even among evangelicals, is,

Doctrine is dead head knowledge that just leads to arguments and division. So be careful not to get into doctrine too far!

But the fact is, every believer has doctrines! They may be sound doctrines, in line with Scripture, or they may be screwy doctrines that are inconsistent with Scripture. Theology is simply the process of synthesizing and harmonizing the teachings of the whole Bible on the major subjects that it discusses. So if you are a Christian, you can't avoid being a theologian. The question is, are you growing to be sound in your theology, or are you shallow, mixed up, and unbiblical in your theology? ([Hebrews 5:11-6:3](#))

Why does the writer say they now have come to need milk? Because they are still spiritual babies (1Cor 3:2) and not able to chew "solid food" for they without intellectual and spiritual teeth. They ought to be teachers and mature saints, but instead they are still little babies needing someone to burp them. "Why didn't the soloist sing this morning? We wanted to hear the soloist sing." They are little babies, wanting their rattles, and wanting the bottle with the nipple on it!

The writer defines the **milk** as **the first principles of the oracles of God**. The **meat** of the Word is the teaching about our Lord's ministry now in heaven as our High Priest. The writer wanted to give this **meat** to them, but they were not ready for it. The **milk** of the Word refers to what Jesus Christ did on earth—His birth, life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection. The **meat** of the Word refers to what Jesus Christ is now doing in heaven. We begin the Christian life on the basis of His finished work on earth. We grow in the Christian life on the basis of His unfinished work in heaven. And where do we find the most in depth treatment of the subject of Jesus' present ministry in heaven? In the book of Hebrews, a book that many pulpits shy away from because of what are admittedly several of the most difficult passages in all of the Bible.

Of course, even the most mature adult never outgrows **milk**. As believers, we can still learn much from our Lord's work on earth. But we must not stop there! But the writer's point is that his readers must make spiritual progress, and they can do this only if they learn about Christ's present priestly ministry on behalf of believers. (See He 13:20, 21-note for a summary of what the Lord wants to do for His people now.)

The contrast between the immature Christian and the child, between milk and solid food occurs in some other NT passages (1Pe 2:2-note; 1Cor 2:6; 3:2; 14:20; Ep 4:13, 14, 15, 16-see **notes** Ep 4:13; 4:14; 4:15; 4:16).

No one likes to be told "Just grow up!" Especially if they are adults! So here the writer is saying you should act your spiritual age. And it must have surely commanded their attention. We don't want to be humiliated by having to field this question regarding maturity. One may be **old** enough to handle certain things but they may not be **mature** enough. But you don't want to be told you are not mature.

Growth is important to every person - witness the marks on the wall of the door in your house that mark a child's growing up... each year they grew a bit more. Growth is measured against age, as when you take the child to the doctor. The first thing he wants to know is "How old is your child?" Why? because we assess their maturity level by comparing it with their age. By age 2 the child should be walking. By age 3 he should be speaking, etc, etc. Growth within may not match our growth without. Some have a great deal of wisdom yet are not big. Others may be big in size but lack intelligence. So growth within does not necessarily match growth without. This all applies to the Christian life & God sees growth as very important:

From the moment of the "new birth" we are in some stage of the process of growth, ideally taking in good nourishment (pure milk of the Word), watching good models who live out God's Truth and we begin to exercise and practice this Truth we are taking in. That's growth in maturity but this is rare today. So many believers after a burst of zeal begin to wane, becoming rather lethargic as the growth stagnates. These "children" need to hear the admonition "Grow up."

These hearers do not appear to have been "victimized" by someone but rather to have suffered self-imposed immaturity. Why does dullness set in? You can be 50 years in a Bible teaching church and yet be a baby. Job 32:7,8: (Living Bible) declared

Those who are older are said to be wiser but it is not mere age which makes men wise.

Bob DeWaay writes that...

Babies are wonderful, so are baby Christians if one means those who have recently come to the faith. The author of Hebrews, however, is speaking of babes of a different variety. These "babes" are in a state of perpetual infancy. They lack the interest and ability to understand Biblical teaching of any complexity and

consequently lack discernment. Geriatric spiritual babies love to be entertained and amused like their counterparts in the nursery, but balk at the notion of learning and understanding theology.

Hebrews 5:11-14 is perplexing to many modern Christians because it is not compatible with their priorities. Think about it. Why would the author of Hebrews rebuke his readers for not being able to understand the difference between the typological implications of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthods (this topic is picked up in Hebrews 7 after the extended parenthetical section of He 5:11-6:20)? The problem is not that they did not already understand this point of theology, it was that they could not hear it (Hebrews 5:11). The same is true today. Today many cannot have such matters explained to them either because they would not attend a church that tried, nor would they tolerate learning enough theology and hermeneutics to tackle passages such as Hebrews 5-7. Many remain babies today because they do not think growing up is worth the effort. ([Critical Issues Commentary](#))

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Illustration - Dull hearers are like the teacher who had "25 years experience" but was passed over for a promotion by a teacher with only "10 years" experience. When she asked why she was passed over even though she had longer tenure, the principal said "You have not have 25 years of experience. Instead you have had 1 year of experience 25 times!"

We need to stop talking about how long we have been in the family of God and start talking about how mature we've become (not bragging of course but living it out). We don't need to tell others how many times we've gone through our Bible but how many times the Word gone through us!. We don't need to show others how big our notebook of sermon notes is. Who cares? God doesn't! The vital question to answer is "How much have I grown in maturity since I was first saved? Since last year? Since last week?" Are you growing older but not growing wiser? These are convicting questions!

Dearly beloved, only you can answer these pithy questions. Stop a moment and think upon these things. Your spiritual health and vitality depend on it!

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Spectator Risks - Even the weakest among us can participate in sports, but only the strongest can survive as spectators. According to a heart specialist, when you become a spectator rather than a participant, the wrong things go up and the wrong things come down. Body weight, blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, and triglycerides go up. Vital capacity, oxygen consumption, flexibility, stamina, and strength go down.

Being an onlooker in the arena of Christian living is also risky. The wrong things go up, and the wrong things come down. Criticism, discouragement, disillusionment, and boredom go up. Sensitivity to sin and the needs of others, and receptivity to the Word of God go down. Sure, there's a certain amount of thrill and excitement in hearing someone's testimony about how God has worked. But it's nothing like knowing that joy yourself. There's no substitute for piling up your own experiences of faith, and using your own God-given abilities in behalf of others.

If we're to be maturing and growing stronger as followers of Jesus Christ, we need to venture out in faith—and that's risky. But remember, it's a far greater risk to be only a spectator.—Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

For Further Study

Read 2 Peter 1:5-7. What qualities should we be developing? Also, read What Does It Take To Follow Christ?

God calls us to get into the game, not to keep the score

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How Old Are You? - Hebrews 5 was addressed to believers who should have been mature enough to teach others, but they were still babes in Christ. They were like nursing infants, lacking spiritual fruit and in danger of severe discipline from the Lord. They were urged to put away childish things and to grow up.

The author wrote, "Leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection" (He 6:1). The word perfection means "maturity." The recipients of this letter were to leave the milk stage and grow up to "full age" (He 5:14) by feeding on the solid meat of the Word.

Many churches today have this same problem. They should be workshops but instead they are just nurseries for infants and crybabies. A vigorous church will have a "nursery" for new Christians, but when the babies don't grow up the workers have to spend too much time being nursemaids while neglecting the rest of the family of God.

How long have you been a follower of Christ? How much have you grown? Are you a burden to your pastor and your fellow believers, or are you an encourager and a burden-bearer? The apostle Peter challenged us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pet. 3:18). Let's aim for maturity. --M. R. De Haan, M.D. (founder of RBC Ministries) ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

By feeding on Your blessed Word, dear Lord,
I will no longer weak and childish be;
And as I listen to Your Spirit's voice,
May Christlike love and grace be seen in me. --Hess

Growing close to Christ produces a growing Christlikeness.

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Grow Up! - When my children were infants, my wife and I gave them milk. As they grew older, we fed them soft food. They looked as happy as the plump babies pictured on the baby-food jars.

Our children are adults now. When they come to visit, my wife fixes them food like steak and potatoes. They've grown up.

Milk and baby food are great for babies. As they mature, however, they should go on to solid food. The same is true about spiritual growth.

Maturing as a Christian can also be compared to becoming a concert pianist. In a sense, you are a pianist from the moment you play your first simple piece. Yet it takes years of practice to play the piano well. You'll never be a concert pianist if you don't advance beyond the easy compositions.

The writer to the Hebrews was concerned about the lack of spiritual growth among his readers. He wrote, "By this time you ought to be teachers." Then he observed, "You have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12). He urged them to "go on to perfection" in their faith (Hebrews 6:1).([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Christians should move on to spiritual maturity. We must feast on the meat of God's Word and put into practice the lessons we have learned. It's the only way to grow up. —Haddon W. Robinson

More about Jesus let me learn,
More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God, my teacher be,
Showing the things of Christ to me. —Hewitt

**The new birth takes but a moment
Spiritual maturity takes a lifetime**