

Hebrews 5:11-12 Commentary

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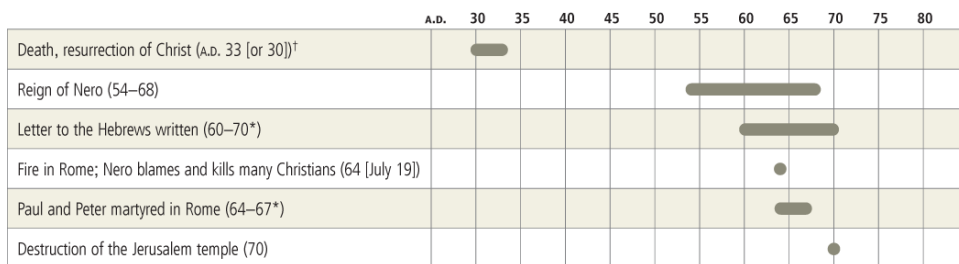
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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Swindoll's Chart](#), [Interesting Pictorial Chart of Hebrews](#), [Another Chart](#)

The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18			EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
REVELATION			RESPONSE	
PRECEPTS			PRACTICE	
DOCTRINE			DUTY	
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 PROPHETS, ANGELS MOSES Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER THAN AARON'S PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER THAN THE OLD COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER THAN ANIMAL SACRIFICES Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE IN CHRIST THAN IN ADAM!
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68 AD				

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

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Timeline of Hebrews - ESV Study Bible

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](#).

BGT Περ ο πολ ς μ ν λ γος κα δυσερμ νευτος λ γειν, πε νωθρο γεγ νατε τα ς κοα ς.

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.

NKJ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become 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,

NET On this topic we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing.

CSB We have a great deal to say about this, and it's difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand.

ESV About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

NIV We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.

NLT There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen.

YLT concerning whom we have much discourse and of hard explanation to say, since ye have become dull of hearing,

MIT Concerning this truth much can be said—and hard to express because you have become lackadaisical about listening.

NJB On this subject we have many things to say, and they are difficult to explain because you have grown so slow at understanding.

NRS About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding.

RSV About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

NAB About this we have much to say, and it is difficult to explain, for you have become sluggish in hearing.

GWN We have a lot to explain about this. But since you have become too lazy to pay attention, explaining it to you is hard.

BBE Of whom we have much to say which it is hard to make clear, because you are slow of hearing.

ASV Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing.

FIVE WARNING SECTIONS IN HEBREWS

Take Heed

Hebrews 2:1-4+

Do Not Miss His Rest

Hebrews 3:7-4:13+

Beware of Dullness & Apostasy

Hebrews 5:11-6:12+

Beware of Willful Sinning

Hebrews 10:19-39+

Beware of Refusing Christ

Hebrews 12:14-29+

Wilmington has another way of looking at the warning passages...The Better Nots...

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

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+), who was enlightened, who tasted of the heavenly gift and had been made a partaker of the Holy Ghost (He 6:4+), one who had tasted the Word of God and the powers of the age to come (He 6:5+), and who had been brought to repentance (He 6:6+). 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+). 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+). 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+), 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+. 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+). 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+; He 6:6+, though in He 6:9+, 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 logos*legein (PAN):

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

CONCERNING HIM: PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

Concerning (*peri*) **him we have much to say** - NET = "On this topic" NLT = "There is so much more we would like to say about this." GWT = We have a lot to explain about this." And so some versions translate this as "concerning this." (Heb 5:11RSV, Heb 5:11YLT, Heb 5:11ESV) **We** is the writer referring to himself. **Much to say** (*polus...ho logos*) is a well-known literary idiom used to highlight the importance of the subject under discussion. The writer of Hebrews, clearly functioning as a teacher, explains that his difficulty lies not in the lack of material—he has much to teach (cf. 'I have written... briefly,' Heb 13:22+)—but in the lack of receptivity. His readers have become dull of hearing, unable to grasp deeper truths.

In context, the writer has just introduced Jesus as High Priest **according to the order of Melchizedek**. (Heb 5:10) The writer wanted to expand on this topic which he will do later beginning in Hebrews 7:1-28).

In Hebrews 5:11 the writer pauses, rebuking his readers for being spiritually sluggish—"dull of hearing"—which hindered them from grasping the deeper truths about Melchizedek and Christ's eternal priesthood. Their immaturity had become an impediment to further teaching, so Hebrews 5:11–6:20 functions as a digression of warning and exhortation. He is ready to unfold the significance of Melchizedek, yet fears his readers may fail to understand since his argument runs counter to conventional Jewish ideas (cf. Heb 13:22+; 2Ti 4:3+). Thus he stirs their attention before proceeding, noting, "I still have much to say." Indeed, the discussion that follows (Heb 7:1–10:18) proves to be both extended and profound.

THOUGHT - 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. (Rev 22:18-19+)

Before God entrusts us with deeper truths, He calls us to spiritual attentiveness and maturity. Dullness of hearing must give way to eagerness of heart and diligent study if we would grasp the riches of Christ. Are you in a serious Bible study that is regularly digging deeper into the spiritual truths in Scripture? If not, you need to be! You might consider a Precept inductive Bible study, the most in depth format I have encountered in over 40 years of teaching the Bible. Many classes are available via zoom so you could join

a class even if none were available locally. Check out the list the classes in the Austin area [here](#).

Kenneth Wuest on concerning him - 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](#))

*The strong meat of allegory must be
for half-inspired saints*

Charles Spurgeon on concerning him - 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. ([Strong Meat](#))

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

*Many of the Hebrew Christians to whom our author wrote
had grown down in their Christian walk, not up.*

Just about every home that has small children has a growth chart somewhere in the house. We sometimes used the inside of a closet door jamb to mark the height of our kids and the date (see depiction above). 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)

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

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

Related Passages:

Matthew 13:15+ FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'

Luke 8:8+ "Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**"

Luke 8:18+ "So **take care** ([blepo](#) [also in Heb 3:12+] in [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) 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."

NOT HARD OF HEARING BUT HARD OF LISTENING

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain([dusermeneutos/dysermeneutos](#)), **since you have become dull** ([nothros](#)) **of hearing** ([akoe](#)) - This teaching regarding the priesthood of Melchizedek is difficult to make intelligible to the Hebrews, not because of any deficiency in the writer, but because of the spiritual condition of his audience. The problem lies in them—they have become dull of hearing. **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. It was difficult to expound the theological truth of Christ's high priesthood and its biblical roots in Melchizedek, because the readers were unaccustomed to thinking in such categories. They were still confined to the "elementary principles of the oracles of God."

*A sobering picture of spiritual backsliding:
once vibrant, now stagnant.*

You have become dull - **Become** implies deterioration on the hearers' part. The perfect tense indicates a completed action in the past with ongoing effect in the presence — You have become (in the past) and you still are (now) dull of hearing. The readers weren't always this way — they once were more attentive and spiritually teachable. Over time, they drifted and settled into a condition of spiritual sluggishness. The perfect tense underscores the continuing state, showing that their dullness is not momentary, but an established condition. The perfect tense warns that they remain in that state unless they act. In the spiritual life, the old saying applies well: *Never look back unless you want to go that way.*

*They as a result were in a settled state of spiritual stupidity
so far as their ability to apprehend New Testament truth was concerned.*

Kenneth Wuest elaborates on the significance of the verb **become** - "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](#))

"Withering is a slow process, barely perceptible at first either to one who is being withered or to those who look on."

--Donald Grey Barnhouse

It is not a question of what they were **by nature**, but of what they had become **by choice**. The question might be what happened at some point of time in the past that would have caused them to have **become** dull? To be sure persecution from without must have played some role and must have caused them to begin to doubt the "Jesus way" was better than the "Judaistic way".

THOUGHT - Applying this personally, we need to ask what can happen in our own life that might make 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 (like the "encumbrance" in Heb 12:1+) but not God's best ("the tyranny of the urgent"), not His will for my short day on earth (1Pe 1:17+). ([See checklist below](#) Take a moment to reflect on the checklist, and prayerfully consider how it speaks to your heart and your walk with the Lord.)

*A declining Christian must needs be
A doubting Christian.*

--William Gurnall

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.*

THOUGHT - Sunday School class is dull (many churches in modern evangelicalism no longer even have such an entity known 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)

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](#))

C H 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.

*Spiritual laziness makes God's Word seem "too hard,"
when the real issue is dullness of heart.*

Robert Gromacki writes "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 3:2-3+). 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. ([Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews](#))

COMMENT - Note Gromacki mentions a "carnal child of God." Some writers have taken this single mention of "carnality" in 1Co 3:2-3+ and used that to propound a separate category of believers, which they have designated so-called "**carnal Christians**." But dear Berean student (Acts 17:11+), beware of this highly questionable and even dangerous teaching from even respected evangelical writers (e.g., [Thomas Constable](#) writes "*Prolonged immaturity as a result of carnality is a condition that is all too prevalent in modern Christianity. Often we mistake **carnal Christians** for 'natural' people: **unbelievers**."* Perhaps that is because they are in fact natural people or unbelievers masquerading as believers!!!) See a balanced discussion of [What is a Carnal Christian?](#) from Gotquestions.org. who concludes "*For a genuine believer in Christ, though, these outbreaks of carnality will be the **exception, not the rule***"")

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***." (ED: I would add, you might want to do a 2 Corinthians 13:5+ spiritual checkup!)

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.

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.

--Henry Ward Beecher

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, some of the readers of this letter lacked any real "push" or "drive" in their spiritual lives. They had no appetite for deeper teaching, no desire to press further into God's truth. Instead of sharpening their understanding and stirring their hearts through the regular intake and serious study of God's Word, many had grown dull in their grasp of spiritual realities.

THOUGHT - Beloved, does this describe your life—or mine—today? Arrested spiritual development is a tragic sight; how sad it is to see a grown man acting like a child! Such immaturity is never attractive. No wonder the writer's tone grows sober and urgent, as he expresses his frustration with their condition in this warning passage.

[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](#))

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](#))

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!....The pathway to maturity and to solid biblical food is not first becoming an intelligent person, but becoming an obedient person ([By This Time You Ought to Be Teachers](#))

*"Dullness of hearing" is hearing without faith
and without the moral fruit of faith.*

-- John Piper

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). Dull of hearing was a common Greek ethical term for a sluggish intelligence

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.

Why might they be dull of hearing? Drifting, neglecting (unconcerned, paying no attention to) (He 2:1+, He 2:3+), doubting (He 3:7, 8, 9ff+), hardening their hearts (He 3:7, 8+, He 4:7+), not obeying (He 5:9+). 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 (+) 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 (+) 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 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 (+) 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 (+) 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+) consisting of the OT Scriptures (Ro 9:4+), the Messiah Himself (Ro 9:5+), and the teaching of the apostles (Heb 2:2+; He 2:3+). 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](#) or see [Thru the Bible](#))

David 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)

R Kent 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. (See [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#))

Hard to explain ([1421](#)) (**dusermeneutos/dysermeneutos** from **dus/dys** = bad, difficult, hard [*dysfunctional*, *dyspepsia*] + **hermeneuo** = interpret + **-tos** - adjectival suffix indicating a verbal adjective) 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. The word doesn't imply that the subject matter itself (Melchizedek, Christ's priesthood) is inherently impossible to explain. Rather it is difficult to convey properly. The problem is partly the audience's lack of receptivity ("dull of hearing"), not just the complexity of the subject. The writer could explain, but it would be a struggle because the hearers have lost their appetite for spiritual depth. The subject is profound: Jesus' eternal priesthood according to Melchizedek transcends the Levitical priesthood. It requires careful interpretation because it overturns entrenched Jewish assumptions. The problem of communication is not only with the teacher's skill but with the hearer's willingness to understand.

Like a math teacher trying to explain calculus to students who refuse to learn basic algebra. Or a physician giving complex medical counsel to a patient who won't even follow simple health advice. The subject matter itself is clear enough to the skilled teacher, but the hearer's condition renders it "hard to explain."

COMMENT - 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](#)

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

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.

Nothros however does not mean that the readers in Hebrews 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+)

William 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](#))

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)

In NT **nothros** is found only here and He 6:12 where the writer desires of his readers "that (they) may not be **sluggish** (**nothros**), but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (note)

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.

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.

Hearing (189) (**akoe** from [akouo](#) = to hear; related verb [hupakouo](#)) is the act, the sense or the thing heard. Akoe is the faculty of hearing (1 Cor 12:17) The act of hearing, listening (2 Pt 2:8) The organ of hearing, the ear (Mk 7:35; Ac 17:20) That which is heard: fame, report, rumor (Mt 4:24; 14:1; 24:6). Account, report, preaching (Jn 12:38; Gal 3:2, 5; Heb 4:2; 1 Th 2:13) Frequently **akoë** occurs in the Septuagint in reference to obeying the voice of the Lord, i.e., His "message" (cf. Ex 15:26; 19:5; 22:23; Dt 11:13,22; etc.). This use also recurs in later prophetic writings (Isaiah 6:9; cf. Jeremiah 50:43).

It is notable that **akoe** in the Septuagint is often used with the related verb ([akouo](#)) (e.g., Ex 19:5 Hebrew reads "if you will indeed obey" which in Greek is rendered with "*ean akoe akosete*" which can be rendered "if you will indeed hear My voice." In other words, the hearing is not just in one ear and out the other but hearing and heeding, hearing God's Word and obeying it! This same combination ("*ean akoe akosete*") is used in Exod. 19:5; Exod. 23:22; Deut. 11:22; Jer. 17:24 all conveying the idea of hearing and obeying!

Friberg - ability to hear, hearing; (1) as the sense organ for hearing ear; idiomatically - literally his ears were opened, i.e. he could hear (Mk 7.35); literally bring into the ears, i.e. speak about (Acts 17.20); (2) as the act of hearing listening; idiomatically - literally hear with hearing, i.e. listen carefully, again and again (Acts 28.26);

(3) passive; (a) as what is heard rumor, report, news (Mt 4:24); (b) message heard (Heb 4:2) (BORROW [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

Gilbrant - In its active sense it expresses the act of hearing and it often falls in prophetic contexts: "You will be ever hearing (lit. a report [akoē] you will hear [akousete]) but never understanding" (Matthew 13:14; Acts 28:26; cf. Isaiah 6:9). Akoē includes a more passive sense also, and expresses "that which is heard or the message itself" (John 12:38; Romans 10:16; cf. Romans 10:17, which has the sense of "to hear" as well as "the message itself"). Galatians 3:2 and 5 speak of the "hearing of faith," that is, preaching which has faith as its proclamation and goal. (See also 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and Hebrews 4:2.) In some places akoē means "the sense of hearing" or "ear" (Mark 7:35; Luke 7:1; Acts 17:20; 1 Corinthians 12:17; 2 Timothy 4:3). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

AKOE - 21V - ears(4), heard(2), hearing(8), keep(2), news(3), report(2), rumors(2). Matt. 4:24; Matt. 13:14; Matt. 14:1; Matt. 24:6; Mk. 1:28; Mk. 7:35; Mk. 13:7; Lk. 7:1; Jn. 12:38; Acts 17:20; Acts 28:26; Rom. 10:16; Rom. 10:17; 1 Co. 12:17; Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; 2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Tim. 4:4; Heb. 4:2; Heb. 5:11; 2 Pet. 2:8

AKOE IN THE SEPTUAGINT - Exod. 15:26; Exod. 19:5; Exod. 22:23; Exod. 23:1; Exod. 23:22; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 11:22; Deut. 15:5; Deut. 28:1; Deut. 28:2; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Sam. 15:22; 2 Sam. 13:30; 2 Sam. 22:45; 2 Sam. 23:23; 1 Ki. 2:28; 1 Ki. 10:7; 2 Chr. 9:6; Job 37:2; Job 42:5; Ps. 18:44; Ps. 112:7; Isa. 6:9; Isa. 52:7; Isa. 53:1; Jer. 6:24; Jer. 10:22; Jer. 17:24; Jer. 31:18; Jer. 37:5; Jer. 49:14; Jer. 49:23; Jer. 50:43; Ezek. 16:56; Dan. 11:44; Hos. 7:12; Obad. 1:1; Nah. 1:12; Hab. 3:2

The idea of **hearing** is a key thought 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 We Can Become Lethargic Toward God's Word

Neglect of Regular Intake

- Just as the body weakens without food, the soul grows dull without consistent Scripture.

Skipping time in the Word "once in a while" easily becomes a pattern of neglect.

- Preoccupation with the World

Distractions, pleasures, and the pressures of life (Luke 8:14) choke the Word.

- When our hearts are filled with lesser voices, the voice of God grows faint.

Unconfessed Sin

- Sin tolerated dulls spiritual appetite. Guilt and hardness of heart close the ears (Heb 3:13).
- Psalm 66:18: "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear."

Hearing Without Obeying

- James 1:22 warns against being hearers only. When truth is heard but not applied, the heart becomes calloused.
- Disobedience desensitizes us to God's voice.

Spiritual Complacency

- Drifting is easy (Heb 2:1). At first subtle, it leads to entrenched dullness.
- We stop hungering and thirsting for righteousness, (Mt 5:6) and start coasting, assuming we "know enough."

What's are the Antidotes?

- Feed Daily: Stay in the Word even when you don't "feel" like it. Appetite grows by eating.
- Stay Soft: Keep short accounts with God—confess sin quickly.
- Be a Doer: Apply Scripture, don't just collect knowledge.
- Pray for Hunger: Ask God to renew desire (Ps 119:18, 36).
- Stay Watchful: Recognize drift early; fight spiritual laziness with discipline and delight.

Hebrews 5:11 reminds us that spiritual dullness doesn't happen overnight. It creeps in when I neglect the Word, toy with sin, or coast on yesterday's obedience. To stay sharp, we must approach God's Word daily with expectancy, humility, and a heart ready to obey. A seasoned Bible teacher once said, "Your spiritual appetite is like your physical one—use it or lose it."

Our ears can grow dull when we fill them more with the world's noise than with God's voice. Sin left unconfessed hardens the heart. Familiarity can breed complacency—thinking, "I already know this," we stop listening closely. Or perhaps we keep reading but fail to obey, and slowly our appetite for truth withers.

THOUGHT - Is there an area where you have grown dull toward God's Word? What steps do you need to take today to hear and obey afresh? You might consider praying Ps 119:25+ "My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word." Lord, guard all of us from spiritual lethargy by Your Spirit and Your Word, sharpening our hearing and stirring our hearts so we might eagerly receive Your Word and live it out with unhesitating obedience for the glory of the Lamb. Amen

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)

Adrian Rogers - So many people—spiritual babies—have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward the Word of God, whether it's a Sunday school class, preaching, personal Bible study, or prayer. It's all just a dullness to you. You know, one of the problems with children is they have a short attention span. Isn't that right? Anybody ever taught kids? They've just got a short attention span. And, that's what happens to a lot of folks: they come to church, and they're clock watching, you know, and they get itchy and fidgety. They're wanting to get out. They don't want to spend time in the Word of God. They don't have time. Their problem is they—just dullness. ([Page 138](#))

NOT A GOOD VERSE FOR A TEACHER TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn."

When We Dally In Sin, Our Bond Of Intimacy With Christ Is Broken

A spiritual dullness and hardness of heart sets in. We begin to wander from God by growing indifferent to Him. We find our heart

easily seduced by other affections. (Hebrews 3:13; 5:11; James 5:19; Proverbs 4:23; 2 Corinthians 11:3)

When King David broke that bond of intimacy with God through his liaison with Bathsheba, rationalization and self-deception became a way of life. (Psalm 32)

Their problem was not physical deafness in need of hearing aids, but a spiritual dullness—the inward man had drifted into insensitivity toward the things of God.

The danger facing the Hebrews still confronts us today. Spiritual dullness does not come suddenly—it creeps in slowly, as our hearts grow accustomed to the noise of the world and inattentive to the voice of God. The writer's warning reminds us that the real issue is not in our ears but in our hearts.

If we are honest, we must ask:

- Am I becoming less sensitive to God's Word?
- Do I approach it with eagerness, or with indifference?

The good news is that Christ can awaken dull hearts. As we return daily to Scripture with prayer and obedience, the Spirit softens what has grown hard and restores our spiritual hearing.

Horatius Bonar - DULLNESS OF HEARING 'Seeing ye are dull of hearing.'—HEB. 5:11.

MUCH is said in Scripture about 'hearing' and about the 'ear.' The latter word occurs above 300 times, and the former above 1000 times; whereas the words 'eye' and 'seeing' are not found above half this number of times. The ear is the great inlet for truth into the soul. To shut the ear is to shut out wisdom, to exclude the voice of God. In early ages this was peculiarly the case, when all teaching was oral.

In regard to hearing, we find a great contrast between God and man. God has such an open ear for man; man has such a deaf ear for God. God is ever listening to man,—to his faintest sigh or breathing; man refuses to hear God's loudest, sweetest, and most earnest voice. He is the deaf adder, that shutteth her ear against the charmer.

God's desire is that we should hear Him. He has given us the ear, and He expects us to hear. He wishes us to be listeners. 'Hearken unto me,' is His entreaty. He mourns when we refuse to listen, knowing not only the guilt of such a refusal, but the blessedness from which we are shutting ourselves out. 'Let every man be swift to hear.' 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.' The 'hearing ear' is what God looks for.

We must hear, (1) aright; and (2) we must hear the right things. We too often are deaf to the right, while we listen to the wrong; and we listen to the right in a wrong way. There is a right listening and there is a wrong listening; there is a listening to the right thing, and there is a listening to the wrong thing. As the consequences of hearing are very momentous for good or for evil, we must be careful. 'My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him' (Hos. 9:17).

Let us look now at the whole passage, and see for what purpose the apostle thus speaks.

He had named Melchisedec, the royal priest of Salem, as type of the Son of God, the greater than angels, or Moses, or Aaron; but he stops short, as if unable to proceed farther. Many and great things (for the word means both) had he to say of this Melchisedec in connection with Christ; but there is a hindrance to his saying them. They were lofty truths, requiring many words of explanation to make them intelligible, and these Hebrews were not 'able to bear it.' They had become (for this is the force of the word) dull of hearing; their minds had lost their acuteness and sensitiveness; they were not in a state to comprehend him. They once were more acute in their hearing; but they had lost their acuteness, and were becoming like what Isaiah had predicted of their unbelieving brethren (Isa. 6:9). By this time they might have been teachers; but they had so gone back, that they required to be re-taught the first principles of the divine oracles; to go back to a second childhood, and to be fed once more on children's food. They had not gone so far back as the Galatians, requiring a second birth (Gal 4:19); but they had at least stopped growing into manhood, or rather had become so weakly, as to be children once more, and to need milk, not strong meat, for their diet. He could not, therefore, present them with the strong meat about the Melchisedec priesthood and kingship; it was too much for them. They could not digest it nor be nourished by it.

There are two things which our text suggests to us, as the personal and practical bearing of the subject.

I. The necessity for progress.—For that word progress suits the Church no less than the world. We are made to grow: we are not iron, nor stone, nor ice, but life; and life makes progress; life does not stand still; when life begins to stagnate, death is at hand. We

are by our new nature made for progress; the new creation is ever advancing and rising. We are called to progress; motion onward and upward. God expects us to advance. The path before us is illimitable, and along it we must be ever moving. The evils of standing still are great; our only safety lies in making progress. The truth presented to us by God is meant to produce this: it contains unbounded stores, out of which growth in every sense springs. There is, then, a necessity for progress; the necessity of our new nature, the necessity of our calling, the necessity of the provision made for us in the word. Advance! Forward! This is our watchword. No sloth, no stagnation, no love of ease and rest. Progress, in the highest sense of the word, is our motto. Progress in knowledge, progress in holiness, progress in zeal and love. We have a line of progress, which, if followed out, will more than keep us abreast of the age; and we have a living spring of progress, which impels us onward. The indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of progress; the example of past ages is the example of progress. Necessity is laid on us, yea, woe is unto us if we do not advance.

II. The apostolic theory of progress.—Contempt or rejection of the old is not progress, nor love of the new. The mere addition of what is new is not progress. Progress in Scripture is a very definite thing, and the root or spring of which may be summed up in two inspired expressions: 'Increase in the knowledge of God' (Col. 1:10); 'Growth in the knowledge of Christ' (2 Pet. 3:18). By means of these we move onward to perfection. It is Christ, then, especially, whom the apostle presents to us as the fountain head of all progress. Every new discovery of Him is progress; every fresh participation of His fulness is progress; the knowledge of His Melchisedec glory is progress. It is in studying Christ that we make progress.

We get this knowledge of Christ by listening to God,—to the Father's voice and testimony concerning His Son Jesus. In regard to this we are to beware of being 'dull of hearing.' Listen, then, to God! Listen to His revelation! Listen to His Spirit! Listen to His apostle. Listening promotes faith; for faith cometh by hearing. Listening enlightens the understanding; listening quickens the soul: 'Hear, and your soul shall live.' Listening comforts: for the words are the words of the everlasting consolation. Listening heals; for the words are the words of health. Thus, in listening to God, all that produces growth is poured into us. In our day it is especially needful that we should thus listen, seeing there are so many things distracting us, and a thousand earthly voices saying, Listen to me. Science, philosophy, pleasure, literature, all say, Listen to me. But it is the voice which speaks from above, which alone has authority; the voice of that God that made us, says, Listen to me; and again, 'This is my beloved Son, HEAR HIM.'

A W Tozer - Use Your Head! —Hebrews 5:11 - See [I Call It Heresy](#):

Many a preacher would like to challenge the intellectual and thinking capacity of his congregation, but he has been warned about preaching over the people's heads.

I ask, "What are people's heads for? God Almighty gave them those heads and I think they ought to use them!"

As a preacher, I deny that any of the truths of God which I teach and expound are over the heads of the people. I deny it!

My preaching may go right through their heads if there is nothing in there to stop it, but I do not preach truths which are too much for them to comprehend. We ought to begin using our heads. Brother, you ought to take that head of yours, oil it and rub the rust off and begin to use it as God has always expected you would. God expects you to understand and have a grasp of His truth because you need it from day to day.

Lord, help me to use my head, to be willing to be stretched intellectually by Your Holy Spirit. Use me to stretch others as well. Amen.

P G Matthew - You are slow to learn. —Hebrews 5:11

The recurring theme of the book of Hebrews is the high priesthood of Jesus Christ after the order of Melchizedek. But the church of the Hebrews, about thirty years old when this epistle was written, was not intellectually equipped to understand this doctrine and live out its vital implications. This truth demands muscular, not mushy, Christianity. It requires that we be adult Christians, not ones who prefer to remain in infancy. Hebrews 5 and 6 address this issue.

The Hebrews were not growing intellectually, because a mature knowledge of Christianity demanded that they forsake Judaism with its laws, covenant, and high priesthood, and follow Jesus Christ as the perfect high priest. It demanded continued suffering for the gospel, and they had grown tired of being persecuted. They wanted a religion that entertained them, a religion of escape and little thought. They were not getting ready to go to heaven; they just wanted to live comfortably in the here and now.

These church members were in danger of abandoning the true gospel, which includes suffering and high spiritual discipline, in order to embrace a false gospel of peace, health, and affluence. They wanted to return to a second childhood in which they would be taken care of and not have to assume any responsibilities, especially the responsibility of evangelizing and making disciples.

This is the reality in many churches today. Many welcome the notion that now is the time to enjoy life, not to suffer for Christ. They

are not interested in learning serious doctrine. They have no delight in regular, methodical, painstaking Bible study. Thus, they lack the ability to discern and make correct decisions. They refuse to grow up and produce fruit; they remain spiritual infants.

The writer to the Hebrews had already warned his readers several times: "We must pay more careful attention. . . . Do not harden your hearts. . . . See to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God" (Heb. 2:1; 3:8, 12). Now he takes time to further admonish them about their spiritual inertia, mental laziness, and regression into childhood. These temptations are the all-too-common enemies of muscular Christianity that we in our generation must also recognize and oppose in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Steven Cole -- 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+ 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+)

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+). 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 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.

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+, He 4:13+). 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+, Ro 12:2+; Ep 4:20, 21, 22+, Ep 4:23, 24+). 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+). 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](#))

Jon Courson - .Seeing ye are dull of hearing. Hebrews 5:11 [Jon Courson's Application Commentary:](#)

The term translated 'dull of hearing' is the word for 'ignorant' in Greek. But the ignorance spoken of is not due to never hearing. Rather, the ignorance spoken of is the result of ignoring. In other words, when truth was shared, the response was, 'Big deal. I don't care what you say. I have my own perspective.'

There are those who say, 'I'm just not getting anything out of Bible study. I go to church, but nothing registers with me. I read the Bible, but it just seems like ink on paper.' Why? It could very well be because they are those who are dull of hearing. Why? Because God spoke to them a week ago, a month ago, a year ago concerning something they were to do. But they ignored it. Why, then, would God keep speaking to them if they refused to do those things He already made clear to them?

It is a loving Father who says, 'Jon, I'm going to make it real simple: when you do step 1, I'll take you to step 2. When you do what I ask, when you incorporate what I show you—then I'll take you further down the road. But I'm not going to keep on heaping instruction and insight upon you if you're only going to ignore what I've already told you.'

Dear saint, what's the last thing God told you to do? Have you done it?

A W Tozer - Spiritual Perfection Defined (Hebrews 5:11) [Success and the Christian: The Cost of Spiritual Maturity](#)

Did you ever try talking to a person who didn't understand a word you were saying, who didn't know your language? You can stand and talk earnestly to him and he just shakes his head and maybe speaks one word that he's learned, meaning "I don't understand."

Well, that is the reason it is hard. The writer of Hebrews is saying we have many things to say; but I'm talking one language and you understand another. "Seeing ye are dull of hearing. 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" (Hebrews 5:11–12). I want to call attention to the phrase, "are become such." They weren't such; but they had "become such as

have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (5:12b). They had regressed and gone back to their childhood state after having, obviously, grown some. "For every one that useth milk," he explains, "is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (5:13–14). He said that we are to leave the first principles, that is, the elementary instructions of the Christian faith. We are to leave them, but not leave them behind. We are not to leave them as one would leave one house and go to another or leave one city and go to another. We are to leave them behind as a builder who is building a house lays the foundation and leaves it behind as he goes upward. If it's a building like some of the buildings downtown, they leave the foundation far behind and go up several stories until they have thirty, forty or fifty stories towering in the air. They have left the foundation, not that they've departed from it, but they have built upon it. Now that is what the man of God means.

The First Principles

What are these first principles that we are to leave? He names them for us so there is no misunderstanding. He says, "repentance ... faith ... baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (6:1–2). These are the elementary first principles of the doctrine and we are to leave them as a builder leaves the foundation and builds on up. "Not laying again the foundation" (6:1), he says. The structure must rest on the foundation, no matter how high it may tower into the sky.

It rests upon the foundation of Christ—of who He is and of repentance and faith in Him; of baptism into the body of Christ; of the coming resurrection of the dead and the judgment to come. These are basic doctrines of the faith that we rest upon, and no matter how far we go in the Christian faith we never leave them. They are there as a foundation upon which we build.

The trouble was the Hebrews never went beyond the foundation. And this exclusive preoccupation with elementary truth is also characteristic of evangelicals today. Conversely, the ignoring of Christian truth is characteristic of the liberals. But exclusive preoccupation with the first principles is characteristic of the average church. He says that keeps us babies all our lives.

Remaining a Baby

Let's first explore the metaphor about a baby and milk. It is possible to be frozen in your babyhood state, to have your growth suspended and stay right there. Notice the marks of a baby—beautiful in a baby, but terrible in a person when they get to be eighteen or twenty years old.

First, a baby can't concentrate on anything very long. A baby loses interest about as fast as it's possible to lose interest. It'll scream and yell and grab for something delightedly and get it, and ninety seconds later, throw it down and look for something else. That is typical of a baby and it's the way God meant a baby to be. But He didn't mean the baby's father to be like that, nor the baby's mother—nor even the baby's seven-year-old sister. That is characteristic of a baby and it is also characteristic of Christians who became Christians, fundamental Christians, and then froze and stopped developing. They're unable to stick to spiritual exercises. They can't pray very long and can't meditate. In fact, they smile at the whole idea of meditation. They think that was for Thomas Aquinas. As for Bible reading, they don't do it very much—nor very much else that takes discipline and maturity.

A second thing about a baby is that it is preoccupied with simple things, with foundational things. You never talk to a baby about existentialism or the cold war. The baby is satisfied with a half a dozen little things; it is enough to eat and to keep warm and dry and to keep its mother within yelling distance. That is about all a baby cares about.

There are Christians who grow up and have no relish for anything spiritually advanced. They're preoccupied with their first lessons. The average church is a school with only one grade and that is the first one. These Christians never expect to get beyond that and they don't want to hear a man very long who wants to take them beyond that. If their pastor insists they do their homework and get ready for the next grade, they begin to pray that the Lord will call "our dear brother" somewhere else. The more they hate him the more they bear down on the words "our dear brother." All he's trying to do is prepare them for another grade, but that church is dedicated to the first grade, and the first grade is where it's going to remain.

Paul said some of them went up into the second grade and gave it up, and said, "It's too hard here," and they went back to the first.

"How long have you been in the first grade, Junior?"

"Twelve years."

Well, how long have you been listening to the same truth and hearing the same doctrine? You must be born again and there's a judgment and so on. While that is true and we must not leave that, we must use that to advance. But we don't do it. Whole generations of Christians grow up in the first grade. They learn to read their Bible in the light of this. To them, nothing in the Bible ever means anything beyond this elementary stage. They have Bible conferences dedicated to the first grade in the Christian life, Bible schools dedicated to the continuance of the first grade. For my part, I feel that I want a little ambition, a little spiritual ambition. Paul said, "Forgetting those things which are behind... I press toward the mark" (Philippians 3:13b-14a). There was a man not

satisfied with the first grade.

Another thing about a baby is its cry for amusement. It loves to be amused. When I'm on a bus somewhere I'm delighted to see a baby looking over a mother's shoulder. If the mother sees me, I just sit there dignified as can be. But if I can see the baby, I begin to do things that invariably rouse the baby and we have a good time. Finally, the mother notices him and pulls him down and wonders who that old fellow is back there. Well, I won't harm the baby; it loves to be amused. It doesn't take \$100 to do it. You can do it by wiggling your finger or looking through your fingers at it.

Just as babies love to be amused, so the cry for amusement in religion is evidence that we are frozen in the first grade. We're still children and we're going to remain that way. Children have to have toys and they have to have novelties and they have to have new playmates every once in a while. And the Church is like that.

Religious entertainment has so corrupted the Church of Christ that millions don't know that it's a heresy. Millions of evangelicals throughout the world have devoted themselves to religious entertainment. They don't know that it's as much a heresy as the counting of beads or the splashing of holy water or something else. To expose this, of course, raises a storm of angry protest among the people.

A Christian businessman once said to me, "Brother Tozer, I don't make a god out of you; but I follow you and believe you. What I'd like to know is why so many people like you but don't know what you're talking about." And I said, "Brother, I give up, I have no idea why it is." But it's true. As soon as they think you're exposing the love of religious entertainment, you're finished in a minute.

One man wrote an article as an expose of me. He said that I claimed that religious entertainment was wrong and he said, "Don't you know that every time you sing a hymn, it's entertainment?" Every time you sing a hymn? I don't know how that fellow ever finds his way home at night. He ought to have a seeing eye dog and a man with a white cane to take him home!

When you raise your eyes to God and sing, "Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me," is that entertainment—or is it worship? Isn't there a difference between worship and entertainment? The church that can't worship must be entertained. And men who can't lead a church to worship must provide the entertainment. That is why we have the great evangelical heresy here today—the heresy of religious entertainment.

And then there is another characteristic of immaturity—a child can neither read nor enjoy advanced literature, even when they get to be five or six years old. He'll come and make you sit, he'll read the book through, but all it says is, "I saw a cat and the cat was white." You know, there's nothing much to it. It's nothing profound. If he never went beyond that, you'd feel very bad for your child. When he first comes home and says, "Mommy, Daddy, listen to me read," no matter what you are doing or what's burning on the stove, he grabs you and pulls you down and reads. He can read! How proud you are! He can read, wonderful! You never thought he'd make it, but he did; now he can read the whole book. We never knew how much our kids memorized and fooled us! But anyhow, they were reading.

Suppose ten years from now he comes in—now he's seventeen—and says, "Mommy, Daddy, I can read—'The cat is red.' "

You'd say to your husband or wife, "I think we ought to do something for this boy. I think we ought to take him somewhere."

That is exactly why the Holy Spirit wrote the book of Hebrews. He said, "Let's leave this." Why stay where you are and remain forever engrossed in the fundamentals of religion? We excuse anything by repeating, "You've got to be born again." We can have any kind of show and say, "Now, you ought to be born again"—first principles all over. The Holy Spirit says, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works" (Hebrews 6:1), and so on, "But let us go on unto perfection."

Now how shall we go on?

Obtaining Perfection

Perfection means maturity. Just as when your son stands twenty-one years old and has his college degree, he's as healthy as they come and good-natured and well-balanced and you are proud of that big boy. What's happened to him is he's matured, that is all. But he's not perfect. Go into his room in the morning and see if what you see lying around there is perfect. He steps out of his trousers and leaves them there and his shoes over here. He's not perfect; but he's mature. He's come up to his maturity now and you're happy. You feel good and if you're a Christian, you thank God that your boy stands tall and straight and mature and healthy.

That is what the Holy Spirit means. He doesn't mean become a wax saint without a speck of imperfection, without a freckle on your soul. He means maturing in God. Grow up in God so that you're no longer a baby, having to be entertained with the first principles. You are now growing up in God, becoming a strong Christian, learning to carry heavy burdens in the Holy Spirit, to pray effectively, to suffer with the world and with the church, and to carry the cross.

How do I go about it? Let me give several suggestions.

One is to make up your mind, to decide. By deciding, you can't save yourself, but you can decide to get saved and you can make up your mind after you are saved to go on with God. Until our minds are made up, God won't work with us. Or if He does, He will work toward getting it made up. Make up your mind. Get the loose ends tied up and get ready.

When a young man is called into the army, he gets that nice little letter—a beautifully worded, fraternal, nice-sounding letter—but it all means the same thing: "you're in." Before this young fellow goes he fixes up his room and has a last date with his girlfriend and goes down where he hangs out sometimes, talks to the boys and says, "Well, I'll be seeing you in two years." And he gets ready. He says his good-byes and gets ready.

A Christian must make up his mind to go on with God and to grow up into God and learn the deep and high and lofty things of God. He must say to himself, "I've fooled around in kindergarten long enough. I've been a kindergarten Christian long enough now. I want to grow until I know what God's talking about and the high, lofty things of the Spirit."

The second thing is to put away unChristlike things. Put away unChristlike habits and acts, squelch within you unChristlike desires, put away unChristlike plans and get rid of hindrances and thoughts and thought habits.

The third thing is to become preoccupied with the Scriptures, the Word of God. This Book of God is a powerful thing, powerful indeed. If you read it, it will bring you out and take you along. When we sing, "Break Thou the Bread of Life," we're praying that God will give us an understanding of the Scriptures. And then, pushing it on a bit and raising it to its mystical phase, we're saying, "Lord, when we take Communion, break Thou the Bread to me." That is all the same. So get preoccupied with the Scriptures. Don't just have a chapter occasionally; but read it until it warms your heart. Read it until it begins to talk to you. We haven't read the Scripture until it begins to talk to us. We only think we have. So, get preoccupied with the Scriptures. Get a good large text Bible and I recommend King James; but there are other good versions besides the King James; the King James is a good basic version always to have around and trust.

The fourth thing is take up your cross. Learn how to suffer for the Lord's sake a little bit. The reason the communists are slowly encroaching on us in the Western world is that we love our comforts too much. [Sermon originally preached in early 1960s.] They're not looking for comforts; they're looking for victory.

A friend of mine went to see a man who was the head of a local communist cell in a local communist headquarters where they send out literature. The communist said, "Come in, Reverend, and sit down." He went in and sat. "Now, we're communists," he said, "you know that, and you're a minister. Of course, we're miles apart. But," he said, "I want to tell you something. We learned our technique from your book of Acts." He said, "We learned how to win and conquer from your book of Acts." And he said, "You who believe the Bible have thrown overboard the methods of the early Church and we who don't believe it have adopted them and they're working."

What was the method? It's a very simple method of the early Church. It was to go witness, give everything to the Lord and give up all to God and bear your cross, take the consequences. The result was in the first hundred years of the Christian Church the whole known world was evangelized. We don't know that now because our missionaries are telling us, or at least they're leaving the impression, that there are parts of the world that were not evangelized. Every part of the known world was evangelized about one hundred years after our Lord's resurrection.

The next thing is to get Christ in your focus, get the Lord Jesus Christ in your focus.

Show me Thy face,
one transient gleam of loveliness divine.
And I will never think or dream
of any love save Thine.

Open your heart to the Holy Spirit and I'm sure God will take you on. And remember, this isn't a luxury. This is a necessity that we forsake the first principles and give up our childhood and go on into God; it is basic necessity. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift ... if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance" (Hebrews 6:4, 6a).

So this doctrine, this teaching, this exhortation by the Holy Spirit to leave the first principles and go on toward perfection is not to make deluxe saints. It is to make any kind of saints, a most basic necessity in the Christian life.

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 trophe](#).

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](#):

- **For though by this time** - Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19
- **Ought to be teachers** - Ezra 7:10; Ps 34:11; 1Co 14:19; Col 3:16; Titus 2:3,4
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Matthew 17:17+ (JESUS IS ADDRESSING HIS 12 DISCIPLES!!!) And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me."

Luke 12:48+ but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

For though by this time (Lit = because of the time) **you ought** ([opheilo](#)) **to be teachers** ([didaskalos](#)), **you have need** ([chreia](#)) **again for someone to teach** ([didasko](#)) **you the elementary principles** ([stoicheion](#) - Lit =elements of the beginning) **of the oracles** ([logion](#)) **of God, and you have come to need** ([chreia](#)) **milk** ([gala](#)) **and not solid** ([stereos](#)) **food** ([trophe](#)) - By this time indicates that enough time had passed since their conversion for them to have matured. The expectation is that their spiritual growth should have been evident after a period of following Christ. **Ought** ([opheilo](#)) is in the present tense conveying the idea that we are continually morally obligated to perform this duty. **Opheilo** is a strong word, meaning "we have a duty." (cp Lk 12:48+) They had a moral and spiritual obligation to have advanced to a certain point. Stated another way, the writer isn't suggesting this growth was optional, but that growth in Christlikeness was their duty, and not merely a possibility.

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](#))

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+, Php 2:14+, see also Paul's description of the Corinthian believers to a **letter**... known and read by all men" - 2Co 3:2-3+) The writer does not mean they should all have the spiritual gift or official role of teacher (cf. Jas 3:1+ warns not many should be teachers). Instead, his thought is that every believer should reach the point of being able to explain, defend, and pass on the truths of the faith to others. The idea is spiritual reproduction, mature believers helping younger ones grow, disciples making disciples fulfilling the great commission (Mt 28:19+).

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+; 2Ti 3:15+, 1Pe 3:15+, 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).

They had professed faith in Christ but were still "**babes**," needing spiritual milk (1Cor 3:13+). It often happens that we dodge teaching something because it is difficult (election, sovereignty, etc) ; we defend ourselves by saying that our hearers would never grasp it (I literally had a pastor make that statement to me and was shocked!). 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"!

A 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 ABC's 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.*

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](#))

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

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

C H 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!

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 (anachomai) 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+)

THOUGHT - 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)

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+)? Why are older, more mature men not actively discipling younger men (2Ti 2:2+ or older women teaching younger women - Titus 2:3,4,5+)? 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+).

What would your church service look like this next Sunday if we dressed everyone in the apparel that best reflected his or her level of spiritual maturity? How many would be sucking on baby bottles filled with milk? Interesting thought to picture!

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)."

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...

Examine everything carefully; **Hold fast** to that which is good. **Abstain** from every form of evil" (1Th 5 :21, 22+) (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!)

TTHOUGHT - We must be paying careful heed to all that is taught (or even more frightening what is not being taught! Be a Berean - Acts 17:11+) 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. Does your church still sing doctrinally sound hymns (and by the way, not all old hymns are doctrinally sound!)

[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.' ([How To Live What You Believe](#))

William 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](#))

Is there somebody that you're discipling?...

Every mature Christian ought to be discipling somebody else.

Adrian Rogers on ought to be teachers - We have a church—many of them are grey-headed babies spiritually..... In other words, “you can’t teach; you need someone to teach you.” Little children, of course, don’t know how to share with other people. When the church is full of immature people, the pastor becomes a spiritual nursemaid, and he has to help people because they are immature. Let me ask you a question: Is there somebody that you’re discipling? Some of you have been saved twenty years. Some of you have been saved thirty and forty years, and you don’t help anybody. When you ought to be one of the finest Bible teachers in this church, you don’t even know the spiritual ABCs. What a shame—what a shame. Every mature Christian ought to be discipling somebody else. But, you’re dependent. I mean, you cannot operate apart from the context of the Body. If this church depended upon you to get things done—to teach the Bible, to win souls, to disciple others—folks, it would not happen. It’d be less than zero because you’re a big baby. (See [page 136 Going on to Perfection](#))

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?

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 Perfector of the faith (He 12:2+, cp He 3:1+).

Didaskalos - 59x in 58v - 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.

Ought (3784)(**opheilo** 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")

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+). The Jewish priests were "**obligated** (opheilo) to offer sacrifices for sins" for themselves and the people (He 5:3+)

Opheilo - 35x in 34v 0 had(1), have(1), indebted(2), must(1), obligated(3), ought(15), owe(4), owed(4), owes(1), responsible(1), should(2). 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.

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

- **To teach you** - Isaiah 28:9,10,13; Philippians 3:1
- **The elementary principles** - Hebrews 6:1
- **The oracles of God** - 2Sa 16:23; Acts 7:38; Ro 3:2; 1Pe 4:11
- **Need Milk** - He 5:13; Is 55:1; 1Co 3:1-3; 1Pe 2:2
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

1 Peter 2:2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation

REBUKE FOR REGRESSION BACK TO THE "CRIB!"

You have need ([chreia](#)) **again** (once more) **for someone to teach** ([didasko](#)) **you the elementary principles** ([stoicheion](#) - Lit =elements of the beginning)**of the oracles** ([logion](#)) **of God, and you have come to need** ([chreia](#)) **milk** ([gala](#)) **and not solid** ([stereos](#)) **food** ([trophe](#)) - NLT = "you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures." **NET** = "You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food. (Heb 5:12NET) 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! The author is rebuking the readers for their spiritual immaturity. They should have progressed to maturity ("ought to be teachers") but instead they have regressed. The idea is basically that of backsliding (they have slipped backward) -- they once learned the basics, but their dullness (Heb 5:11) has left them in need of re-teaching what they should already know. Their spiritual laziness ("dullness of hearing") led to forgetting what they once learned. God expects growth: moving from stoicheia (ABC's) to maturity in Christ (Heb 6:1, "let us press on to maturity").

*The Christian life is meant to move forward;
lack of growth inevitably leads to sliding back.*

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.

THOUGHT- Am I still needing to hear the basics "again," or am I pressing into deeper obedience and understanding? Self-check: Am I coasting, or actively growing? Where am I delaying obedience to truth I already know? Schedule time for study beyond devotional snippets—dig into the pure milk of the word that by it might grow in respect to salvation (1Pe 2:2+).

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.

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.

*"When you ought to be a college professor,
somebody has to tell you the ABCs and the multiplication table"*
-- Adrian Rogers

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](#))

*Failure to move forward in the Christian life
invariably will result in slipping backward*

Have come - This is more literally "you have become", and is the same verb as in the previous verse. **Come** ([Ginomai](#)) means to come to acquire or experience a state. **Have come** 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 of this principle. And as such they now needed to be "bottle fed" again with the elementary instructions about the Christian life.

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!

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](#))

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. ([Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary](#))

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.

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--a state of lacking what is required. Jesus redefines "need" (Luke 10:42)—only one thing is truly essential: fellowship with Him. In rhetoric, *chreia* stresses the importance of memorable sayings—a method Jesus Himself often used (short, powerful, memorable teachings).

Need, necessity – a state of lacking what is required. Example: physical needs like food or shelter. Use, usefulness – something practical or beneficial. Duty, obligation (by extension of necessity). In rhetorical/educational Greek (esp. in Greco-Roman schools): a brief, useful anecdote or saying that illustrates a moral point (similar to a proverb, fable, or short story with a lesson). This was a formal exercise in rhetoric, used to teach students how to reason and persuade.

In Greco-Roman rhetoric (Quintilian, Theon, Hermogenes), a *chreia* was a short anecdote, maxim, or action attributed to a famous person, used for instruction. For example: "Socrates said, 'Know thyself.'" (a *chreia* that could be expanded in rhetorical exercises). Early Christians sometimes used Jesus' sayings as *chreia* in teaching and apologetics (e.g., "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts 20:35). Thus, *chreia* in education = "a concise, useful saying or story with moral force."

CHREIA IN HEBREWS Heb. 5:12; Heb. 7:11; Heb. 10:36

Teach (1321) (**didasko** from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see **didaskalia**, **didaktikos**) (**present tense**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. Didasko means to teach a student in such a way that the will of the student becomes conformed to the teaching taught. So the teacher teaches in such a way that as the student is taught, he now changes his

mind saying in essence "I won't do it my way, but I will do it God's way because I've learned this doctrine or this teaching." Doctrine determines direction of our behavior, conformed to world or to God? (Ro 12:2) Teaching that Scripture finds significant is not that which provides information alone but also the teaching that produces (Spirit enabled) transformation, that creates disciples to supernaturally live in responsive obedience to God's will.

Didasko refers to imparting positive truth. It is the responsibility of every believer (Col 3:16), and is part of the Great Commission (Mt 28:20). It is especially the responsibility of church leaders. "An overseer, then, must be... able to teach" (1Ti 3:2). Heresy flourishes where sound Christian teaching lags. The idea is to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them by word of mouth (tutor, direct, advise, put in mind). In the NT almost without exception didasko refers to the teaching of groups. "Teaching" is the orderly presentation of Christian truth for converts so that they may know how to grow.

Elementary principles (4747) (**stoicheion** 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+, 2Pe 3:12-+) 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.

Old word for anything in a stoichos (row,series) like the letters of the alphabet, the materials of the universe 2Pe3:10,12 elementary teaching Heb 5:12 elements of Jewish ceremonial training Ac15:10; Ga4:3,9 the specious arguments of the Gnostic philosophers as here with all their aeons and rules of "being spiritual" Col2:8

Marvin Vincent - Derived from stoichos, a row, and meaning originally one of a row or series; hence a component or element. The name for the letters of the alphabet, as being set in rows. Applied to the four elements — fire, air, earth, water; and in later times to the planets and signs of the zodiac. It is used in an ethical sense in other passages; as in Gal. 4:3, "elements or rudiments of the world." Also of elementary teaching, such as the law, which was fitted for an earlier stage in the world's history; and of the first principles of religious knowledge among men. In Col. 2:8, of formal ordinances. Compare Heb. 5:12. The kindred verb stoicheo, to walk, carries the idea of keeping in line, according to the radical sense. Thus, walk according to rule (Gal. 6:16); walkest orderly (Acts 21:24). So, too, the compound sustoicheo, only in Gal. 4:25, answereth to, lit., belongs to the same row or column with. The Greek grammarians called the categories of letters arranged according to the organs of speech sustoichiai. 2Pe3:10 the word is of course used in a physical sense, meaning the parts of which this system of things is composed. Some take it as meaning the heavenly bodies, but the term is too late and technical in that sense. Compare Matt. 24:29, the powers of the heaven.

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. **Logion** generally referred to important sayings or messages, especially supernatural utterances. And so 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+) 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+). 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 2:2-4+). **BDAG** "a divine response or utterance, esp. a brief utterance." Refers to sayings given by God. In other words *Logion* emphasizes that Scripture is God's speech.

*In all NT uses, logion refers to divine revelation—
not human wisdom.*

Derived from logos, meaning word, speech, saying. The diminutive form logion can mean a little word, but in usage it typically takes on a specialized sense: a divine saying or authoritative utterance.

Logion - 4x in 4v in the **NAS** - Acts 7:38 = "living oracles"; Ro 3:2 = "oracles of God"; Heb 5:12; 1Pe 4:11 = "speaking the utterances of God"

MacArthur writes that "**Logion** (oracles) is a diminutive of **logos** (+), 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).

Milk (1051) (**gala**) is literal milk but is used 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+) Milk symbolizes the elementary truths of Christianity (the “ABCs” = cf. stoicheion in Heb 5:12). Living only on milk = refusing to grow, staying at a beginner’s level of understanding (1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:13). Peter balances the metaphor—milk is not bad! Just as infants need pure milk to grow, Christians must crave the pure Word (1 Pet 2:2). The problem is not milk itself, but staying on milk too long. Contrast with Solid Food: Milk = basics; meat/solid food = deeper truths and maturity in Christ. In secular Greek, gála is simply “milk” (cow’s, goat’s, human). Sometimes metaphorically: milk of kindness, milk of wisdom, etc. (See [discussion of imagery of milk in Bible](#))

GALA - 5 VERSES - 1 Co. 3:2; 1 Co. 9:7; Heb. 5:12; Heb. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:2

GALA IN THE SEPTUAGINT - Gen. 18:8; Gen. 49:12; Exod. 3:8; Exod. 3:17; Exod. 13:5; Exod. 23:19; Exod. 33:3; Exod. 34:26; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; Num. 14:8; Num. 16:13; Num. 16:14; Deut. 6:3; Deut. 11:9; Deut. 14:21; Deut. 26:9; Deut. 26:10; Deut. 26:15; Deut. 27:3; Deut. 31:20; Deut. 32:14; Jos. 5:6; Jdg. 4:19; Jdg. 5:25; Job 10:10; Job 29:6; Ps. 119:70; Prov. 30:33; Cant. 4:11; Cant. 5:1; Cant. 5:12; Isa. 7:22; Isa. 28:9; Isa. 60:16; Jer. 11:5; Jer. 32:22; Lam. 4:7; Ezek. 20:6; Ezek. 20:15; Ezek. 34:3; Joel 3:18

Gilbrant - Gala principally denotes “milk” in classical Greek. Various metaphoric understandings or associations appear; for example, wine is called the “milk” of Aphrodite (Liddell-Scott). Other meanings include the “milky sap” of plants or the astronomical “Milky Way.”

Septuagint Usage - The Hebrew term chālāv, “milk,” is rendered by gala in the Septuagint in 31 of the 33 times in which a Hebrew original exists. In addition to the literal usage (e.g., Genesis 18:8; Exodus 23:19), the “whiteness” of milk may be used figuratively (of teeth, Genesis 49:12; cf. Song of Songs 5:12).

However, by far the dominant image conveyed by gala is one of “bounty or prosperity.” This is especially reflected in the phrase “milk and honey,” or “the land flowing with milk and honey,” a figure of the richness of the Promised Land (e.g., Exodus 3:8,17; 33:3; Numbers 14:8; Joshua 5:6; Sirach 46:8; Jeremiah 11:5; Baruch 1:20). The author of Sirach indicated that milk was among the basic needs of humanity in the ancient world (39:26). Perhaps this provides insight into what led to the imagery of “milk and honey” as a symbol of abundance.

New Testament Usage - Of the five instances of gala in the New Testament, all but one are figurative (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:7). Paul, in speaking to the immature Corinthians calling them “infants” rather than “spiritual” (i.e., “mature”) Christians (see 3:1), had to give them “milk” (gala) rather than solid food (brōma [1026]; 1 Corinthians 3:2). He complained that they were “still not ready” (3:2,3). Apparently their behavior rather than time determined this for him. Their quarreling and divisiveness reflected their immaturity (i.e., their worldliness).

The writer of Hebrews used the same analogy for his readers. Although they should have been teachers by this time, they were still infants (5:12). Here “milk” is not to be misunderstood as a negative term, for obviously it corresponds to the “elementary truth (ta stoicheia tēs archēs) of God’s words,” whose significance should not be overlooked. This probably includes the message of the Cross and salvation.

The fifth instance of gala occurs in 1 Peter 2:2, and it obviously picks up on the same imagery. However, in this case there is no hint that the recipients of this circular letter were necessarily immature. “Pure spiritual milk” here captures more the idea of the fundamental “goodness” and “sweetness,” the indispensable nature of the gospel (cf. Sirach 39:26; of “sweetness” see Song of Songs 4:11).

E.G. Selwyn has admirably collected numerous texts reflecting how the imagery of milk’s goodness and sweetness continued in the Early Church writings (e.g., Odes of Solomon 8:17; 19:1-4; Barnabas 6:17; BORROW [The First Epistle of St. Peter, pp.154f.](#)). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

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.

Food (5160) (**trophe** from **trépho** = to feed, eat) is most often used literally to refer to nourishment or sustenance. In Hebrews

5:12,14 trophē is used figuratively of food for soul, instruction. Literal Food: Matthew 3:4 – John the Baptist’s “food (trophē) was locusts and wild honey.” Matthew 6:25 – “Do not be anxious about... what you will eat (trophē).” Luke 12:23 – “Life is more than food (trophē).” Acts 27:33–36 – Paul urges the sailors to take “some food (trophē) for your survival.”

TROPHE - 16V - enough*(1), food(13), meals(1), support(1). Matt. 3:4; Matt. 6:25; Matt. 10:10; Matt. 24:45; Lk. 12:23; Jn. 4:8; Acts 2:46; Acts 9:19; Acts 14:17; Acts 27:33; Acts 27:34; Acts 27:36; Acts 27:38; Heb. 5:12; Heb. 5:14; Jas. 2:15

Literal sense: daily meals, what sustains physical life. Broader sense: provision from God, a reminder of dependence on Him. Spiritual lesson: earthly food sustains for a time, but true and lasting nourishment comes only from Christ.

Symbolically, the word is used in common Greek writings in a variety of ways: of one’s livelihood, of nursing and rearing children, of tending animals, etc. Trophē can also denote the place where animals are fed (Liddell-Scott). In classical Greek: trophē = nourishment, rearing, upbringing (sometimes even metaphorical: education or training as “nourishment of the soul”). In the Septuagint (LXX): frequently used for “food” in daily life, sacrifices, or God’s provision (Gen 45:23; Lev 11:39).

In the Septuagint trophē occurs in Gen. 49:27; Jdg. 8:5; 2 Chr. 11:23; Job 36:31; Ps. 65:9; Ps. 104:27; Ps. 111:5; Ps. 136:25; Ps. 145:15; Ps. 146:7; Ps. 147:9; Prov. 6:8; Prov. 30:25. In Job 36:31 Elihu stated that God is the provider of food for the people of the earth. In Psalm 104:27 the Psalmist noted that God provides food for all the animals as well.

Gilbrant - The King James’ translators normally translated trophē with the word **meat**, but this refers to grain; flesh is the King James’ term for “meat.” It is used literally of the food John the Baptist ate (Matthew 3:4), in Jesus’ command about not worrying over how to acquire necessary food (Matthew 6:25; Luke 12:23), and in His instructions to the 12 disciples not to take food for their preaching mission (Matthew 10:10). Thus, trophē is a word for “food,” any kind of food or nourishment for the body. The New Testament utilizes the term metaphorically to refer to the solid food of the Scriptures that only mature believers are capable of digesting (Hebrews 5:14). Conversely, new converts or people who remain babes in Christ are not capable of digesting solid food (Hebrews 5:12). Therefore, they must mature by depending on God’s grace to help them progress beyond the elementary truths of the Bible, or what Scripture designates as the “milk” of the Word. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Theological Implications

- God as Provider – Jesus teaches not to be anxious about trophē (Matt 6:25); God knows our needs.
- Contentment – Paul reminds us that trophē and clothing are sufficient (1 Tim 6:8).
- Temporary vs. Eternal – Physical trophē sustains temporarily, but Christ as the “bread of life” (Jn 6:35) provides eternal nourishment.
- Faith Over Anxiety – Life is “more than food” (Luke 12:23), meaning true life depends on God, not mere material provision.

[Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, page 1860](#) - Milk

The Israelites were primarily agriculturalists and shepherds; therefore, milk was a common enough drink. However, its color, texture, use and origin all lent to milk’s use as an image in the Bible.

In the first place, whole milk has a sensuous quality. Its texture is thicker than water and wine; its taste lingers on the palette. It is a pleasant taste experience, and it symbolizes blessing and luxury. This sense is evoked in the name frequently given to the land of Palestine, the “land of milk and honey” (e.g., Ex 3:8, 17; 13:5; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; Deut 6:3; 11:9; Josh 5:6; Jer 11:5; Ezek 20:6). The Israelites looked at the Promised Land as a land of great abundance and fertility. The prophet Joel looked forward to a restoration of the blessing of Israel in similar terms when he says that “the hills will flow with milk” (Joel 3:18 NIV). Job looks back on his life of wealth and good relationship with God as a time when his “path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out streams of olive oil” (Job 29:6 NIV). The sensuous quality of milk is highlighted in the Song of Songs where deep kissing is anticipated by the remark that wine and milk are found under the woman’s tongue (Song 4:11; 5:1).

Milk’s luxurious and sensuous quality also stands behind its occasional mention in contexts of hospitality. Abraham rolls out the red carpet for his three special visitors, and the banquet includes milk as well as other luxury items (Gen 18:8). Deception plays a role in another scene of hospitality. After his defeat at the hands of the Israelites, Sisera, the Canaanite commander, fled and sought refuge in the tent of a woman named Jael (Judg 4). Sisera was thirsty, and in the words of the poem reflecting on the event, “He asked for

water, and she gave him milk” (Judg 5:25 NIV). She showed Sisera hospitality, perhaps lulling him as much by the soporific effects of the drink as by the kind treatment. But when he went to sleep, she killed him by driving a tent peg into his head.

Milk is striking in its whiteness, and a few biblical passages pick up on this aspect of the drink. As Jacob looked into the future, he concluded his blessing of Judah by saying, “His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk” (Gen 49:12). As the author of Lamentations recalls the past, he observes that Judah’s princes were “brighter than snow and whiter than milk,” but that now, after the destruction of Jerusalem, “they are blacker than soot” (Lam 4:7, 8).

Milk, of course, comes from the breasts of female mammals; thus, it can also strike the note of kinship. This may be behind the mysterious law that informs the Israelites, “do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk” (Ex 23:19; 34:26).

In a unique use of milk as an image, Job describes his creation in the following way: “Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?” (Job 10:10–11 NIV).

Finally, in the NT milk is a metaphor for spiritual nourishment. Peter appeals to the strong appetite of newborn babies for milk. Believers should put away malice, deceit and other vices that stunt spiritual growth, and “crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pet 2:2 NIV). But for other writers who are trying to awaken their audiences from spiritual stupor, milk is contrasted with a diet of solid food; and milk comes to represent the inferior diet of the spiritually immature. Paul gave the Corinthians “milk, not solid food,” for they were not yet ready for solid food (1 Cor 3:2); and the audience of Hebrews is still in need of milk, though they should be feeding on solid food (Heb 5:12–13). Milk is an early growth formula that goes down easily; but with growth comes teeth, and further growth requires solid food.

Related Resources:

- [What is spiritual milk](#) (1 Peter 2:2)?

A Few Illustrations of Hebrews 5:12...

1. The Perpetual Infant

Imagine a grown man still being pushed around in a stroller, drinking from a baby bottle. People laugh at the absurdity because someone who should be strong and mature is still acting like a baby. Spiritually, the Hebrew Christians had grown old in the faith but not grown up in the faith. They should have been mentoring others, yet they still needed to be spoon-fed.

2. High School Dropout in Kindergarten

Think of a student who has been in school for years but still hasn’t progressed past learning the alphabet. By now they should be solving equations, writing essays, and perhaps teaching others, but they are still stuck relearning the ABCs. The “elementary principles of the oracles of God” are the ABCs of the faith—and the Hebrews had stalled in kindergarten.

3. Athlete on the Sidelines

Picture a person who has been part of a team for years but refuses to train, exercise, or practice. Instead of playing on the field and teaching younger players how to excel, they’re sitting on the bench, winded after a short jog, unable to contribute. So it is with Christians who never move beyond “milk”—they remain spiritual spectators instead of active participants.

4. Diet of a Grown Child

A teenager who insists on eating only baby food is not only malnourished but also refusing the strength-building nourishment available. In the same way, believers who continually avoid the “solid food” of deeper spiritual truth remain weak and unable to stand firm in trials or teach others.

5. The Rusting Tool

A tool unused in the workshop begins to rust and becomes dull. A believer who fails to exercise discernment through the Word grows spiritually dull. The Hebrews, instead of being sharp instruments in God’s hand, had become blunt and ineffective because they had not progressed in understanding.

6. The Family Analogy

Parents expect their children to grow up. Imagine the disappointment if a ten-year-old still cannot tie their

shoes or speak in full sentences. In the same way, God desires His children to grow spiritually. Arrested development—remaining in perpetual immaturity—is a grief to both God and the church family.

Picture a grown man sitting in a stroller, clutching a baby bottle. It's a comical, almost pitiful sight—someone who has aged but not matured. The writer of Hebrews says this was the state of many believers. By now, they should have been feeding others with truth, mentoring the younger in the faith, and standing strong in trials. Instead, they still needed the spiritual ABCs repeated to them. This is a sober warning for us. It is possible to be a Christian for many years, attend countless sermons, and still remain a spiritual infant. Growth is not automatic—it requires deliberate feeding on God's Word and exercising discernment through obedience.

Choosing Baby Food or Solid Food - Imagine a teenager who refuses steak, vegetables, and bread, insisting only on jars of baby food. They might survive, but they'll never thrive. That's what it's like to live on "milk only"—never moving beyond the basics of forgiveness and salvation, but never wrestling with deeper truths of God's holiness, sovereignty, priesthood, or endurance in suffering. Solid food requires chewing, patience, and digestion. Spiritually, it means stretching our understanding, engaging in study, and applying God's Word in challenging situations. Milk is for babies, but maturity requires a steady diet of Scripture's riches.

Arrested development is a tragedy in the Christian life. But growth is possible! God's Spirit and Word are sufficient to move us from the bottle to the banquet table.

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+, Ep 4:12+), 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!

A DAY OF 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+ 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+; 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 priesthoods (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](#))

Medieval Meal

Read: Psalm 19:7-14

How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! — Psalm 119:103

Awhile ago I attended a conference on the Middle Ages. In one seminar we actually prepared several foods that would have been common in medieval times. We used pestle and mortar to grind cinnamon and fruit to make jam. We cut orange rinds and broiled them with honey and ginger to produce a sweet snack. We crushed almonds with water and other ingredients to create almond milk. And, finally, we prepared a whole chicken to serve as a main dish with rice. As we sampled these dishes, we enjoyed a tasty culinary experience.

When it comes to spiritual food for our souls, God has given us a varied menu that we can chew on and savor. In doing so, we can be filled and satisfied. The historic books, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, and other parts of the Bible strengthen us when we are weak, give us wisdom and encouragement, and nourish us for the day's journey (Ps. 19:7-14; 119:97-104; Heb. 5:12). As the psalmist tells us: "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps. 119:103).

So what are we waiting for? God has set before us a banquet of delectable spiritual food and calls us to come and dine. We are all invited! — Dennis Fisher (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Thank You, Lord, that You call me to Your table to feast on Your Word. I know that I need it for my spiritual nourishment and to grow close to You. I open my heart to You now.

The Bible is the bread of life, and it never gets stale.

Even the weakest person can find a way to participate in their favorite sports, but according to some heart specialists only the strongest can survive as spectators. Studies have shown that when a person becomes a spectator rather than participant, things begin to go wrong. A spectator's body weight, blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, and triglycerides go up. At the same time, the things a participant would require such as vital capacity, oxygen, flexibility, stamina, and strength all drop.

In response to these findings, Martin De Haan II finds an interesting parallel within the church. He says remaining an onlooker in the Christian life is just as risky. When a person chooses to remain on the sidelines, criticism, discouragement, disillusionment, and boredom go up, while sensitivity to the needs of others, and receptivity to the Word of God goes down. De Haan says there is a degree of thrill and excitement when someone else explains how the Lord has worked in their life; there is no substitute for building your own experiences of faith, and using your own God-given abilities to serve others.

De Haan adds, "We need to venture out in faith—and that's risky. But remember, it's a far greater risk to be only a spectator."
—Our Daily Bread, December 16, 2002. Spectator Risks, Submitted

Tony Evans - SPIRITUAL MATURITY [Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations: Stories, Quotes, and ...](#)

MOST people have, at one time or another, been on a treadmill to work out. This equipment serves to help a person walk at faster and faster paces, creating a sweat as they attempt to burn calories. One thing is for certain, though; a treadmill has an ability to get a person moving fast without taking them anywhere.

Many Christians spiritually find themselves on a treadmill. Men and women run to and from church, to and from worship, to and from seminars, to and from classes, and to and from religious activities—to discover that when it's all said and done, they are still stuck in the same place where they started.

IF YOU see a baby playing in the dirt, the baby may be dirty but you pretty much don't make a big deal about it because it's understood that babies play in dirt. Babies try to eat dirt. Babies scrub themselves in dirt. Dirt is a toy to a baby. But if you see a twenty-one-year-old man playing in the dirt, rubbing himself with the dirt, or trying to eat the dirt, you know you've got a crazy person on your hands! The only difference between the two is time. By twenty-one, that man ought to know that dirt is not a toy.

We have too many Christians who have been saved too long that are still playing in the dirt. They play in the dirt and they have fun in the dirt. You can't come and listen to the Word of God every week and not realize that the dirt is not where you are supposed to be.

[Spiritual Maturity, Lack of] 1 Cor. 3:3; 13:11

I REMEMBER a time growing up when I was sixteen and I wanted my father to let me start doing stuff. My big phrase would always

be, “Well, Dad, you know I’m almost a man,” or sometimes I’d say, “In two more years, Dad, I’m going to be a man and so you might as well let me start practicing some of this stuff now.” My dad would always tell me, “When you start acting like a man, then you can do some of this stuff.”

He basically made it his business to inform me that, although I wanted to have the responsibilities of adulthood, I was still acting like a kid. He wanted me to know that I was still riding the fence between two worlds and that I had to get straight which side of the fence I wanted to stay on.

In the same way, there are many Christians today who are not maturing. They are not producing fruit that is developing and ripening in accordance with the level of maturity they should have for the number of years they have been saved.

[Christian Living, Spiritual Growth; Spiritual Maturity, Lack of] Heb. 5:12

RATE multiplied by time equals distance. If I walk from our church in the southwest of Dallas to downtown Dallas, which is about eleven miles, and I start off at 11:00 in the morning, it’s going to take me a long time to get there—probably about four hours or so. If, at 11:45, you decide that you want to go downtown but you want to drive, you will get there a lot faster. Even though I started out earlier than you, you are going to get there before me because you are moving at a faster rate of speed than I am. You’ll be covering more territory in a shorter amount of time than I. You’ll be there and have had lunch before I even get to the Trinity River that precedes downtown. The rate of your speed will allow you to cover more distance than the slow rate that I will be traveling.

What is the relevance of that to your spiritual growth? Some folks have been coming to church for years. Some folk were almost born in church, raised in church, and they still aren’t downtown yet because they are moving along at a crawl. Then there are those people who’ve only been saved five years, but who have reached a steady level of spiritual stability because they moved at a faster rate.

God has guaranteed maturity to every believer as a real option, but it is what each believer does with their time that will determine the rate of their speed and time to arrival at the destination of maturity.

[Christian Living, Spiritual Growth; Spiritual Maturity, Growth] Heb. 5:12; 1 Peter 2:2

FROM TIME TO time in church, I’ll look out in the audience as we are conducting our services and notice a mother who has a baby in her arms. Many times she’s sitting toward the back of the sanctuary so that she can get to one of the cry rooms if the need arises. When the baby starts whimpering a little bit, I’ve noticed that the mother will try first to pull out a pacifier and give it to the baby. That’s fake food. It’s a piece of rubber designed to trick the kid. It’s designed to make the kid feel like he’s getting something and subsequently quiet down. So the kid will start sucking and gradually begin to suck harder because he realizes that nothing is happening

Now, I know this kid’s a baby and hasn’t lived long, but he’s not crazy. That baby quickly comes to realize that the pacifier is not food and that his mother is trying to temporarily distract him from his real craving. That baby really wants milk—the real deal. The mother normally realizes that she has two options at this point. She can reach into her bag and pull out a bottle or she can go somewhere private and pull out something else. She can try to hold the baby off as long as possible, but eventually the baby will start whimpering, and then start crying, and then start screaming because he’s hungry and tired of fake food. He’s tired of being pacified. He’s hungry for the real thing, not for a substitute.

Many people come to church on Sunday and they’re satisfied with a pacifier sermon and a pacifier song because it makes them feel good, only to discover later that they’re still hungry. The soul demands righteousness or else the soul goes hungry.

[Christian Living, Authenticity; Materialism, Deception of; Spiritual Food] Heb. 5:12

WHEN you go to a restaurant, they give you a menu. The menu says what a particular restaurant at a particular location offers to eat. Now, you can read a menu and get real hungry. Even though your original hunger may have led you to the restaurant, a menu can make you feel like salivating. You hear lots of people say as they review their choices, “Mmmm, that looks good.”

Then you have somebody who comes and proclaims the menu to you. A waiter then exegetes the menu. They expound on the menu. They take you through the menu. They describe the menu. Then they have a Q and A session by asking if they can answer any questions about the menu. So a restaurant patron can read the menu and hear about the menu, but they don’t then say amen and go home. They don’t leave the restaurant talking about how great the menu was or how great the waiter did explaining it. That is not the reason why you came. You didn’t come to read about it nor did you come to just hear somebody describe it. You came to experience it. So until you’ve eaten, you’re not through.

Many people are satisfied to come to church to read from the menu, to have somebody describe the menu, and then go home not having partaken of the meal and still being hungry.

[Bible, Use of; Christian Living, Spiritual Growth; Spiritual Maturity, Growth] Heb. 5:12

SPORTS buffs know a lot about celebrities and athletes whom they’ve not even met. They can cite statistics on touchdowns, home runs, and points scored. Gossips know a bunch about the latest scoop on people they don’t talk to—who divorced who and who’s hanging out with who. Pop culture junkies read the tabloids even though the people they are so interested in would pass them on the street without a nod.

A Christian can come to church for years and only know about God. True knowledge of God requires a two-way conversation. Many

Christians say they want to know God but don't put the effort in to do so.

[Christian Living, Spiritual Growth; Jesus, Relationship with] John 17:3; Heb. 5:12–14

Wanted: Teachers (Heb. 5:12) Prime Rib or Skim Milk? [Stand Firm Day by Day: Let Nothing Move You - Page 87](#)

It's no secret that in many churches men struggle with spiritual maturity. Perhaps it's because of two widely held myths.

The first is that discipleship and growth are somehow an option, like pursuing a hobby. This nonchalance keeps a lot of guys on the sidelines of their faith. The other myth is just as destructive: the myth of inability. If you could get the honest truth from most Christian guys, you'd find they really don't feel they possess the gifts to move forward in their faith. They see the pastor, the missionary, the church leader and believe these "professional Christians" are more spiritually blessed than they are.

Growth Is Possible

While personality and gifts vary widely from man to man, Jesus' radical call to fruit-bearing discipleship is neither optional nor impossible. In fact, it's the normal Christian life. That's why in today's verse the author of the book of Hebrews conveys a sense of disappointment over his readers' lack of growth.

The encouraging truth is that every Christian man has been empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit to move toward greater Christlikeness. All God needs is our surrendered heart and our intentional desire to know Christ. The Spirit does the rest—convicting, teaching, transforming, and motivating the heart.

Bottom Line

God's will is for every man to move from milk to meat.

Never Too Old

Topics: AGE, MATURITY, TEACHING

Bible Verses: Hebrews 5:12; Hebrews 6:1

In May 2007, Nola Ochs, age 95, graduated from Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas. The Guinness World Records has recognized Nola as the world's oldest college graduate. The Kansas Legislature honored Ochs with praise and standing ovations. Ochs did not plan to break records. She started taking classes at a community college after her husband of 39 years, Vernon, died in 1972. A class here and there over the years, and she was close to having enough hours for an undergraduate degree.

Todd Leahy, history department chairman, wondered at first if Ochs could keep up with the other students. After her second week, all doubts were gone. Now Leahy wants to record oral histories with Nola after she graduates and help her teach others about American history.

"I can tell them about it, but to have Nola in class adds a dynamic that can't be topped," Leahy said. "It's a firsthand perspective you seldom get."

For instance, Ochs offered recollections of the 1930s Dust Bowl—skies so dark that lamps were lit during the day, and wet sheets placed over windows to keep out dust that sounded like pelting sleet hitting the house.

"We should all be so lucky and do such amazing things. Her achievement challenges us all to reach for our own goals and dreams," said Tom Nelson, chief operating officer of the American Association of Retired Persons.

There should be a natural maturity in a spiritual life when we move from a learner to a teacher.

GROWING BEYOND THE BASICS [NIV, Once-A-Day: Walk with Jesus: 365 Days in the New Testament](#)

Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. HEBREWS 5:12

After a certain age people are expected to master the basics of life. But the Hebrews had never gotten beyond the kindergarten stage of the Christian life. Instead of becoming teachers, they were still toddlers in the faith. Growth in grace was long overdue.

It's a phenomenon not unique to the first century AD, as Albert Barnes points out.

WALK WITH ALBERT BARNES

"It often occurs that people are true Christians, yet they are ignorant of some of the elementary principles of religion.

"This is a result of such things as a lack of early religious instruction; the faults of preachers who fail to teach their people; a lack of

proper interest in the subject of religion; and a greater interest in other things than in religion.

"It is often surprising what vague and unsettled opinions Christians have on some of the most important points of Christianity, and how little qualified they are to defend their beliefs.

"To some of the elementary doctrines of Christianity—about deadness to the world, about self-denial, about prayer, about doing good, and about spirituality—they are utter strangers. So also of forgiveness, and charity, and love for a dying world.

"These are the elements of Christianity—rudiments which children in righteousness should learn."

WALK CLOSER TO GOD

Perhaps you can identify with the person who said, "My favorite grade in school was the second grade, because three of the happiest years of my life were spent there!"

The problem? Lack of visible, definable, reasonable progress in the basics of education.

Maturity is the by-product of applying what you know—putting it to good use. Then you will make progress in the school of faith.

The basics. That's the best place to start—and the worst place to stop!

"Pray That Sermon"—Heb. 5:12.

A young licentiate, after throwing off a highly-wrought, and, as he thought, eloquent gospel sermon, in the pulpit and presence of a venerable pastor, solicited of his experienced friend the benefit of his criticism upon the performance.

"I have but just one remark to make," was his reply, "and that is, to request you to pray that sermon."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean literally just what I say; pray it, if you can, and you will find the attempt a better criticism than any I can make upon it."

The request still puzzled the young man beyond measure; the idea of praying a sermon was a thing he never heard or—conceived of; and the singularity of the request wrought powerfully on his imagination and feelings. He resolved to attempt the task. He laid his manuscript before him, and on his knees before God, undertook to make it into a prayer. But it wouldn't pray; the spirit of prayer was not in it, and that for the very good reason—as he then clearly saw for the first time—that the spirit of prayer and piety did not compose it. For the first time he saw that his heart was not right with God; and this conviction left him no peace until he had "Christ formed in him the hope of glory." With a renewed heart he applied himself anew to the work of composing sermons for the pulpit, preached again in the presence of the pious pastor who had given such timely advice, and again solicited the benefits of his critical remarks.

"I have no remarks to make," was his complacent reply. "You can pray that sermon."

David Jeremiah - JEREMIAH 15:16 [Your Daily Journey with God: 365 Daily Devotions - Page 275](#)

A worker at the AT&T office in San Jose once tried to clean out an old refrigerator. Because of her allergies, she couldn't smell the stench, but the rotten food was so noxious it prompted someone to call 911, and firefighters evacuated the building. Seven coworkers were taken to the hospital, and it took a hazmat team to clear out the mess.[1]

Our lives, like food in a refrigerator, can suffer spoilage if we don't keep them cleared out and cleaned up. Things can go bad quickly when lukewarm (Revelation 3:16). Make sure the sincere milk of the Word is on a shelf you can reach every day, along with solid food for the soul (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12). Treasure the words of His mouth more than your daily bread, and make sure the manna of daily Bible study doesn't become stale and wormy (Job 23:12; Exodus 16:20). Keep the oil of joy fresh (Psalm 45:7). Throw out anything that doesn't contribute to your overall spiritual well-being, and beware of anything rotten. Stay plugged in to the current of heaven through prayer, and you'll be a source of nourishment to others.

We can never give out spiritual nourishment until we have first taken it in ourselves. KENNETH OSBECK

Six Myths - from Facts of the Matter: Daily Devotionals

In discipling others, avoid these six myths about spiritual maturity

1. Spiritual maturity is automatic:

We should not assume that people will mature simply because they show up at church or religious activities: "By this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!" (Hebrews 5:12)

2. Spiritual maturity is mystical:

Some retain the idea that maturity is beyond the reach of the average person, and is reserved for a select few. Not so: "That the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature ..." (Ephesians 4:12b, 13a)

3. Spiritual maturity is instant:

Certain people believe maturity is bound up in a single experience, conference, person, etc. Rather, spiritual maturity is a process that takes time and involves a multiplicity of exposures. Mushrooms sprout over night. Redwood trees take a bit longer! (**ED: I THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE POTENTIAL PITFALLS OF CONFERENCES THAT CALL US TO ATTEND SO THAT WE MIGHT ATTAIN A DEEPER SPIRITUAL LIFE OR GREATER MATURITY**).

4. Spiritual maturity is knowledge:

While Biblical knowledge is indispensable, it must be weighted along with righteous behavior: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

5. Spiritual maturity is personal and private:

True spiritual maturity does not occur in isolation. There is no allowance in Scripture for an independent spirit, as God intends for us to engage in fellowship and accountability with other believers: "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together ... but let us encourage one another ... Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom ..." (Hebrews 10:24, 25a; Colossians 3:16b)

6. Spiritual maturity is Bible study:

While Bible study is vital, the process of growth also encompasses loving relationships, an appreciation of the gifts, and genuine worship.

Conclusion: Growing toward spiritual maturity is a process that starts with commitment, but also entails the development of spiritual disciplines, a Biblical perspective on life, Scripturally rooted convictions, Christlike character, and the skills necessary to help others find and mature in Christ.

Spurgeon - Too Much Truth Can Cause Confusion

Mark 4:33; John 14:26; 16:4, 12–15; 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12

Christ does not teach us everything at once. If he did, we might be so confused that we would not learn anything. Perhaps we have sometimes wished that our ears could hear more than they now do, but it is most probable that, if we could hear more, we would really understand less than we now do.

Have you, at any time, had your hearing more than usually acute? If so, you must then have heard a thousand sounds that it would have been better for you not to have heard, for they so confused and confounded one another that you did not hear anything distinctly.

It is just so with the mind. It is capable of receiving a certain quantity of truth, but if too much truth is placed before it at once, it produces confusion in the mind's ear and in the mind's eye, and we really hear less, see less, and understand less than we would if less truth were set before us. The Master knew that his disciples were like narrow-necked bottles that must be gradually filled, so he only revealed the truth to them as they were able to receive it.

Why Theology Is Needed (Proverbs 23:7) - AMG Illustrations

On the subject of sound doctrine, James M. Campbell says: "Between doctrine and life there is an inseparable connection. Beliefs are creative forces; they are the things by which we live, as the very etymology of the word 'belief' indicates. As a man believeth in his heart, so is he {Prov. 23:7}. The strong Christians of the past have been nourished upon the great doctrines. Theological gruel can never make strong men. Diluted theology will always result in diluted religion; shallowness of thought will always issue in shallowness of character. Milk is for babies, strong meat is for men. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes this complaint respecting those to whom he was writing: "When by reason of time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not of solid food" {Heb. 5:12}. Here we see the harmfulness of feeding too long upon doctrinal milk. It prolongs the state of religious babyhood, and keeps in the kindergarten those who ought to be teachers of others. That this is the effect of the watered-down theology of the present day is painfully evident ... "

Charles Swindoll - HEBREWS 5:12

The writer indicates that his readers have been walking with the Lord for a number of years, like many of us. He's saying, in essence, "By this time you ought to have enough truth under your belt to be able to lead a class of young learners. You should be able to help other people grasp what God is saying as you think your way through the Scriptures. But the truth is, you're still playing with the building blocks in the nursery. You're still looking over the ABCs of life rather than understanding the deeper truths. You're so satisfied with the basics that you've gotten stuck in your spiritual journey."

I've been there; I identify with those words. When Cynthia and I were young adults, we realized that if we remained at the church we were in, we would continue to be stunted in our growth. We weren't being challenged to learn; we were being fed milk, like babies on bottles. We weren't being taught to prepare our own spiritual meals. We determined that our wisest course of action was to break free from the tradition we'd been a part of all our lives and to seek a church where we would be fed the nourishing meat of the Word of God and where we'd be challenged to think deeply and begin to grow in our faith. We did that, and oh, the difference it made!

Oswald Chambers —Hebrews 5:12

ARE YOU GLOSSING OVER THE counsel God gave you for someone else? Hammer at it morning, noon, and night.

If you know someone who says he received the Spirit of God, and yet there are signs he has not gone on with God, you will find a corresponding word of Scripture to tell him why. You will be a persistent thorn, annoyance, and aggravation to that person whenever you share a word from God; but he will ultimately thank God and praise you for the annoyance.

Prayer Thought: Convict those dear souls who are shunning You, Lord, and give me courage to keep pursuing them.

MILK ... STRONG MEAT - John Bennett

In these verses the writer to the Hebrews rebukes the lack of spiritual progress that characterizes some of his readers. He says, by way of introduction to this section, that he has many things to say and hard to be spoken or difficult to explain, because they were spiritually hard of hearing, v. 11.

This dulling of their hearing was as a direct result of their lack of progress in spiritual things. It has always been a principle that if there is no practical response on the part of the believer to revelation from the word of God, then there will be little spiritual progress.

He continues by saying that by this time they ought to have become teachers of the word but instead 'are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat', v. 12. The 'first principles', v. 12, or 'oracles', needed to be taught again, for they had not moved on from the starting point. The 'oracles', or 'utterances' of God, are mentioned by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 3 verse 2. He writes of the privileges of the Jews: 'that unto them were committed the oracles of God'. This includes prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament.

So, instead of feeding them with 'strong meat', he has to treat them as babes in Christ and feed them 'milk'. They were still in spiritual infancy. There was little or no progress and the result was a tragic lack of growth. Paul addresses the Corinthians similarly, 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ'. And again, 'I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able', 1 Cor. 3:1–2. They should have been able to take 'strong meat', spiritually solid food, something which every mature Christian should be capable of digesting. Their deportment was like that of babes, v. 13. A babe is marked by constant crying, unsteady steps, unwillingness to share, with an emphasis on play rather than work.

The strong meat of the word of God should have an effect on us, enabling us to distinguish between good and evil, of which babes would be incapable.

James Smith -An Apostolic Requirement

"By this time you ought to be teachers." Hebrews 5:12

Many people are not what they ought to be, either in state, qualifications, or practice. Some deny this — and, therefore, we cannot expect them to improve. Others admit it — but they make no effort to alter it, and consequently, are none the better for the admission. Truth is to spread through human instrumentality; and by the spread of truth, Christ is to be made known, sinners converted, and God glorified. For the spread of truth, teachers are required; and the church of God is to furnish the required instructors. In many quarters we hear the complaint that teachers are needed; and in many congregations we see professors sitting idle who "ought to be teachers." Let us, therefore, look very seriously at this declaration of the apostle.

Some of you ought to be qualified to teach, who are not. You have long professed Christ. You have had plenty of means at hand. You have had time to spare for other pursuits. Others, with no more means, with no more time — are qualified, and why should not you be? Are you so very dull? Is it so very difficult for you to acquire knowledge, or to acquire the ability to communicate what you know? Or, rather, is it not the love of ease, the indulgence of the flesh, and the prevalence of a selfish disposition — which has prevented you? You ought to be teachers, because you might have been qualified to teach. Why are you not? Let conscience answer this question as before God, and in the light of eternity.

You ought to be willing to teach. Many have the ability — but they have not the will — they are educated — they profess Christ — they are members of the church — they are respectable in society — they have a good degree of influence — but they are not teachers. Why? Ah! why? The Lord Jesus has commissioned his church to go and teach the nations. The commission is to the whole church, and applies to every member, according to his station, talent, and ability. Every Christian should teach. You are entrusted with the truth to preserve it, to spread it, to practice it, and to enjoy it. You ought to teach it, why do you not? Just because you lack the will. There are people ignorant of the truth to whom you could communicate it. They cannot be sanctified or saved without it. If they live and die ignorant of it — are you guiltless? Can you be guiltless?

You ought to be a teacher. By your daily conduct, by your general conversation, by your special efforts — you ought to teach. And you ought to hold yourself responsible, up to a certain point, for the ignorance that is in the world. Does not the apostle teach this, when he says, "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34)?

You ought to be anxious to teach. Not perhaps in the pulpit; you may not be qualified for that. Not to teach your pastor or the aged members; ten to one if you have any fitness for that. But to teach the young, the ignorant in your own neighborhood, and in the villages near where you reside. You should never see a person ignorant of the truth, if it is at all probable that you can instruct him, or if it is consistent to endeavor to gain access to him — but you should be anxious to teach him. How can you be a Christian, and not be anxious to make known the Savior?

How can you be a consistent member of the church, and not be anxious to add to its numbers? How can you be a patriot, and not be anxious to instruct your fellow countrymen in the things which belong to their peace? How can you observe the law, which says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and not be anxious to lead your neighbor in the good and the right way? How can you obey the gospel, which says, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," "preach the gospel to every creature," if you are not anxious, by teaching, to bring every soul under its influence? If you are not anxious to teach, there is something radically wrong; and if you are anxious to teach, you will seek qualifications, grace, and opportunity to do so.

You ought to be employed in teaching. There need not be a child in Great Britain uneducated, or a person left without an acquaintance with the gospel, if the members of the church of Christ would only do their duty. We ought seriously to think of this; and I am sure, that the more seriously we think of it, and the more closely we examine it, the more thoroughly shall we be convinced of its truth.

Why are children left in ignorance, or handed over to the teaching of Puseyites and Papists, or people ignorant of the gospel? Just because those who ought to be teachers, are not. Why are our villages in darkness, and thousands in our crowded towns strangers to the gospel? Because the members of the church of Christ love ease, indulge the flesh, and many of them are too respectable, that is, too carnal, to be teachers. From every pulpit, from every religious periodical, the sound should be heard, addressed to every professor of religion, "By this time you ought to be teachers" until the drowsy are awakened, and the flesh-loving professor is made ashamed of his course. Beloved, your Savior speaks to you — he speaks in the accents of aggrieved love — he speaks from the throne of his glory. He says, "I wish that you were either hot or cold." He tells you, "It is high time to awake out of sleep."

You ought to be teachers, and you ought to be teaching. Souls are perishing. Error is spreading. Popery is working. Satan is deceiving the nations. Hell is filling. Earth and Hell seem to be moved and stirred to their very depths, and shall "we sit still?" In vain do you cry out against error — if you do not teach the truth. In vain do you protest against the aggressions of the Pope — if you do not spread the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In vain do you complain of crime, ignorance, or cruelty — if you are not teachers, and if you are not teaching. Teach, then, "every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord" (Hebrews 7:2). Teachers are needed in many of our Sunday-schools, and you could teach — but will not. What shall we say to you? Rather, what will your Lord say? Teachers are needed in many of our villages, and, perhaps, you could speak of Jesus acceptably, if you would try — but you will not. Teachers are needed in the cottages, cellars, garrets, and other residences, in the courts, lanes, alleys, and streets of our towns, and you could gain access to them, and set Christ before them, if you would — but you will not, and what shall we say?

Shall we not say that you are truly guilty concerning your brothers. They are bone of your bone — they are flesh of your flesh — they inhabit the same place — they speak the same language — they need the same Savior — they are traveling to the same solemn eternity — they must, with you, appear before the same solemn judgment-seat — they are in gross ignorance — they are laboring under a fearful delusion — they sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. You could visit them — you could carry the light of the gospel to them — you might be the means of snatching them as brands from the everlasting burnings, and be instrumental in their everlasting salvation — but you will not.

Where is your hatred to sin?

Where is your love for souls?

Where is your zeal for Christ?

Where is your opposition to Satan?

Ah, where!

"By this time you ought to be teachers." You have been long enough in the church — you know more than thousands around you; many would willingly be taught by you; God, in his word, commands you; and the Holy Spirit would work by you. Awake, then, and arise, and go to work in right earnest. Infidels are in earnest spreading infidelity. Jesuits are in earnest spreading Popery. Puseyites are in earnest spreading Puseyism. The devil is in earnest ruining immortal souls. All appear in earnest — but the church of Christ. All are active — but those who should be.

Let us brethren, cast away the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Let us begin to work for God as we never began before. Let us go right up to the cross — and there entirely and forever consecrate ourselves to God. Let us draw near to the throne of grace, and seek special grace from God for special service in the cause of God.

Let us begin teaching in every way, up to the extent of our power, saying, by our conduct — if any perish in ignorance, it shall not be my fault. Let tracts be circulated by thousands; but let not the tract be a substitute for the living voice; but let the tongue, the hand, the pen, the press, the purse, the head, the heart — let all work, and all work together; and then, when our sincerity, perseverance, and purity of motive, have been tried — great and glorious results will follow. Churches of Jesus, awake, arise, and teach! Believers in the Son of God, go forth, everywhere preaching the word! Trust alone in the sacrifice of Jesus, exercise confidence in God, invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit — and yet work as if all depended on your working, and a glorious revival will soon be realized and enjoyed.

There comes a point in our experience when we must move on from the basic salvation truths (Heb. 5:12)—not that we should ever lose our taste for them. Milk is always good and nourishing. We must never lose our appreciation for God's forgiveness and our new life in Christ. The milk of the Word will always taste good, but the Bible's solid food makes us strong. How's your diet?

*The Bible is a pantry
Where I can always find
The food I need from day to day
For heart and soul and mind.*
--Anon.

Ask the Lord to help you apply the Bible to your heart today. Take time to ponder the meat and milk of the Word (Heb. 5:12). As you quiet your heart, God will teach you about Himself through His Book.

*Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed,
and some few to be chewed and digested.*
—Bacon

Oranges Or Milk?

Read:Hebrews 5:5-14

Solid food belongs to those who are of full age. — Hebrews 5:14

When I told my young daughter that a 3-month-old baby boy was coming to our house for a visit, she was delighted. With a child's sense of hospitality, she suggested that we share some of our food with the baby; she thought he might enjoy a juicy orange from the bowl on our kitchen counter. I explained that the baby could drink only milk, but that he might like oranges when he was older.

The Bible uses a similar concept to describe a believer's need for spiritual food. The basic truths of Scripture are like milk—they help new Christians thrive and grow (1 Peter 2:2-3). In contrast, "Solid food belongs to those who are of full age" (Heb. 5:14). Believers who have had time to digest and understand the basics can move on to investigate other biblical concepts and begin to teach others these truths. The rewards of spiritual maturity are discernment (v.14), godly wisdom (1 Cor. 2:6), and the ability to communicate God's truth to others (Heb. 5:12).

Like a loving parent, God wants us to grow spiritually. He knows that feeding only on spiritual milk is not in our best interest. He wants us to move on so we can enjoy the taste of solid food. — Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Dear Lord, please deepen my understanding of Your Word. Let Your Holy Spirit guide me and enlighten my heart as I pursue Your truth so that I might walk in Your ways. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Spiritual growth occurs when faith is cultivated.

(ED: And "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. "-- Ro 10:17+)

Learning to Be a Navigator

Old salts like to tell the story of the young sailor learning to become a navigator. Aboard the ship at sea, the captain said to him, "Please tell us where we are."

So the sailor took a sextant and made the complicated set of calculations. After a while, he wrote down the coordinates of longitude and latitude and handed it to the captain.

The captain studied it for a while, checked his charts, and said to the young navigator, "Are you absolutely convinced that these are the right coordinates?"

"Yes, sir, I'm absolutely convinced."

"You know exactly where we are?"

"Yes, sir."

"There could be no conceivable mistake in your calculations?"

"Absolutely not, sir. I've done my best."

Then the captain said, "Well, then I would suggest you put on a jacket."

"Why, sir?"

"Because according to your calculations, we are planted squarely at the top of Mount Washington."

—Gordon MacDonald, "When Religion Becomes Serious Business,"

To leave the church because sin has not been dealt with is to contribute to the immaturity of the body.

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!

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

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.

Feeding Ourselves

By this time you ought to be teachers. —Hebrews 5:12

Read: Hebrews 5:12–6:2

The eaglets were hungry, and Mom and Dad seemed to be ignoring them. The oldest of the three decided to solve his hunger problem by gnawing on a twig. Apparently it wasn't too tasty, because he soon abandoned it.

What intrigued me about this little drama, which was being broadcast by webcam from Norfolk Botanical Garden, was that a big fish lay just behind the eaglets. But they had not yet learned to feed themselves. They still relied on their parents to tear their food in tiny pieces and feed it to them. Within a few weeks, however, the parents will teach the eaglets how to feed themselves—one of their first survival lessons. If the eaglets don't learn this skill, they will never be able to survive on their own.

The author of Hebrews spoke of a similar problem in the spiritual realm. Certain people in the church were not growing in spiritual maturity. They had not learned to distinguish between good and bad (Heb. 5:14). Like the eaglet, they hadn't learned the difference between a twig and a fish. They still needed to be fed by someone else when they should have been feeding not only themselves but others as well (v.12).

While receiving spiritual food from preachers and teachers is good, spiritual growth and survival also depend on knowing how to feed ourselves. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

You've given us Your Spirit, Lord,
To help us grow, mature, and learn,
To teach us from Your written Word,
So truth from error we'll discern.
—Sper

Spiritual growth requires
the solid food of God's Word.

A Constant Companion

Direct my steps by Your Word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me. —Psalm 119:133

Read: Psalm 119:129-136

When my wife and I are preparing for a trip, one of the first things we do is get out the road atlas. We study it intensely to learn the best routes, determine the number of miles we'll have to travel, pick out interesting places to visit, decide how far we can get in a day, and estimate expenses. On the journey, the atlas is our constant companion, and we consult it many times a day. We couldn't get along without it.

For Christians, the Bible is an atlas for their spiritual journey, but it is much more. It is described as:

- sweeter than honey (Psalm 19:10; 119:103)
- a lamp (Psalm 119:105)
- rain and snow (Isaiah 55:10,11)
- a fire (Jeremiah 23:29)
- a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29)
- water (Ephesians 5:26)
- a sword (Ephesians 6:17)
- solid food (Hebrews 5:12)
- a mirror (James 1:23)
- milk (1 Peter 2:2)

Like the highway traveler, we as Christians are on a long and sometimes hazardous journey. We face many decisions and will have many needs on our pilgrimage to paradise. The Bible has been given to us to help us make those decisions and to meet those needs. It should be our constant companion—studied diligently and consulted often along the way. We can't do without it. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

I have a companion, a dear, faithful friend,
A union of blessing that never shall end;
Till Jesus returns with His saints from on high
We'll travel together, my Bible and I.
—Anon

The Bible is like a compass—
it always points the believer in the right direction.

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). (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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**