

Hebrews 5:13-14 Commentary

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

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

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Hebrews 5:13 For [everyone](#) who [partakes](#) only of [milk](#) is not [accustomed](#) to the [word](#) of [righteousness](#), for he is an [infant](#).
([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [pas gar o metechon](#) ([PAPMSN](#)) [galaktos apeiros logou dikaiosunes](#), [nepios gar estin](#); (3SPA)

Amplified: For everyone who continues to feed on milk is obviously inexperienced and unskilled in the doctrine of righteousness (of conformity to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action), for he is a mere infant [not able to talk yet]! ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ASV: For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.

Barclay: for when anyone is at the stage of participating in milk feeding, he does not really know what Christian righteousness is, for he is only a child. ([Westminster Press](#))

ESV: for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ([ESV](#))

KJV: For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

NET: For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant. ([NET Bible](#))

NIV: Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NJB: Truly, no one who is still living on milk can digest the doctrine of saving justice, being still a baby. ([NJB](#))

NLT: And a person who is living on milk isn't very far along in the Christian life and doesn't know much about doing what is right. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

TEV: Anyone who has to drink milk is still a child, without any experience in the matter of right and wrong.

TLB: You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others, but instead you have dropped back to the place where you need someone to teach you all over again the very first principles in God's Word. You are like babies who can drink only milk, not old enough for solid food. And when a person is still living on milk it shows he isn't very far along in the Christian life, and doesn't know much about the difference between right and wrong. He is still a baby Christian!

Weymouth: By people who live on milk I mean those who are imperfectly acquainted with the teaching concerning righteousness.

Wuest: For everyone whose sole diet is milk, is inexperienced in a message which is righteous in quality, for he is a [spiritually] immature person.

Young's Literal: for every one who is partaking of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness -- for he is an infant,

FIVE WARNING SECTIONS IN HEBREWS

Take Heed

Hebrews 2:1-4-note

Do Not Miss His Rest

Hebrews 3:7-4:13-note

Beware of Dullness & Apostasy

Hebrews 5:11-6:12 (notes)

Beware of Willful Sinning

Hebrews 10:19-39 (notes)

Beware of Refusing Christ

Hebrews 12:14-29 (notes)

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

The Better 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

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

He 5:5 <> Ps 2:7

He 5:6 <> Ps 110:4

He 5:10 <> Ps 110:4

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

Eternal - He 5:9

Sacrifice - He 5:1, 3

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

CONSIDER JESUS

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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

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

FOR EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: pas gar o metechon (PAPMSN) galaktos apeiros logou dikaiousunes:

- Ps 119:123; Ro 1:17,18; 10:5,6; 2Co 3:9; 2Ti 3:16
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For (gar) = "as I need hardly tell you," "as you all know." (Lenski) It is a great discipline to learn to recognize these **terms of explanation** and when you do, to pause and ponder, asking questions (You can always ask what the author is explaining?).

Partakes (3348) (**metecho** from **metá** = with, denoting association + **écho** = have) has to do with taking hold of something that is not naturally one's own kind. To have a part or share in something. To partake of something in common with someone (eat, drink,

enjoy)

Metecho - 8x in 8v in **NAS** = 1 Cor 9:10, 12; 10:17, 21, 30; Heb 2:14; 5:13; 7:13. **NAS** = belongs(1), partake(3), partakes(1), partook(1), share(1), sharing(1).

The writer had used **metecho** in Heb 2:14 (note) in his explanation that Christ willingly took on Himself humanity in order that He might die in our place as our substitute, defeat the devil and death and enable us to take hold of the divine nature which did not belong to us (cf. 2Pe 1:4-note)

In the present context **metecho** means to have a share of shares in the possession of "milk" and **present tense** indicates it is their habitual practice.

Milk (1051) (**gala**) can mean literal milk but in this context is used figuratively to refer to the Word of God. There are 5 uses of **gala** in the NT - 1Co. 3:2; 9:7; He 5:12, 13; 1Pe 2:2.

Here in Hebrews 5 **gala** speaks of the rudiments of Christian doctrine by which babes in Christ are nourished. The writer is referring to an exclusive diet of milk because even adults still drink milk. They just don't drink milk exclusively as do newborn infants. Newborn Christians are not ready for **solid food**, because they are not yet able to "chew" it or to digest it. The writer of Hebrews is saying that the readers however should have reached the point in their maturing process that they need solid spiritual food to assure full spiritual health.

Wuest on **partakes only of milk** - refers to an exclusive diet of milk. Adults drink milk, but it is not their exclusive diet. [Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Yes, it is true what the Dairy Council preaches "Milk makes a body good", but the writer is saying milk is for infants and children and is not to be the sole intake of those who are fully grown. If all you are taking in is the "milk" of God's word, the basic rudiments, you must still be a "baby". Such a state is clearly one of the marks of **spiritual immaturity**.

Beloved, may I ask you - are you still on a "milk only" diet spiritually? Are you still reading devotionals which have a few tidbits of Scripture? Are you reading "Christian books" instead of The Book? Are you primarily listening to tapes rather than your primary Teacher, the Spirit?

Milk is good but filet mignon is much better! Can I encourage you to consider delving into the great adventure of **inductive Bible study**, whereby you are led to dig deeply into the "solid food" aspects of the Scriptures, learning how to observe the text, how to read in context, how to look for key words, and how to recognize **terms of conclusion, contrasts, expressions of time and terms of comparison** (such as similes metaphors). Although there are numerous inductive studies, by far the best studies are available at Precept Ministries International (click for a list of their currently available inductive studies- e.g., see [Hebrews Inductive Study Part 2; Hebrews - Pt 1 - Chapters 1-4](#))

Martin comments that... The author has expected better things of his readers than they display. They should have made more progress in the Christian life than they have. The author is disturbed by their immaturity. Enough time has transpired in their spiritual lives that by now they should qualify to be teachers. Instead they need instruction. Milk is necessary and adequate for infants. No baby is criticized for taking milk (1Pe 2:2). But when a baby grows into an adult it is absurd to envision it still feeding only on milk. Milk is insufficient for the needs of an adult. With a twist of irony, the author rebukes these believers for such an absurdity: they have had enough time in the faith to be adults feeding on solid food; instead they are still feeding on milk... **Solid food**... points to the priesthood of Christ, which is likened to the priesthood of Melchizedek (cf. Heb 5:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 with the connective in Heb 5:11) and the instruction of the high-priestly office of Christ that will be provided in Hebrews 7:1-10:18 (Bruce, 108-9; Lane, 138-39). (Martin, R. P., & Davids, P. H. Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

Paul uses the metaphor of milk with a similar meaning in 1 Corinthians writing...

I 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. (**1Cor 3:2**)

Comment: Solid food in this context refers to the hidden wisdom of God, which is imparted by the Spirit to those who possess the mind of Christ - see 1 Cor 2:6, 7; 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Peter uses **milk** in a different context to symbolize the word of God in general, emphasizes that there is no spiritual growth without intake of the pure milk of the Word...

like newborn babies, **long for** (aorist imperative) the pure milk of the word, (why do we need to take in milk?) so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (See note 1 Peter 2:2)

Comment: So here milk does not represent the ABC's but the Word of God which is desirable and by every

world of which man lives as Jesus taught - "*But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'*" Mt 4:4.

Not accustomed (552) (**apeiros** from **a** = without + **peira** = experience, trial related to **peiro** = perforate, pierce thru to test durability of things or simply to pass through) literally means without test or trial and thus without experience. **Apeiros** pertains to the lack of knowledge or capacity to do something - ignorant, unskillful, unacquainted with, inexperienced in.

Apeiros is used in the **Septuagint (LXX)** translation of **Numbers 14:23 (LXX)** where it refers to "inexperienced youths" who have not yet learned good and evil.

Here in Hebrews 5:13 (the only NT use) **apeiros** signifies ignorance of and/or inability to partake of the "deeper" Biblical doctrines because they did not have enough experience. They could not digest deeper truths, any more than a physical infant can digest a steak. Their spiritual system (analogous to the physical body) had failed to grow sufficiently to enable them to handle these teachings, specifically the profound teaching about the priesthood of Christ and how it related to that of Melchizedek. A child can get something out of looking at a picture book but nothing out of looking at a textbook. The writer is teaching **solid food** from the "textbook" of Melchizedek.

Reality Messages has an interesting thought writing that a spiritual... babe lacks the ability to make sound decisions. Thus this person has no successful experience in the application of Scripture to problem solving in moral or personal situations. They have never thought or processed or acted biblically. Their decisions are based on pragmatism not Biblicism. They are concerned with what is practical not holy. They look for what suits them not what honors God. So they remain in a place of spiritual infantilism. Their development arrested. Not for lack of ability, but integrity. Therefore, they need to be told what to do and how to do it (like a child), and coerced to follow through. But a mature Christian can make those decisions for his or herself and is accountable to the Word of God and the Spirit of God to follow through. Which are you? ([Study Notes-Arrested Development](#))

The word of righteousness - It should be noted that there is not a clear consensus on the meaning of this phrase. Some favor this to be the message about the **righteousness** of Christ which we receive by faith (1Co 1:30, 2Co 5:21; see Ro 3:21-note; Ro 3:22-note; Php 3:9-note Titus 3:5-note) (**past tense salvation** ~ justification by grace through faith. See Three Tenses of Salvation). Others say it refers to the **righteousness** we are now to live out by faith (**present tense salvation** ~ sanctification ~ becoming holy as He is holy [Lv 11:44, 20:7, 1Pe 1:15, 16-note], going from glory to glory [2Co 3:18], having our inner man renewed day by day [2Co 4:16], being transformed by the renewing of our mind [Ro 12:2-note, 2Co 4:16, Ep 4:23-note, Col 3:10-note], growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [2Pe 3:18-note]).

The word of righteousness is felt by some writers to be equivalent to the Gospel of salvation which is received by faith. The gospel is not only the good news about salvation (past tense), but is the good news about salvation present tense (sanctification, progressive sanctification, practical holiness). The gospel that saves us initially then enables us to live a life of righteousness (right behavior before God and before man) instead of unrighteousness (which was the only way we could live before we were saved). Believers so equipped have a responsibility to work out their salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note).

Paul explained that the **Gospel** (expounded on in the ENTIRE book of Romans, the "Christian's Constitution"!) is the source of revelation about God's righteousness writing that...

in it (the Gospel) the **righteousness** of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**" (Ro 1:17-note)

Writing to Timothy **Paul** outlined how a believer is to grow in **righteousness** declaring that...

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, **fortraining in righteousness**; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2Ti 3:16, 17-note)

Vincent writes that "The genitive of **righteousness** is combined in NT with *way, God, gift, instruments, servants, law, ministration, fruit and fruits, ministers, hope, breastplate, crown, king, preacher*. It is a mistake to attempt to give the phrase here a concrete meaning. It signifies simply a word of normally right character... Probably, however, in the foreground of the writer's thought was the word spoken by the Son (Heb 1:2-note); the salvation which at first was spoken by the Lord (Heb 2:3-note)

Ray Stedman explains it this way... They are not acquainted with the teaching about **righteousness**. Commentators differ as to whether **righteousness** here refers to conduct or imputed worth. Hughes opts for the latter view, describing it as *the teaching about righteousness which is fundamental to the Christian faith, namely, the insistence on Christ as our righteousness (1Co 1:30, 2Co 5:21) as opposed to self-righteousness or works-righteousness* (1977:191). Ignorance of having a righteous position in God's eyes already through faith in Christ has been the cause of much useless laboring to earn **righteousness** through the centuries. It invariably produces a form of legalism which tries to earn "brownie points" with God to gain his acceptance. The dullness which does not understand the divine program that leads to right conduct manifests its ignorance by being unable to "distinguish good from

evil." But those who, by persistent obedience to the truth (**Ed**: Made possible by the indwelling Spirit), are able to grasp such solid food will give evidence of it in wise and wholesome conduct. They will identify evil as evil, even when it looks good, and follow good because it is good, even when it looks evil.

Charles Pfeiffer (BORROW [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#)) points out that although the "milk drinker...is unskilled in the word of righteousness (Heb 5:13)....There is no hint of course that we should not cherish the "milk" - the rudiments of the Christian faith. The facts of God's grace should always be precious to the believer ---

I love to tell the story
For those who know it best
Are hungering and thirsting
To hear it like the rest.

Steven Cole writes that the **word of righteousness** refers to... the Scriptures, which are designed to produce God's righteousness in those who believe and obey (**Ed**: This would be tantamount to present tense salvation = progressive sanctification as discussed above). The author may be referring to the doctrine of **imputed righteousness** (**Ed**: This would be tantamount to past tense salvation = justification = declaration of righteousness by faith), taught in Ge 15:6, and repeated by Paul in Romans 3 & 4. But also, those who are counted righteous by faith in Christ will also progress in practical righteousness, learning what is pleasing to the Lord (Ep 5:10-note). You may think that **righteousness** and **good and evil** are obvious, but that is not so. These things need to be learned through practice and training. ([Sermon](#) on He 5:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 6:1, 2, 3)

Phil Newton has a well reasoned comment on the meaning of the **word of righteousness**... The phrase, "**the word of righteousness**," quite likely has a dual meaning. On one hand it implies the legal aspect of **righteousness**," that is, the whole truth concerning our justification through faith in Jesus Christ. Most new believers do not understand the full range of implications concerning justification. It is as you grow in the Lord that you come to appreciate and glory in the richness of this truth. You grasp something of what Paul meant when he tells us to "**put on the breastplate of righteousness**" (Ep 6:14). For in this you realize that Christ is your righteousness; because this is true, then none of the adversary's arrows of condemnation can find a landing spot in your mind. But the "**word of righteousness**" also refers to the practice of the Christian life (**Ed**: Present tense salvation = progressive sanctification). It is the "impartation of righteousness" as William Gurnall expressed it. It is living out the moral and ethical dimensions of the Christian life. We face moral and ethical demands every day. We experience a range of choices, decisions, and options related to everything from what our eyes will see, what our ears will hear, where our feet will carry us, who we will be involved with, what our minds will dwell on, what kind of careers to pursue, how to spend our resources.

**When we have become dulled in hearing the Word,
then our ability to exercise discernment in these things is dulled.**

There are obvious things that the Word spells out for us. We know that we are not to murder or steal. But to be able to practice righteousness in all of the other areas that are not clearly spelled out requires having our "**senses trained to discern good and evil**." That comes through regular nurture and application of the Word of God. If you are skimping on milk, then don't expect to handle solid food. And you might very well be unable to feast on **solid food** because you are not practicing the **word of righteousness** regarding what God has already taught you. ([Leaving Milk for Meat](#))

Guthrie also has a balanced note on **word of righteousness**... In the Greek there are no articles and the phrase must be taken to mean, not any specific body of doctrine, but the kind of **word** (logos) which has the character of **righteousness**. This would agree with the use of the same term (logos) in He 6:1 where it refers to doctrine. The writer may be thinking of the special use of **righteousness** (dikaiosune), which describes what is obtained by faith in Christ (**Ed**: Justification - past tense salvation), but could also refer to the more general idea of rightness. These two interpretations are in any case linked, for man can have no adequate idea of right except through the **righteousness** of Christ. Undoubtedly when men first believe they do not at once gain skill in appreciating this theme, but some such interpretation is an indispensable quest for anyone who desires to be mature. (Guthrie, D. Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

W E Vine feels that... the "**solid food**" is here called "**the word of righteousness**," not only because of the fundamental character of the gospel which brings justification, but especially because it inculcates the truth of practical relationship to God as centered in Christ and carried out in a life expressive of that relationship and thus of the very character of Christ. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

The **KJV Bible Commentary** explains the **word of righteousness** this way... They are unskillful (Greek apeiros), inexperienced in or unacquainted with the word that instructs them in how to live a life of righteousness (**Ed**: Present tense salvation - progressive sanctification). ([Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

Tom Constable feels that... The word of righteousness" (He 5:13) is the **solid food** that results in righteous behavior... The readers

were in danger of not comprehending what the writer had to tell them because they had not put what they did understand into practice in their lives. Instead, they were thinking of departing from the truth. ([Hebrews 5 Commentary](#))

FOR HE IS AN INFANT: *nepios gar estin* (3SPA1):

- Is 28:9; Mt 11:25; Mark 10:15; Ro 2:20; 1Co 13:11; 14:20; Ep 4:14; 1Pe 2:2
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For (gar) is another use of this strategic (and common) **term of explanation** - what the author is explaining?

The writer has been very explicit as to who remains a **spiritual infant**...How do we know? Lets make this objective, not subjective...Those who integrate doctrine and duty are mature. Those who live what they learn. Christianity is not a philosophy to be merely learned, but a life to be lived. Unless it makes some difference in your behavior, you have probably never truly encountered Jesus... The ultimate test of Christian **maturity**/validity is **obedience**. To the degree that you obey Christ, is the degree to which you are spiritually mature. Not how much you do, how loud you sing, how high you raise your hands, what spiritual gifts you have...It is how well you obey Jesus ([Study Notes -- Arrested Development](#))

Phil Newton applies this section to each of us asking... Where is your spiritual progress? I'm not asking you to compare yourself to someone else. That can be rather unfair and arbitrary. But I am asking you as a believer, what kind of progress are you making in growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? The shocking reality among most congregations is that the level of living exposes the level of understanding of God's Word. When Christ is not evident in our lives it is likely that our hearing has grown dull for the Word of God. When there is no ongoing passion for Christ then it is because dullness has set in. When we can flounder around with the world and give in to its lure, then by default we admit that we have "come to need milk and not solid food." Such admission is that either our faith is weak and possibly faltering; or that our faith has never gotten off the ground in honestly trusting Jesus Christ as our Mediator before God. ([Leaving Milk for Meat](#))

Steven Cole notes that... If there is spiritual life, there will be spiritual growth of some sort, but growth rates vary. Some become Christians and instantly drop the sins that have plagued their lives for years and never fall back. Others struggle to get rid of those sins for decades. I have a pastor friend who got saved in his early forties. He was a night club entertainer, addicted to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. He instantly dropped all of those habits and began to follow Christ. But I know others who have struggled with those habits for years after making a profession of faith. They make a break from them, but then keep falling back into them. ([Sermon](#))

He is an infant - The writer is saying in Hebrews 5:11-14 that only **solid food** will effect the desired result of progressing beyond "first principles" (Heb 6:1, 2, 3 -note) toward spiritual maturity and moral discernment.

**You are young only once,
but you can remain immature your entire life!**

Someone once said that the travesty of the church in America is that many if not most believers are **betweeners** -- they are **between** Egypt and the Promised Land—out of the place of danger, but not yet into the place of rest and rich inheritance. They are **between** Good Friday and Easter Sunday, saved by the blood but not yet enjoying newness of resurrection life. **We all need to ask ourselves are we a betweener? Are we moving toward the "Promised Land" in our spiritual walk? How would one know they are making progress? Have you graduated from spiritual milk to meat? Have you become involved in more serious Bible studies, such as those that utilize the [inductive technique \(mentioned above\)](#)?** I can personally attest to the transformative power of this type of study -- I disciple young men and have seen the greatest spiritual growth in those who have truly bought in to this method of Bible study. Unfortunately some of the men I disciple have failed to dig in for themselves and these men as you might expect have shown the least spiritual growth. Sadly as teachers and pastors, although we can "set the table" with the rich fare of God's Word, including deeper truths, we cannot force men and women to eat!

Is (estin) is in the **present tense** which indicates that the person he describes is still in "spiritual diapers" and needs to have their "spiritual food" mashed up or pureed and fed to them by spoon!

Radmacher says **infant**... is a description of the spiritually immature. Babies have little discernment or self-discipline. They must be constantly told "no." Mature believers are able to know right from wrong and to control their sinful appetites. ([Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

Spurgeon - A child is a very beautiful object, an infant is one of the loveliest sights under heaven; but if, after twenty years, your child was still an infant, it would be a dreadful trial to you. We must keep on growing till we come to the stature of men in Christ

Jesus. The babe is perfect in its measure, but it is not perfectly perfect. Those limbs must expand; the little hand must get a wider grasp; the trembling feet must become strong pillars for ripening manhood; the man must swell, and grow, and expand, and enlarge, and be consolidated. Now when we are born to God, we have all the parts of the advanced Christian. Faith, hope, love, patience,—they are all there, but they are all little, all in miniature, and they must all grow; and he is of full age whose faith is vigorous, whose love is inflamed, whose patience is constant, whose hope is bright, who has every grace, in full fashion. The full-grown man is stronger than the babe. His sinews are knit; his bones have become more full of solid material; they are no longer soft and cartilaginous, there is more solid matter in them. So with the advanced Christian; he is no longer to be bent about and twisted; his bones are as iron, and his muscles as steel; he moves himself in stately paces, neither does he need any upon whom to lean. He can plough the soil, or reap the corn; deeds that were impossible to infancy are simplicities to the full-grown man.

Infant (babe) [\(3516\)](#) (**nepios** from negative **nê** = no + **epo** = speak) means one not able to talk, a suckling. In context they are not able to chew "*spiritual steak*" because they are still on the bottle which limits their intake to "spiritual milk". **Nepios** does not necessarily indicate that they are "born again" like the "babe in Christ" (1Co 3:1, 2) where Paul was clearly describing immature, "carnal", "fleshly" believers. As alluded to earlier, you may have been genuinely saved and sitting in church for 40 years any yet still be able to only drink "spiritual milk" because of your lack of spiritual growth, in turn related to your failure to progress to the "solid food" of more serious Bible study! If you say that you are too busy for serious Bible study (eg, one that requires 4-5 hours of homework/week) then simply stated -- you are too busy! Now, if you have absolutely no appetite for the Word of God, no desire to read and study the Bible, then you need to seriously consider whether you are a genuine believer (see 2Co 13:5-note). Note that we are not talking about times when you are living in unconfessed sin which will kill the appetite of a genuine believer, but we are speaking to that person who says they have professed Christ and yet have never experienced a hunger or desire for the Word. Real physical newborn babies always desire milk. Plastic doll babies never desire milk. (see 1Pe 2:2-note)

Nepios - 15x in 11v in **NAS** - Mt 11:25; 21:16; Luke 10:21; Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 3:1; 13:11; Gal 4:1, 3; Eph 4:14; 1 Thess 2:7; Heb 5:13.
NAS = child(5), childish(1), children(2), immature(1), infant(1), infants(4)

Paul uses **nepios** to exhort the believers at Ephesus ... As a result, we are no longer to be **children** (**nepios**), tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; (Eph 4:14-note) (**Question**: From this verse, what is the danger of spiritual immaturity? What is the antidote in Eph 4:11,12-note? What's the fruit of applying this antidote in Eph 4:13-note?)

Paul does say that we are to be like **infants** or **babes** in one thing! = Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be **babes**, but in your thinking be mature. (1Cor 14:20) (**Question**: In this context, can a "**babe**" be spiritually mature? And so we see the vital role that **context** plays in facilitating accurate **Interpretation**)

Wuest (KJV = babe) - The word "babe" (infant) is not the translation of a Greek word meaning an "infant," such as is used in Luke 2:16, nor from a word translated "child" as in Luke 1:7, which latter word is related to the verb which means "to give birth to," and therefore speaks of a child in its birth relationship to its parents; but from **nepios**, which means "immature" as contrasted to "mature." Paul used this word in contrast to a word which means "mature." In 1Corinthians 2:6 he says that he speaks wisdom among the perfect, that is, the spiritually mature. But the Corinthian saints were babes in Christ, immature Christians. He speaks of those who are perfect, that is, spiritually mature, in contrast to children, namely, immature Christians (Eph. 4:13, 14). Here the writer contrasts these Hebrews who are immature so far as their spiritual apprehension is concerned, with those of full age, namely spiritually mature. We must be careful to note that the Greek word "babe" in itself carries with it no implication of salvation. The phrase, "babe in Christ," as used today, refers to a new convert. Paul's use of it in I Corinthians 3:1 is different. There he refers to immature Christians. One can be forty years old in the Faith and still be immature spiritually. Furthermore, the word "babe" needed the qualifying phrase "in Christ" to indicate that these Corinthian "babes" were saved. Therefore, the word "babe" in our Hebrew passage cannot be made to show that the person referred to is a saved individual. It has no birth relationship idea about it. The analysis of the book and the context in which the word is found require that we understand it to refer to these unsaved Hebrews who, because of their neglect of New Testament truth and their turning away from it, have again become immature in their spiritual apprehension of the same. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#)).

J Vernon McGee notes in the present context the writer says his readers are **infants** because they do not...

know the Word of God. I don't want to step on your toes, my friend, but I'd love to be helpful to you.

**You cannot grow
apart from the Word of God.**

I don't care how active you are in the church. You may be an officer. You may be on every committee in the church. You may be a leading deacon or elder. I don't care who you are, or what you are; if you are not studying the Word of God, and if you don't know how to handle it, you are a little baby. It is tragic to occupy a church office when you are just a little baby. You ought to come on and grow up. It is tragic that there are

people who have been members of the church and have been saved for years, and they are still going around saying, "Goo, goo, goo." They have nothing to contribute but little baby talk. All they want is to be burped periodically! ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#)) (Or listen to his great "scratchy" voice as he gives this pithy warning -- [Mp3 on Hebrews 5:12-14](#))

Warren Wiersbe warns us that... Satan enjoys seeing Christians get a head-knowledge of victory without a heart-experience, because this lulls believers into a false security, and Satan finds them an easy prey. It is not the reading of truth, or even the enjoying of truth that brings the blessing. It's the doing of truth. (The Strategy of Satan)

John MacArthur... One of the marks of small children is lack of discernment. They have no way of telling what is good or bad for themselves. They judge only by feeling and whim. If something looks attractive, they may try to pick it up, even if it were a poisonous snake. If something looks remotely like food, they try to eat it. A child of three left to select his own diet would never live to four. He would either sweeten or poison himself to death. Some Christians, unfortunately, show little more discernment than this in the spiritual realm. They have been so little exposed to sound doctrine, or so long removed from it, that they judge entirely by appearance and feeling. Consequently, the church is filled with babes, who swallow almost any teaching that is put before them, as long as it is not blatant heresy and the teacher claims to be evangelical. As a body, and as individual Christians, we cannot be steadfast in Christ unless we are "constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine" (1Ti 4:6). As long as believers are immature, false doctrine is a major danger (cf. Ep 4:11-16). ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Here is a simple illustration - A new Christian was reading through the Gospels. After she finished, she told a friend she wanted to read a book on church history. When her friend asked why, the woman replied,

"I'm curious. I've been wondering when Christians started to become so unlike Christ." (**Which of us is not convicted!**)

When you walk with Christ,
you'll be out of step with the world.

The world will try to pressure us
To fit into its mold,
But with God's help we can resist
If to His truth we hold. --Sper

The author assaults his friends with a somewhat silly image of adult babies who are still nursing. Put on your "sanctified imagination" for a moment. If this next Sunday service God were to dress each of those who attended in the garb that most nearly reflected their level of spiritual maturity, what would the assembly resemble? Perhaps we would not even need a separate nursery! Imagine the absurdity of full-grown men and women sitting in the pews in diapers sucking their thumbs and unable to eat solid food! That's the picture with which the writer of Hebrews is rebuking his dull (and in danger) readers!

Remember that if your not growing in Christ-likeness and spiritual maturity, you are not simply maintaining the status quo. There is simply no such thing as a static Christian. We either move forward or fall back. We are either climbing or falling. We are either winning or losing. Static, status quo Christianity is a delusion, a perpetration of the Liar himself! Imagine yourself ("spiritually speaking") on a bicycle right now. Are you pedaling forward? Or are the pedals even moving? If they are not what is about to happen? If you are a cyclist and quit pedaling on a hill you are in trouble! And especially if you are clipped in! I'm an avid cyclist and some of my worst falls have been when I was either not moving forward or just barely moving! Now apply this analogy to your own spiritual life -- are the pedals moving?

><>><>><

Babies Need Weaning - I find few things more delectable than three or four of my wife's freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies, hot from the oven but cool enough to pick up and introduce to my longing taste buds. What really makes this treat complete is a large glass of ice-cold milk. That milk and those cookies are made for each other.

Now, I'm not considered a baby because I still drink milk. But if that's all I took in for nourishment, you would ask, and rightly so, "What's wrong? Shouldn't you have been on solid foods long ago?"

Transfer this scenario to our Christian lives, as the writer did in today's Scripture. 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.

God wants us to learn the Word through study, prayer, meditation, obedience, and testing. We must know spiritual principles so that

we can apply them, speak with confidence about our faith, and stand up under adversity.

The milk of the Word will always taste good, but the Bible's solid food makes us strong. How's your diet? —Dennis J. De Haan [Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

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.

Spiritual growth requires the meat of God's Word.

God's Word...
has *life*,
gives *life* and
nourishes *life*.

**If you received physical nourishment
with the same regularity that you receive spiritual nourishment from God's Word,
what kind of shape would you be in?**

Hebrews 5:14 But **solid food** is for the **mature**, who **because** of **practice have** their **senses trained** to **discern good** and **evil** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [teleion de estin](#) (3SPA1) [e sterea trophe, ton dia ten](#) exin [ta aistheteria gegumnasmena](#) (RPPNPA) [echonton](#) (PAPMPG) [pros diakrisin kalou te kai kakou.](#)

Amplified: But solid food is for full-grown men, for those whose senses and mental faculties are trained by practice to discriminate and distinguish between what is morally good and noble and what is evil and contrary either to divine or human law. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ASV: But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

Barclay: For solid food is for those who have reached maturity, those who, through the development of the right kind of habit, have reached a stage when their perceptions are trained to distinguish between good and evil. ([Westminster Press](#))

ESV: But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. ([ESV](#))

KJV: 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.

NET: But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice for discerning both good and evil. ([NET Bible](#))

NIV: But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NJB: Solid food is for adults with minds trained by practice to distinguish between good and bad. ([NJB](#))

NLT: Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

TEV: Solid food, on the other hand, is for adults, who through practice are able to distinguish between good and evil.

TLB: You will never be able to eat solid spiritual food and understand the deeper things of God's Word until you become better Christians and learn right from wrong by practicing doing right.

Weymouth: Such persons are mere babes. But solid food is for adults—that is, for those who through

constant practice have their spiritual faculties

Wuest: But solid food belongs to those who are [spiritually] mature, to those who on account of long usage have their powers of perception exercised to the point where they are able to discriminate between both that which is good in character and that which is evil.

Young's Literal: and of perfect men is the strong food, who because of the use are having the senses exercised, unto the discernment both of good and of evil.

BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE: he sterea trophe teleion de estin (3SPAI):

- Matthew 5:48; 1Corinthians 2:6; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; James 3:2
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

John MacArthur... The contrast here is simple. The one who continues to feed only on God's elementary revelations is not going to grow, not going to have any discernment. A small child will stick almost anything into his mouth, touch anything he can reach, go anywhere he can manage to crawl—with no concept of what is good for him and what is bad, what is helpful and what is dangerous. The mature adult, on the other hand, has developed considerable discernment. He is careful about what he eats, what he does, where he goes. The same principle operates in the spiritual realm. The mature believer has discernment about what is right and wrong, true and false, helpful and harmful, righteous and unrighteous. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#))

Spurgeon - Milk you may use as you will. You cannot take too much of it; it will not do strong men any very great amount of good, but it will certainly do them no hurt. But the strong meat must always be accompanied by a word of caution when it is placed before the uninstructed and feeble, since such are very apt to do mischief both to themselves and to others with this strong meat. Understand, dear friends, that there is no reference here at all to the age of a person as to human life. The Greek word is "Men that are perfect"; it signifies, therefore, spiritual men who have attained to the highest degree of spiritual development. Now this is not the result of years, for there are some gray heads that have no more wisdom than when they first began; and, on the other hand, there are some youthful believers who are worthy to be called fathers in Israel through the progress that they have made in grace. Growth in grace does not run side by side with growth in years.

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus likewise exhorted His listeners to seek spiritual maturity declaring... Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mt 5:48-note)

Tom Constable... The writer's point in these verses is not just that spiritual babies lack information, which they do, but that they lack experience. A person becomes a mature Christian not only by gaining information, though that is foundational, but by using that information to make decisions that are in harmony with God's will. ([Hebrews 5 Commentary](#))

But - note the **contrast** and also note that **mature** is placed first in the Greek text for emphasis... "and of **perfect men** is the strong food, who because of the use are having the senses exercised, unto the discernment both of good and of evil. (YLT)

Solid ([4731](#)) (**stereos** from **histemi** = stand) literally means strong, compact, solid or firm (as used to describe a foundation as firm). **Stereos** is in contrast with that which is soft or liquid solid.

Figuratively, **stereos** refers to the foundational doctrines of God which are **firm** (securely or solidly fixed in place) (2Ti 2:19-note), of faith which is **steadfast** (not subject to change) (1Pe 5:9-note).

Solid "food", the equivalent of Biblical "health" food which builds strong, solid, healthy believers who can resist when temptation comes, who are steadfast when winds of crooked doctrine blow, and who God uses to lead others to His righteousness.

Food and **drink** are not uncommon metaphors for Biblical truth (Isaiah 55:1-6, Ps 42:2; 63:1; 143:6, 1Co 10:3; cf. Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4, etc).

2 Timothy 2:19 (note) Nevertheless, the **firm** foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."

Hebrews 5:12 (note) 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.

Hebrews 5:14 (note) But **solid** food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

1 Peter 5:9 (note) But resist him, **firm** in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

There are 13 uses of **stereos** in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ex 37:17, 20; Nu 8:4; Dt 32:13; 1Sa 4:8; Ps 35:10; Is 2:21; 5:28; 17:5; 50:7; 51:1; Je 15:18; 30:14; 31:11)

Sermons are good, but they are not to be compared with **personal Spirit illuminated Bible study** as food for your soul ("soul food"). Songs and hymns are excellent, but let us not become "songbook Christians". Men wrote the songs but God wrote the Bible. As an aside we lament the declining popularity of the old hymns (many of which do contain God's words as well as sound doctrine) as they are slowly being replaced by choruses that are often repetitive and doctrinally shallow (there are exceptions). This gradual drift should be cause for some alarm among **mature** believers. Why? Well, ask yourself, what is one of the marks of being continually filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18-note)? Paul answers it is...

speaking to one another in **psalms** and **hymns** and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord (See Eph 5:19-note and also Col 3:16-note)

A maturing Christian must be a Biblically saturated Christian. If we are to get a deep insight into the holy mysteries of God's Word, we must lay aside every sin (He 12:1-note) and every preconceived notion about His Truth and come simply as children to be taught by the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20, 27). God has purposely hidden His truths from the wise and prudent but He is ready at any time to reveal them to babes. (Mt 11:25, 13:11, Lk 10:21).

John Piper exhorts all pastors "So I say again, the way to save yourself and your hearers (1Ti 4:16) is not to arrest the growth of your people by a meatless diet of "salvation messages." This had sent the "Hebrews" straight backward toward destruction (Heb 5:11, 12, 13, 14). The way to save the saints is to feed them all the Scriptures, for it is the Scriptures "which are able to make you wise for salvation" (2Ti 3:15). ([Brothers, We are Not Professionals : A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry](#))

Warren Wiersbe writes that "The **"milk"** of the Word represents the "first principles" of the Christian life, that is, what Jesus Christ did for us when He was on earth. The **"meat"** of the Word is the teaching about what Jesus is now doing for us in heaven, His ministry as High Priest. How sad it is when Christians neglect God's Word and stop growing in grace... As we grow in the Word, we learn to use it in daily life. As we apply the Word, we exercise our 'spiritual senses' and develop spiritual discernment. It is a characteristic of little children that they lack discernment. A baby will put anything into its mouth. An immature believe will listen to any preacher on the radio or television and not be able to identify whether or not he is true to the Scriptures." ([Wiersbe, W: With the Word: Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook. Nelson or Logos or Wordsearch](#))

As **Solomon** recorded in Proverbs 2 almost 3 millennia ago...

My son, if you will receive my sayings, And treasure my commandments within you,

2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding;

3 For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding;

4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;

5 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, And discover the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:1-6)

**To avoid being pulled into error
Keep a firm grip on the truth.**

THE GOAL: SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Howard Hendricks...

- Who are the **"mature"**? The mature are those who by constant use have trained themselves by taking the Word of God and using it in their lives to distinguish good from evil.
- The highest mark of spiritual maturity is not how much you understand, it is how much you use.
- The opposite of ignorance in the spiritual realm is not knowledge, it is obedience. (Living by the book : Workbook)

Stop for a moment and do a personal inventory - First, answer the question "How does Hebrews 5:13, 14 teach that we are to

evaluate spiritual maturity?" Second, applying these criteria personally ask "Am I spiritually mature (or at least growing in my spiritual maturity)?" Ask God to help you discern "truth from error" so that you don't deceive yourself (cp Jer 17:9). If you conclude that you are lacking the prerequisites for the development of spiritual maturity, then, enabled by God's Spirit, begin your lifelong journey of grace. It will be the best trip you will ever take in your short life on earth! God guarantees it (see 1Ti 4:7, 8-note)

PICTORIAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE BIBLE

Metaphorical Descriptions of the Bible

1) A Mirror (Jas 1:23, 24, 25).

It reflects the mind, holiness and righteousness of God and exposes the filthiness of men's sin.

2) A Seed (1Pe 1:23, Jas 1:18, Mt 13:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23)

Once planted in a good heart, it brings forth life, growth, and fruit.

3) Water (Ep 5:25,26,27, Ps 42:1 Ps 119:9 Pr 25:25 Is 55:10 He 10:22 Re 22:17)

Like water it is cleansing, quenching, and refreshing.

4) A Lamp (Ps 119:105, Pr 6:23, 2Pe 1:10)

Light a lamp it shows us where we are, guides us to where we are to go and keeps us from falling off the path.

5) A Sword (He 4:12, Ep 6:17)

Like a sword it pierces with equal efficacy on sinners, saints, and Satan.

6) A Precious metal - Gold (Ps 19:10, Ps 119:127), Silver (Ps 12:6)

Like gold and silver it is precious, beautiful, and highly valued in God's eyes.

7) Nourishing food - Milk (1Pe 2:2), Meat (He 5:14KJV), Bread (Mt 4:4, Jn 6:51), Honey (Ps 19:10)

Is is nourishing because of the strength it imparts in one's and the growth it produces in one's Christlikeness.

8) A Fire (Jer 20:9, Lk 24:32)

Like a fire it is purifying and consuming and bespeaks judgment.

9) A Hammer (Jer 23:29)

It shatters sinful man's pride and self righteousness.

Related Resource: See Inductive Study on the Power of God's Word

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

Mature ([5046](#))(**teleios** from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal) means complete, fully developed, full grown, brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, in good working order. **Teleios** signifies consummate soundness, includes the idea of being whole. Teleios is commonly opposed in classical and Biblical Greek to nepios.

Beware of mistaking mere possession of information for genuine spiritual maturity.

In using the word **mature**, the writer is applying terms familiar to normal human development to describe their spiritual development, which is of course far more value than physical growth (cf 1Ti 4:7, 8, 9, 10-note).

The writer uses **teleios** later in Hebrews writing... But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more **perfect** (teleios) tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation (see **notes** Hebrews 9:11)

Paul used **teleios** in Colossians after declaring the glorious truth that Christ was now in them and that He Alone was their Hope

(absolute assurance of future good - Col 1:27-note) of glory went on to emphasis that because of this great truth...

we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man **complete** (teleios) in Christ. And for this purpose also **labor** (to the point of literal exhaustion!), **striving** (**agonizomai** - same verb describing Epaphras' "laboring earnestly" in prayer for the same goal = that the Colossian saints would be complete in Christ) according to His power (which undoubtedly is how Epaphras also was enabled to pray with such passion and power - and it is the only way we can pray this way - His power working in us and through us), which mightily works within me. (Col 1:28, 29-note)

More like the Master I would live and grow,
More of His love to others I would show;
More self-denial, like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be.
—Gabriel

Teleios does not connote moral or spiritual perfection or sinlessness as some have taught is possible or attainable by mortal flesh, but rather refers to that a believer who is fully developed, who is being progressively transformed into all he or she was "re-created" to be --- like Christ, conformed to His image. And yet maturity is never an end we attain and then say "Whew! I have finally arrived!" No, instead it is to be our earnest, diligent pursuit, even as the "**mature**" apostle Paul declared...

10 that I may know Him (Christ), and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 **Not that I have already obtained it**, or have already become **perfect** (teleios), but I press on (present tense = his continual practice) in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting (present tense = his continual practice) what lies behind and reaching forward (present tense = his continual practice) to what lies ahead, 14 I press on (present tense = his continual practice) toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as are **perfect (teleios)** have this attitude (present tense = to be our continual attitude); and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; 16 however, let us keep living by that same standard (present tense = to be our continual practice) to which we have attained. (See **notes** Philippians 3:10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16)

Richards explains that the word **teleios** places emphasis on... wholeness and completeness. In the biological sense they mean "**mature**," or "**full grown**": the person, animal, or plant achieved the potential inherent in its nature. The perfect is the thing or person that is complete, in which nothing that belongs to its essence has been left out. It is **perfect** because every potential it possesses has been realized. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

Conversion is the miracle of a moment.
Maturing takes a lifetime.

Barclay writes that... A thing is **teleios**, if it realizes the purpose for which it was planned; a man is **perfect** if he realizes the purpose for which he was created and sent into the world... For what purpose was man created? The Bible leaves us in no doubt as to that. In the old creation story we find God saying. "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Ge 1:26). Man was created to be like God. The characteristic of God is this universal benevolence, this unconquerable goodwill, this constant seeking of the highest good of every man. The great characteristic of God is love to saint and to sinner alike. No matter what men do to him, God seeks nothing but their highest good.."([Matthew 5 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Richards writes that... Maturity should come as a natural process of our being among a group of believers who are functioning properly ("until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be **mature and full grown** [teleios] in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ." NLT, Eph 4:13-note), as we face trials and persevere ("And let endurance have its **perfect** [teleios] result, that you may be **perfect** [teleios] and complete, lacking in nothing." James 1:4. **Ed note:** James is referring to spiritual maturity fulfilled in Christlikeness, which is the goal of endurance and perseverance in trials!), and through the constant exercise of our faculties by applying God's Word to guide our daily choices ("But solid food is for the **mature** [teleios] , who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." Heb 5:14). **Why is maturity important?** Because those who are mature Christians are able to grasp and apply spiritual truths (1Co 2:6), establish right priorities in life (Php 3:15-note), and stand confident and firm in the will of God (Col 4:12-note)."([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

Regarding Christian perfection, **Tom Skinner**, famous black evangelist, explained that...

If you check out the life of Jesus you will discover what made Him perfect. He did not attain a state of perfection by carrying around in His pocket a list of rules and regulations, or by seeking to conform to the

cultural mores of His time. He was perfect because He never made a move without His Father.

The **mature** Christian can handle **solid food**. The Holy Spirit can guide them into Scripture and from it they can draw wisdom for life. They can grasp doctrine and make decisions. They integrate doctrine and duty.

Growth in Christ likeness is what the Father expects of and desires for each of His children ("mature man" Ep 4:13note)

MARKS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

(1). Maintaining a Proper Diet: Good food. Solid food. Sound Doctrine. You in your own inductive Bible study begin to mature (1Pe 2:2 - no intake, no growth!). You are in trouble if the pastor is the main source of food no matter how good is his exegesis!

(2). Practice: "Practice makes perfect" is the old saying. We of course will never be perfect in this life but are to practice using our powers of discernment. As we take in truth and obey that truth we progressively become better equipped to distinguish good and evil.

(3). Senses become trained: Our power of discernment becomes sharpened (not judgmental or pharisaical!).

Aim High - When my daughter and her family were in town for a visit, I had a chance to take my son and two sons-in-law out for a "guy" outing.

We decided that while the ladies were shopping, we would go to a firing range and practice shooting. We rented two pistols and took aim at our targets. While shooting, all four of us discovered that on one of the firearms the sight was set too low. If we aimed using that sight, we hit the bottom of the target. We had to aim high in order to hit anywhere near the bull's-eye.

Isn't life a lot like that? If we set our sights too low, we really don't accomplish all that we can. Sometimes we have to aim high in order to reach a desired goal.

What should be our aim in life? How high should we point our ambitions? Well, since Scripture is our true guide, we will shoot for nothing but spiritual maturity. In fact, in Paul's farewell to the people of Corinth, he said, "Aim for perfection" (2Co 13:11NIV). And we also have the high aim of these words from the lips of Jesus, "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

Perfection is a lofty target, and we won't attain it in this life. But if we want to honor God and get close to that high goal, we need to aim high.

O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear. —Chisholm

WHO BECAUSE OF PRACTICE HAVE THEIR SENSES TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL: ton dia ten hexin ta aisthethria gegumnasmena (RPPNPA) echonton (PAPMPG) pros diakrisin kalou te kai kakou:

- Job 6:30; 12:11; 34:3; Psalms 119:103; Song 1:3; 2:3; Matthew 6:22,23; Ephesians 1:18
- **Discern** - Genesis 3:5; 2Samuel 14:17; 1Kings 3:9,11; Isaiah 7:15; Romans 14:1; 1Corinthians 2:14,15; Philippians 1:9,10; 1Thessalonians 5:21
- [Hebrews 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The simple point here is that if one continues to feed only on the "ABC's" (elementary principles), they are not going to grow spiritually and are not going to develop spiritual discernment.

John MacArthur... A small child will stick almost anything into his mouth, touch anything he can reach, go anywhere he can manage to crawl—with no concept of what is good for him and what is bad, what is helpful and what is dangerous. The mature adult, on the other hand, has developed considerable discernment. He is careful about what he eats, what he does, where he goes. The same principle operates in the spiritual realm. The mature believer has discernment about what is right and wrong, true and false, helpful and harmful, righteous and unrighteous. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#))

Guthrie rightly comments that... Spiritual maturity comes neither from isolated events nor from a great spiritual burst. It comes from

a steady application of spiritual discipline. (Ibid)

John Piper alludes to the importance of **practice** in his list of the **four sources of wisdom**

1. Meditation on the Scriptures: Ps 19:7, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."
2. Prayer: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God."
3. Sound counselors (the book of Proverbs!).
4. The practice of principles in real life experience (Hebrews 5:14).

[\(Walk in Wisdom Toward Those Outside\)](#)

Practice (1838) (**hexis** from **écho** = have) describes a **habit**, whether of **body** or of **mind**. It describes a condition of the body or mind acquired through custom, use or practice. The idea is doing something again and again. It refers to a habit of the body or mind, not the process but the result: The condition produced by past exercise and now the habitual or normal condition, disposition or character. Plato referred to a habit of body, especially a good habit.

Dods - Hexis is the habitual or normal condition, the disposition or character; and the expression in the text means that the mature, by reason of their maturity or mental habit, have their senses exercised ([Hebrews 5 Commentary - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Because of practice - This can also be rendered **because of habit**. Use of one's powers of spiritual discernment are to be the practice for those who seek to be mature. The old saying is "Use or lose it". Failure to nourish and exercise our spiritual faculties of discernment is like a leg that is placed in a cast for months with resultant "disuse atrophy" of the muscles to the point that the person can hardly walk on it when he is first taken out of the cast. Truth practiced and obeyed becomes internalized truth that transforms

Wuest writes that **hexis** "refers to a habit of the body or mind. It speaks here of the habitual use of the perceptive faculties (senses) which are being vigorously exercised. This results in the ability to discriminate between good and evil, and in this context, good and evil teaching. But these Hebrews had abused their perceptive faculties in rejecting the new light given and turning again to the First Testament (Old Covenant) sacrifices. Light rejected, blinds."

Jesus alluded to this dynamic when He declared

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

Comment: Jesus lays down a basic, vital principle that the first prerequisite to ascertaining God's leading in some matter or the truth about some doctrinal question, is a genuine willingness to believe the truth and obey God's will.

F B Meyer...

By reason of use you get keener. I go with the savage through the wilds, and notice that he looks at that bent twig, at that grass brushed down across the path. He starts and says:

"A man has been along here."

I don't see any trace, I can't find any footmark; but in that snapped twig, in the impression on that grass the savage, by reason of use, has had his senses exercised to discern where man has gone.

Now, most of us never use our spiritual sense. God has given us a nose to smell with, eyes to see with, hands to feel with, and a tongue to taste with. We are made in three parts—body, soul and spirit. The soul has senses equivalent to those of the body, and the spirit behind that has a third set of senses which an unregenerate man has not commenced to use. But if you are a spiritual man you will use these spiritual senses to discriminate the thoughts as they come to your heart. "**By reason of use**" you will have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Back to Bethel: Separation from Sin, and Fellowship with God)

Bob DeWaay offers some insights on how "practice" is related to modern Christianity...

Practice at anything is hard work. Perhaps this is what causes so much resistance to the Biblical command to become students of Scripture.

Be diligent (NET Bible = Make every effort) (in the **aorist imperative** = command to do this now. Don't delay. Do it effectively. "Do your utmost for His highest!") to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (2Timothy 2:15-note).

Paul also told Timothy,

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who **work hard** at preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

To become teachers as Hebrews 5:12 says we ought we must first be diligent in study, which is hard work. The call to hard work probably will never be popular in the age of television where everything is done for us and we are passive spectators. Modern Christianity has produced a generation of spiritual consumers, many who are from the "baby boomer" generation whose wants and needs dictate which churches will be successful. This generation is repulsed by the idea of a lifetime of hard work with little recognition or immediate pay off. As consumers we want to be the center of attention and if a waiter or waitress does not attend to our needs now, we make a fuss and move on. This is sadly how many from our modern generation approach church life. We want the church administration to hire professionals to do everything for us, including teaching our children. We want to be comfortable, happy, entertained, never put upon, never made to feel guilty, and certainly never commanded to do anything that would be more work and responsibility. If the author of Hebrews was concerned that his admonitions could not be heard by his first century, Jewish audience, how much more difficult is it for twentieth century, pampered, "baby boomers"?

God's Word is changeless and we will be judged by it even if it seems incompatible with our modern priorities. We must allow God's Word to speak to us and not be content to compare ourselves with others of our own ilk. We could stay babies and never notice it or stand out because we live in a culture of babies. However, what a sad waste of a spiritual life! ([See John Piper's - Don't Waste Your Life](#)) Practice is necessary for spiritual sensibility and discernment. The type of practice referenced here is the study of Scripture and its application to the issues of life. Faith and obedience are the envisioned outcomes of this process (Related Resource: Relationship of faith and obedience). ([The Danger of Perpetual Infancy - The Need To Study Scripture](#))

TRAINING FOR DISCERNMENT

Senses (145) (**aistheterion** from **aisthanomai** = apprehend by senses from **aio** = to perceive; English = "aesthetic") describes an apprehension by the senses or perception primarily with the external senses. It was a Stoic term for sense organs. As used in this verse figuratively it describes spiritual perception or possession of the capacity to perceive clearly. It is the ability to understand the real nature of something or to have the ability of discernment or of discrimination. It is the ability to make moral decisions using the capacity for spiritual apprehension. It implies a sort of spiritual intuition by which the sensitive Christian can, more or less, automatically discern whether something is right or wrong. However, this sense is developed only by attaining real maturity in the Scriptures.

The related word **aisthesis** is used by Paul...

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all **discernment** (**aisthesis**) (Php 1:9-note)

Comment: Aisthesis or discernment selects, classifies, and applies what is furnished by knowledge.

The root verb **aisthanomai** is used in Luke...

But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they might not **perceive** it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement. (Luke 9:45)

Trained (1128) (**gumnazo** [word study] from **gumnós** = "naked" or minimally clothed and descriptive of the common practice of males in the Greco Roman "**gymnasia**" source of English "gymnasium", "gymnastics") literally means to exercise naked in the palaestra (a school in ancient Greece or Rome for sports). Vine says it means to "to strive with the body stripped i.e., strenuously." **Gumnazo** means to exercise bodily and described an athlete exercising in the gym.

Figuratively **gumnazo** means to exercise so as to discipline oneself (in the moral or ethical "gym") or to exercise vigorously, in any way, either the body or the mind. It describes the rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes.

Trained is in the **perfect tense** indicating a past completed action with ongoing effect and speaks of the permanence of their state of training!

When you see something in God's Word that seems to say you need to change something in your attitudes or actions, then DO IT (under grace, not Law, in the Spirit not in the "strength" of the flesh).

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

The Jewish historian Josephus uses **gymnazo** in his description of the Roman soldier writing that...

"... their military exercises differ not at all from the real use of their arms, but every soldier is every day **exercised (gymnazo)**, and that with great diligence, as if it were in time of war which is the reason why they bear the fatigue of battles so easily." (Josephus, F. The Works of Josephus. Wars 3.73)

Paul uses **gymnazo** in his first epistle to Timothy drawing on the **athletic metaphor** to exhort his young disciple to...

have nothing to do with (continually refuse, shun, reject) worldly (profane in contrast to sacred, void of piety, opposite of holy that which is set apart to God) fables (myths) fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline (gymnazo = present tense** calls for rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training like an athlete) yourself for the purpose of godliness (NIV = "train yourself to be godly") for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (see **notes** 1Ti 4:7; 4:8)

Gymnazo is used again in Hebrews where we find the encouraging truth that...

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been **trained** (gymnazo) by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Heb 12:11-note)

Kenneth Wuest comments on the use of **gymnazo** in relation to **discipline** explaining that "Here (**gymnazo**) refers to the spiritual exercise which the recipients went through as a result of the persecutions which in the last analysis were the chastening hand of God. That spiritual exercise consisted of the struggles of the soul, the battle between the determination to go back to the (Jewish) temple sacrifices and thus escape the persecutions, or to go on to faith in the High Priest of the New Testament in spite of them. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

There is one use of **gymnazo** in the apocrypha (2 Maccabees 10:15) in which which is used to mean harass, wear out or distress

Besides this, the Idumeans, who had control of important strongholds, were **harassing** the Jews; they received those who were banished from Jerusalem, and endeavored to keep up the war.

Phil Newton sums up this section noting that...

We train our spiritual faculties to discern good and evil by a regular, ongoing diet of God's Word.

"But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

Notice that two things are involved.

First there is **"solid food,"** what Fuller calls "the strong meat" of God's Word. It is those who are developing in spiritual maturity that can enjoy such food. Babies tend to play in solid food while maturing children and youth enjoy eating it. What is the **"solid food"**? It is those doctrines that make up the whole of Scripture. Here the writer was speaking of Christ's high priestly ministry-grasping it and delighting in it. In Galatians it might be the wondrous doctrine of justification. In Ephesians it might be getting a handle on the doctrine of election. These things are **solid food**.

But we make a mistake if we think that **solid food** is just for knowledge. Yes, we must have knowledge. But right knowledge always leads to practice, so our writer speaks of those

"who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

The word **"practice"** refers to the development of regular habits. These are godly habits of the mind, attitude, thought life, and moral actions. One's **"senses"** are **"trained"** or trained by the exercise of the truths of God's Word. Understanding and obeying God's Word develops the believer's capacity to **"discern good and evil."** In other words, the kind of living that redounds to the glory of God is that which is honed by the study and practice of God's truth.

"The pathway to maturity and to solid Biblical food is not first becoming an intelligent person, but becoming an obedient person" [Piper]. ([Leaving Milk for Meat](#)) (Bolding added)

Bob DeWaay... Trained senses (Hebrews 5:14) means the ability to differentiate between good and evil because of having continued in the Word of Christ (John 8:31,32) and become disciples. Many think discernment depends on a "metaphysical

impression sensor" that differentiates between the feelings and sensations produced by different spiritual beings. For example, I received a phone call from a person who announced, "I have the gift of discernment." She told a strange tale of demons, angels, human spirits, etc., that would be fit for the pages of a supermarket tabloid. The answer to various problems for individuals and churches was to use her secret, spiritual knowledge to manipulate the spirit world so that things would go God's way. This concept of discernment that makes it out to be a mystical ability to view into the unseen spirit world has many counterparts in the occult, but it is not what Hebrews 5:14 is about. The example of the author of the book of Hebrews was to use Biblical passages to correct error, warn against sin, urge to faith, and differentiate truth from falsehood. One need not enter an altered state of consciousness to exercise this type of discernment. ([The Danger of Perpetual Infancy - The Need To Study Scripture](#))

Spurgeon - The **soul has senses as well as the body**. Men who have had their senses exercised know how to choose between good and evil. Now, what are these senses? Well, there are our **spiritual eyes**. Travelers who go to Switzerland for the first time soon discover that they have not had their eyes exercised. At a distance, young travelers scarcely know which is mountain and which is cloud. All this is the result of not having the eyes exercised upon such glorious objects. It is just precisely so in spiritual things, unless Christians have their eyes exercised. The man, the eye of whose faith has been tried with bright visions and dark revelations, is qualified to discern between good and evil in those great mysteries that would be too high for unexercised believers. **Then there is the ear**. We hear it said of some that they have no ear for music. We sometimes hear it said of others that they have an ear for music, and they can tell when people are singing half a note amiss. But there are some who cannot tell one note from another. So is it in spiritual things, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound," but many do not know the difference between the joyful sound and that which is half a note lower. Why, dear friends, when a Christian is well taught, he knows when a note goes too high, and he says—"No, no, no; that jars;" or when it goes too low he says—"No, that is out of tune." Happy is he whose ear is well tuned to discern both good and evil. **Then comes the nose**, the intention of which sense is to smell things afar off. True Christians have smelled the fragrance of Christ's fellowship. "While the king was on his couch, my nard gave its fragrance" (Song 1:12). Advanced Christians know the fragrance of heaven. The spiritual nostril that has been made to perceive the difference between the righteous and the wicked will soon be able to perceive what is true food and what is carrion. **Then there is the taste**; and this sense needs educating, too. There are many who have no taste spiritually. Give them a cup of mangle-mangle, and if it is only warm they will drink it down and say, "Oh! How delightful!" If you give them a cup, on the other hand, that is full of divine purposes, precious promises, and sure mercies of David; if you will only flavor it with a good style of oratory, they will drink that sweet potion too and relish it. The two things may contradict each other flatly, but these people have no discernment—they have not had their senses exercised. But those of you who have been made to taste the sweets of covenant grace, you, especially, who have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood, and you, too, who have been made to drink the wormwood and the gall till your mouth knows every flavor, from the bitterness of death up to the glory of immortality, you may taste the strong meat without any fear, for your senses are exercised. **Lastly, there is the sense of touch**. Believers have been made to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. They have exercised the sense of feeling by joy, by rapture, perhaps by doubt and by fear, and their touch has become so acute, so keen, that, though their eyes were shut, as soon as they touch a doctrine they would know what was of God and what of man.

Discern ([1253](#)) (**diakrisis** from **diakrino** = distinguish, decide, judge from **diá** = separation, between + **krino** = decide, judge) is literally to distinguish between or making a judgment between two things. It describes the ability to evaluate and decide or to clearly discern.

Discernment speaks of the power to see what is not evident to the average mind (cp 1Co 2:14). It is the power or faculty of the mind, by which it distinguishes one thing from another, as truth from falsehood, virtue from vice, good from evil. Discernment is an act of wisdom or detection marked by an insight into a person's character or by an event that comes through insight that goes beyond the facts given.

As someone has well said even in a secular sense the errors of youth often proceed from the want of discernment.

The **discernment** the writer is describing in this passage is not natural but supernatural as emphasized in the little poem by John Oxenham...

Not for one single day
Can I **discern** my way,
But this I surely know—
He who gives the day
Will show the way,
So I securely go.

Joe Stowell wrote that...

Discernment in Scripture is the skill that enables us to differentiate. It is the ability to see issues clearly. We desperately need to cultivate this spiritual skill that will enable us to know right from wrong. We must be prepared to distinguish light from darkness, truth from error, best from better, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from defilement, and principles from pragmatics. (from [Fan the Flame Living Out Your First Love for Christ](#))

Diakrisis is used 2 other times in the NT...

Romans 14:1-**note** Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of **passing judgment** (diakrisis) on his opinions.

Comment: Here Diakrisis takes on the sense of engagement in verbal conflict which is the result of differing opinions or viewpoints.

1Cor 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the **distinguishing** (diakrisis) of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

Diakrisis is used once in the **Septuagint**...

Job 37:16 And he knows the **divisions** (diakrisis) of the clouds, and the signal overthrows of the ungodly

John MacArthur... Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish divine truth from error and half-truth (cf. Acts 17:11; 1Ti 4:1-6, 13, 16; 6:20, 21; 2Ti 4:1-5; Titus 1:9) and is essential to the Christian life (1Co 12:10; Ep 4:14-15; He 5:14; 1Jn 4:1; cf. 1Ki 3:9; Pr 2:3; 14:15, 33; 16:21).

Bob DeWaay writes that...

The word "**discern**" means "to judge or distinguish between." The immature are more easily deceived. This is why people warn small children not to talk to strangers. They cannot distinguish between a person who is legitimate and one who has bad intentions. Discernment is the ability to make necessary distinctions. According to our verses in Hebrews 5, it comes from the study and application of Scripture... A baby distinguishes few categories. As a child grows, he learns to identify more categories. We consider this good progress and if it is not happening we bring the child for testing to see what is wrong.

In order to "**discern good and evil**" as Hebrews 5:14 exhorts, study and hard work that result in maturity are necessary. Many more Biblically defined categories can then be distinguished. Before the author of Hebrews began his parenthetical exhortation about infancy and maturity, he was showing his readers the difference between the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthood and their typological ramifications concerning the high priesthood of Jesus the Messiah. He realized that these were more categories that his immature, Christian readers cared to be concerned about. Perpetual infants go so far and stop, having no hunger to learn more about the faith.

How many Christians in modern, American, Evangelical churches would attend a lecture on the typological significance of Melchizedek and Aaron with regard to the priestly ministry of our Lord? A few perhaps, but church growth experts warn against emphasizing such things. What we may not realize is that discernment is lacking because we do not care about this and numerous other Biblical issues. This is one reason why cults and charlatan preachers prosper, recruiting many of their followers from our own ranks.

The warning of Hebrews 5:11-14 is clear. The need for maturity and discernment is evident. The Holy Spirit inspired this passage and preserved it for us (as with all other Scripture) for "... for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2Timothy 3:16b,17). The idea that study, Biblical education, and doctrine are superfluous or even harmful is creating a generation of perpetual infants.

The author of Hebrews entreats, "let us press on to maturity" (Hebrews 6:1). Pressing on to maturity is God's answer to the problem of perpetual infancy. Hebrews 6 contains a vivid and frightening warning against apostasy. A failure to press on to maturity creates a severe danger to those who do not heed this Biblical call.

God will give grace to help us obey the Holy Spirit's call to grow up. If we respond to it, we will be equipped for the work of the ministry and can be sure that God will use us in these perilous times. ([The Danger of Perpetual Infancy The Need To Study Scripture](#))

Vance Havner has a few pithy barbs regarding discernment in the the modern church...

Nothing is more rare in churches today than **discernment**. The natural man knows nothing of it, the carnal man is devoid of it. Only the spiritual man has it and we have all too few in that category.

When the nightclub invades the sanctuary it ought not to be difficult for any Bible Christian to **discern** the time of day.

Consider first, the need of a ministry of edification, a strengthening ministry. When I say "edified," I do not mean that comfortable, cozy feeling that comes over one after hearing a good sermon. Nothing is more disastrous than hearing good things without translating them into practice. Goethe said, "Thought without action is a disease," and many believers are so affected. We are not edified merely by hearing the Word... We are not edified until the Word has been not only appreciated but appropriated; not only heard but heeded; not only adored but obeyed; **for it is by reason of use that our senses are exercised to discern good and evil.** (Vance Havner Quotations)

One serious malady of the church is infantile paralysis—too many babes who never grow.

Paul addresses the development of the art of discernment in Ephesians writing...

Therefore **be careful** how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not **be** foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And **do** not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled** with the Spirit (Ep 5:15, 16-note, Ep 5:17, 18-note) (**Note:** All verbs in red are **present imperative** = commands calling for continual attention)

**Remember that error often comes
dressed in the garment of truth.**

Joe Stowell writes that... the Pharisees had developed a system of 613 laws, 365 negative commands and 248 positive laws... By the time Christ came it had produced a heartless, cold, and arrogant brand of righteousness. As such, it contained at least ten tragic flaws. (1) New laws continually need to be invented for new situations. (2) Accountability to God is replaced by accountability to men. (3) **It reduces a person's ability to personally discern.** (4) It creates a judgmental spirit. (5) The Pharisees confused personal preferences with divine law. (6) It produces inconsistencies. (7) It created a false standard of righteousness. (8) It became a burden to the Jews. (9) It was strictly external. (10) It was rejected by Christ (from [Fan the Flame Living Out Your First Love for Christ](#))

Illustration of a "**practice**" facilitating **discernment** (from Haddon Robinson) - A Chinese boy who wanted to learn about jade went to study with a talented old teacher. This gentle man put a piece of the precious stone into his hand and told him to hold it tight. Then he began to talk of philosophy, men, women, the sun and almost everything under it. After an hour he took back the stone and sent the boy home. The procedure was repeated for several weeks. The boy became frustrated. When would he be told about the jade? He was too polite, however, to question the wisdom of his venerable teacher. Then one day, when the old man put a stone into his hands, the boy cried out instinctively, "That's not jade!"

What was **Solomon's** primary request of God?...

So give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?" (1Ki 3:9, God's answer = 1Ki 3:10, 11, 12, 4:29) (Solomon began well but then he [Wandered From Wisdom](#))

Comment: Note that the Bible associates the ability to **discern** with our "**heart (study)**" figuratively referring to our "**control center**" if you will. Partaking of **solid food** and **practicing** the truths "ingested" is the recipe for developing a discerning heart. **What are you waiting for?** Get in the Book (**not** books about the Book! Col 3:16-note = command to make this our daily practice!) so it can get in you and renew you mind (Ep 4:23-note, cp 2Co 4:16, Col 3:10-note), clarify your thinking regarding God's will (Ro 12:2-note) and transform you from glory to glory (2Co 3:18)!

As **Howard Hendricks** says "Bible study is essential. The Bible is the divine means of developing spiritual maturity. **There is no other way.**" (from Living by the Book)

For Study: Here are passages from Proverbs to ponder that use the term **discern** (in the **NAS**) - Pr 1:2 2:3 2:5 2:9 7:7 8:5 10:13 14:7 16:21 28:7 (cp Is 27:11, Ezek 44:23, Hos 14:9 Php 1:9-note, He 4:12KJV). Write down what you discover about Biblical discernment according to Solomon (ask **5W'S & H** type questions and remember to check the **context**) (Eg, What do we have to do?, What is the fruit of discernment? Who is called discerning? How can you tell someone is discerning?, etc, etc) This might make an excellent Sunday School topic.

David also acknowledges our dependence on the Lord for **discernment**...

Who can **discern** his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. (Ps 19:12-note)

The **psalmist** petitions God...

Teach me good **discernment** and knowledge, for I believe in Thy commandments. (Ps 119:66)

Comment: This psalm suggest one aspect of the "training" in Heb 5:14 is pleading with God for discernment. Notice that here as in Heb 5:14, discernment is integrally associated with God's Word ("solid food") and genuine belief in that Word - such a belief will bring forth the fruit of Spirit enable obedience to the Word. It is a divine axiom that knowledge obeyed leads to increasing knowledge of God [Col 1:10-note walk worthy > increasing knowledge of God] and His will [Jn 7:17].

Spurgeon adds ([full note](#)) - We are not able to judge, for our knowledge is so sadly inaccurate and imperfect; if the Lord teaches us knowledge we shall attain to good judgment, but not otherwise. The Holy Ghost alone can fill us with light, and set the understanding upon a proper balance: let us ardently long for his teachings, since it is most desirable that we should be no longer mere children in knowledge and understanding.

Spurgeon: Say some, "Tell us how to discern truth." You may judge it by three things: by God, by Christ, and by man; that is, the truth which honors God, the truth which glorifies Christ, and the truth which humbles man.

Spurgeon: A little excess in right may be faulty. It may be wise to look, but foolish to gaze. There is a very thin partition sometimes between that which is commendable and that which is censurable.

Spurgeon: As the good man said to his boy, "My boy, pay as you go." "Suppose I cannot pay, father." "Then, don't go;" so would I say to you, examine your life as you go. If you dare not examine an action, or look at it, then do not do it.

What better way to **discern good and evil** than to **let our mind dwell** (by way of application, should be part of our "practice", of our being "trained") on good, on God, on holy, as Paul encouraged the saints at Philippi...

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let** your mind **dwell** (**present imperative** = command calling for us to continually place our attention) on these things. (Php 4:8-note)

Illustration on senses trained to be able to discern...

The American Banking Association once sponsored a two-week training program to help tellers detect counterfeit bills. The program was unique--never during the two-week training did the tellers even look at a counterfeit bill, not did they listen to any lectures concerning the characteristics of counterfeit bills... All they did for two weeks was handle authentic currency, hour after hour and day after day, until they were so familiar with the true that they could not possibly be fooled by the false." Ben Patterson, Waiting (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p. 153.

Lord, help us from Your blessed Word
All error to discern,
And by Your Spirit's truth and light
From Satan's snares to turn. --H G Bosch

While it is true that we must approach the Word of God with an open mind, we also must recognize that God's truth provides absolute boundaries for that openness. As G. K. Chesterton has said, "Merely having an open mind is nothing. The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid." And the danger for spiritual "infants" is just like the danger with real infants who will put anything in their mouth!

Good and evil - refers to ethical conduct as well as true and false doctrine for both of these areas require discernment.

Dods - "exercised so as to discriminate between good and evil," i.e., between what is wholesome and what is hurtful in teaching. The child must eat what is given to it; the boy is warned what to eat and what to avoid; as he grows, his senses are exercised by a various experience, so that when he reaches manhood he does not need a nurse or a priest to teach him what is nutritious and what is poisonous. The first evidence of maturity which the writer cites is ability to teach; the second, trained discernment of what is wholesome in doctrine. The one implies the other. Cf. Isaiah 7:16, " ([Hebrews 5 Commentary - The Expositor's Greek](#)

[Testament\)](#)

Good ([2570](#)) (**kalos**) describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. In classical Greek use kalos was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful.

Evil ([2556](#)) (**kakos**) evil, bad, destructive, damaging, unjust. **Kakos** basically, denotes a lack of something which is thus not as it ought to be.

O Let us learn from Thy blest Word

Base error to discern,

And by Thy Spirit's light and help

From Satan's snares to turn.

--Bosch

Phillip Hughes comments that... **Good and evil** should not be understood merely in an ethical sense here as signifying good conduct and evil conduct, but more particularly, as the context requires, in a comprehensive theological sense, namely, of **good and evil**, or true and false, doctrine, which would include moral teaching. The power of discernment is something very necessary in those who are "mature" enough to be "teachers," and something to be expected of those who, like the recipients of this letter, have been members of the Christian church for a number of years. ([A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews](#))

Steven Cole writes that...

Bible doctrine is not just to fill your head or help you defend some theological system. It is always intended to make you a more godly person. In his introduction to Calvin's Institutes ([Westminster Press], p. lii), John McNeill points out that to the modern mind the word "piety" has lost its proper implication and status. But to Calvin, piety was "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces." "It exists when men 'recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good.'"

Then McNeill quotes A. Mitchell Hunter, who says, "Piety was the keystone of his character. He was a God-possessed soul. Theology was no concern to him as a study in itself; he devoted himself to it as a framework for the support of all that religion meant to him."

McNeill adds, "Since we 'owe everything to God,' in Calvin's pages we are everywhere confronting God, not toying with ideas or balancing opinions about him." (Keep these comments in mind if you read Dave Hunt's vitriolic and baseless attacks on Calvin!) So when you study the Bible or theology, always study with an aim to obedience and godly living. We've seen that it is possible to be a Christian, but be slow to grow. Also, Christian growth means moving on to deeper levels of understanding. It is directly related to obedience to the truth that we have learned. ([Hebrews 5:11-6:3](#))

MacDonald adds that... By obeying the light they receive from God's word, these people are able to form spiritual judgments and save themselves from moral and doctrinal dangers. In this context the particular sense in which the readers are urged to distinguish between **good and evil** is in relation to Christianity and Judaism. Not that Judaism was evil in itself; the Levitical system was introduced by God Himself. But it was intended to point forward to Christ (Gal 3:23, 24, 25). He is the fulfillment of the ceremonial types and shadows (He 9:23, He 10:1, Col 2:17). Now that Christ has come, it is sinful to return to the pictures of Him. Anything that rivals Christ in the affections and loyalties of men is evil. Spiritually mature believers are able to discern between the inferiority of the Aaronic priesthood and the superiority of Christ's. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Holman New Testament Commentary... Christians are able to distinguish between good and evil. The terms good and evil may have both a moral sense and a theological sense. Christians are those who can spot moral evil and avoid it. They can see moral good and attach themselves to it. Christians also can distinguish between true and false doctrine. They will turn aside from the false and faithfully follow the true. Living the Christian life demands the spiritual skills of stamina seen physically in a long-distance runner. Unswerving, relentless applications of Christian truth and practice will equip us for a lifetime of usefulness which will continue into eternity. ([Holman New Testament Commentary Series](#))

John Piper writes that...

the key to maturity (and the remedy for dullness of hearing) is not jumping from milk to meat. The key is the way you drink the milk—what you do with the milk of the word. So let me close with three steps in how to grow with milk to maturity.

1. First you drink in the milk. That is, you listen to the milk of the word—the message of God's promises in

the gospel. You read them your self in the Bible and you sit under the preaching and teaching of God's word. And you give heed. You are earnest and diligent to apply your heart and mind to what is being said. You are not passive and cavalier and indifferent—babes long for milk, and are incredibly focused when they are thirsty.

2. Savor and swallow and digest and be satisfied. This is crucial. If this doesn't happen, the next stage of discernment will not happen. Here is the miraculous spiritual event of loving what once you hated. You love the taste of the milk: "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). And when the promises of God and the God of the promises are tasted, the milk satisfies. And when it satisfies, it transforms your values and priorities, which leads to Step 3.

3. With a heart satisfied with God now, discern good and evil. There are hundreds of decisions that you must make day in and day out which are not spelled out explicitly in the Bible. What to watch on TV, political positions to take, investment strategies, vocation, insurance, retirement, business tactics, where to live, what to drive, whether to own a gun, how to discipline your children, what to wear, where to volunteer, how much to give, etc. etc. ([By This Time You Ought to Be Teachers](#))

Steven Cole rightly concludes that...

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. ([Hebrews 5:11-6:3](#))

Ray Stedman asks that...

How do Christians train themselves to be able to understand the teaching about righteousness? The steps are the same in any age.

(1) Begin with truth you already know but have not been obeying. Does God want you to stop some activity you know to be wrong? Does Scripture exhort you to change your attitude, forgive someone, reach out with help to another? No further light will be given until you begin to obey the light you already have.

(2) Review the promises of God for help from on high to obey his word, for example, Heb 2:18^{note}; Heb 4:14, 15, 16^{note}; 2Ti 2:7^{note}.

(3) Claim those promises for yourself, do whatever you need to do, and count on God's grace to see you through the consequences.

(4) Follow this procedure whenever you become aware of areas of your life and thinking that need to be changed. This is the constant use which will enable one to grow and to handle the solid food of the teaching about righteousness. ([The Spiritual State of the Readers](#))

JONATHAN EDWARDS' RULES FOR ACQUISITION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

Jonathan Edwards' seven directions for the acquisition of Christian knowledge:

1. Be assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures.

This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense.

This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of its different parts, casts great light upon itself. —We are expressly directed by Christ, to search the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use, other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge.

There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on sabbath-days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end.

How much might persons promote each other's knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice.

If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to me knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being; your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1Co 8:1. "Knowledge puffs up."

6. Seek to God, that He would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge.

This is the apostle's direction, Jas 1:5. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not."

God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: Pr 2:6. "The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Labour to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge: 1Co 3:18. "If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

7. Practise according to what knowledge you have.

This will be the way to know more. The psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divine truth, from his own experience: Ps 119:100. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."

Christ also recommends the same: Jn 7:17. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (Edwards, J. The Works of Jonathan Edwards - Volume 2, page 162)

Detecting Toxins - San Francisco and New York City are using bluegill fish to check for the presence of toxins in their water supply, which could be a possible target for a terrorist attack. A small number of bluegills are kept in a tank at the bottom of some water treatment plants because the fish are sensitive to chemical imbalances in their environment. When a disturbance is present in the water, the bluegills react against it.

Like these bluegills, Paul wanted the Galatians to beware of and react against any toxic disturbance in the "true gospel" that was being preached. The toxin was defined as the false principle that God grants acceptance to people and considers them righteous on the basis of their obedience to a set of rules (especially circumcision and dietary laws). In short, obedience to the law was needed, apart from faith in Jesus. This false teaching was a toxic disturbance of the truth and the Galatians were told to react strongly against it. Paul said that anyone preaching a gospel that is not based on grace through faith in Christ alone should be accursed (Gal 1:8, 9).

Let's faithfully study the Scriptures so we can detect the toxins of false teaching and proclaim the truth of God's wonderful salvation

through faith in Jesus. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, teach us from Your holy Word
All error to discern,
And by Your Spirit's light help us
From Satan's snares to turn.
—Bosch

**If you know the truth,
you can discern what's false.**

CHRISTIANS AND THE FBI: [they] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:14

When a man is accepted by the FBI, he is given intensive training to prepare him for his responsible position. As part of the program he is taught to watch for counterfeit currency. He is commissioned to make a thorough study, not of the "phonies," but of the genuine bills! This is done so that a fake will be recognized at once because of its contrast with the real thing.

We, as Christians, can learn a lesson from the FBI. While it is helpful to study the cults and to be fully aware of their false and dangerous dogmas, we should also be so well versed in the truth of God's Word that when we encounter that which is not genuine, we can immediately detect it. We must study the Bible and be so familiar with the "real article" that anything which is counterfeit will be perceived almost instinctively.

We are living in a day when many are being led astray into cults and isms because they are not actually aware of what they are getting into. The only way to prevent this is to indoctrinate believers with the truth so that they will discern the false automatically. For example, if a person is really taught the truth of grace, he won't fall for the line of the legalists who inject human works into the matter of obtaining salvation. If an individual is well instructed concerning the truth about the Person of Christ, he won't be led astray by those who proclaim Him to be less than God. If one knows the truth about the second coming of Christ, he won't be swayed by those who distort this blessed hope, and make it mean something other than the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Himself. Let's be like good FBI agents — so familiar with the truth that at a glance we will detect the counterfeit!

The letters FBI, when used in reference to that respected agency of our government, stand for "Federal Bureau of Investigation." We also need FBI Christians — that is, those who have Full Bible Intelligence! -- H G Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

"Try the spirits," Christian,
Test them by the Word,
See if they acknowledge
Christ as living Lord!
—M. E.

Beware! Error often rides to its deadly work on the back of truth!

—C. H. Spurgeon

William Scoresby was a British seafaring explorer in the 19th century who responded to God's call to the ministry. An interest in the workings of navigational compasses stayed with him during his work as a clergyman. His research led to the discovery that all newly built iron ships had their own magnetic influence on compasses. This influence would change at sea for various reasons—leading crews to read the compass incorrectly. Often this led to disaster. The Bible, not man's erroneous opinions about it, is the ultimate guide for our conscience in navigating life's changing seas. Beware of wrong readings. The first point of wisdom is to know the truth; the second, to discern what is false.

Discernment - Here is a large, brilliant diamond. You look at the stone, and it pleases you by its wondrous whiteness and luster. You admire it, you praise it very highly. You say, "This stone is without fault of any kind—a most beautiful and precious gem." The lapidary places in your hand a magnifying glass of great power, and bids you look at the centre of the stone. You look. The lapidary inquires what you see, and you reply, "Why, there is a black spot at its very centre! I did not see that without the glass. To the naked eye the stone looked perfectly white—entirely without flaw or fault; and yet now that I look at the stone through the glass, why, I wonder that I could not have seen so great a speck as that!" The lapidary says the naked eye cannot receive it, neither can it know it, because it is microscopically discerned. And nobody arises to contest the reasoning of the lapidary; no man ventures to say to

him, "Sir, you have introduced a most painful mystery into human thought and human inquiry." Such people are rather glad that a medium has been supplied by which the most hidden fault can be brought to light. (The People's Bible)

Shrike System - The ancient sport of falconry used trained hawks or falcons in the pursuit of wild game. When the "educated predator" was allowed to fly, however, it often rose too high for human eyes to see. So a hunter often carried a small caged bird called a shrike. By watching the antics of the little bird, the man could always tell where his hawk was, for the shrike instinctively feared the predator and cocked its head to keep it in view.

Christians desperately need an alert perception similar to that of the shrike to detect their spiritual enemy. Our adversary, Satan, "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1Pe 5:8). Our responsibility, according to the apostle Peter, is to be sober and vigilant. In other words, we're to be always on the alert.

It would be nice if God had giant sirens to warn us of an attack by the devil. But He doesn't operate that way. Instead, we must read the Bible regularly, meditate on its truths, maintain a prayerful attitude throughout the day, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Only then will we be sensitive to an imminent assault by the evil one, and be armed by grace to meet it. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The devil is clever, deceiving us all,
He cunningly causes the strongest to fall;
But we his sly methods are sure to discern
By making God's warnings our daily concern.
—D. De Haan

Word Hunger - I had just completed a night of Bible conference ministry in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and was chatting with some of the people who had attended. At the end of the line was a young man in his twenties. He shared with me that he had been a Christ-follower for only about 4 months, and he was eager to learn more of the teachings of the Bible. I referred him to the RBC Web site with the Discovery Series topics as one possible resource for his personal study.

The next night the young man returned to the conference and shared that he had stayed up until 3:30 reading and processing the biblical truths he discovered in that online resource. With a big smile on his face, he declared that he just couldn't get enough of God's Word (1Pe 2:2-note).

What spiritual hunger! That excited young man is a reminder to us of the wonder of the Bible and its heart-enriching truths. It's all too easy for us to ignore God's Book in a world filled with voices screaming for our attention. But only in the Bible can we find God's wisdom for our struggles, God's answers for our questions, and God's truths for our understanding. These truths are worth hungering for. —Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study - If you're interested in digging deeper into the Bible, review the Discovery Series (click here for list). You'll find more than 200 topics.

Study the Bible to be wise
Believe it to be safe
Practice it to be holy

Poisonous Mushrooms - In January 1997, according to Moira Hodgson in the New York Times, Sam Sebastiani Jr., a member of one of California's most prominent winemaking families, died from eating poisonous mushrooms that he had gathered near his home in Santa Rosa, California.

"The mushroom Mr. Sebastiani is thought to have eaten," writes Hodgson, "was an *Amanita phalloides*, also known as the death-cap mushroom. It is the cause of 95 percent of lethal mushroom poisoning worldwide and is fatal more than 35 percent of the time; toxins in its cap destroy the victim's liver by rupturing the cells.

"Experts... are warning inexperienced mushroom enthusiasts to leave the picking to trained mycologists, who will not be fooled by poisonous varieties that closely resemble their nonpoisonous cousins."

Roseanne Soloway, a poison control center administrator, says, "A level of presumed expertise is not enough to save your life."

"One of the most sinister aspects of deadly mushroom poisoning," writes Hodgson, "is the delay between ingestion and onset of symptoms. The stronger the poison, the longer it takes to show itself, and by the time a patient is aware of the problem, it may be too late."

Some things you shouldn't attempt to learn by trial and error, for the price of a mistake is far too high. That's the way it is with our beliefs about the meaning of life and our choices about right and wrong. Much is at stake, and the full consequences of our actions may not be seen until it is too late. The only expert you can fully trust is the Bible.

Babies Need Weaning - I find few things more delectable than three or four of my wife's freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies, hot from the oven but cool enough to pick up and introduce to my longing taste buds. What really makes this treat complete is a large glass of ice-cold milk. That milk and those cookies are made for each other.

Now, I'm not considered a baby because I still drink milk. But if that's all I took in for nourishment, you would ask, and rightly so, "What's wrong? Shouldn't you have been on solid foods long ago?"

Transfer this scenario to our Christian lives, as the writer did in today's Scripture. There comes a point in our experience when we must move on from the basic salvation truths (He 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.

God wants us to learn the Word through study, prayer, meditation, obedience, and testing. We must know spiritual principles so that we can apply them, speak with confidence about our faith, and stand up under adversity.

The milk of the Word will always taste good, but the Bible's solid food makes us strong. How's your diet? --D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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.

Spiritual growth requires the meat of God's Word.

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-note).

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 ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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.**

Hebrews 5:14 - A Rusty Mind - Leonardo da Vinci's contributions to art, science, and engineering establish him as one of the great geniuses in history. Whether it be designing a flying machine or painting the Mona Lisa, his mind was alive, observant, and creative. He is credited with making this comment about maintaining mental sharpness: "Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity; ... even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind."

It is also possible to become stagnant in our Christian life. This is what happened to the recipients of the book of Hebrews. The inspired author saw the symptoms and knew the cure. "Solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

The word exercised is from the Greek gymnasium and relates to our idea of a disciplined workout. The Christian life is to be one of growing in knowledge so that we learn to choose the right path. And we do that by looking into the Word of God.

Take a fresh look at the Bible and ask God for new insights on how it affects your relationship with Him and with others. Work at staying spiritually fit. - Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Search the Scripture's precious store—
As a miner digs for ore,
Search, and you will surely find
Treasures to enrich your mind. —Anon.

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

Senses exercised - It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the physical senses. Take, for instance, that of scent. It is the means of exquisite enjoyment, conveying to us the perfume of garden or field; and it secures us against serious perils that lie in wait for our unwary footsteps. By the order of God's providence, hurtful substances exhale noxious and forbidding odours, by reason of which we are warned from going into their close proximity.

The soul also is endowed with senses. How important a part our spiritual senses may play in the regimen of the inner life! If we are quick to discern good and evil, we may welcome the one and avoid the other with ever-increasing readiness. We may receive the blessing of the one when still afar off, and avoid the curse of the other when only threatening us.

The army which is ill served by its scouts stands a much worse chance than if it were forewarned when an attack was advancing. The foremost ranks of the foe may be over the ramparts, and engaged in the heart of the fortress, before there has been time for preparation. Oh, to detect temptation, when still it is only a thought, a suggestion, a faint shadow on the sky!

We may sharpen our senses by use. When I was in the tea-trade, my sense of touch and taste and smell became acute to discern quite minute differences. We need a similar acuteness in discerning good and evil. May our hearts become most sensitive to all that might lead to temptation, so that we may deal with the tempter in the very earliest suggestions of evil. Lord, make us quick of scent in the fear of the Lord (Is 11:3). (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

No Fast Food In The Bible - I love the sight of cows lying in the field, chewing their cud. But what is cud? And why do they spend so much time chewing it?

Cows first fill their stomachs with grass and other food. Then they settle down for a good long chew. They bring the food back up from their stomachs and rework what they've already eaten, assimilating its goodness and transforming it into rich creamy milk. Time-consuming? Yes. A waste of time? Not if they want to give good milk.

The phrase "chewing the cud" is used to describe the process of meditation. The writer of Psalm 119 obviously did a lot of mental chewing as he read God's Word. No fast food for him! If we follow his example of careful and prayerful Scripture reading, we will:

Be strengthened against sin (Psalm 119:11).
Find delight in learning more about God (Psalm 119:15, 16).
Discover wonderful spiritual truths (Psalm 119:18).
Find wise counsel for daily living (Psalm 119:24).

Meditation is more than reading the Bible and believing it. It's applying Scripture to everyday life.

God's Word is not meant to be fast food. Take time for a good long chew. —Joanie Yoder [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word. —Lathbury

**To be a healthy Christian,
don't treat the Bible as snack food.**

Are You Sensitive to the Little Things? - Sensitivity to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, even in little things that seem harmless, marks the mature Christian. While preaching in a small church in Florida, a young evangelist noticed that his gold wristwatch sparkled in the light.

He wrote, "I saw people looking at it. The Lord said to me, 'Take it off. It's distracting.' I said, 'Lord, I can surely wear a wristwatch that my daddy gave me.' But it was sensitivity that God was teaching me—to be sensitive to the little things. I took it off and ... never wore it in the pulpit again."

It's not always easy to know when God is speaking, because inner urgings may arise from fear, selfish desire, or Satan. Yet if we learn biblical principles through reading the Word, and if we daily yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we will gradually come to recognize His gentle prompting. The writer of Hebrews said that mature believers have had their senses "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:14). Whatever exalts Christ over self comes from God, and we can obey with confidence. But whatever is unkind, unloving, and self-seeking grieves the Spirit. When we do something like this, we must confess our disobedience to God at once to restore our fellowship with Him.

"Lord, make me sensitive" is a prayer that should always be on our hearts. —D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**When we yield ourselves to the Spirit's control,
we do not lose our self-control.**

Part of the training to be a US Secret Service agent includes learning to detect counterfeit money. Agents-in-training make a thorough study of the genuine bills--not the phonies--so that they can spot the fake currency immediately because of its contrast to the real thing.

The child of God can learn a lesson from this. While it is helpful to study false religions and be fully aware of their dangerous dogmas, the best defense against such error is to be so familiar with God's Word that whenever we encounter error, we will spot it at once and won't fall for it.

Today many are being led astray because they don't recognize how they are being deceived. For example, if a person isn't solidly grounded in the teaching of salvation by grace, he may swallow the line of the legalists who inject human works into the matter of being saved. If he is not well instructed about the person of Christ, he might accept the error of those who deny the Savior's deity. A thorough knowledge of essential biblical doctrines is the only way to detect counterfeits.

Let's be diligent in our study of the Word of God. Then, instead of falling into error, we will stand firmly on the truth. --R W De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant us wisdom to discern
The truth You have made known,
And may we not believe one word
Beyond what You have shown. --DJD

**Beware! Error often rides to its deadly work
on the back of truth! --Spurgeon**