

9. Helping Spiritual Children and Young Men Continue Healthy Growth

In our last topic, we discussed some basic things that a new Christian or a spiritual toddler needs to help him in his or her spiritual growth. As individuals continue to grow in their spiritual lives, spiritual growth produces a similar focus at different levels of maturity. As a result, people will often tell you where they are at in their spiritual growth by their focus. The following focuses are commonly seen at various levels of spiritual growth:

- ◆ Spiritual newborn - food
- ◆ Spiritual toddler - My needs, My problems
- ◆ Spiritual child - growth
- ◆ Spiritual young man - service
- ◆ Spiritual parent - care of spiritual children
- ◆ Spiritual Timothy - development of ministry of spiritual children

In this topic, we will give an overview of spiritual children and spiritual young men so that you can see how we help Christians continue to grow. Then, in our next topic, we will give an overview of spiritual parents and spiritual Timothys. At a later time, we will give an overview of spiritual Timothys who are developing faithful men and spiritual Timothys with faithful men who are equipping them to teach others also - 2 Timothy 2:2.

The spiritual child, spiritual young man and spiritual parent are all described in 1 John 2:12-14. Those verses tell us, “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.” In these verses, we see two characteristics of a spiritual child. Spiritual children:

- Know that their sins are forgiven
- Know the Father

Spiritual newborns and spiritual toddlers usually hope that their sins have been forgiven but they do not yet understand what it means to really know that their sins are forgiven. In fact entire denominations do not yet know this and they teach that a Christian can lose his or her salvation. In our topic, “Reversing the Effects of Original Sin” we saw that at the moment a person places his or her trust in Christ that person now has a personal relationship with Christ and has become a part of the family of God. Although a Christian can be out of fellowship with Christ, the relationship can never be broken. We did not enter into that relationship by our own works and so our own works cannot break that relationship.

Our salvation is based totally on the fact that Christ paid for our sins and the Father was satisfied with that payment - 1 John 2:1-2. We have received salvation by repentance and faith - Acts 20:21. One of the key things that has happened in the United States, and many other countries, is that repentance is often never mentioned when sharing the Gospel. A careful study of the New

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Updated January 2025

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Testament will show that repentance and faith are taught together: Acts 2:36-41, 5:29-32, 11:18, 17:30-34, 20:20-21, 26:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2 Peter 3:9. We have laid the foundation for new Christians to know that their sins are forgiven if we focused on both repentance and faith at the time we led them to Christ. In turning from sin and turning to God, and then placing their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the result will be that they will come to understand more quickly that their sins are forgiven.

Second, we see that a spiritual child is one who knows the Father and not just one who knows about the Father. I often ask people, who profess to be Christians and are struggling, the following question, “When you pray, do you feel like you are talking to God face to face or do you feel like you have a million-mile phone line with a bad connection?” The answer that the struggling Christian gives to that question will usually tell you a lot about whether the person is getting to know the Father or just knows about the Father. In addition to prayer, the person who knows the Father has usually learned to hear, read, study, memorize and meditate on the Word of God. That person has learned to talk to God and he has also learned to let God talk to him through the Word.

The spiritual child also needs certain things to help him to continue in his spiritual growth. We see several of the needs of a spiritual child in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12, “You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” In these verses, we see the following needs of a spiritual child. They:

- Need an example to follow
- Need regular encouragement
- Continue to need spiritual parents
- Need help to learn to walk to please God

1 John 2:12-14 also describe the characteristics of a spiritual young man (or young woman), “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.” In these verses, we see three key characteristics of a spiritual young man:

- They are strong - strong in spirit because they yield to the Holy Spirit
- The Word of God abides in them - they are meditating on the Word of God
- They have overcome the wicked one - they are having victory over sin

We saw that the spiritual toddler is still depending on his own strength. The result of a Christian depending on his own strength is described in Romans 7:14-25 where we see that a person cannot do what he wants to do. That is the passage on “I” trouble as in those verses we see that I, me, my and myself are used 37 times. However, the spiritual young man has become strong in his spiritual life because he has learned to depend on the strength of the Holy Spirit instead of his own strength

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- Romans 6:13, 16. The result is the fact that he has taken root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and His love (Ephesians 3:17-19) with the result that instead of “I” trouble he is experiencing the fact that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ - Romans 8:35-39.

Second, we see that the spiritual young man has the Word of God abiding in him. The spiritual young man is spending more and more time studying, memorizing and meditating on the Word of God. As this happens he is learning to experience victory over sin a greater percentage of the time. He has learned to have victory over sin by yielding to the Lord when he has temptation instead of struggling by his own efforts to have victory.

However, a spiritual young man needs to continue to grow. In Luke 2:40-52, we see the progress of Christ in His growth. That growth provides us with some key things that the spiritual young man needs to have happen in his life in order to continue to grow spiritually. Luke 2:40, 52 tell us, “And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him...And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” In verses 40 through 52 we see that a spiritual young man:

- Needs and wants opportunities to serve the Lord
- Needs to continue to increase in godly wisdom
- Needs to continue to grow in his relationship with God
- Needs to continue to grow in his relationship with people

In these verses, we see that a spiritual parent continues to help a Christian grow and mature. In our next topic, we will see how a spiritual parent helps a Christian to become an “adult son” and a partner in ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you continue to be a spiritual parent and help growing Christians to continue to grow.