

# **“You Know You Are Spiritually Immature When...!”**

**Hebrews 5:11-14**

**Intro.** – “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Hebrews 6:11-12). These verses put in capsule form one of the more difficult portions of God’s Word. Many commentators and Bible students alike recognize this section (Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20) as being tough portion of the Bible to understand. Israel wanted to go back to Egypt. As a result, a whole generation failed to enter the promised rest in Canaan. This segment of scripture is written so that you and I don’t make the same blunder. If you will keep in mind that this section of scripture is all about *making spiritual progress or spiritual growth*, you and I will steer clear of creating problems in understanding it.

The lack of spiritual growth is a serious matter. Just because one has gotten older does not mean they are mature. Just because one has been a Christian for many years, doesn’t mean they are *mature*. They may be like the person about whom I read. She was a teacher for 25 yrs. She learned of a job opportunity that would mean a promotion for her; so, she applied. She later learned that someone who had been teaching for only one year was hired instead. Upon inquiring why, she was told, “I’m sorry, but you haven’t had 25 years of experience as you claim. You have had only one year’s experience twenty five times.” In other words, during that whole time, the teacher had not grown/matured. And so it is with many Christians. They have failed to mature; instead, like this teacher they have simply repeated their first year “in Christ” over and over with little or no growth.

That brings us to our text today. The writer of Hebrews was faced with a problem. He had much to say concerning Christ being our High Priest, and he will in chapter seven, but, the spiritual immaturity of his readers made it impossible for him to proceed without clarifying the seriousness behind spiritual immaturity. He knew there were blessings in Christ that can’t be truly understood or realized without growth. He knew that unless there is growth in one’s relationship with Christ, those “in Him” will not be fully appreciated. He knew that spiritual immaturity makes one more susceptible to the temptations of Satan.

*Purpose: to better identify spiritual immaturity in our own lives*

Are you growing or are you repeating the first year of your becoming a Christian over and over again? Do you know how to determine whether you or individuals around you are spiritually immature? Our text gives us four indicators that reveal our individual need to be growing up spiritually:

## **I When You Are DULL OF HEARING (v 11)**

### **A. The Hebrews Were Dull of Hearing**

1. This prevented God’s inspired writer from continuing his point that Christ was superior to Aaron
2. While this material was “hard to explain” it wasn’t so much the difficulty of the material itself, but was their own inability to receive it!
3. These Christians started their backward journey by *drifting from the Word* (2:1-4); and then by *doubting the Word* (3:7-4:13).
  - a. as a result they were *dull of hearing* – *ωοθρος* “slow, sluggish, untoward” – *dull* good trans.
  - b. point is they were unable to listen to the Word, receive it and act upon it
4. They did not have the attitude of the 1 Thessalonians 2:13 - “*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*”
5. Most people when they become Christians are truly “excited and sharp” listening with readiness and desire. What results is spiritual growth.
  - it is not uncommon, however, for apathy to set in, making one “dull of hearing” = immaturity

### **B. Are You Dull of Hearing?**

1. One of the first indicators of spiritual immaturity or backsliding, is a dullness toward the Bible.
2. Ask yourself the following questions: 1) Is the Bible dull to you? 2) Are Bible classes dull? 3) Are sermons dull? 4) Is anything of a spiritual nature dull and “boring?”

3. In such a state, if one listens at all, they will listen to those willing to “tickle their ears” and will be more susceptible to being misled – 2 Timothy 4:3-4 *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”*

## II When You Are Unable to TEACH OTHERS (v 12a)

### A. The Hebrews Should Have Been Teaching

1. These people had been Christians for awhile – at least long enough to learn and grow – *“by this time you ought to be teachers”*
2. A natural response to growth is the bearing of fruit – one way we bear fruit is by teaching others...
3. Not to suggest all are or will be gifted to teach formally, but, all Christians ought to be able to share what they have learned from the Word.
  - a. one of the first but most difficult of lessons to learn as a child is the lesson of sharing.
  - b. the recipients of this letter had been Christians long enough to be able to teach others; instead, they were in need of being taught again the elementary elements of God’s grace.

### B. Are You Able to Teach?

1. Either formally as a teacher instructing others in the study of God’s Word
1. Informally by sharing your faith with others – is it natural for you to conversationally speak of your faith and commitment to Christ? Think about what you talk about – are you spiritually minded in your everyday conversation or is your talk mostly about the world?
2. An honest response to these questions will tell whether you are able or unable to teach and if you need the *first principles* again taught to you.

## III When You Have a DIET OF MILK (vv 12b – 13)

### A. The Hebrews Were Still on Milk

1. Milk is a predigested food – specially suited for babies
2. When Hebrews were babies in Christ they needed milk
  - a. true to Christians at Corinth – 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. 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.”*
  - b. such a diet includes what is described as the *first principles of the oracles of God* and is later called *the elementary principles of God* (Hebrews 6:1)
3. But as a physical baby must graduate to solid foods in order to grow, so must these Christians.
4. Point is, a babe in Christ cannot mature unless the diet goes beyond milk.

### B. Are You Able to Eat Meat?

1. One commentator explains the “milk of the Word” as what Jesus did on earth – i.e. His ministry, birth, life, teaching, death, burial and resurrection.
2. Same commentator explains the “meat of the Word” as what Jesus is now doing in heaven - i.e. His High Priesthood...
3. Point is clear, if your and my diet remains milk alone, then we will be left as immature babies unable to offer the kind of worship and service we ought to give.
  - a. Greek word *απειρος* – “unskillful, inexperienced, ignorant” (NIV “not acquainted” NASB “not accustomed”)
  - b. point is, we need far more “experience” in the word of God lest we remain babes in Christ
4. Stay with us in this study of Hebrews and you will be challenged in your understanding...

A “milk only” diet leaves one immature, and by default one who is “unskilled” in the word of righteousness. This in turn will produce another trait of spiritually immaturity.

## IV When You Are UNABLE TO DISCERN (v 14)

### A. The Hebrews Were Undiscerning

1. These Christians were having trouble discerning the difference between good teaching (truth) and bad teaching (error); good conduct (righteous living) and bad conduct (sinful living).
1. These Christians were being tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine simply because they were not maturing in the faith like they should.
3. Like a “wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” they were acting like the double-minded man James talks about in James 1:6-8

### B. Are You Able to Discern?

1. Can you apply general biblical principles to specific situations?
2. Are you able to identify sound doctrine and when something being taught is not true and accurate to the Word of God?
3. Do you judge people by their character, as all Christians are instructed to do, or do you look on the outward appearance of matters...?
3. The ability to be discerning is in direct proportion to your understanding and application of God’s Word in your life.
5. The nation of Israel in Moses’ day lacked discernment and as a result were not permitted to enter the Promised Land. The readers of the letter were in danger of making the same debacle.
6. The point is clear – in the Christian life it is impossible to stand still. One is either moving forward and growing in grace, or one is going backward returning to the land of bondage.

**Conclusion:** Obviously there are other indicators of spiritual immaturity... e.g. living in a carnal manner... embracing strife, jealousy and envy... In general, living unto self and not crucifying self and taking up your cross daily to follow Christ.

You have heard the old saying: “The trouble with being best man at a wedding is that you get no chance to prove it.” In bearing the name of Christ (Christian), you not only are enabled by His Spirit but you can prove it through your life!

Are you proving your spiritual maturity in Christ? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Are you more spiritually mature today than say a year ago and do those around you confirm your conclusion?

Today, we have studied four indicators of spiritual immaturity:

- 1) When You are Dull of Hearing
- 2) When You are Unable to Teach Others
- 3) When You Have a Diet of Milk
- 4) When You Are Unable to Discern

I conclude with 2 Peter 3:18 which summarize the point and purpose behind our text and this message:

*“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen”*