

**Sermon Title: Warning Against Stagnation**  
**Sermon Text: Hebrews 5:11-14**  
**Sermon Series: Walk Through the Bible - FBC AZ City - 10/14/18**

**Introduction: (Slide # 1)**

No one wants to be called immature. Everyone wants to grow up and strives to accomplish better things as you mature. However, many of us can look back and see where we have done some really immature things in the past.

Years ago, when I was in my late 20's, I was coaching basketball on a high school level at a Christian school. I was passionate about basketball and I was also trained under a coach in college that believed part of your job as a coach was to give the referees a hard time when they made calls that you didn't agree with.

There were two games that I was so enraged over the calls that I carried my emotions too far. Both of these games my team was being sorely mistreated by "unjust" calls. I lost my temper and I went ballistic. This was in front of my team, in front of all the fans and it also happened to be the only two games my parents saw me coach. Both of those games, I was so emotional and boisterous that I was kicked out of the game by the referees. I was ejected from both of these games.

After the game, I evaluated my actions. I realized I had acted very immaturity. I had embarrassed myself and I was showing everyone what was important to me. I was determined to win at all cost and I was also determined to be right. This was immature thinking that led to immature action on my part. Have you ever been there? The writer of Hebrews is warning against the same kind of thing in our passage today.

(Slides # 2 - 4)

**Read Hebrews 5:11-14 (CSB)**

***"We have a great deal to say about this, and it is difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand. 12 - Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. 13 - Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. 14 - But solid food is for the mature - for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil."***

1. ***Spiritual stagnation is caused by a sluggish heart NOT intellectual ignorance.***

(Slide # 5)

Stagnation is defined as the state of not flowing or moving - lack of activity, growth, or development. This happens spiritually to individuals and to churches, corporately.

***What is spiritual stagnation?***

It is the opposite of spiritual growth. It is getting stuck. It is determining that I am good enough right where I am in my relationship with Jesus Christ. Spiritual stagnation is staying in the same position you were last year with Christ.

If I were to ask you this morning, what has Christ been teaching you this past year? Since January 2018, what has He been working on in your life? What would your response be?

**Vs. 11 - "we have a great deal to say about this"** - it is difficult to explain. In previous verses the writer of Hebrews is teaching these early Christians about Melchizedek, the great high priest of the Old Testament, and how Melchizedek is an illustration of Christ's work. The writer declares in Hebrews 5:10 that Christ is the great high priest as declared by God.

The author of Hebrews wants to go on talking about Christ's priesthood, but he stops in verse 11. **Why does he stop?**

I want to come back to this question...but first...let me just be honest before you this morning. We can all get in a rut spiritually speaking. Several things can help us from getting stuck spiritually.

- ★ **Self-evaluation** - you should regularly ask yourself questions and maybe even ask a friend to evaluate yourself. Questions such as:

**Am I doing all I can to reach my God-given potential?**

**What is in my life (private or public) that is NOT God-honoring? How does God want to change this area?**

**How am I seeking out a coach or mentor that can challenge me to grow rather than stay still?**

**We must first set our hearts toward growth. If we don't change, nothing will change.**

Each year around this time, our church files what is called an Annual Church Profile. This asks for certain numerical data concerning our church from the months of October through September. Each year this information is submitted to the Southern Baptist Convention. This year it was an eye opener for me. When you go through an evaluation, it can awaken you to what you need to work on.

ACP reports from the church:

2014 - Baptisms = 6; SS = 53; Worship = 77

2015 - Baptisms = 9; SS = 63; Worship = 91

2016 - Baptisms = 5; SS = 57; Worship = 86

2017 - Baptisms = 6; SS = 55; Worship = 81

2018 - Baptisms = 1; SS = 52; Worship = 76

**Our church has plateaued and even started to decline.** We all need to give more attention to having gospel conversations with others. Sharing our testimonies and sharing the good news with others is the way we will see our church grow. I, as your pastor, need to be modeling that for you. This is one area of growth in my life.

**Our goal this year will be to have 12 baptisms this next year. But we must all do our part!**

Here's the point: We don't want to be stagnant. **Listen churches and Christians are either in one of two places: 1. A place of continual challenge, or 2. A place of continual comfort. Comfort kills growth. Let's not settle for comfort!!!**

**How does God want to grow you? Where is He challenging you today? Will you accept His challenge of growth?**

**What is a Sluggish heart?**

(Slide # 6)

Go back to the question of verse 11...why does he stop teaching about the priesthood of Christ?

He says it is difficult for them to know this because they have become "too lazy to understand." Some of your translations will say, "you have become dull of hearing" or "you are slow to understand." Is it because the subject matter is just too difficult for them to comprehend or grasp? NO

The Greek word means, "dull" or "hard of hearing" with the additional idea of being slack or inattentive, too mentally lazy to listen to what is said.

They don't have the mature ears, minds, or hearts for grasping the concept. Believers have a moral responsibility to know and understand Scripture. We often act like biblical ignorance is the cause of spiritual immaturity. In other words, if we just learn more things about God's Word, learn more Bible verses, go to more Biblical courses taught by the pastor and/or other members in the church. The more discipleship classes we can offer the more people will become spiritually mature.

**This is NOT our spiritual problem.** Spiritual immaturity is NOT intellectual ignorance, it IS caused by sluggish hearts. When we deliberately ignore God's Word for whatever reason, we sin against the Lord. When we don't train ourselves and discipline ourselves to practice the things that are in God's Word then we become "sluggish" in our obedience and our heart toward the things of God.

Have you ever felt sluggish? Perhaps you woke up some morning and you just felt sluggish. Perhaps you checked your temperature because you suspected maybe you were sick, but that's not it. Perhaps you feel like you just need your "caffeine fix" and you get a cup of coffee...but later you still are sluggish. It's more difficult to know how you became sluggish than knowing when you are sluggish. In other words, it's usually pretty easy to identify when you are sluggish but more difficult to find the cause.

In fact the next few verses contrast for us what these Christians should be and what they actually are.

- Verse 12 - You should be teaching others, but you still need someone to teach you the basic ideas
- Verse 12 and 13 - you still need milk
- Verse 14 - implied that milk is for the children and solid food is for the mature adult

This passage is similar to the message the apostle Paul had for the Christians in Corinth. In **1 Corinthians 3:1-3** he calls them babies in Christ. Paul says he gave them milk to drink and not solid food. He told them they weren't ready for solid food because they were still worldly.

**Hebrews 6:1** states, "**Therefore let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity.**"

None of us want to get sluggish in how we respond to God and His Word. All of us want to always be known as "doers of His word." **What keeps us from being completely obedient to God and His word? What turns our heart away from practicing and living out spiritual truths we say we have learned and know?**

Let me approach this from a different angle. Dr. Susan Heitler wrote an article in Psychology Today a few years back. Her article was entitled, "can you spot 10 signs of a childish adult?" Listen to some of these...

- Emotional escalations - losing your cool and just having meltdowns (coaching ill.)
- Blaming - we blame someone else for our faults or mistakes
- Lies
- Name-calling
- Impulsivity - children lash out or they speak recklessly when they get mad
- Need to be the center of attention
- Bullying
- Budding narcissism - they get what they want because they are bigger, better, richer, etc
- Immature defenses - attack others who have a differing viewpoint
- No observing ego - they aren't able to see their own mistakes - no emotional intelligence - how do others perceive you and do you have an accurate view of yourself

**Why do I share this with you? Do you ever see this kind of behavior coming from "mature Christians" in the church?**

To use John Crist language...you need to check yourself....ask God to search your heart...have you assumed you are a "mature" Christian and yet you are acting in immature ways. Maturity is NOT based upon age or how much you intellectually know about God or about spiritual things.

**Growth in the Christian life is about what you are doing with what you have been given.** What needs to be confessed today? Have you taken pride in what you know but at times you still act like a child?

(Slide # 7)

**Conclusion:**

There are, in the end, only two ways open to us: to honestly and honorably make an admission of how far we are from the Christianity of the New Testament, or to perform skillful tricks to conceal the true situation. (Soren Kierkegaard) Let's honestly evaluate where we are this morning. Let's not pretend but be honest with ourselves.