

ESTABLISHED: SPIRITUAL MATURITY
I CORINTHIANS 3:1-2

NLT: "DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHEN I WAS WITH YOU I COULDN'T TALK TO YOU AS I WOULD TO SPIRITUAL PEOPLE. I HAD TO TALK AS THOUGH YOU BELONGED TO THIS WORLD OR AS THOUGH YOU WERE INFANTS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. I HAD TO FEED YOU WITH MILK, NOT WITH SOLID FOOD, BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T READY FOR ANYTHING STRONGER...AND YOU STILL AREN'T READY."

**I HAVE NEVER READ OR SEEN A BOOK OFFERED ON THE SUBJECT...
THERE IS NO WEB-SITE THAT I COULD DIRECT YOU TO...
I HAVE NEVER SEEN A COLLEGE CATALOG OFFERING A COURSE ON IT...
THERE IS NOT EVEN A 'COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE' THAT I KNOW OF...**

BUT I DO KNOW THAT ALL OF US HAVE SOME INNATE NOTION, SOME VERY DEFINATE, WELL-DEFINED IDEA, SOME CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT WHAT I WILL CALL "AGE-APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR."

LITTLE BENSTON BOHANNON CAN GET AWAY WITH WHAT BRO. BOHANNON CANNOT NOR SHOULD NOT GET AWAY WITH!!

**ITS ONE THING FOR JUDAH LOEHR TO EAT CHEERIOS AND RUN AROUND THE CHURCH WITH A LOADED DIAPER;
BUT IT'S ANOTHER THING ENTIRELY...WELL, YOU GET MY POINT!**

**EXPECTATIONS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE AS YOU ACCUMULATE BIRTHDAYS...
WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE FOR A TODDLER; IN-EXCUSABLE FOR A TEENAGER...
WHAT'S SEEN AS HUMOROUS FOR AN INFANT; CRIMINAL FOR AN ADULT...**

I WILL NOT SULLY YOUR MINDS WITH TOO MUCH DETAIL, BUT THERE IS A MENTAL DISORDER CALLED "PARAPHILIC INFANTILISM" WHERE ADULTS DIGRESS TO ENGAGE IN CHILD OR INFANT LIKE BEHAVIOR.

GROWN ADULTS SLEEPING IN CRIBS, CRAWLING AROUND THE FLOOR, AND DRINKING FROM BOTTLES, ETC...SOMETHING IS "BAD WRONG"!!

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS: AT SOME POINT YOU JUST HAVE TO GROW UP!!!

I PETER 2:2 "AS NEWBORN BABES, DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD, THAT YE MAY GROW THEREBY."

THERE IS A PERIOD OF TIME IN THE LIFE OF A BELEIVER, HAVING JUST GAINED AN UNDERSTANDING OF TRUTH AND RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST AND BEING BAPTIZED IN JESUS NAME; THAT BELEIVERS ARE LIKE BABIES.

NOT MUCH IS REQUIRED OR DEMANDED OF THEM. THEY JUST EAT AND SLEEP AND DON'T CONTRIBUTE MUCH TO THEIR WORLD.

SIDE NOTE: IF YOU WANT TO GET ON MY BAD SIDE REAL QUICK; JUST TAKE IT UPON YOURSELF TO ARBITRARILY DETERMINE THAT IT'S TIME FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S SPIRITUAL BABY TO GROW UP...

ALL OF US PARENTS REMEMBER THOSE TOUGH TIMES WHEN OUR CHILDREN WOULD WAKE UP EVERY 2 HOURS AND WANT TO BE FED AND CHANGED... IT WAS NEVER FUN, BUT IT WAS NECESSARY!

YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO WITH THE EXPECTATION/HOPE THAT TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES AND BEHAVIOR WOULD EVENTUALLY CHANGE!

IF MY SON LUKE, ALMOST 16 IS WAKING UP EVERY 2 HOURS AND WANTS TO BE FED AND CHANGED...WE ARE HEADED TO A LIFETIME OF THERAPY!!

SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS THE GOAL AND CONSEQUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY!!

THE WORD "MATURE" COMES FROM THE SAME ROOT AS THE WORD "RIPE". IT INDICATES SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN COMPLETED OR FULLY DEVELOPED OVER THE PROCESS OF TIME.

HERE ARE 3 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT SPIRITUAL MATURITY:

1. SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT AUTOMATIC.

JOHN 8:31 "THEN SAID JESUS TO THOSE JEWS WHICH BELIEVED ON HIM, IF YE CONTINUE IN MY WORD, THEN ARE YE MY DISCIPLES INDEED."

THERE IS A WHOLE PROCESS OF CONTINUING IN HIS WORD AS IT IS REVEALED TO YOU BY YOU READING HIS WORD, BY SPIRITUAL REVELATION, AND BY THE PREACHING/TEACHING OF HIS WORD. THAT IS WHY IT IS VITAL THAT YOU ARE HERE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHTS/SS!!

II CORINTHIANS 7:1 "HAVING THEREFORE THESE PROMISES, DEARLY BELOVED, LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES FROM ALL FILTHINESS OF THE FLESH AND SPIRIT, PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD."

NLT: "...AND LET US WORK TOWARD COMPLETE PURITY BECAUSE WE FEAR GOD."

2. SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS A PROCESS.

PROVERBS 8:5 "O YE SIMPLE, UNDERSTAND WISDOM..." "LEARN TO BE MATURE"

II PETER 3:18 "BUT GROW IN GRACE, AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST..."

THAT IS WHY BIBLE STUDIES ARE SO VALUABLE AND IMPORTANT! IT IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR A YEAR OF 'ESTABLISHED' BIBLE STUDIES!!!

3. SPIRITUAL MATURITY TAKES DISCIPLINE.

I TIMOTHY 4:7 "BUT REFUSE PROFANE AND OLD WIVES' FABLES, AND EXERCISE THYSELF RATHER UNTO GODLINESS."

PHI: "TAKE THE TIME AND THE TROUBLE TO KEEP YOURSELF SPIRITUALLY FIT."

NAS: "DISCIPLINE YOURSELF FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS."

MATURE BELIEVERS ARE CALLED DISCIPLES.
BUT YOU CANNOT BE A DISCIPLE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE!
PHYSICAL FITNESS IS NOT AUTOMATIC OR EASY AND NEITHER IS SPIRITUAL
FITNESS! BOTH TAKE HARD WORK AND EFFORT AND COMMITMENT!!

READING THROUGH MUSCLE MAGAZINE ISN'T GOING TO DO A THING FOR MY
PHYSIQUE AS LONG AS I'M LAYING ON THE COUCH EATING A BOX OF SEE'S...

GROWING OLD WITHOUT GROWING UP IS A TRAGEDY...
THERE IS A TIME IN THE LIFE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN WHEN WE MUST
GRADUATE FROM MILK TO MEAT...
ANYTHING THAT REFUSES TO GROW AND CHANGE WILL EVENTUALLY DIE!
IF YOU ARE NOT MOVING FORWARD, MAKING PROGRESS IN YOUR
CHRISTIANITY, THEN YOU ARE BACKSLIDING AND DYING!!

MILK VS MEAT

*HEBREWS 5:12-14;6:1 "FOR WHEN FOR THE TIME YE OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YE
HAVE NEED THAT ONE TEACH YOU AGAIN WHICH BE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE
ORACLES OF GOD; AND ARE BECOME SUCH AS HAVE NEED OF MILK, AND NOT OF
STRONG MEAT.
FOR EVERY ONE THAT USETH MILK IS UNSKILFUL IN THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:
FOR HE IS A BABE.
BUT STRONG MEAT BELONGETH TO THEM THAT ARE OF FULL AGE, EVEN THOSE WHO
BY REASON OF USE HAVE THEIR SENSES EXERCISED TO DISCERN BOTH GOOD AND
EVIL.
THEREFORE LEAVING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, LET US GO ON
UNTO PERFECTION (COMPLETENESS)..." EXPOUND*

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MILK AND MEAT:

MILK IS GIVEN TO THE CHILD BY THE MOTHER; MEAT IS HUNTED AND
PREPARED BY ONESELF.
MILK IS A COMFORT FOOD THAT MEETS MY NEEDS; MEAT IS AN ENERGY
FOOD TO HELP ME MEET OTHER'S NEEDS.
MILK BUILDS UP THE BONES OR THE FRAMEWORK OF A SPIRITUAL LIFE;
MEAT BUILDS THE MUSCLES IN ORDER TO HAVE AN ACTIVE SPIRITUAL LIFE.
NOTHING HAS TO DIE IN ORDER TO PRODUCE MILK; SOMETHING HAS TO DIE
IN ORDER TO PRODUCE MEAT.

DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT LEGALISM! WE ARE NOT TRYING TO EARN ANYTHING
FROM GOD BY BEING DISCIPLINED. WORKING FOR YOUR SALVATION IS
HERESY, BUT WORKING OUT YOUR SALVATION IS BASIC CHRISTIANITY!

WILBUR REES: "I WOULD LIKE TO BUY \$3.00 WORTH OF GOD, PLEASE. NOT
ENOUGH TO EXPLODE MY SOUL OR DISTURB MY SLEEP, BUT JUST ENOUGH
TO EQUAL A CUP OF WARM MILK OR A SNOOZE IN THE SUNSHINE. I WANT
ECSTASY, NOT TRANSFORMATION; I WANT THE WARMTH OF THE WOMB, NOT
A NEW BIRTH. I WANT A POUND OF THE ETERNAL IN A PAPER SACK. I WOULD
LIKE TO BUY \$3.00 WORTH OF GOD, PLEASE."

II PETER 1:3-10