

DISCIPLESHIP: GROWING UP IN THE FAITH

ACTS 17:10-15

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*AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE ARE TO BE GROWING UP IN OUR FAITH.
WE MATURE AS WE STUDY THE BIBLE AND APPLY IT TO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES*

OUTLINE

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II. A GIFT RECEIVED (VS 11-12)

The Only Way To Maturity Is To Study, Receive, And Submit To The Bible.

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A Sign Of Maturity Is That We Are Constantly In A State Of Growth: Learning More And Acting Out More In Faith.

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Can you imagine how we would react if we found out that parents were only feeding their 10-year-old children baby food and formula? We would be appalled. We would call up D.C.F.S. It would be neglect and abuse.

Yet, many Christians are guilty of this in regards to their own spiritual nutrition. I would venture a guess that most Christians in the United States -- even those who have been Christians for more than 50 years -- still hold on to immature, baby beliefs. It's sad to say that most Christians get saved, become babes in Christ, and stay that way.

The problem is that in order to grow in our faith we must be willing to read, study, memorize, and obey the Bible. Yet, most Bibles just lie around the house, gathering dust.

And that attitude carries over to church. Sunday School Superintendents rarely get the respect they deserve. I'm not saying which church this incident took place in, but at one of our 4th of July picnics, our Sunday School Superintendent got beamed in the head with a fastball. He was kind of woozy, so we took him to the nearest hospital. They took several x-rays, did CAT scans, and several other tests. They decided to keep him in the hospital over the weekend just for observation.

On Sunday morning, our board chairman got up and said to the congregation, "The Superintendent is resting comfortably. All the x-rays and CAT scans of his head showed absolutely nothing."

Our Christian Education director, Sunday School Superintendents, Children's workers, and Children's teachers don't get nearly enough respect for what they do.

The main idea of this morning's message is simple. **AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE ARE TO BE GROWING UP IN OUR FAITH. WE MATURE AS WE STUDY THE BIBLE AND APPLY IT TO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.** When we received Jesus and became God's children, Jesus described that event as being born again. In other words, when we receive Christ, we become spiritual babies. But the Bible is clear that God expects us to grow up. And the way we grow is through learning what He wants by studying the Bible. Then we must conform our behavior and thinking to match our newly acquired knowledge. That's what it means to grow as Christians.

I. A GIFT GIVEN (vs. 10)

*We Have Bibles To Read And Study Because Of The Sacrifice
Of Many Faithful People Throughout The Years.*

In verse 10 we see God sends us the Bible as a gift given. We often forget what a wonderful gift our Bibles are. **WE HAVE BIBLES TO READ AND STUDY BECAUSE OF THE SACRIFICE OF MANY FAITHFUL PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.** The Bible was written by prophets and apostles who were moved and inspired by God's Holy Spirit. The majority of these prophets and apostles were persecuted and killed for obeying God. We have the Bible because of their faithfulness to God.

A. SOMETIMES REJECTED (10a)

The first half of verse 10 reminds us that they were sometimes rejected. We may miss this if we don't remember this takes place about 2,000 years ago. We travel at night all the time. But in ancient Israel, nobody traveled at night. Verse 10 starts out, "That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. You see, Paul and Silas had been in the city of Thessalonica. They preached the gospel and were trying to teach the people about Jesus. The people reacted badly, started a riot, and Paul, Silas, and their friends became the targets of mob action. They were forced to escape the city under the cover of darkness. This was pretty common in the life of the Apostle Paul. He was arrested, jailed, beaten, shipwrecked, rejected,

and left for dead, more times than he would like to count. Why? Because he knew the message of Jesus was powerful. The Apostle Paul is responsible for writing a great deal of our Bible. He sacrificed a great deal so that we could hear about Christ and mature in our faith. He gave up his life to spread the good news and to write our Bible. Throughout history, many brave men and women died to preserve, translate, and publish Bibles. So we have our Bible as a result of faithful people giving up their lives.

B. BUT NEVER GIVING UP (10b)

Even though these brave people were persecuted, tortured, and killed, the second half of verse 10 reminds us they never gave up. You would think Paul would want to hide out for a while. Yet, he knew how important the word of God was. We find him right away, the very next day, preaching and teaching in the city of Berea. He went to the synagogue and started telling them about Jesus. People like the Apostle Paul have been God's gift to the church throughout all of history, and they have given us a very precious gift, our Bibles. The next time you look at your Bible, remember for over 4,000 years, men and women have been giving up their lives so we can read God's Word. **WE HAVE BIBLES TO READ AND STUDY BECAUSE OF THE SACRIFICE OF MANY FAITHFUL PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.**

II. A GIFT RECEIVED (vs. 11-12)

The Only Way To Maturity Is To Study, Receive, And Submit To The Bible.

There is only one thing to do with a gift. Verses 11-12 paint a nice picture of a gift received. **THE ONLY WAY TO MATURITY IS TO STUDY, RECEIVE, AND SUBMIT TO THE BIBLE.** As Christians, we accept the Bible as God's revealed Word to us.

A. WE MUST BE HUMBLE ENOUGH TO HEAR GOD SPEAK (11a)

The first half of verse 11 demonstrates that we must be humble enough to hear God speak to us. In other words, we can't go around making up our own rules for life. I think one of the greatest disappointments I have faced over the years is that people live with very wrong theology all their lives. They don't know what the Bible says, nor do they care. If God allowed so many of His favorite children to suffer and die so we could have the Bible, how do you think He feels when we don't bother to read it, study it, and submit to it? The people in Berea were open-minded and humble. They listened intently to Paul's message. Do we have that eager expectation to hear God speak to us when we open our Bibles, listen to Bible lessons, or sermons?

B. WE MUST BE DILIGENT ENOUGH TO STUDY (11b)

But it's not enough to listen to sermons or lessons. When I preach or teach, I hand out outlines, I encourage you to keep your Bibles open, and I want you to test what I say. You must be diligent enough to go back and study. If what I am saying matches the scripture, then it becomes a point to learn and assimilate into your lives.

C. WE MUST BE COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO OBEY (12)

But we are not here just to grow in knowledge. As verse 12 points out, we must be courageous enough to obey. Our thinking and behavior must grow in proportion to our growth of knowledge. Many of the Bereans gave their lives to Christ. When I attend a worship service, I go with the intent of hearing God speak to me through songs, prayers, scripture reading, and the sermon. I then worship by agreeing and purposing to grow by changing my behavior. **THE ONLY WAY TO MATURITY IS TO STUDY, RECEIVE, AND SUBMIT TO THE BIBLE.**

III. A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING (vs. 13-15)

*A Sign Of Maturity Is That We Are Constantly In A State Of Growth:
Learning More And Acting Out More In Faith.*

Maturing in our faith is a gift that keeps on giving as described in verses 13-15. **A SIGN OF MATURITY IS THAT WE ARE CONSTANTLY IN A STATE OF GROWTH: LEARNING MORE AND ACTING OUT MORE IN FAITH.**

A. THROWING THE GIFT AWAY (13)

Verse 13 is a sad reminder that many will continue to throw away the gifts God has given us to mature. Again, I hope we are not rejecting God by refusing to read, study, and memorize the Bible. I hope that we are not rejecting God by refusing to be humble and courageous enough to submit to the truths of the Bible by changing our lives.

B. MAKING GOOD USE OF THE GIFT (14-15)

But verses 14-15 remind us that there are plenty of people who make good use of the gift. The Thessalonians never learned. They kept stirring up trouble. But the Bereans helped Paul and his fellow workers on their way to continue to spread the gospel. Many Christians will take God's gift of maturity and help others. Don't ever think of maturity as a state we achieve and then we are done. One of the signs of true maturity is that we realize how far we have to go and our lives are characterized by continuous growth. **A SIGN OF MATURITY IS THAT WE ARE CONSTANTLY IN A STATE OF GROWTH: LEARNING MORE AND ACTING OUT MORE IN FAITH.**

If you are not taking advantage of all the tools that are available to grow here at Devon, please start to get involved. We have adult Sunday School, Prayer meeting, small groups, and discipleship opportunities of all sorts. Remember, **AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE ARE TO BE GROWING UP IN OUR FAITH. WE MATURE AS WE STUDY THE BIBLE AND APPLY IT TO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.**