

SERMON GUIDE

Hebrews: Milk and Solid Food

Hebrews 5:11-14



7.21.2024

SERMON NOTES

VS 11 -- *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*

In the previous verses, the Hebrew writer brings up some deep theology around the person and work of Christ. He exalts Jesus as the Great High Priest. He brings up Melchizedek, Jesus' intercession for us with prayers, and His obedience.

He then says to the listeners that there is much more to say about these things, but it is hard to explain to them since they have become dull of hearing. They don't have discerning ears. The picture here is that when we hear with understanding it is because we have the mental categories and frameworks in place for dealing with the facts and data coming at us. Without those things, the things you are hearing are like words of another language. Even if you hear English, you don't have a way to formulate understanding because you don't have the mental categories for it.

This can happen in any subject. Someone can discuss the intricacies of the economy or investment theory and if you don't understand that world, it will be gibberish. Or if someone starts discussing the details of a car motor and how its parts work together, if you don't understand mechanics, it will be gibberish. You won't understand. You'll be dull of hearing.

This is the idea he's saying to them when he calls them dull of hearing. Why are they dull of hearing?

VS 12-13 -- *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.*

They ought to be so knowledgeable and equipped in understanding the things of the gospel that they could be teachers. But they aren't. They need someone to teach them the basic principles of the

oracles of God. These basic principles are the foundations of the Christian faith, which start not in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but in Genesis. The Old Testament and New Testament together have theological threads that run through them and explain the gospel to us.

I don't know all the basic principles the Hebrew writer had in mind, but we know the conversation to this point has been about the High Priestly role of Christ. Here are some other basic principles of the faith he may have also had in mind:

- God is the King of the universe and sovereign over it all
- God's Word is truth
- Every person is made in God's image
- All have sinned and deserve spiritual death in Hell
- Christ died to pay the penalty we deserve
- People must trust Christ and repent of their sins
- Jesus rose from the dead and is coming again
- God's Kingdom will be established on earth for eternity

They don't know the basic principles well enough to understand more complex things, so he says they need milk instead of solid food. The analogy here is obviously to the maturity of a person. We are born with a milk diet, but eventually we need more nutrition in order to grow and mature. He's calling them spiritual babies. They are immature Christians because they don't know the things they ought to know at this point. They should be able to grasp deeper things and help teach others. But they can't.

Let me personalize this for a moment. Can you? What is your level of spiritual maturity? Ask yourself this question: How many years have I been a Christian? Now ask yourself this question: Does my maturity level and grasp of the things of God match the number of years I've been a Christian? If not, why?

For some people, they grew up in churches that didn't emphasize or provide opportunities for growth and development. For others you don't have any drive or willingness. You're not putting in any effort. You're not involved in community or with the church. You don't attempt to read anything or watch anything that would help you.

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, most mature you can be, or a 1, which is someone who knows nothing other than Jesus died for their sins. Where would you put yourself? Scale of 1-10? Now here is the question: Regardless of where you are on the scale, what are you actively doing to close the gap? What are you doing to go from a 4 to a 5, a 2 to a 3, a 7 to an 8.

We are told to be mature in our thinking, not like children. We are to mature in our thoughts. We are to grow up in our wisdom and discernment. Are you on milk or solid food spiritually?

VS 14 -- But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Notice how the Hebrew writer describes those who are mature. They have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice. This idea of practice is something we understand from a musical, artistic, or athletic viewpoint. We know it requires practice for someone to learn to master an instrument. A basketball player gets good with practice and training. A painter or writer gets good with constant practice. The Hebrew writer tells us that spiritual maturity happens the same way. We grow from babies in the faith to mature in the faith by practice.

A disciple is a learner. But this isn't just academic learning, it is more like an apprentice learns a craft from a master. That is what discipleship is. It is learning from the master, Jesus. There is no person that's going to grow into spiritual maturity except through discipline. Godliness comes through discipline.

We train our senses. We develop discernment. We develop wisdom. This is trained. It doesn't come with time. It comes with intentionality. We get it with work. Jerry Bridges said it like this: "Spiritual growth occurs as a result of intentional and appropriate effort. The word intentional implies a diligent pursuit of a clear goal. Appropriate indicates that we must use the God-given ways of growth given to us in the Bible."

How do we train our powers of discernment?

- Reading and studying the Scriptures (spiritual disciplines)
- Learn from others (personal discipleship)
- Fellowship
- Prayer

We have opportunities here for you to grow in your faith. You can join a life group or attend MDWK classes start back up soon (sign up). You can come to the seminars we have. August 30th we have the political theology seminar. The goal is to mature your thinking around politics. We want to be mature in thinking biblically about these things. That doesn't happen by osmosis or chance.

You should seek personal growth. One book I would recommend you read is: Growing Your Faith by Jerry Bridges. It's short. It's easy to read. But it is packed with fantastic insights on how to grow spiritually. I highly recommend it.

The Hebrew writer tells us that our power of discernment is trained. They grow and mature as they are exercised and worked. An example I'd give is Pastor Brandon is currently training himself for the debate on Saturday, August 10th. He is debating a Muslim on some key questions. He is preparing himself, studying, and seeking the Lord for guidance on how to best share and defend the truth of the gospel. Now here's what is fascinating: Brandon is training himself for this, but those who come will be training themselves in that they will learn and grow from it too. But none of this happens without training.

Today is a challenge and call to discipleship. It is a challenge to take your spiritual growth seriously. We need to be rooted and grounded in the truth. The goal of the Christian is to be "little Christs."

We need to grow in our grasp of the Scriptures. We need to not only know Bible verses, but how to handle the Bible. We should be able to teach our children or friends or family the things of God. The longer you are a Christian, the greater your understanding and ability to instruct others should be.

Some of you are still on spiritual milk. You should make it a priority to change that. Some of you are mature in your faith, but you are not doing anything to help others to grow (you're not discipling anyone). Some of you have not yet surrendered all to Christ and began following Him. Today should be

the day for action for each person I mentioned. Today, if you hear His voice, you should recognize His call to you. Follow in obedience to what you hear the Lord saying. Take a step of action rather than being a hearer only of the Word. Be a doer today.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read **Hebrews 5:11-14** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - 1 Corinthians 3:2
 - 1 Corinthians 14:20
 - 1 Timothy 4:7
 - 2 Peter 1:3
 - 2 Peter 2:2
 - 2 Peter 3:16
- **REFLECT**
 - What does the analogy of milk and solid food mean?
- **RESPOND**
 - Are you on milk or solid food?
 - Are you pushing yourself to grow theologically, intellectually, and spiritually?
 - What are some practical steps you can take to mature in your faith?
 - Are you taking advantage of discipleship opportunities at TJC?
- **MEDITATE**
 - Hebrews 5:14 – But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.
- **MEMORIZE**

- Psalm 1:1-2 – Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

LOOK AHEAD



- **FOLLOW:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **FISH:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - **Staff** – John Hogan
 - **Ministry** – Tech Director
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our short-term teams**
 - Asian Pacific Rim Team #2 departing August 16
 - Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
 - **Pray for the lost.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>