

Growing in Christ

1 Corinthians 3:1-8

God calls us in whatever stage of life we're in to begin an eternal journey into greater life with Him. Paul wants this for the Corinthians as he does for all Christians (cf. Col. 1:22, 28), but they are stunting their own maturity (v1). It's not that they need to become Christians, but to walk with the Spirit they already have. How does this happen?

In the Church

The Corinthians were acting carnal, like babes in Christ (v1). Some have drawn a two-tier division among Christians based on this passage, either as those are in versus those who are out, or as those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior versus those who have accepted Him as their Lord. Paul calls them brethren, but as behaving like infants in the faith. There's nothing wrong with immaturity at a young stage, but rejecting growth is rebellion. This is different than never being a Christian in the first place. A Christian is a Christian. You can't be a little bit Christian any more than you can be little bit pregnant. If Jesus is your savior, it's because He decided to save you. All His sheep hear His voice, and no one can snatch them out of His hand (Jn. 10:27-28). And no one gives Him permission to be Lord. We submit to His Lordship and thrive, or kick against it and suffer, but no one makes Him Lord of his life in the objective sense. To think otherwise is to radically misunderstand the Godness of God and dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthians are having these troubles as they compete with one another, experiencing envy, strife, and divisions (v3). They want prominence and superiority, and to even think that way is to be immature. Paul just told them that they know God through His own Spirit, but instead of imitating the persons of the Trinity, their sinful desires became obvious. The church is where we butt heads, sin, and work out our salvation. There is no church (or Christian) without sin, and the way to deal with it is to repent, grow and serve others, not to quit or move to the boonies. You don't grow in grace as much by yourself as you do when dealing with others people. This is why we emphasize fellowship, community, friendship and hospitality and want to be a church marked by deep relationship. Spiritual growth and maturity happens in the body of Christ. This is where we grow out of acting like the old humanity.

Solid Food

Milk is good but meat is required for growth. Paul puts meat on the table (e.g. 2:6-16). Will they eat it? Immaturity is self-focused. It's all about what I want, feel, think, need, and deserve. Maturity is all about others, beginning with God. The goal is to grow gratefully and eventually become one who gives. Hebrews 5:12-14: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by

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reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” It’s not the case that some Christians are doctrinal and others are not. We are all called to love God with all of our *minds*. The Word of God is living and active, and when we read and interact with it, it changes us (Heb. 4:12). God’s word us in Scripture has resulted in countless books being written about Him and everything else. We should be hungry for wisdom and knowledge because we love Him. This means our study, meditation, prayer and discussion should make us love God and people more. Be hungry to learn, feed yourself, and bless others.

Many Ministers

Who are Paul and Apollos but the servants God happened to use in Corinth (v5)? What is the point, the planting and watering, or the fruit (vv6-7)? It’s wonderful to see the greatest Christian in the history of the church call himself nothing, and proclaim his perfect unity with Apollos (v8). Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, deacons, fathers, brothers, mothers and sisters are all tools God uses to grow His crop. We honor them all in their places, but nothing should make us lose sight of God who gives the increase. We have access to more resources and teachers to help us grow than at any other time in the history of the world. Many Christians mistakenly think they the ultimate friendship or mentor, but God gives us many brethren and we need them all. They also need us. We need to know where we fall short and seek to grow, and know where we can help and give ourselves to the work of the gospel so that God would grant the increase.