

2/16/25**Are You Ready for Solid Food?*****Hebrews 5:11-14*****Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church**

Good morning. If you are visiting with us today, my name is Pastor David Pranga. I am the Executive Pastor here at Brewster Baptist Church. I am so glad that you have come to join us. Whether you are watching online, or here in the Sanctuary, thank you for making the time to worship together.

How many of us in this room like going to see the doctor? I am guessing that most of us do not enjoy going to a doctor's visit. In my limited experience of going to the doctor — and I know many of you go more than I do — many of you have much better experiences than I usually have seeing the doctor.

Let me tell you about my experience when I go to the doctor's office. I arrive early, because that is what I was taught to do. I check in. I fill out the paperwork. I sit in the waiting room. I sit, and I sit some more. After fifteen or twenty plus minutes of waiting, my name is finally called. I go into another room. I begin my second round of waiting. More minutes and more time are clicking away.

Finally, the nurse comes in and asks me a few questions about my health. She takes my blood pressure, etc. She leaves, and the wait continues.

There is a knock on the door. The doctor finally enters the room. He begins to ask me a number of questions. "How are you feeling?" "Anything wrong with you?" "Do you have any concerns?" I say, "No," to every question. The doctor will look at my blood work and then tell me that everything looks fine, except a few things.

I received a lengthy warning on how important it is to lose weight, the importance of exercise, and the importance of a healthy, proper diet. This is coming from a guy who needs to do the same thing that he suggests for me.

I know the doctor is right in all his suggestions. He is offering me a warning that I need to pay more attention to. I, unfortunately, have grown indifferent and callous to what the doctor has been telling me. I know that I should exercise more, lose weight, and watch my diet.

This week, when I was reading this passage from *Hebrews 5:11-14*, it reminded me of my last doctor's visit about my health. The writer of this letter is genuinely

concerned about the spiritual condition of the Hebrew Christians. These Christians are stagnant in their spiritual walk. They have been going through the motions for some time. They have stopped listening, and have become indifferent to God's Word. They have become callous. This is a dangerous sign.

Let me ask you a question this morning. How many of you want a closer relationship with God? How many of you are happy and satisfied with your relationship with God? Is God happy with his relationship with you?

I think it is always good to evaluate our spiritual relationship with God. At this moment, where are you in your spiritual relationship with God? I believe in this sized room, we have people at all different stages.

Stage 1 — You are here this morning, and you are not sure about Jesus or Christianity. You believe in a God. You are here today and trying to figure all this out. What does it mean to be a believer? If that is you, I am glad you are here, and I encourage you to keep coming.

Stage 2 — You are here today, and you are a believer in Jesus. Yet, as you sit here today, you feel like you are going through the motions. Maybe it is like my last doctor's visit. You may feel like you are stagnant and in a slump with your faith. You know you should be growing in your faith, but you are not. If this is you, I am glad you are here.

Stage 3 — You are in a season of life when you are growing and learning things about your faith. You feel close to God. You are learning new things all the time. That is a wonderful place to be.

Let me be completely honest with you. We all go through different stages and seasons in our spiritual life. We do this constantly throughout our life. We are up, and then we are down. There are times when we are searching for God and trying to understand Him. There are times when we are stagnant and not growing in our relationship with Jesus. There are seasons when we are learning and growing in our faith and God seems so real. This is true for everyone.

Here at Brewster Baptist Church, we want to be a church that helps you to grow in your faith. We want to help you take the next step in your faith. We want to help you get out of the rut that you may be in. Here at BBC, we want to help you develop your faith.

Today's passage is from *Hebrews 5:11-14*. It is a difficult passage.

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Today’s passage is a challenging one for us. The writer is giving us a warning to take our faith more seriously. We live in a world that celebrates progress, growth, and the pursuit of knowledge. Whether it is in school, at work, or even with our hobbies, we are constantly challenged and striving for improvement. This needs to happen in our spiritual life as well.

This passage challenges us not to be complacent and stagnant in our walk with God. The author doesn’t want us to be stuck or to decline in our faith. As Christians, we should be people who are growing and maturing in our faith. This is what the passage is all about — growing as disciples!

This morning, I want to share with you four keys to spiritual growth.

1. Watch out for Spiritual Stagnation

If we go back to verse 11, I am going to share the NLV version. ***“There is so much we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don’t seem to listen.”*** The author of this letter is clearly frustrated with the believers. The writer recognizes a major problem. The believers who are receiving this letter are not ready to learn. The verse says they have become “spiritually dull” and they “don’t seem to want to listen.”

In other words, the believers have become spiritually lazy. They have lost their desire and motivation to learn. They have shown a spiritual apathy towards God. They are moving in the wrong direction. This is not good.

The issue is not an intellectual problem but a heart issue. These Christians have become lazy and sluggish. They lack real commitment to their faith. Their hearts have become closed off to God.

What does it mean to be spiritually dull or experiencing spiritual apathy? Being spiritually dull is a state of being uninterested in, or indifferent to, spiritual growth. It is the unwillingness to move forward in your faith. Instead, your faith is in apathy and decline. This dullness and apathy can happen so quickly and without us even knowing this is taking place. Once it begins, it can continue on a downward slope. Let me give you a few examples:

This can happen on Saturday night or Sunday morning when you are deciding if you want to go to church. You have a decision to make. Do you make church a priority? Do we come to church with a heart that is open to God in receiving the music and preaching? Or do we come to church to grade the service based on what I heard and what I like? Am I coming to church with the right motive?

This can also happen in our times with God. Do I rush through my quiet time with God because my mind is focused on something else? Or, do I intentionally spend time with God and stay focused on my reading and prayer, even when I am in a rush? Spiritual stagnation is characterized by a dullness of hearing and a failure to grow in knowledge of God. It is so easy for all of us to fall into spiritual stagnation and become lazy about our relationship with God. We can keep our lives so busy with family, friends, work, scrolling through apps on our cell phones, and watching TV. What we should be doing is fostering our relationship with God. Instead of guarding ourselves and staying focused on God, we let the world dominate our lives and let God sit on the sidelines.

2. Moving Beyond the Basics

Even though this group of believers had been believers for a long time, the writer goes on and explains that understanding simple truths is not enough. They were still infants in their spiritual walk in Christ. Let me read verses 12 through 14. ***“In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).***

The author of Hebrews is saying that these believers should be further along by now. They should be teachers of faith. Instead, they are still receiving elementary truths. They are living on milk instead of solid food.

The imagery of milk and solid food is a powerful one that we all can relate to. Milk is for a baby. It is easy for a newborn to digest. It is quite simple and basic. It is what everyone starts out with in life. Eventually, you want your baby to move forward to solid food.

Eating solid food happens as the baby grows. As parents, we introduce our children to solid food to help them to grow even more. Solid food, however, requires more effort to chew, to digest, and to process. It takes more time at the dinner table, as many of us have experienced. It requires patience for the child and for the parent. There is a level of maturity that needs to happen when a child starts to eat for themselves.

What does this mean in a spiritual context? “Milk” represents the elementary truths and facts of the Christian faith. Some examples include: God loves you, God is the creator of the universe, Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus died on the cross, the resurrection of Jesus, salvation, forgiveness. These are all simple truths that we teach our children.

“Solid food” is for those who have grown in their understanding of God’s Word. Solid food involves deeper knowledge and application of the scripture. It is understanding the weight of Christ’s work on the cross. It is living a life that is deeply rooted in the righteousness and holiness of God. It is taking the knowledge you learn from the Bible and applying it to your life.

As Christians, we must not be content in knowing the facts about Jesus’ life or about God. The basics are good when we are young. As we continue to grow in biblical knowledge, we need to apply it to our life. We need to desire to continue to grow in our faith in Jesus and God.

What does spiritual maturity look like?

3. The Path to Maturity

The writer gives us a picture of maturity in verse 14. “***But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil***” (*Hebrews 5:14*). Maturity in our faith is not about knowing a list of facts

or memorizing so many verses. These things are great, but the writer is trying to make a point. His point is simply this — we are to be living out the spiritual truths.

Maturity is about exercising our faith on a daily basis and allowing it to shape our decisions and actions in life. It is about learning to discern good from evil. There are two phrases that stand out to me in this verse. The first one is “constant use” or practice.

I had a basketball coach who always drilled into us the need to practice. The coach would emphasize to us that we should make 200 jump shots every day in the summer — which meant that we would be taking 400 jump shots every day. More repetition would make us better players. The coach wanted us to take the next step in our development — improving our form and confidence in shooting.

In our spiritual walk with God, we are in constant training. We want to grow in our faith. This means consistent application of God’s Word to our life. We are reading the Bible, and then taking new knowledge and applying it to our life. It is not enough to hear God’s Word on Sunday morning or read it in the Bible — we need to take what we heard and read and live it out. We need to live it out consistently. The more we put it into action, the more we will grow. Pastor Rick Warren said, “Maturity is produced through practice. The more we apply God’s truth the more we grow.”

The second mark of spiritual maturity, according to the passage, is the ability to discern or “distinguish good from evil.” This is so important with our walk with God — that we can discern right from wrong. As believers, we are called to be wise. We need to learn to recognize what is true and good. The things that are bad and harmful, we need to reject. Discernment takes time to develop. This requires that we spend time in God’s Word, pray for wisdom, and rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us. Pastor Charles Stanley said, “Spiritual maturity does not come by accident. It is a daily choice to seek God, obey His Word, and to walk in faith.”

4. The Importance of Growing

This passage of Scripture is not meant to be condemnation; rather, it is a loving call to move us forward. Spiritual growth is a process. Spiritual growth is not a one-time event; it is more like a journey. It takes time and effort. It takes some training to see the results. As we practice our spiritual disciplines, we will grow in our faith and mature.

The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. Growth requires much time, patience, persistence, and unwavering faith in Jesus. It is so important to keep our eyes on Jesus and not focus on ourselves so much.

What does it look like to Grow in our Faith? Let me give you three practical steps.

1. Make it a Priority!

Anything you want to be good at takes time and effort. If you want to grow in faith, it takes time to meet and learn from God.

- a. Prayer — Begin your day in prayer and invite Jesus to be part of your day. Close your evening in prayer and share with him three things for which you are thankful.
- b. Make church and small group a priority — Coming to church needs to be essential in your life as a Christian. It cannot be, “Maybe I will go this week.” If you want to grow in your faith, you need to go to church and meet with God. Think of your favorite TV program. You are going to make sure you watch it. You need to make your small group and church a favorite in your schedule as well.
- c. Read one chapter a day in your Bible — When I was in college, my Bible study leader, who was 21 years old, challenged me to read just a chapter a day. “If that is too much,” he said, “read a paragraph a day and work your way up to a chapter.” It is so important to be reading the Bible and letting God speak to you on a regular, daily basis.

2. Join a Group

Every one of us needs people in our life to help us. We can grow best with the help of others. This is especially true in our spiritual walk with God. God did not want us to do it alone. We need each other. *Proverbs 27:17* says, “***As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.***”

- a. Alpha Group — This is an excellent class that helps us to explore our faith. It is a great way for us to refresh our faith in God. This group is halfway through a ten-week class. You can still join. It meets weekly on Wednesdays at noon and on Friday nights at the church.

- b. Small Groups — BBC has small groups for adults; these groups are men's groups, women's groups, and mixed groups. We also have Sunday School during the second service. Some groups meet weekly, and others meet two times per month. This is another wonderful way to grow in faith and meet other people in the church.

3. Challenge Yourself

- a. Read a Christian Book — There are many good Christian books that you can read that will challenge you to grow in your faith. If you need a book recommendation, see a pastor. We all have favorites.
- b. Memorize Scripture — This is so important, and I do not do it enough. Take a favorite scripture verse and memorize it. I promise you that it is well worth it.
- c. Read the Bible daily in a year. Many of us have downloaded the Bible App. We are reading/listening through the Bible in a year. This is a wonderful way to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and God.

As we reflect on *Hebrews 5:11-14*, the question we must ask ourselves is, “Am I ready for solid food?” Remember, spiritual growth does not come overnight. I wish it did, but it does not. It requires daily discipline and intentionality on our part. I will say that the reward is worth it. As you grow in your faith and maturity, you will grow closer to God. You will learn how to discern right from wrong, and live an impactful life for God's kingdom.

I want to challenge you, in 2025, to make your spiritual faith a priority. I want to encourage you to come to church, join a small group, and meet with God daily. Remember, God wants us to do life together and not alone. Let us pray.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection:

1. What is something that you know you should do, but, for one reason or another, you do not do it? Why is it so hard to do?
2. Read *Hebrews 5:11-14*. What is the author's main concern in this passage? What distinguishes immature believers?
3. What factors tend to promote spiritual laziness in your life? How high is your priority of understanding God's Word and walking in his ways?
4. Why does the author say that the believers should be teachers by this time? What does this say about their spiritual growth? What are the elementary truths of God's Word that they should already know?
5. What does the author mean by "milk" and "solid food" in these verses? How does the author describe the difference between an immature believer and a mature believer? What is the process of making a mature believer?
6. Why is it important to move beyond basic teaching about Jesus Christ? Why do we struggle to grow and mature in our spiritual life?
7. What role does "practice" or "constant use" play in the process of spiritual maturity? What does the author mean when he talks about the need to "distinguish good from evil"? How is this related to maturity?
8. What does this passage teach us about the need for ongoing spiritual growth and learning? What are some ways you can grow in your spiritual walk and take the next step with God?