

Born to Grow – Pt 2

1 Peter 2:1-3 (07/24/16)

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1 Peter 2:1-3 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Every baby is born to grow. No parent has ever boasted, “Look, our boy looks and acts exactly the same as the day he was born!” Quite the opposite. Parents delight when their baby grows, gets his first tooth, begins to crawl, and says his first word. Babies are born to grow. The same is true of you as a believer in Christ. 1 Peter 1:23 says God brought you forth by His powerful, abiding Word, and now He expects you to grow. That’s why 1 Peter 2:1 begins with a “therefore.” What is the “therefore” there for? In view of the power of the living and continuing Word of God which brought you your new life, the Word is of maximum importance here. God grows you up through the ministry of His Word and the Spirit in you. Listen to Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 rejoicing in God’s Word.

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

How important is the Word of God revealed in the Bible? It is essential for your entire Christian life! Your new birth and new life in Christ is the fruit of its work. You heard it, received it, and accepted it in all its God-breathed authority. And it continues working in you, growing you, transforming you, progressively sanctifying you, and changing your heart and behavior. Babies are born to grow physically; every Christian is born to grow spiritually. That’s what Peter is telling us in this passage, and this morning we are going to lay down three absolutely essential requirements for healthy spiritual growth.

Before we dig in here, let’s take a quick look at a cross reference, James 1:21-22. This is so good for spiritual growth.

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Last week we talked about stripping off all those nasty, stinky attitudes. James says the same thing, including the word all. You can’t come to God’s Word with a receptive mind if you are hiding malice and anger and bitterness in your heart. You must put them aside and become a humble, teachable learner. Then you are able to receive and welcome God’s Word, like seeds implanted into the prepared soil of your heart. Your heart is God’s garden to bear fruit for His glory and the Word will keep growing fruit until Jesus comes back. But there is one more important issue. God doesn’t give you His Word just for you to hear it. You must actively welcome it and apply it to your life! Are you teachable? Can you receive correction without blowing up and getting defensive? And then, are you welcoming the Word into your life? Are you growing a good crop of godliness? Or are you just a hearer, filling your head but not changing your heart and life?

Okay, back to 1 Peter 2:2-3 and these three absolutely essential requirements for healthy spiritual growth.

First requirement: Develop a strong appetite for the Word of God – vs. 2, “as newborn babies, crave the sincere milk of the Word.”

You’ve seen babies crave the milk. They have a vigorous, vehement craving for it and if they don’t get it they become angry and even violent. Like John MacArthur said, “They’d throw a brick through a window if that’s what it took to get your attention.” God says, “Look at these babies and how they crave that milk!

You need to develop the same strong craving for God's Word." I was curious as to what gives babies that strong desire to eat, so I googled, "Why do babies want to eat?" Here's what I got back, "Why do people want to eat babies? Scientists explain, 'Wanting to eat your baby makes you a better parent.'" - Today's Parent. "Study explains why women want to eat their babies." - NY Daily News. "Why Moms Want to 'Gobble Up' Cute Babies." - Live Science; "One reason is because they smell so good." This was not exactly what I was looking for.

However, upon further research I did find out there's a hunger hormone called Ghrelin released primarily in the stomach and is thought to signal hunger to the brain. Then the body responds to the brain's hunger signal and actively searches for food. Now let's compare our physical body to our spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is in every believer and gives you a hunger and desire for spiritual food, but just like the brain doesn't supply the food, neither does the Spirit spoon feed you. He expects you to act on the desire He gives, and when you do and open the Word with a teachable mindset, He will supply you with the understanding needed to develop and grow. The Spirit works hand in hand with God's Word and as you grow, you want it more and more. You can't eat the Word at one meal and then figure you've had enough. Babies crave milk every day and find fresh delight with each meal. He doesn't say, "Oh no, more milk! I'm so tired of this milk!" No, babies don't tire of it and want to eat multiple times a day. And you do the same. Just as you get physically hungry every day, you need the Word of God every day. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 that you must not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. God created you to need His Word.

David speaks of the Word as sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honey comb (Psalm 19:10). Colossians 3:16 says to let God's Word dwell in you richly. Realize that your eternal life began with the Spirit and the Word. Then let that reality cause you to crave more of that life-giving Word. Welcome it into your life. Open the windows and doors of your mind and heart and insist that the Word come in and make itself at home in your family room, your kitchen, your bedroom, basement, in your backyard, in your car! Let it dwell in you richly in every area of your life! Crave it. Let it rule your life. Let it grow in your life. Jeremiah craved and feasted on the Word in Jeremiah 15:16, "Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts."

Do you crave God's Word? Do you feast your heart on it regularly? Vigorous craving of the Word of God is a sign of spiritual health! When your desire for the Word dulls down, look for a reason in your own heart. Your flesh does not crave God's Word. Are you allowing fleshly desires to overcome spiritual ones? Hebrews 5:11 warns of becoming dull of hearing. You can easily lose that hearty craving by letting some sin begin to dominate your heart. Perhaps a relationship has turned sour and you aren't dealing with it, or worldly cares and concerns have come in and strangled it.

Losing a delight in God's Word comes when you lose your first love for Jesus. There was a time when everything was exciting about Jesus. Everything seemed new and there was so much to learn. You couldn't get enough of His Word. You couldn't wait to go to church each week to hear God's Word and fellowship with other Christians. But that desire dulls quickly if you aren't abiding in God's Word and feasting there daily. Peter tells you in verse two to remember the Word is your lifeline to God. It's God-breathed; God is talking to you! Crave it. Get into it prayerfully. Hear it. Take time for it. Get a plan to read it. Take notes as you read and in sermons. A newborn baby's heart is ruled by hunger for the milk! Ask God to fill you with that same desire to feed on His Word every day!

Second requirement: Make sure you are feeding on the right stuff – vs. 2 "the pure milk of the Word."

"Crave the logical, unadulterated, spiritual milk." Peter uses the word "logical" to refer to the fact that this milk is not for your body, but for your soul. It is spiritual sustenance for your soul. And Peter wants you to be sure it is unadulterated or without mixture with the lies of this world. The word pure is *adolos*, the opposite of deceitful in verse one. What is God saying here? You and I live in a world deceived by the devil. The world lives on deception, on lies. Just take evolution as a simple example. Anyone with a modicum of reason knows it's a huge lie. You simply can't get something from nothing, life from non-life,

higher forms from lower forms, and man from animal. Evolution would be a joke if it wasn't believed by so many. So know this, when you feed on this spiritual milk of the Word of God, it isn't going to lie to you. It is going to give it to you straight. When you read Genesis 1, you know God created all things out of nothing and it took Him six literal days. You also know God created man in His own image; man is not an advanced animal. When you read Genesis 3 you see the beginning of Adam's fall into sin and total depravity. While you may not understand all of it when you read the history and poetry and prophecies of the Old Testament, you know God is not lying to you. When you read the Gospels, the life of Christ, the redemption He accomplished for sinners, you know God isn't deceiving you and that the great plan of salvation is true. This milk of God's Word is pure, not diluted with lies. Listen to these amazing verses.

Psalms 12:6, The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

Proverbs 30:5, Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

And when you start looking for help to understand your Bible and life, realize you've got to measure all things by the Word of God. A baby doesn't want polluted milk, and neither should you. Jay Adams said, "Just because the label says truth doesn't mean truth is in the can." So don't just grab anything off the shelf. Be discerning. And only God's Word can give you discernment in this world full of lies.

One of the neat things about our ladies ministry leaders, they are truth seekers. They don't jump on the latest Christian author's bandwagon. They are discerning and constantly ask, "Wait, is this biblical?" There are plenty of authors writing books about Jesus that include a hodgepodge of psychology, man-centered teaching, and other poisoned milk. And unlike every other religious book in this world which may be full of idolatry and the vain imaginations of men, you can trust your eternal soul to the pure milk in God's Word.

Remember this. God didn't need modern atheistic psychologists like Freud and all his spinoffs to explain our problems and how to live. 2 Peter 1 says you have all you need right here in the Word of God. And with the Spirit of God in you giving you understand, this book will transform your life if you welcome it and apply it to your life! Crave the pure, sincere, undiluted, unadulterated Word of God! Feed on it; this book will never lie to you. Take it at full dose. Drink it. Eat it. Chew on it. Meditate on it. Apply it to your life. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

Third requirement: Apply what you learn to your daily life - vs. 2 *"so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."*

You don't grow by admiring pictures of food. You don't grow by watching one of those TV chefs serving up a fantastic dish. You must actually eat and consume it! One author said, "The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind." The Word of God has to go down into your heart, transform your thinking, and change your life! You will grow spiritually when you feed your soul with a steady diet of the Word of God day by day, and then apply what you learn to your life. God didn't give you His Word to admire it or just to fill your heads with biblical facts so you could win at Bible trivia. Hiebert writes, "The true aim of Bible study is never a mere mastery of its content but a transforming experience with the Lord who reveals Himself in His Word."

J. C. Ryle said about growing:

"If there is any one feature about a growing soul which specially marks him—it is his deep sense of his own unworthiness. He never sees anything to be praised in himself. He only feels that he is an unprofitable servant and the chief of sinners."

How do you know you are growing? What are the marks of spiritual growth? Like the cowboy who jumped on his horse and rode off in all directions, this question could take you into many directions. If you had to explain to a new Christian what they needed to do to grow spiritually, what would you say? Every believer needs to grow in three main areas: knowledge, character, and relationships.

First, grow in Bible **knowledge**.

*Colossians 1:9, "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with **the knowledge of His will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*

Develop the habit of prayerfully and thoughtfully reading God's Word every day. Follow a reading plan and read whether you feel like it or not. Remind yourself, "This Word brought me spiritual life and I need to know everything I can about it." You'll learn about God's sovereignty over every area of your life. You'll learn about God's undeserved grace, mercy, and love to you in Jesus Christ. You'll learn from 1 Peter how God wants you to handle trials and suffering. The Bible is the only way you can know God. So learn your Bible and keep learning it.

Second, grow in your **character**. God is all about transforming you through the Word to become more and more like Christ in your attitudes and thoughts and words. Here is a sampling and you can write these qualities down and turn them into prayer.

Colossians 3:12-15 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Third, grow in your **relationships** in this world. God wants you to grow in loving Him and your neighbors more and more. Let's zero in on Colossians 3 again.

*Colossians 3:18-24 **Wives**, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 **Husbands**, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. 20 **Children**, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 21 **Fathers**, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. 22 **Slaves**, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

- Wives, are you growing in developing a submissive spirit and showing respect to your husbands?
- Husbands, are you growing in loving your wife as a servant, not insisting on her meeting your needs but denying yourself for her sake and refusing to hold bitterness?
- Kids, are you growing in respecting and obeying your parents?
- Dads, are you learning to be patient and kind with your kids and not to be demanding or demeaning them?
- Workers, are you honoring Christ by doing the best you can for your boss with a great attitude?

SO WHAT?

You've been born again by God's Word. You were born to grow, and growth comes from a steady input of God's Word. Ask God to give you a strong desire and delight in the Word of God. Feed on its pure milk. Apply the truths of God's Word to your life. This is how you will grow more and more to become like Christ.