

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Analysis of a Crop Failure

*Mark 4:1–20*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Jesus was the master teacher. Against relentless and hostile opposition, and in spite of many who followed Him for all the wrong reasons, He spoke with wisdom and taught with skill. Among the methods He preferred to use, the parable was one of His favorites. By placing a familiar and simple word picture before His audience, Jesus was able to draw out profound analogies that have intrigued even the brightest minds for centuries. In this message, we'll look at His first parable, one that carries with it remarkable relevance to this very day. We shall see ourselves in one of the types of soil Jesus talked about, and only you can know for sure which soil you are in. Let us here, then, heed His counsel.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A Few Words about the Setting (Mark 4:1–2)

*Jesus and the Crowd*

*Teaching and the Parables*

#### 2. A Close Look at the Parable (Mark 4:3–9)

*The Sower — Unnamed*

*The Seed — Same Kind, No Variety*

*The Soil — Variety Is Introduced*

- Wayside
- Rocky
- Thorny
- Fertile



## Quotable

*The harvest  
depends on the soil.  
The results of truth  
heard depend on  
the condition of  
your heart.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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MM01

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Analysis of a Crop Failure

*Mark 4:1–20*

### 3. An Accurate Interpretation of the Story (Mark 4:10–20)

#### **Initial Conversation (4:10–13)**

Jesus' disciples were curious; what should they have made of His story?

#### **Understandable Explanation (4:14–20)**

*The Sower—Those Who Declare God's Truth*

*The Seed—The Truth Of God; God's Word*

*The Soil*

- *Wayside (4:4)*  
The wayside soil represents **unresponsive** people. The birds, which represent our adversary, the Devil, snatch the Word from these people, and they are never impacted by the truth.
- *Rocky (4:5–6)*  
Rocky soil represents **impulsive** people. These people have learned the language of Christianity without the truth ever taking root in their lives.
- *Thorny (4:7)*  
Thorny soil represents **preoccupied** people. Worry sucks their emotions and steals their joy. Preoccupation with financial status steals their heart. And these people become lured by worldly things.
- *Fertile (4:8)*  
Fertile soil represents **productive** people. Their hearts are right with God and receptive to His truth, no matter the circumstance.



#### **A CLOSER LOOK**

##### ***Reading Parables***

Parables are unique and almost exclusively consigned to the New Testament. They are “short stories” that depict real life and, by way of analogy, are designed to teach specific spiritual truths, usually related to God's kingdom. Parables have four basic purposes: to reveal new truth to the believing person or people (revelational); to conceal truth from the unbelieving person or people (judgmental); to provoke a decision from the undecided person or people (persuasive); and to stir up the memory of the truth through the telling of concrete stories (perpetuative).

*Continued on next page*



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Analysis of a Crop Failure

*Mark 4:1–20*

*Continued from previous page*

When it comes to interpreting parables, five guidelines apply:

1. Uncover the historical and cultural setting.
2. Discover the problem being addressed in relation to God's kingdom.
3. Uncover the central truth or its major points of comparison.
4. Relate the details of the supporting scenery to the central truth.
5. State the intended appeal or application.



### LET'S LIVE IT

Please consider two abiding principles from this message.

- First, literally, in the farmer's field, the quality of the harvest is dependent on the quality of the soil.
- Second, spiritually speaking, the result of truth always depends on the condition of your heart.

So what's the response? Evaluate the condition of the spiritual condition of your heart.

If your heart is thorny, confess your condition to God. Then, repent, and begin to pull out the thorns by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Which soil are you? What are you going to do about your soil?**



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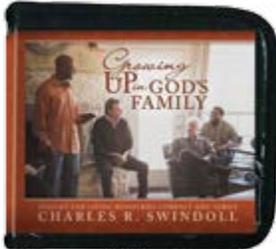
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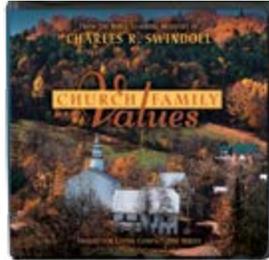
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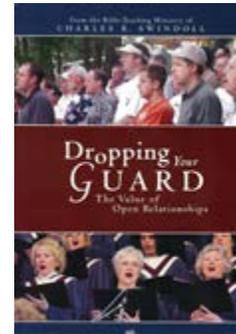
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Growing Up in God's Family

*Ephesians 3:14–21*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

There is one common analogy used throughout the New Testament regarding the local church. It is not a business, farm, team, school, or hospital, though those word pictures are frequently used by us to convey various dimensions of congregational life. The most often used analogy is that of a *family*. God is our *Father*; we are called His *offspring*—sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, even fellow heirs. Since this is true, it stands to reason that congregations, like families, go through definite ages and stages as they progress toward maturity. This message will help us gain an overview of where we are going. In the process, we'll discover some of the reasons and results of an interrupted growth process.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. The Church as a Family

- Scriptural support
- Practical significance

#### 2. The Stages of a Family

- Birth and infancy
- Childhood and discovery
- Adolescence and immaturity
- Adulthood and maturity



## Quotable

*An essential part of growing in Christ includes the self-discipline of authenticity—7 days a week. In short, we don't fake it.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Growing Up in God's Family

*Ephesians 3:14–21*



### A CLOSER LOOK

#### *What's in a Name?*

In his book *Wishful Thinking*, Frederick Beuchner explains the inner significance of a name.

[Beuchner] is my name. It is pronounced Beekner. If somebody mispronounces it in some foolish way, I have the feeling that what's foolish is me. If somebody forgets it, I feel that it's I who am forgotten. . . . If my name were different, I would be different. When I tell somebody my name, I have given him a hold over me that he didn't have before. If he calls it out, I stop, look, and listen whether I want to or not.

In the book of Exodus, God tells Moses that [His] name is Yahweh, and God hasn't had a peaceful moment since.<sup>1</sup>

God wants us to call out His name, but He doesn't want us to trample it underfoot. According to the fourth commandment:

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7 NASB)

Because He is our Father, we must bear His name with honor. When we exhibit spiritual maturity, we hold His name up high. But when we stumble into a pit of sin, we drag His divine name through the mud with us.

What's in a name? In the Lord's name, there's a universe of love and power and justice. So, “whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17 NASB).



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Growing Up in God's Family

*Ephesians 3:14–21*



### LET'S LIVE IT

As members of God's family, we each must make a commitment to spiritual growth which begins with an honest assessment of ourselves. Take a closer look at the following questions to help begin that evaluation.

- Identification: At which stage am I?
- Change: What action is necessary to dislodge me from my present stage and accelerate my growth to maturity? (Am I struggling with a menacing sin? Am I holding on to a habit that is dishonoring to the Lord? Do my friends and those I consistently join with support or hinder my desire to honor the Lord?)
- Urgency: When is the best time to begin? There is no time like the present to begin the often difficult but worthwhile process of growing up in God's family. Ask the Lord to bring people and opportunities into your life that will move you along toward spiritual maturity. He will be faithful!

#### ENDNOTE

1. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 12.



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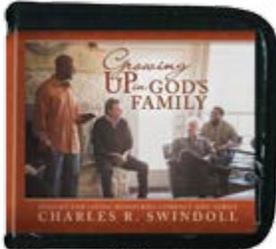
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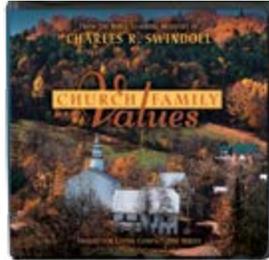
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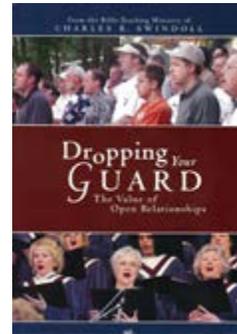
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MM02

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Ages and Stages of Growing Up

1 Peter 2:1–3



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Few things are more thrilling than birth. And on top of that, the time of infancy that follows is both exciting and intriguing. All who work with babies and bottles, toddlers and high chairs, building blocks and toy boxes enjoy one of the special delights life offers. It may be exhausting, but there are special moments of sheer exhilaration, unduplicated by any other involvement. Yet with all the thrills, there are also the threats unique to newborns. Being so tiny and dependent, their little lives often hang perilously close to danger and death. What is true of infant humans is equally true of infant believers in God's family. As we shall soon discover, their needs are great, their hunger is constant, their discernment is nonexistent, yet their potential is nothing short of remarkable.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. The Place Where We All Begin

- The fact of birth
- The reality of infancy

#### 2. The Lifestyle of the Newborn

- *What is it like? (Characteristics)*
  - They need a great deal of time and hands-on attention.
  - They require constant supervision.
  - They are totally dependent on others.
  - They need constant repetition about the basics.
- *What makes it so exciting? (Benefits)*
  - Rapid growth occurs during this stage.
  - They have uncomplicated innocence and simplicity of life.
  - Total trust — infants trust their caretakers implicitly.



## Quotable

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*A mature Christian  
is not easily  
offended, not  
given to fads, and  
understands the  
value of service.*

— Charles R. Swindoll

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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Ages and Stages of Growing Up

*1 Peter 2:1–3*

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- *What are the dangers? (Perils)*
  - Total lack of discernment
  - Unawareness of danger—vulnerability to false teaching
  - Lack of involvement
  - Time of many failures and mistakes

### 3. The Essentials of Surviving Those Early Years

- Affection and affirmation
- Basics—information and doctrine
- Compassion and courtesy
- A diet of biblical nourishment



### LET'S LIVE IT

Growing from infancy to adulthood in life doesn't happen overnight. Likewise, growing up in God's family is a process that takes time—and that process, at times, needs to be nourished and restarted. Self-evaluation, in the context of a loving and supportive Christian community, is essential to God's plan for your spiritual growth.

Still, you may be feeling frustrated with where you are presently. If you are in the birth and infancy stage, maybe you wish you could be like the more mature Christians around you. Perhaps you are frustrated because you want to grow up faster. If so, relax. It's okay to not know how to run when you're just learning to walk.

**If you are a baby Christian, what are some exciting characteristics of your life with God?**

**If you are in another stage of spiritual growth, what can you do to protect and encourage baby believers?**



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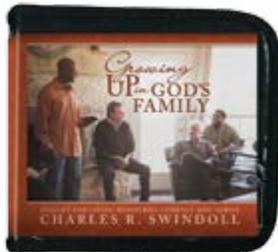
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Ages and Stages of Growing Up

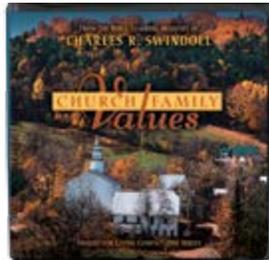
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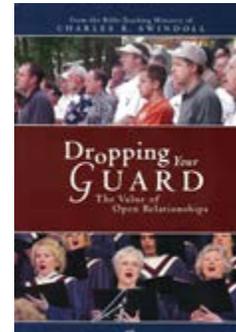
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Birth and Infancy: Survival Basics

1 Peter 1:3–7



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

In the growth process, as members of God's family, we enlarge our reservoir of knowledge and we strengthen our grasp of understanding. We also increase the sensitivity of our conscience, the level of our discernment, and the boundaries of our perception. Ideally, our intuition and imagination also grow proportionally, providing us with a solid base of awareness of and enthusiasm for life. But these are not what we might call *foundational*, nor do they emerge in any great measure during the infant stage of our existence. Infancy is back-to-basics time! It is during that era that we set the cornerstone and fix in place the initial blocks, upon which we develop the balance of our lives, spiritually speaking. Because of the essential nature of these truths, it is helpful for us to return to them periodically and be reminded of their importance.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A Reminder of the Ages and Stages of Growth (see chart)

- Birth and infancy: "Help me!"
- Childhood and discovery: "Tell me!"
- Adolescence and irresponsibility: "Show me!"
- Adulthood and maturity: "Follow me!"



### GETTING TO THE ROOT

#### *Redemption*

Ransom—the idea of freeing someone held prisoner in exchange for something else—appears as a theme throughout the Bible. When the people of Israel as slaves in Egypt could do nothing to free themselves, God stepped in and provided a way out. Therefore, Isaiah called Israel, "the ransomed of the Lord" (Isaiah 35:10). Under Old Testament Law, if an ox killed a person, the owner himself faced death. But since the killing was not a willful act, he could escape capital punishment by paying a ransom to compensate for the one who died (Exodus 21:29–32). For intentional murder, however, the criminal could not be freed from his or

*Continued on next page*



## Quotable

*To grow in Christ, you must learn how to walk—by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Birth and Infancy: Survival Basics

*1 Peter 1:3–7*

*Continued from previous page*

her penalty through a ransom (Numbers 35:30–32). Throughout the Psalms, David both cried out for and praised God for his ransom (Psalm 31:5; 69:18).

Paul's readers had intimate knowledge of slavery and the slave market and would have understood well what he meant when he wrote to Timothy that Christ had given "Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). Those living in Ephesus in the first century, just like everyone, needed redemption from the slavery of sin. Sin causes each to stand before God, guilty and condemned to eternal death. But according to His Father's will, Jesus came to the earth to "give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 26:29). His suffering and death paid the price for humanity's sin and provided the means for those who believe in Him to be redeemed unto God.

## 2. A Return to the Basics of Spiritual Infancy

- **The *Birth* Basics**

Must be born from above

Must be biblical

Must be personal

Must be authentic

- **The *Growth* Basics**

How to obey: importance of trust

How to eat: importance of nourishment

How to talk: importance of prayer

How to walk: importance of the Spirit



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Birth and Infancy: Survival Basics

1 Peter 1:3–7

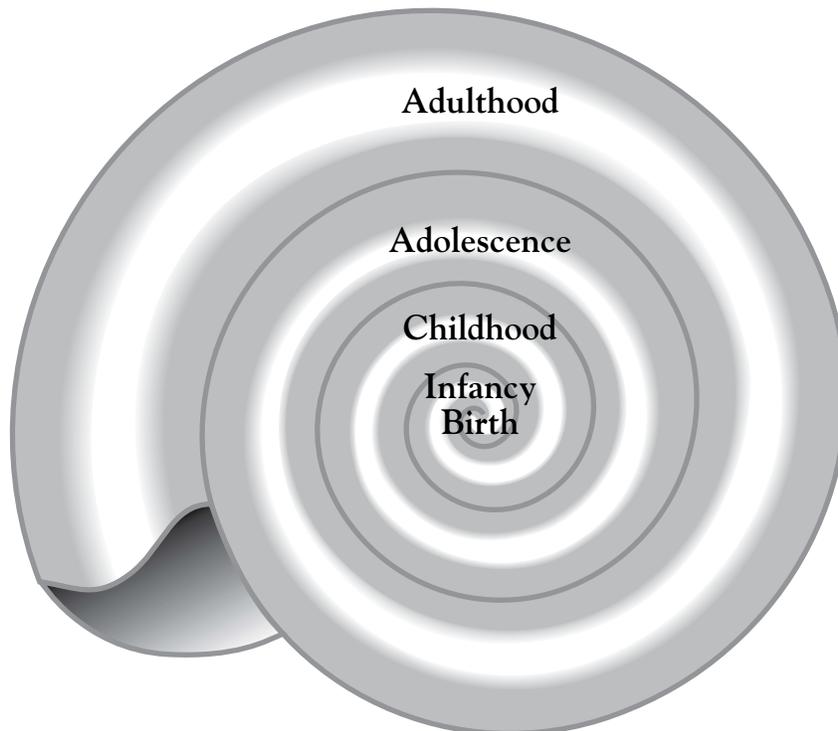


### LET'S LIVE IT

All of this presents an opportunity for anyone who hears these truths to respond. There are two particular responses each of us must consider.

- **Have you been born from above?** When Jesus confronted Nicodemus with matters of eternal significance, the issue for Jesus was not the young man's pedigree. Jesus made it clear that he needed to wrestle with his spiritual birth—had he been born of the Spirit. Have you? Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ and received the free gift of eternal life in His name? If yes, you have experienced a new birth from above.
- **Have you passed the infant stage?** Once you have come into God's family by faith, the expectation is that you grow up spiritually. In what ways do you feel you are moving toward the end of the infant stage of your new life in Christ and starting down a path toward spiritual maturity?

## Ages and Stages Toward Christian Maturity



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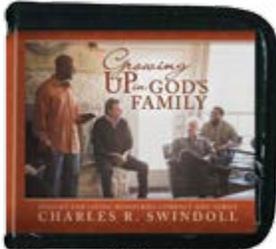
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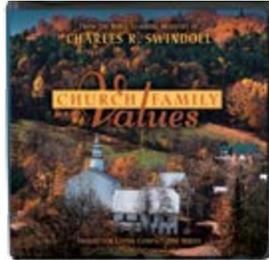
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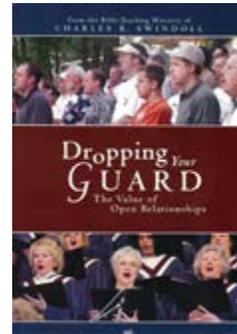
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MM04

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Look . . . I'm Walking!

*Ephesians 5:1–8, 15–21*



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

Few things are more foundational to a productive life than walking. That is not only true in the physical realm but especially so in the spiritual realm. However, the tragedy is apparent: many in God's family (dare we say *most*?) have little or no knowledge of the way to do it. The "Spirit-filled life" is talked about by everyone but consistently practiced by few. Some know the facts but simply choose not to obey. That is disobedience—one kind of problem. More, however, do not know what is involved and therefore cannot pull it off. Rather than being disobedient, they are ignorant . . . uninformed and unaware. Perhaps you fall into that category. Let's dispel the ignorance and remove confusion regarding the manner in which God's children are to walk.



## LET'S DIG DEEPER

### 1. Walking: An Understanding of the Terms



#### A CLOSER LOOK

##### *Walking*

"Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (Ephesians 5:1–2). How can finite human beings imitate an infinite God? By walking in love (5:2), by walking in purity (5:3–7), by walking in light (5:8–14), by walking in wisdom (5:15–20), and by walking in mutual submission and deference toward one another (5:21–6:9). All of our relationships, the apostle Paul explained, should reflect and attest to Christ's reality. It is through a holy life of caring and mutual humility, rather than the dark divisiveness of self-centeredness, that unity in Christ will be achieved for all the world to see.



## Quotable

*To walk well,  
you must imitate  
your Father.*

*He is the model.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Look . . . I'm Walking!

*Ephesians 5:1–8, 15–21*

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## 2. Walking: An Explanation of the Process

- A. Initial Commands (Ephesians 5:15–17)
  
- B. Essential Issue (5:18)
  
- C. Practical Results (5:19–21)



### LET'S LIVE IT

#### Walking: It's Your Move

Here are four truths that apply to both physical and spiritual walking:

- It's a normal part of growth.
- It comes easier the more we grow.
- It's a step-by-step action.
- It implies action and movement.

Pray for the faith to rely on the Spirit's power in your walk.



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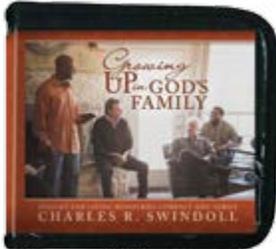
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Look . . . I'm Walking!

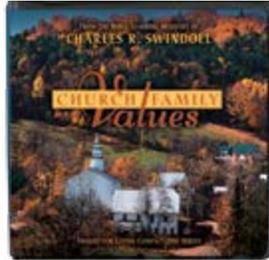
*Ephesians 5:1–8, 15–21*



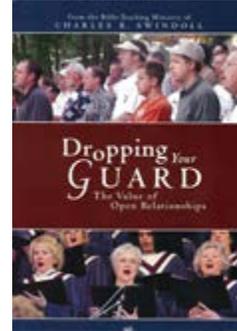
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MM05

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## The Delights of Childhood

1 Corinthians 13:11–12



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

There is a well-worn path stretching across every adult's life. It is impossible to grow up without traveling down that path. To retrace our steps, reviewing the sights and sounds that emerge from the time tunnel, often brings the sting of pain and the struggle of confusion. Why? Because the path is usually strewn with piles of litter. That path is the path of *childhood*. What is true physically is equally true spiritually. How essential is a healthy, happy childhood in the family of God . . . yet how rare! As we shall see, growth toward maturity requires our passing through this stage, learning certain truths, and developing certain skills that help equip us for life.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. The Growth Cycle: A Brief Overview

- A. Four Distinct Stages
- B. Transition from Infancy to Childhood

#### 2. Analysis of Spiritual Childhood: A Biblical Survey

- A. General Observations
  - Children have unique distinctions.
  - Children need parental accommodations.
  - Children require firm supervision.
- B. Delightful Strengths
  - Intellectual openness and availability
  - Emotional dependence
  - Spiritual hunger and readiness



## Quotable

*Do you teach children? Give them the gospel. They're ready to take the hand of the Savior.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## The Delights of Childhood

*1 Corinthians 13:11–12*



### LET'S LIVE IT

#### An Examination of Where I Am: A Personal Evaluation

If you are in the child stage of your faith, don't hold back your enthusiasm and sense of wonder! But be sure to ask lots of questions.

If you've moved beyond this stage, take time to listen to younger believers, nurse their scrapes, and allow them to be childlike in their newfound faith in Christ.



### LISTEN TO CHUCK

#### *A Prayer of Encouragement*

Father . . .

Give us patience, perseverance, grace, tact. Round the sharp corners of our lives so that people are not bruised when they're around us. Open our arms to embrace.

Help us to be discerning and know how much to expose to a child's mind, lest we overexpose it and create confusion in the whole area of shame and moral directives.

Help us as adults, while growing, to keep on in the process of telling others of the Savior, being sensitive to them in their needs and accepting them where they are.

Make us willing to give up our rights for the good of those who are weak and aren't yet where we are.

Graciously help us to be like Your Son, who loved children and who Himself was at one time a child.

Amen.



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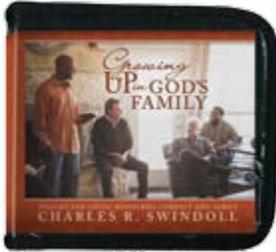
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The Delights of Childhood

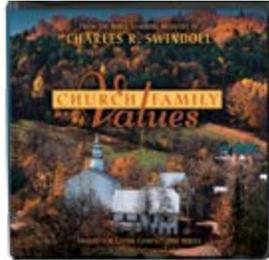
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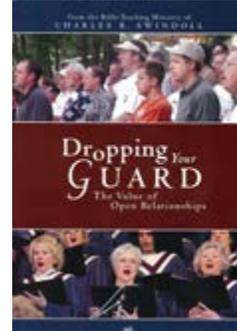
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Adult Talk about "Childish Things"

Isaiah 30:1–2, 8–9



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

While writing the Corinthians about the importance of love, Paul inserted a brief comment that speaks volumes to us in this series:

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (1 Corinthians 13:11)

Interestingly, he mentions no specific age when he "became a man," but it is clear that many of the things that characterize childhood were done away with once he grew into adulthood. What would that include? Specifically, which "childish things" have no business lingering once we become mature? Believe it or not, God's expectation that we grow spiritually is firmly rooted in the Old Testament, where the prophets of old laid down a clear path for knowing God deeply.



### READ SCRIPTURE

#### *Childish Saul*

One of the most childish adults in the Old Testament is King Saul. Remember when the Philistines were pressing in and he foolishly offered the burnt offering himself instead of waiting for Samuel? Then he tried excusing his mistake, saying to Samuel, "You did not come within the appointed days. . . . So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering" (1 Samuel 13:11, 12).

Then there was the time he spared the Amalekite king, Agag, and the best of the livestock, even though God had told him to "utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him" (15:3). When Samuel confronted Saul, Saul put the blame on the people, saying they kept some of the spoil to sacrifice to the Lord. But Samuel replied, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22), and,

"Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,  
He has also rejected you from being king." (15:23)

*Continued on next page*



## Quotable

*Scripture presents  
childishness as  
folly, especially  
when exhibited in  
an adult.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Adult Talk about “Childish Things”

*Isaiah 30:1–2, 8–9*

*Continued from previous page*

Saul cried out,

“I have sinned . . . I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.” (1 Samuel 15:24–25)

But Saul only wanted his kingdom back and to save face in front of his officials. Samuel did return with him so he could worship the Lord, but it was just a show (15:30–31).

Can you see some of the characteristics of childishness in Saul? Willful defiance? Superficial commitment? Being overly impressed with people? And being easily swayed?



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. The Delightful Part: Childlikeness

- Intellectually: Teachable—eager to learn, curious, exploring, discovering
- Emotionally: Touchable—sense of interdependence, willing to trust, to get close to others
- Spiritually: Tender—hungry, ready to believe, quick to respond, creative

#### 2. The Difficult Part: Childishness (Isaiah 30:1–2, 8–9)

We must curb and control being:

- Willfully defiant
- Superficially committed
- Overly impressed
- Easily swayed



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Adult Talk about “Childish Things”

*Isaiah 30:1–2, 8–9*

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### 3. The Diligent Part: Getting Rid of “Childish Things”

- *We dare not remain childish.* We should not be “untamed barbarians.”
- *We must not ignore our responsibility* to press on to maturity.
- *We cannot escape the tension* between our nature (the real) and our need (the ideal).



### LET'S LIVE IT

Evaluate your commitment to the Lord. Is it sincere or a little showy? When you sing or pray, do you focus on the Lord or do thoughts of impressing others enter your mind?

**Examine your walk, and pray that God preserves the childlike aspects of your faith, while pruning the childishness away so that you may press on to maturity.**



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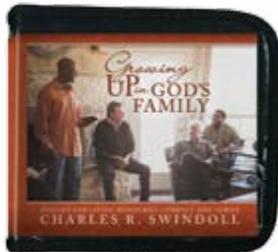
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Adult Talk about "Childish Things"

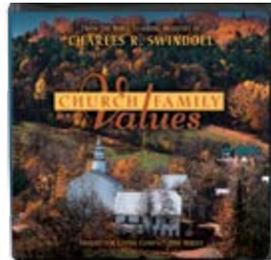
*Isaiah 30:1-2, 8-9*



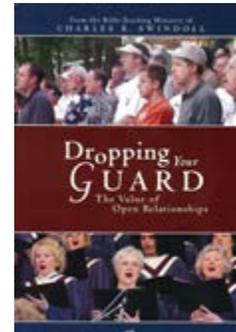
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Three Proofs of Growth

Matthew 10:1–10; Acts 4:32–37



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

One of the most remarkable eras in the history of the church occurred during the first century. Shortly after Christ had left the earth, His disciples (who became apostles) led congregations into new and exciting vistas of faith. Though young and relatively inexperienced, the believers who comprised the first-century church showed evident marks of maturity . . . the children were now growing into adolescence! As we shall see from this particular account, they were willing to take Jesus' teaching seriously and model those truths in the local church. We hope to glean from these verses three of the more pronounced characteristics of a body of Christians who refused to remain childish in their walk of faith. Ultimately, our goal is to emulate the first-century example in our congregations today.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Reviewing Three Principles from Jesus' Teaching (Matthew 10)

- Regarding unity: there is strength in staying close together (Matthew 10:2–6).
- Regarding authority: there is power in doing God's work (10:1, 7–8).



#### GETTING TO THE ROOT

##### *Authority*

The Greek word for "authority" is *exousia*, which means "liberty or power to act."<sup>1</sup> It's the power of one whose will or command must be obeyed, like the power of a police officer who stops hundreds of cars by simply raising a hand. With this *exousia*, the disciples now had power to bring disease, demons, and even death to a screeching halt.

The early church wonderfully displayed authority.

And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

*Continued on next page*



## Quotable

*Authority comes  
straight from  
God's throne.  
It doesn't come from  
education or dress  
or eloquence.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Three Proofs of Growth

*Matthew 10:1–10; Acts 4:32–37*

*Continued from previous page*

God's grace filled the church and became a bridge of respect and trust between the people and the leaders, who were proclaiming Christ's message with authority and power. The church was made up of what writer Howard Snyder calls kingdom people rather than church people.

Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; Kingdom people work to see the church change the world.<sup>2</sup>

In order to produce kingdom people today, Christian leaders should view the church as a place for believers to huddle, like players on a football team, to receive biblical instruction and a moment of rest. The real game occurs during the week, as the team members live out their beliefs and proclaim Jesus Christ in the world.

- Regarding generosity: there is freedom in giving without restraint (Matthew 10:8–10).

## 2. Modeling Those Principles in the Early Church

- A. Unity in Action (Acts 4:32)
- B. Authority on Display (4:33)
- C. Generosity Applied and Exemplified (4:34–37)

## 3. Putting Those Principles into Practice Today

- *For there to be unity:* we must maintain a closeness (accountability).
- *In coming to terms with authority:* we must remember who is Lord (obedience).
- *To excel in generosity:* we must hold treasure loosely (unselfishness).



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Three Proofs of Growth

*Matthew 10:1–10; Acts 4:32–37*

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### LET'S LIVE IT

Unity. Authority. Generosity. Jesus gave these principles of growth to the disciples, who passed them on to the early Christians, who now through Scripture offer them to you. Are you hoping for spiritual growth spurts in your life? Here's some advice: stay close to people, remember who's really Lord, and hold your treasure loosely. Do these things, and you'll be amazed how tall you'll grow in a short period of time.

### ENDNOTES

1. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. and T. Clark, 1937), 161.
2. Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1983), 11.



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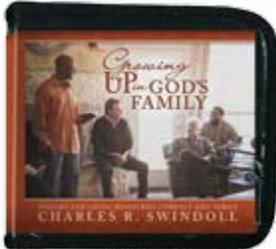
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Three Proofs of Growth

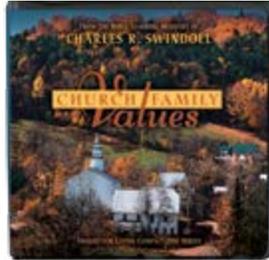
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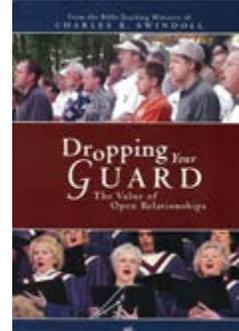
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Adolescents in Adult Bodies

*Acts 12:24–25; 13:1–13*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

In our previous study, we gave attention to three proofs of growth. We saw all three illustrated in an early church congregation (Acts 4:32–37). Although young in the faith, those Jerusalem believers demonstrated a commendable growth toward maturity. But this condition was not found throughout all congregations. As is true today, there were some who were old enough to be well on their way to maturity, but they preferred to remain immature and irresponsible . . . adolescents in adult bodies. In this biographical message, we shall take a look at three such people. Remember, each one was old enough to know better, but they deliberately chose to act out attitudes and a lifestyle that reflected an unwillingness to grow up. As we analyze these biblical characters, let's not fail to ask what the disciples once asked Jesus: "Lord, is it I?"



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Undeniable Characteristics of Adolescence

- Instability when the going gets rough
- Irresponsibility when the world becomes appealing
- Insensitivity when the will is challenged

#### 2. Modeling Those Characteristics in the Early Church

- John Mark, who walked away (Acts 12:24, 25; 13:1–13; 15:36–40)
- Demas, who loved the world (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:23–25; 2 Timothy 4:9–11)
- Diotrephes, who wanted to be first (3 John 9–10)



## Quotable

*The insecure  
Christian knows  
little about staying  
on course when  
life is painful and  
hard to deal with.*

*The secret?  
Trust and obey.*  
— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Adolescents in Adult Bodies

*Acts 12:24–25; 13:1–13*

### 3. Ways to Guard against “Permanent Adolescence”

- When wrestling with restlessness, realize the benefits of faithfulness.
- When allured by irresponsibility, think of the consequences of carnality.
- When tempted to manipulate and dominate, remember the lordship of Christ.



#### A CLOSER LOOK

##### *Loving the World*

Paul considered Demas a “fellow worker”—a high compliment from the apostle. But something happened inside Demas. He once followed Christ earnestly, or Paul never would have invited him to join his entourage. Demas once demonstrated courage and determination, for traveling with Paul would have demanded nothing less (Acts 15:37–38).

No more. Demas had abandoned Paul for what the apostle termed a “love [for] this present world,” which is no insignificant condemnation. Paul used the distinctly Christian verb *agapao*, normally reserved for people, to say that Demas “loved this present world.” “This present world” refers not only to the worldly pursuits of money, power, status, pleasure, or possessions. Jesus identified the enemy of God’s kingdom as “the world” (John 15:18–19).

“The world” does not mean the earth per se. The planet does not have a mind, so it cannot be evil. Nature has been twisted and corrupted by evil, but it is not evil in itself. In fact, Paul personified nature as an innocent bystander, suffering the ill effects of evil, groaning for redemption by its rightful Owner (Romans 8:20–22). Instead, “the world” represents the fallen world system, which operates according to Satan’s values and is subject to the curse of sin (Genesis 3:14–19). “The world” also represents the people who live by its values and willingly serve its ends. Jesus originally came to redeem the world (John 3:17; 12:47), but the world rejected Him (3:18; 12:48); therefore, He began to separate “His own” from the world (10:14, 26–27; 13:1; 15:19).

To say that someone loves “this present world” is to say that he or she is an enemy of God’s kingdom (1 John 2:15–17).<sup>1</sup>



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Adolescents in Adult Bodies

*Acts 12:24–25; 13:1–13*

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## LET'S LIVE IT

What worldly vices lure you the most? Write down the consequences of succumbing to such temptations. Be specific about how falling into temptation might affect your relationship with the Lord, those you love in your family, and your community of faith.

Also, consider inviting some close Christian friends or the members of your small group or community group to come alongside you in prayer—asking the Lord to strengthen you in a particular area of weakness and even to deliver you from bondage.

## ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Carol Stream, Ill., Tyndale, 2014), 264–65.



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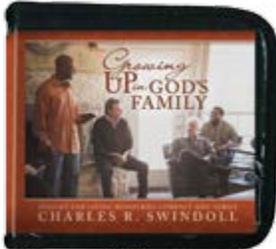
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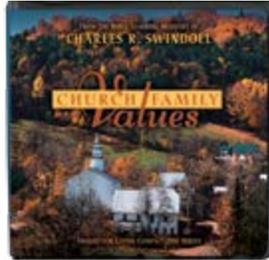
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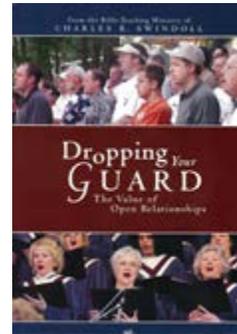
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

When Peter Pan Comes to Church  
1 Corinthians 1:4–11; 3:1–4; 5:1–2; 8:1–13



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

In the previous message, we were introduced to a syndrome that has plagued our society for years. Thanks to Dr. Dan Kiley, we have a name for it — “Peter Pan Syndrome” — and the more we study it, the more we understand what we are dealing with. Although the name is new, the problem is old. In fact, we can trace its roots all the way back to the fall of humanity in the garden. As we shall see, not even the early church was free of this insidious problem. Because it tends to emerge during the adolescent stage of our existence, it is appropriate that we address it. The details are neither pretty nor positive, but they are relevant. Hopefully, as a result of exposing this syndrome, we shall be alert to it and be better equipped to confront it.



## LET'S DIG DEEPER

### 1. Psychological Syndrome: An Overview

- **Explanation**

Many adolescents fail to grow into adulthood; instead, they exhibit Peter Pan Syndrome. They lament no longer being children, and they are terrified of the responsibility of adulthood.

- **Manifestations**

Knowledge without the experience of wisdom can be a rocky thing. An adolescent may love the fun of sailing through life but lack the wisdom of knowing where the rocks are. This adolescent struggle manifests itself through:

- Irresponsibility
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Affluent family of origin
- Self-centeredness
- Mixed-up scale of values
- Conspicuous lack of accountability



## Quotable

*We're free. We have maximum liberty. But we dare not be a live-and-let-live people.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## When Peter Pan Comes to Church *1 Corinthians 1:4–11; 3:1–4; 5:1–2; 8:1–13*

### 2. Biblical Example: A Local Church

- Great Anxiety

I have been informed . . . there are quarrels among you. (1 Corinthians 1:11)

- Personal Immaturity

I . . . could not speak to you as to spiritual . . . but . . . as to infants. (3:1)

- Overt Immorality

There is immorality among you. (5:1)

- Unrestrained Liberty

Take care that this liberty . . . does not somehow become a stumbling block. (8:8)



#### A CLOSER LOOK *Corinth*

Corinth, estimated population 700,000, was a city of supreme importance and notoriety in Paul's day. Due west of Athens, Corinth stood like a sentry on the narrow isthmus connecting central and southern Greece. Its location made it a premier center of commerce and trade. With its two huge harbors, Corinth was a frequent stop for ships traveling east and west across the Mediterranean. Many sailors, in order to avoid the arduous 200-mile journey around southern Greece, paid to have their ships and cargo transported across the four-mile-wide isthmus.

Such flourishing trade, along with the protection of Rome's military machine (Corinth was a Roman colony) and the attraction of the Isthmian Games (second only to the Olympic Games), made Corinth a prosperous city. And with prosperity came all the attending pleasures and perversions.

Shrines and temples to the gods were everywhere, the most renowned being the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. It stood atop an 1,800-foot precipice and employed hundreds of cult prostitutes who helped "worshippers" pay tribute to the goddess.



# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

When Peter Pan Comes to Church  
*1 Corinthians 1:4–11; 3:1–4; 5:1–2; 8:1–13*

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## LET'S LIVE IT

### Practical Advice: A Personal Analysis

Do you keep stumbling on rocks beneath the surface of your walk with God? Are you trying to sail through life in the *SS Peter Pan*? If so, take some soundings of your heart by asking yourself a couple of pointed questions:

What am I gaining by remaining immature?

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Why am I refusing to model purity?

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Once you've answered those questions with honesty, take some time to talk to the Lord about where you feel you are in your commitment to growing up in His family. Tell Him you are ready to grow and that you are willing to do whatever it takes to begin that process deliberately and in full accordance to His Word. Make sure you jot down somewhere in your Bible or in a spiritual journal the date you make this commitment to God. Then one year from that date, look back and see how much you've grown!



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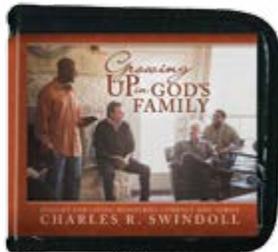
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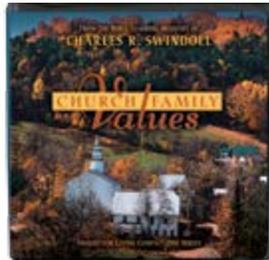
When Peter Pan Comes to Church  
*1 Corinthians 1:4–11; 3:1–4; 5:1–2; 8:1–13*



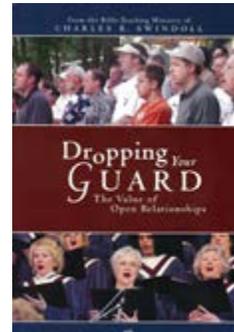
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## What's Right about Adolescence?

*Genesis 22:1–7*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

If we are not careful, we could easily get the impression that adolescence is a disease with headaches and heartaches, pressure and pain as its only symptoms. Not so! Adjustments and struggles may be present, but not to the exclusion of tremendous growth and remarkable achievements. These can be some of the most exciting years of one's spiritual pilgrimage. All adolescents are not horizontally irresponsible and vertically insensitive. As we shall soon discover, there are cases in Scripture where people this age lived exemplary lives in spite of the odds against them.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Positive Traits Found Among the Young

- Willingness to risk (Genesis 22:1–10)
- Sensitivity to God (1 Samuel 3)
- Commitment to integrity
- Determination to stand



## Quotable

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*As we grow older,  
we may lose the  
desire to risk.  
We call it wisdom,  
but it could be  
cowardice.*

— Charles R. Swindoll

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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## What's Right about Adolescence?

*Genesis 22:1–7*



### A CLOSER LOOK

#### *Adolescence: A Study in Contrasts*

Like teenagers, adolescent Christians are a complex blend of contrasts. For instance, compare our descriptions of them from the message “Adolescents in Adult Bodies” with our points in this message:

Adolescents in Adult Bodies	What's <u>Right</u> about Adolescence?
Instability when the going gets rough	Willingness to risk
Insensitivity when the will is challenged	Sensitivity to God
Irresponsibility when the world becomes appealing	Commitment to integrity; determination to stand

Which set of characteristics is accurate? How should we paint adolescent believers—with harsh lines or flowing curves? With dark tones or pastels?

The answer is: both.

If you're in this stage of spiritual growth or if you intimately know someone in this stage, you likely understand. One week, adolescent Christians are ready to pitch their faith; the following week, they're signing up to follow Christ to the ends of the earth. One day, they're playfully tagging along with the world; the next, they're standing for God with determination.

Jesus' disciples rode that same roller coaster of faith. One night they said they'd die for Christ, but when the soldiers came, “they all left Him and fled” (Mark 14:50). But look how they turned out: they eventually leveled their mountains and valleys into a consistent walk with Jesus.

If your faith has ups and downs, don't get frustrated. Keep going! Paul said Christ's patience is “immense” (1 Timothy 1:16 NIV)—just the kind of patience every teenager needs.



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## What's Right about Adolescence?

*Genesis 22:1-7*

### 2. Scriptural Examples of Positive Traits Found Among the Young

	Scripture	Test	Strength
Isaac	Genesis 22	To obey his father, regardless	Willingness to risk
Samuel	1 Samuel 3	Environment that was not conducive to godliness	Sensitivity to God
Josiah	2 Chronicles 34	Bad political track record . . . gross violations	Commitment to integrity
Daniel	Daniel 1	Peer pressure	Determination to stand



### LET'S LIVE IT

In every trial there is a watershed moment. Will you give in to something or stand up to it? Play or fold? Stay or leave? The choice can be difficult. Perhaps now is the time to decide what you're going to do. Write down your resolution. And remember: God will give you the unique strength you need to pass this test.



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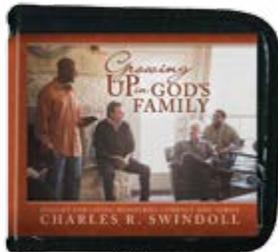
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What's Right about Adolescence?

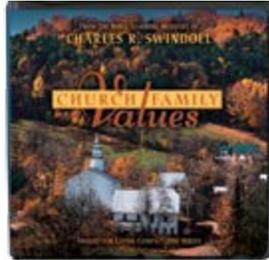
*Genesis 22:1-7*



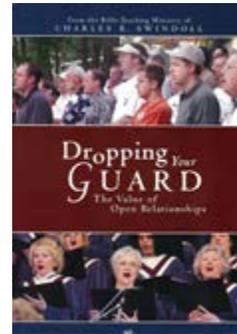
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Reasons We Resist Becoming Mature

*Hebrews 2:1–3; 3:12–13; 4:1–2; 5:11–14*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Tough though it may be to admit it, most of us resist growing up. We say all the things that suggest otherwise, but in reality, we resist launching out into the ocean of adulthood. We much prefer the security of the shoreline — being able to touch bottom, not having to hassle with the swells, currents, and windstorms of the vast sea with all its demands. Give us the safety of the harbor any day! But God would have us brave the elements, to risk, to become models of maturity . . . to grow up. It seems only logical that we spend a little while analyzing why there is such a strong resistance within us to move on into the responsibilities and challenges of adulthood.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A Time for Honest Confession

- Regarding ourselves: we are creatures of habit.
- Regarding our Lord: we want a Savior more than a Master.
- Regarding our growth: we tend to stop short of our full potential.

#### 2. A Letter with Relevant Information

We resist pressing on to maturity because . . .

. . . we drift away from what we have heard. (Hebrews 2)

. . . we fall away from the truth altogether. (Hebrews 3)

. . . we fail to mix faith with truth. (Hebrews 4)

. . . we become dull of hearing. (Hebrews 5)



## Quotable

*When we want a  
Savior more than  
a Master, we  
stop short of our  
potential.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Reasons We Resist Becoming Mature

*Hebrews 2:1–3; 3:12–13; 4:1–2; 5:11–14*



### A CLOSER LOOK

#### *Persecution: Its Nature and Effects*

Loving parents want their kids to understand that discipline and love aren't mutually exclusive ideas — that forms of correction are not vents for parental anger, outbursts of frustration, or clubs wielded to abuse authority (and children). Instead, parents want their kids to understand that real love *requires* discipline.

So why do we have such a hard time receiving discipline from our heavenly Father? Our goal is all too often comfort — freedom from pain, financial security, heaven on earth.

How different from God's perspective. His goal is to conform us to His image, to make us holy (Hebrews 12:4–11). In fact, He assures us that never experiencing His discipline is a reason to wonder if we really belong to Him (12:8).

Do you need encouragement that God loves you? Don't just look at the comforts He provides. Consider the discomfort He allows in your life as well. They are tools of correction in the hands of your loving Father.

Sure, it hurts. But metal bends better when softened with fire. Marble takes shape only under the splintering blow of a chisel. And whoever heard of smoothing wood without the abrasive scrape of sandpaper?

A loving God using pain to produce good in His children may sound harsh, until you consider that the most loving thing He ever did was also the most painful — putting His only Son on the cross.

Let us welcome and endure His discipline, for it “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (12:11).



### LET'S LIVE IT

**Stay teachable.** God will use every circumstance to help you mature if you lean forward and listen for His voice. What could He be teaching you in your marriage? Your circumstances? Your business? Your grief?

**Listen.** Listen with your heart and your hands; and along with God's truth found in Scripture, mix in faith.



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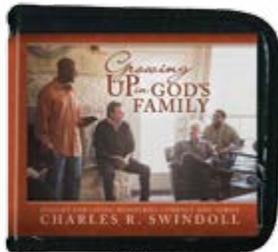
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Reasons We Resist Becoming Mature

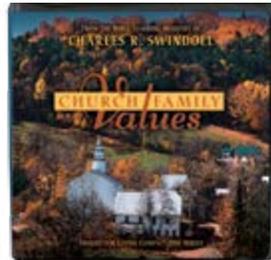
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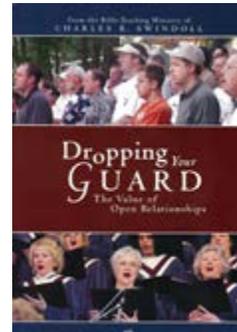
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

The Church: Who Needs It?  
*Matthew 16:18; Romans 12:4–13*

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## 2. Christ's Statement on the Church

Matthew 16:18: "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

- The project is Christ's.
- The church belongs to Him.
- It *will* survive, regardless.

## 3. Paul's Commitment to the Church

- Romans: healthy relationships
- 1 Corinthians: unity and compassion
- 2 Corinthians: generous financial involvement
- Galatians: liberty, love, service
- Ephesians: prayer
- Philippians: servanthood
- Colossians: gratitude, forgiveness, grace
- 1 Thessalonians: moral purity



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

The Church: Who Needs It?  
*Matthew 16:18; Romans 12:4–13*



## LET'S LIVE IT

Why do you go to church? As you consider your reasons, compare them with some of the main points of the message, and if necessary, reevaluate your motives for being involved in your local church.

**How can you make going to church more meaningful for yourself and your family?**

### Our Involvement in the Church Membership Expectations

How easy it is to think of one's church involvement as a passive relationship . . . a once-a-week activity that requires little more than a slight passing interest. On the contrary, becoming a member of this local church carries with it certain expectations that dare not be diminished. As we consider the areas of greatest significance, no less than eight expectations are important enough to mention.

Each member of this local church body is expected to:

1. Assume responsibility for his or her own spiritual nourishment through personal and corporate Bible study and prayer
2. Participate in the weekly worship services on a regular basis
3. Join the family life of the church in a congregational and / or small group context
4. Exercise his or her spiritual gifts in specific areas of involvement
5. Support the variety of ministries of the church through prayer and service
6. Contribute financially to the church in a consistent, generous manner
7. Share his or her faith personally while supporting others who proclaim the gospel around the world
8. Respond positively to the leadership in matters of church policy and discipline

By maintaining these expectations, our lives can be sufficiently nurtured, our church will remain a vital force in this world, and our God will be glorified.



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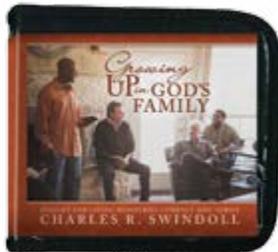
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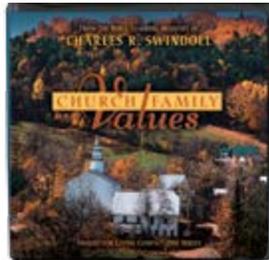
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*Matthew 16:18; Romans 12:4–13*



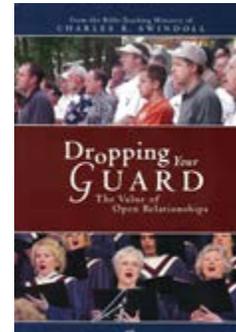
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Story for Adults to Remember

2 Samuel 24:10–25



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

Among the numerous Old Testament narratives, there are magnificent stories of ecstasy and triumph as well as agony and tragedy. All are preserved for our benefit. From each we can find both analogies and lessons to live by. One such story appears in Scripture toward the end of David's life. Although many of the stories revolving around David's experiences are fairly familiar to us today, this one may not be. Because this narrative holds several truths that illustrate the marks of maturity in a believer's life, it seems fitting that we blow the dust off this ancient account and consider its value in our lives today. As we think through and relive its scenes, let's not miss its message to us as we press on to maturity.



## LET'S DIG DEEPER

### 1. A Reminder: The Reason for Old Testament Stories

- Why they were written: for our instruction and teaching
- What they provide: perseverance, encouragement, and hope

### 2. A Story: The Maturity of the Ancient King

- A Mature Conscience (2 Samuel 24:10)
- A Mature Mind (24:11–14)
- A Mature Attitude (24:15–24)
- A Mature Spirit (24:25)



## Quotable

*Why has God preserved the first 39 books of the Bible? For our instruction, perseverance, encouragement, and hope.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Story for Adults to Remember

2 Samuel 24:10–25

## 3. A Message: The Lessons for Adults Today

- Perseverance: When we fail, the mature do not quit.
- Encouragement: When we obey, the mature do not argue.
- Hope: When we sacrifice, we do not lose.



### LISTEN TO CHUCK

*“Spiritual Growth” from The Valley of Vision*

Give me a tender, wakeful conscience  
that can smite and torment me when I sin.  
May I be consistent in conversation and conduct,  
the same alone as in company,  
in prosperity and adversity,  
accepting all Thy commandments as right,  
and hating every false way.  
May I never be satisfied with my present spiritual progress,  
but to faith add virtue, knowledge, temperance,  
godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.  
May I never neglect  
what is necessary to constitute Christian character,  
and needful to complete it.  
May I cultivate the expedient,  
develop the lovely,  
adorn the gospel,  
recommend the religion of Jesus,  
accommodate myself to Thy providence.  
  
Keep me from sinking or sinning in the evil day;  
Help me to carry into ordinary life portions of divine truth  
and use them on suitable occasions, so that  
its doctrines may inform,  
its warnings caution,  
its rules guide,  
its promises comfort me.<sup>1</sup>



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Story for Adults to Remember

2 Samuel 24:10–25

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## LET'S LIVE IT

Time to get real: Is there something in your life dishonoring to the Lord or someone close to you that you need to acknowledge today? What things keep you from owning your sin and lead you to resist the Lord? Can you honestly identify those things and bring them to the Lord?

Are you willing to raise your hand and agree with the Lord's call and say to Him, "That's on me, Lord, and I'm sorry"? When you are, you are on your way toward making genuine progress in your spiritual growth. Don't you think it's time to grow up?

## ENDNOTE

1. Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth, 2016), 109.



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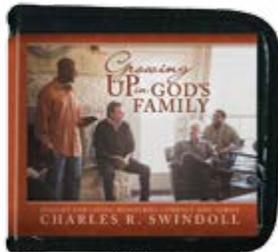
# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Story for Adults to Remember

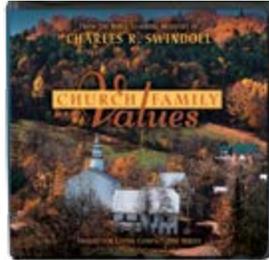
2 Samuel 24:10–25



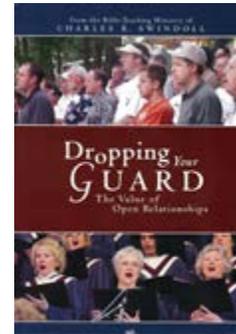
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MM14

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Song for Adults to Sing

*Psalm 26*



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

Out of the rich book of Psalms, we find this ancient hymn—a prayer, a passionate petition—in which David makes a series of requests and statements that reveal a level of admirable maturity. Take a few moments to read over and meditate on Psalm 26. Observe the composer's major theme as well as his unguarded admissions. See if you can discover for yourself the relevance of this melodic revelation. You may be surprised at David's ability to address subjects that are just as up to date as today's newspaper. In reality it was the Spirit of God, not David, who originally prompted these thoughts and preserved them for all generations.



## LET'S DIG DEEPER

### 1. Music for the Mature: A Brief Overview

God seems to have cast His vote in favor of music by making the longest of all the sixty-six books in His Word be the one dedicated to the hymns of the Hebrews, which is what the Psalter has been called for centuries.

### 2. Song for the Spiritually Minded: A Careful Analysis

- Be open before the Lord. (Psalm 26:2)
- On the basis of God's acceptance, continue to obey Him. (26:3)
- Refuse to spend time with the wrong associates. (26:4–5)
- Maintain a positive attitude. (26:6–7)
- Be faithful in public worship. (26:8–9)
- Patiently stand and wait for relief. (26:9–12)



## Quotable

*When your emotions seem out of line, turn to the Psalms for refreshment and recovery.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Song for Adults to Sing

*Psalm 26*

## 3. Truth for Today: A Practical Response

Lessons from 1 Peter 2:18–20:

- The mature want to please God regardless.
- The mature model the life of Christ.
- The mature see benefit in hardship, not just pain.



### A CLOSER LOOK

#### *How to Read Biblical Poetry*

The Bible contains four basic styles of *poetry*:

Brief and thematic lyrics	Pastoral love lyrics (Song of Solomon)
Descriptive and declarative praise and lament psalms (Lamentations)	Character depictions

The distinguishing element of Hebrew poetry is the use of parallelism, the statement or restatement of previous lines or thoughts. Parallelism is a stereo-metric device, meaning similar ideas are repeated sometimes in the same words and sometimes in different words, driving home important ideas and aiding readers and listeners in memory. Five types of parallelism dominate biblical poetry.

1. Synonymous parallelism says the same thing but in different words (Psalm 2:1; 3:1).
2. Antithetical parallelism affirms the truth in the first line by offering a contrast in the second line (1:6).
3. Climactic parallelism affirms the truth in the first line by exactly repeating it in the second line but adding a conclusion (29:1).
4. Synthetic parallelism affirms the truth in the first line by repeating the thought in the second line and adding a conclusion (14:2).
5. Emblematic parallelism presents a figure of speech in one line and explains it in another line (42:1; 52:4).



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

A Song for Adults to Sing

*Psalm 26*

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## LET'S LIVE IT

Has someone treated you unfairly? Are you harboring bitterness toward that person? It may be a small matter, but it's enough to make you feel disillusioned with people and the unjust world we live in.

What are some ways you can follow the steps laid out in Psalm 26? Take a few minutes to read back through David's song in Psalm 26. As you read over the psalm, make a personal prayer, inserting your name and the details of your situation. Allow the Lord to release you from the bitterness in your heart.



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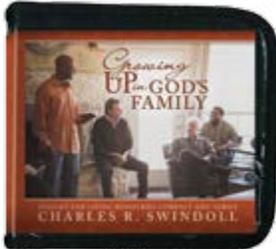
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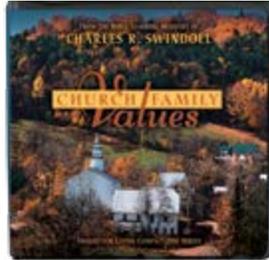
*Psalm 26*



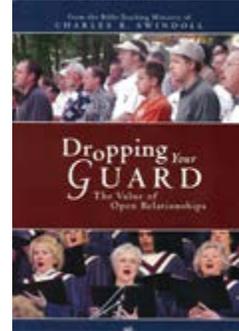
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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Growing-Up Goals for Diligent Disciples

2 Peter 1:1–11



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

We've been thinking about growing toward spiritual maturity for quite some time. The series has taken us through the stages all of us must pass (infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) as we mature in our walk with Christ. Even though we can never say that we have "arrived," there are some check-points by which we are able to measure our maturity. Let's focus our attention on them as we wrap up the series. They are set forth in the beginning of Peter's second letter. Spend a few minutes reading them. Starting with faith (2 Peter 1:5) and ending with love (1:7), you will find *eight* qualities which deserve our diligent effort.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A Review of the Ages and Stages of Growth (see chart)

- Birth and infancy: "Help me!"
- Childhood and discovery: "Tell me!"
- Adolescence and irresponsibility: "Show me!"
- Adulthood and maturity: "Follow me!"

#### 2. A Plea for Balance and Obedience (2 Peter 1:3–5)

- Divine Power
- Human Diligence



## Quotable

*I rely not on my  
own logic but on  
God's truth.  
He says it, I believe  
it, and I can count  
on Him to keep  
His word.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Growing-Up Goals for Diligent Disciples

*2 Peter 1:1–11*

### 3. A List of Goals and Objectives (2 Peter 1:5–11)

#### Expectations (2 Peter 1:5–7)

- Faith
- Moral excellence
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Perseverance
- Godliness
- Brotherly kindness
- Christian love

#### Exhortations (2 Peter 1:8–11)

- One peril paralyzes us: high-tension poles of reality
- One peril immobilizes us: low-vision poles of identity



### LET'S LIVE IT

Your maturity depends upon what you believe and how you behave. How can you make a commitment to grow spiritually from this time forward? Write in the spaces provided some resources and the names of individuals you can bring alongside you to help in your “growing up” process. Close this time by writing down three spiritual growth goals you hope to move toward accomplishing this year.

#### Resources I will use:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Growing-Up Goals for Diligent Disciples

*2 Peter 1:1–11*

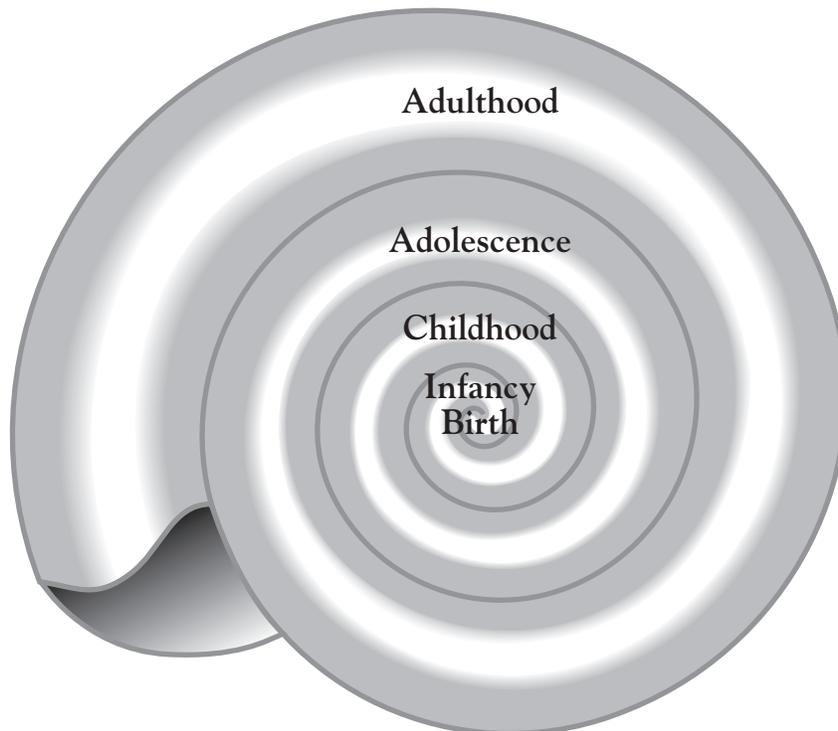
Individuals I will invite to help me grow spiritually:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual growth goals I will pursue:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Ages and Stages Toward Christian Maturity



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# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

## Growing-Up Goals for Diligent Disciples

*2 Peter 1:1–11*

### A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe—  
His craft and pow'r are great,  
And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right man on our side,  
The man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He—  
Lord Sabaoth His name,  
From age to age the same;  
And He must win the battle.

And tho' this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph thro' us.  
The prince of darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him—  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure:  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly pow'rs,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Thro' Him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also—  
The body they may kill;  
God's truth abideth still:  
His kingdom is forever.

A mighty fortress is our God.

Amen.

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

TEXT: Martin Luther (1483–1546); translated (1852) by Frederick H. Hedge (1805–1890); based on Psalm 46

MUSIC: Martin Luther; Last stanza setting and Choral ending by Bruce Greer

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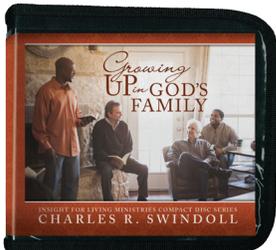
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Growing-Up Goals for Diligent Disciples

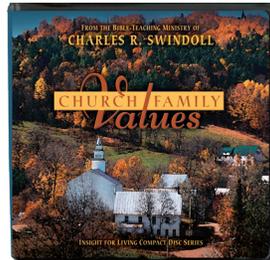
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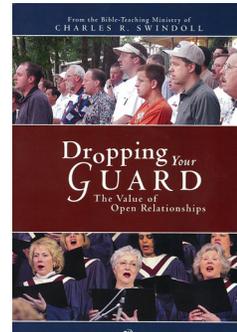
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