

(10-10-99)

*3 Levels of Spiritual Growth*  
**The Spiritual State of All Believers**  
**1 John 2:12-14**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Turn to:*
1. 1 John 2:12-14
  2. This morning we come to an interruption in our text of 1 John chapter two.
  3. John pauses for a brief moment to peel back the veil to show us the spiritual state of the believers he has been addressing.
  4. Read 1 John 2:12-14
  5. As we will see here this morning all believers are at different stages in their growth in Christ.
  6. Some are *fathers* and *young men* while others are still *children* feeding primarily off of others.
  7. There comes a time in our spiritual life when we break from being a child to then becoming a spiritual *young man* to then becoming a *father*.

*EVEN Paul said: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."*

8. But that doesn't just happen.
9. We must spend time with God in prayer and the study of His Word in order to grow.
10. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
11. 1 Peter 2:2 says, As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.
12. In order to grow spiritually we must be *diligent* to rightly divide the word and we must *desire* it as a newborn babe.
13. <sup>But</sup> There must also be a third component. We must do what it says!
14. James 1:22 says, But be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.
15. All of John's readers were children but not all were children, some were fathers and young men.

## I. The Designation of All Believers (v.12)

### A. They Are Children

- This is directed to the entire Assembly.*
1. "Little children" Gr.teknia, "a little or small child" (Strong/Kittel). This term was used in the NT of a "kindly address by teachers to their disciples" (Strong). It is "an affectionate address" (Kittel).
  2. John has already addressed the believers as "little children"
    - a) ✓1 John 2:1
    - b) ✓1 John 2:28
    - c) ✓1 John 3:7
    - d) ✓1 John 3:18
    - e) ✓1 John 4:4
    - f) ✓1 John 5:21
  3. Jesus addressed His disciples as "little children" in John 13:33 - "Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.
  4. Paul addressed the believers at Galatia as "little children" in Gal.4:19 - My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.

### B. They Are Forgiven

#### 1. Of their sins

"Sins" Gr.hamartia, means "offense." The root word (hamatano) means "to miss the mark, to err, trespass" (Strong)

1. John uses this word 17 times in this letter (1 John 1:7-9;2:2,12;3:4,5,8,9;4:10;5:16,17)
2. Paul uses the root form in Rom.3:23 from which we get our definition: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

“Fall short” Gr.hustereo, “to come behind, suffer need, be in want” (Strong)

3. Believers are forgiven of their Sins

“Forgiven” Gr.aphiemi, “to go, to send forth, to send away” (Strong).

- a) 1 John 1:9
- b) James 5:15 - And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
- c) Rom.4:7-8 - "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."
- d) Col.2:13 - And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses. *(PARDONED)*

“Forgiven” Gr.charizomai, “to grant as a favor, to pardon” (Strong)

2. For His name's sakea) This English phrase is used elsewhere in the Bible

- (1) For God's righteousness - Ps.23:3 - He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness *For His name's sake.*
- (2) For God's Power - Ps.106:8 (reference to the Israelites and Egyptians at the Red Sea) Nevertheless He saved them *for His name's sake*, That He might make His mighty power known.

b) We are forgiven for our sin for "His name's sake"

- (1) Because God sent His Son to die in our place we are forgiven "for His name's sake."
- (2) Because Jesus' death and resurrection was a satisfaction to God, we are forgiven "for His name's sake."
- (3) Because Jesus is God and able to provide eternal redemption to those who call upon Him, we are forgiven "for His name's sake."

Now in vv 13-14  
John names his  
address to 3 groups

## II. The Pattern of Growth for All Believers (vv.13-14)

“These very clear distinctions identify 3 stages of spiritual growth in God’s family.” John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

“John does not exclude women from consideration here but employs the language categories of his day, which used masculine forms for mixed groups.” Keener, Craig S., *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

### A. Spiritual Fathers (vv.13,14)

“Fathers” Gr. pateres, “literally and figuratively”  
(Strong)

#### 1. This indicates spiritual maturity

- a) 1 Tim.5:1-2 - Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.
- b) Mat.12:50 - "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

#### 2. They have an intimate knowledge of God

- a) They “have known Him who is from the beginning” (mentioned also in v.14)
- b) “known” Gr. ginosko, “signifies to be taking in

knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely."

Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

"Fathers," are the most mature. They "have a deep knowledge of the Eternal God. The pinnacle of spiritual maturity is to know God in His fullness." John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

- c) Phil.3:10 - That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

B. Spiritual Young Men (vv.13-14)

"Young men" are those who, while not yet having the mature experience of knowing God in the Word and through life, do know sound doctrine. They are strong against sin and error because they have His Word in them. Thus they overcome the wiles of the devil, who makes havoc of children (cf. Eph. 4:14). Since Satan's efforts are in falsehood and deception, they have overcome him." John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

1. They have overcome the wicked one

"Overcome" Gr.nikao, "to subdue, conquer,

prevail, get the victory”

- a) As children of God we all have overcome the spirit of the Antichrist - 1 John 4:4
- b) As children of God we have overcome the world - 1 John 5:4-5
- c) As a spiritual young man, you have overcome satan - vv.13-14

Warren Wiserbe,

“The “young men” are the conquerors: they have overcome the wicked one, Satan, who is the prince of this world system. How did they overcome him? Through the Word of God! “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you” (1 John 2:14). The “young men,” then, are not yet fully mature; but they are maturing, for they use the Word of God effectively. The Word is the only weapon that will defeat Satan (Eph. 6:17).” The Bible Exposition Commentary, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

2. They are strong through the Word of God

“Strong” Gr.ischuros, “Mighty” (Vine), “Powerful” (BADG)

- a) Eph.6:10 - Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
- b) 2 Tim.2:1 - You therefore, my son, be strong



in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

“Strong” Gr. endunamoo, “to enable, empower, to increase in strength” (Strong)

3. The Word of God will make you powerful in Christ

- a) To prevent sin - Ps. 119:11 - Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!
- b) To overcome sin's bondage - John 8:31-32 - Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
- c) To do His will - Col.3:16-17 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

C. Spiritual Children (v.13)

“Children” Gr. paidia, “A small child with reference to age” (Kittel), “A very young child, (infant) of a new born” (BADG), “immature ones” (Wiersbe)

“These are young Christians who have not yet grown up in Christ.” Wiersbe, Warren W., The Bible Exposition Commentary, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

They have only “the basic awareness of God and need to grow.” John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997, [Online]  
Available: Logos Library System.

1. 1 Peter 2:2 - As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.
2. 2 Thess.1:3 - We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

### **CONCLUSION**

This “is the Christian family! All of them are “born ones,” but some of them have grown out of infancy into spiritual manhood and adulthood” Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997, [Online]  
Available: Logos Library System.

1. As a believers we all are children of God
2. Read 1 John 3:1
3. We all act on the Word differently.
4. I pray that we will move from spiritual *children to young men and then to Fathers.*