

Growing Up in Christ

Why is growing up in Christ important?

Let's look at two (2) scriptures that address this question:

- Colossians 1:25-28 (KJV)
- Ephesians 4:11-16 (KJV)

What does growing up or being mature in Christ mean?

The way I was led to provide an answer to that question is to ask you to look at being mature in Christ as being spiritually fit and to help with the teaching I'm going to compare being spiritually fit with being physically fit. Just like being physically fit is important for quality of life reasons, being spiritually fit is important for Kingdom of God reasons. Spiritual fitness or maturity in Christ isn't what we are after accepting Jesus as our Savior. Neither is it something we can achieve in our own strength as if we're better, more dedicated or more gifted than others. Being spiritually fit or growing up in Christ is about letting God do His part in our lives and us doing our part. And for the born again child of God our part is to simply believe right and then you will see right results by His Spirit manifest in your life.

In 1 John 5:3 (Ampl) it says God's commandments (or His words) are not irksome, burdensome, oppressive or grievous. In James 3:17 (Ampl) it says the wisdom that comes from above (which includes God's commandments) are peace-loving, courteous, willing to yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits. In James 1:22-25 NLT it says this about doing God's commandments **"And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling your self. For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law – the law that sets you free – and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it."** The doing right is a fruit of believing right. If you focus on believing right good fruit or doing right will follow.

As Christians we are predisposed to like the word of God and we are equipped to be like Jesus. We're equipped to be like Jesus all the time. That means in both the good times and in the bad times. Doing what Jesus would do in the good times seem to be easier for most but when we are faced with tests, trials, temptations, challenges of life how do we do what Jesus would do? How do stay in the word, how do we demonstrate God's kingdom or God's way of doing things and get God's results in our every day life on a regular basis? Let's look what we have been given by God.

- We have been given the nature of Christ (2 Peter 1:3-4);

- We have been given the love of God (Ro 5:5, 1Cor 13:8)
- We have a Lord who loves us and prays for us (Heb 7:25);
- The Spirit of God is in us and He's our Helper (John 16:7, 13-14);
- A Heavenly Father who has only good things for us (Matt 7:11);
- The angels of God who are sent to minister for us (Heb 1:14);
- The Word of God as our light and nourishment (Prov 6:23; 4:20-23);
- Brothers and sisters in the Lord to encourage and help us (Heb 10:24-25); and
- Grace and mercy when we need it (Heb 4: 16).

All of the above has been give to help us grow up in Christ.

Praise God the deck is stacked in your favor!!!

This lesson is filled with tips that will help you grow up in Christ or help you improve your spiritual fitness. Seek God's guidance on what works for you. He has customized a plan just for you. Like a good nutritionist, physical trainer, or life coach will customize a program that works for you. They will utilize their own experiences and knowledge they have acquired and work with you to understand what your needs are and how you react to certain stimulus. The Holy Spirit who is God, who is good, He is the ultimate source of all knowledge, He knows you better than you know your self and He knows what's going to be in your life at any given point in time. Allow Him to continue to show you the perfect spiritual fitness plan for your life. I want to encourage you to let Him continue to grow you up in Christ, you will not be disappointed.

To start things off, in any good holistic physical fitness plan there are seven (7) key areas that have an impact on how well we do with becoming and staying physically fit.

1. Make a decision to change to your life.
2. Proper food/supplement intake
3. Exercise to build muscle
4. Get rid of excess weight
5. Emotional/mental soundness
6. Adequate rest
7. Staying the course

From a spiritual perspective we can use the above areas to help you identify how to cooperate with God as He is growing you up in Christ.

Even though the categories are listed in sequential order from a spiritual perspective only two must happen in the order listed above. Can you identify which two?

Category 1

Make a decision to grow up: Col 1: 25-28, Eph 4:11-16

Action: Decide to love Jesus the way he said you should demonstrate your love for Him (John 14:21 (KJV) – *keepeth* means to “keep guard, obey, observe”)

Category 2

Proper Food/Supplement intake

Action: Spend quality time daily in the word of God and in prayer. Whether you’re a new Christian that is on milk or a more seasoned Christian that is eating meat both have to want and let God teach them and grow them up in Christ. And God uses His word and His Spirit to grow us up. Jesus said in Mark 11:22-26 that prayer was important in our daily affairs. Prayer is mentioned as if it’s a normal, usual, familiar, habitual occurrence with the Father.

Build an intimate knowledge of the truth that God is a good God all the time. He is not your problem. He never tests you with evil to grow you up (James 1:12-17). Ask God to help you know Him and His ways intimately. Ask Him to teach you the truth. Guard against the traditions of men. The bible says that they make the word of God of no effect (Matthew 15:6, Mark 7:13).

Since growing up is important for the Kingdom of God it’s critically important for your psychological well being to know the truth about whether God plans, develops and puts in place hardships to test or train you?

Let’s review some scriptures

Job 1:1-22 God protected Job

Luke 18-1-9, God hears your prayers the first time

Matt 6:9-13, Jesus was our substitute.

Gen 2:16-17 God didn’t need the tree of good and evil to teach or grow Adam up or He wouldn’t have told him to not eat of it!

Trust in God completely and do what the Word of God says for you to do

Category 3

Shed Excess Baggage or Excess Weight

Action: Streamline Your Focus Get your eyes off yourself

Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV) – Put your focus on Jesus.

Category 4

Build Lean Muscles

Action: Increase your strength by becoming well grounded in the authority that you have as a believer. There are many scriptures that reference our authority that we have because of Christ and God's plan for us to walk in that authority. The epistles are an excellent place to increase your knowledge in this area. Study the all of the Epistles intently.

Eph 2:4-6, 3:8-12 (KJV) – Focus on your place in Him

Category 5

Obtain Emotional/Mental Soundness

Action: Live a disciplined life. Man is a spirit, he lives in a body and he has a soul. In the beginning the bible says that God breathed the breath of life into man and he became a living soul. God made man an earth suit, i.e. a body. We have a suit/body made from the substance of the earth. Our soul (mind, will and emotions) is the bridge and the "synthesis engine" or "creative tool" that our spirit man uses to influence our earth suit and our surroundings. Discipline your soul and body to follow your spirit as your spirit follows God's word.

2 John 2 (KJV) – a prospering soul is God's will for everyone

2 Tim 1:7 (NLT) – a spirit of self discipline is yours (emotional and mental soundness)

Category 6

Adequate Rest

Action: Pursue and obtain rest. From a physical perspective adequate rest gives your body time to rebuild or restore depleted hormones, cells and other vital chemicals that have a positive impact on your health and energy level. Similarly is rest from a spiritual perspective. Rest is necessary for you to operate at the highest level of spiritual effectiveness. So what is "rest" as the bible defines it from a spiritual perspective. Let's look at some scriptures:

Psalms 23 (KJV) – The word of God has power to restore or make new, or make whole our soul.

Hebrews 4 (KJV) – Obtain your promise of rest by faith and study of the word of God

Category 7

Staying the Course

Action: Replenish yourself with joy and you will endure and see God's promise come to pass in your life.

Neh 8:10 (KJV) - Your strength is found in the Lord's joy. It's your treasure.

Hebrews 6:10-15 (KJV) – The believer endures. We are endurance runners. God stacked the deck in our favor we have all it takes to run and see the promise and finish our course.

In summary, as I stated earlier Holy Spirit is your Fitness Instructor. He is the ultimate source of all true knowledge, He knows you better than you know yourself and He knows what's going to be in your life at any given point in time. Follow Him as He unveils the perfect spiritual fitness plan for your life.