

Week 12: FORMED Series

Called to Maturity

Hebrews 5:11-6:3

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. **12** In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **13** Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

6 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, **2** instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3** And God permitting, we will do so.

Scholarly Insight:

Cockerill provides these comments on the text:¹

"The pastor must defer further discussion of Christ's high priesthood because his hearers are 'dull of hearing.' This dullness of hearing is explained in 5:12 as an inexcusable regression into spiritual immaturity. By contrasting such immaturity (5:13) with spiritual maturity (5:14) the pastor demonstrates the repulsiveness of return to the former and the great desirability of attaining the latter. Thus, in 6:1-3 he exhorts his hearers to leave their immaturity and their fixation on what is elementary and go on to the spiritual maturity/perfection that is in accord with and brought about by Christ's high priestly ministry."

Raymond Brown Suggests:²

"The writer of Hebrews is convinced that his readers' ignorance stems from laziness (11). How can he begin to explain what it means for Christ's priesthood to be 'according to the order of Melchizedek' when they have lost their appetite for Christian truth? Instead of giving their best mind to sound doctrine and its practical application, many of these early Christian readers have become dull in understanding. The word really means 'sluggish'; it is used in the Septuagint of 'slothful men' who refuse to tackle hard work, and occurs again later in this letter describing 'sluggish' people who need a good shake-up (6:12). It here describes those who develop a couldn't-care-less attitude to the study of holy Scripture, and have failed to give themselves to a regular, methodical and painstaking study of its teaching and its relevance in everyday life."

This week's sermon:

Brian split the text into three parts:

1. The diagnosis of their spiritual state and strong rebuke (5:11-14).
2. The issue/danger that their trajectory (implied).
3. The call and encouragement to move forward to maturity (6:1-3).

¹ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Eerdmans, 2012), pg 254.

² Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, (IVP, 2021), "The Problem of Ignorance (5:11-14)".

A.W Tozer: "Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth."

In response, he encouraged us to take stock of our own current spiritual state and determine how we ought to "move forward" into maturity.

For Reflection:

1. We invite you to look back over your life and mark the seasons of growth, stagnation, and regression. What was happening in each season; not just externally, but in your heart's posture toward Jesus?
 - The sermon suggests plateaus often coincide with life being "very full of other things" — relational issues with others, tiredness, big transitions. Is there a current season or pressure doing that to you right now?
2. If you did a "spiritual audit" today, what would you find.... growth, plateau, or regression? Don't answer with what you currently *do* (serving, giving, attending) but with what is changing and developing in you (love, faith, wisdom, self-control etc).
3. Now do the same exercise for growth: what seasons stand out, and what was different about your heart in them? Was there a specific intention or pursuit behind it?
4. Hebrews 6:1 pictures the author moving forward *with* the readers, not just instructing from a distance. Who is walking with you toward maturity right now.... and who might you need to invite in?
5. The chapter ends, "God permitting" emphasising that maturity is God's work, not just your effort. Is there anywhere that you have been relying on willpower alone, and where do you instead need to rely on His grace?
6. What's one small, concrete step toward maturity you could take in the coming weeks, not an activity to add, but a heart posture to practice?

Pray for each other:

Jesus, you call us forward, not because we've arrived, but because you haven't finished with us yet. Thank you that our growth was never meant to rest on our own strength, that it's your grace at work in us, patient and sure. Forgive us for the seasons we've settled for milk when you had solid food waiting. Give us hearts inclined toward you, even when the world around us pulls the other way. Holy Spirit, show each of us where we truly are today, and meet us there. Grow in us a hunger for maturity, and the courage to keep walking, whatever it costs. Amen.

Formation Practice:

As we exploring being Formed by Jesus this series; we want to encourage you to do this simple exercise every day for the next 2 months. It can take 5 minutes or more, whatever you are able to achieve (and as you do it more and more, you'll likely find it easier to spend longer listening and reflecting).

"Draw Near Daily" Rhythm (5–10 minutes)

- ***Come:*** Quiet yourself before God.
- ***Confess:*** Be honest about sin/struggle.
- ***Receive:*** Remember what Christ has done.
- ***Respond:*** Take one step of obedience.