



# Growing Up

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

*1 Corinthians 3:1*

CUTE AS A BUG'S EAR. ADORABLE. PLAYFUL. CUDDLY. Even those who do not like cats think kittens are cute. They entertain with their disjointed but enthusiastic play, their tiny faces are the picture of beatific innocence.

But as companions kittens have a limited appeal. Their attention spans are as short as their stubby little legs, their brains are still mush, and their vocabulary is limited. They seem to be restricted to but two modes of operation: frantic, buzz saw activity or near-comatose slumber.

One does not converse with a kitten. One *plays* with a kitten.

A mature cat is not as cute as when it was a kitten, but one can have a relationship

with a cat. Its brain is more developed, more experienced, and its vocabulary is broader. A mature cat can still play (if it so chooses), but it can also reason, meditate, and carry on a meaningful conversation.



Brand new Christian babies—of any age—are cute and endearing. Because they have not yet been indoctrinated into the lingua franca of the church, they speak with a refreshing simplicity, using words that come not from the textbooks of religious canon, but from the heart. They pray to their new Father with candor, stumbling syntax, and brutal honesty. Jesus, to them, is a “Savior” in the most spe-



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We have at our home a three-year-old daughter. It is the undivided opinion of our family that she is the smartest, brightest, and cutest little girl that ever lived. And she says very clever things. We all take great delight in her. But if, at this stage of her life, something should happen and her body kept growing but her mind stopped, and she went on saying the same clever things she is saying now all the while her body matured and grew into full womanhood, we would no longer find delight in what she says. Our joy would be turned to sorrow; we would feel great grief at the sight of our dear one suffering from arrested development.

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cific definition of the word: memories of the cloying residue of the old life are still fresh, and their new Lord is the one clothing them anew. They still remember from whence they came. They still remember in painful detail from what Jesus saved them.

These babes in Christ, however, still swim in the shallow end. They are spiritually undeveloped. Though often eager to learn, their understanding is limited, and they haven't yet the vocabulary to grasp the deeper levels of deity and a personal relationship with the Lord. They see this freshly discovered faith in blacks and whites, and very few shades of gray. Because there indeed are absolutes, they think just about *everything* is an absolute, which leaves them vulnerable, and their belief-level fragile.



God loves “kittens,” but He also wants them to grow up.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to encourage us upward into maturity—to instill in each of us a desire, a hunger to develop a deeper, more meaningful and rewarding relationship with God.

A human father may fall in love with his newborn daughter. He may be firm in his belief that she is surely the most beautiful

thing he has ever laid eyes on. Every time her large black eyes look up into his he melts. But at some point he realizes he would like to sit down and have a conversation with his daughter, teach her a few of the life-lessons he has collected along the way. He wants to counsel her, and he wants her to understand the complexities of life so she can take care of herself whenever her dad isn't around to protect her.

God the Father falls in love with every newborn Christian. Every time His new child gazes up at His face, His heart melts with a love deeper than any love experienced by man. But at some point God desires to have a grown-up conversation with His child, to teach Him the life-lessons he will need along life's path. He is eager to share His timeless wisdom, the “deep magic” of His ways, so that His child will be able to handle himself when the going gets rough.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

Ephesians 4:17-18 NKJV



Perhaps the saddest picture is that of an adult still playing with a baby's rattle. Believers are to cast off the things of childhood in favor of the deeper things of God.

The Christian life is a process, a journey. It is traveled on a road that should be steadily rising into a deeper, more substantial relationship with Christ Jesus and our heavenly Father—all made possible by the indwelling Spirit.

And He wants us to grow up.

