



Growing As Disciples (Section Introduction)

Having taken hold of our freedom in Christ, we now need to concentrate on growing to maturity. In this section we will learn how to stand firm, how to relate to other people and how to stay on the path of becoming more like Jesus.

SESSION 10: Walking In Freedom Every Day

Focus verse: "Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (*Hebrews 5:14*)

Objective: To help people understand that taking hold of their freedom in Christ is not a one-off experience - it needs to become a way of life - and to provide them with tools to help.

Focus Truth:

Our success in continuing to walk in freedom and grow in maturity depends on the extent to which we continue to renew our minds and train ourselves to distinguish good from evil.

GROWING TO MATURITY

* Growth should be our natural state

A church filled with mature Christians = an asset
 A church full of Christians who are 'old' & immature = trouble

"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3a)

'A prevailing pattern of sin (e.g. jealousy & quarreling) demonstrated that they still had a long way to go before they could be considered to be mature Christians.'

Verse 2 literally = *I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not **able** (to receive it). Indeed you are still not **able**.*

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* We are not expected to be instantly mature

New Christians: still operate according to the flesh
 don't fully understand what happened the moment they became Christians
 still have unresolved conflicts that allow the enemy to take advantage



BUT... ... Many do not move past the 'baby stage'

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, implies this is an abnormal situation; or is supposed to be. But it seems common in the Western church.

Any Christian can become an old Christian - it just needs time
 Any Christian can become a mature Christian - but many don't

Babies are cute



But grown-ups who act like babies are less attractive

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BARRIERS TO MATURITY

Not Taking Hold Of Our Spiritual Freedom

" His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (2 Peter 1:3)

Being free is not the same thing as maturity.

Maturity: A process of growth that continues throughout our lives as we apply ourselves to knowing God & His Word.

Freedom: A position we take in response to Christ's victory over sin & Satan.

We are either free or bound in any area of our lives.

We don't grow into freedom, we take possession of freedom by the authority we have in Christ.

But freedom & maturity are inextricably linked - if don't take hold of our freedom we can't mature.

Wanting or trying to mature cannot help until we deal with the footholds of the enemy in our lives.

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Not Taking Personal Responsibility

* No-one else can repent or believe for you.

* No-one else can forgive for you.

* No-one else can submit to God for you. (Others can encourage us, love us & support us)

* We have to choose for ourselves to take God at His Word & stand firm.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1)

* You are the one who has to decide to 'stand firm'.

* We cannot blame our difficulties (obstacles in our past, relationships or present situation) for our lack of growth or freedom.

'Nothing and no-one can prevent you from becoming the person God wants you to be - except you!'... We will not mature until we make the decision to take God at His word, even when our feelings scream at us that it's not true. It takes effort and commitment.'

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Not Knowing The Basic Truths

"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! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14)

They hadn't taken the trouble to make deep connections with the 'elementary truths' (specifically the truth about righteousness). So they were going round and round in circles, confused about the same old issues & never making real progress.



In Christ we are completely righteous. The key issue for maturity: do we really know it or is it just head knowledge? (see *Romans 8:1*)

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Faulty Thinking

"Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." (Hebrews 6:1-2)

How do we leave the elementary teachings behind? By being settled in our mind that what makes us pleasing to God is simply what Christ has done on the cross. Full stop!

But we still carry around with us unhelpful ways of thinking, based on past experiences - strongholds that feel true.



BUT... *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*

* Note: the emphasis on our responsibility: we have to fight
we have to actively demolish arguments & pretensions
we have to take captive every thought

* Wielding the weapons God has given us takes application, takes effort, takes practice

* One of the main weapons is **truth** (see the lists from Sessions 1-3)

Breaking habitual patterns of thinking takes time.

Actively replace lies with truth over a 6-week period, by speaking out the lists.

'This strategy is effective only in so far as you seriously and methodically decide to reject lies and commit to truth.'

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Not Training Ourselves To Distinguish Good From Evil

"But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." (Hebrews 5:14)



We grow in spiritual discernment by becoming intimately acquainted with the truth, so that when a counterfeit thought comes along we recognize it for what it is.

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STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH

Uncovering Lies

* During Steps To Freedom Process (especially Forgiveness step)

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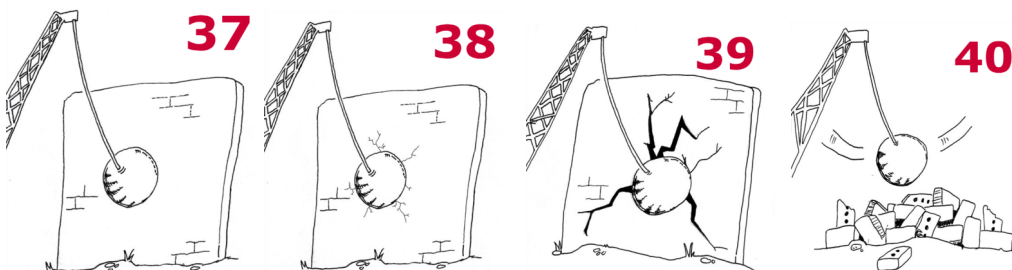
* Fear appendix (at back of Steps... book)

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Dealing With Lies (Replace with truth)

* Stronghold-Busting

- Determine the lie
- Find as many Bible verses as you can that state the truth; write them down
- Write a prayer/declaration: I renounce the lie that ...
I announce the truth that ...
- Read the Bible verses and say the prayer/declaration for 40 days or more



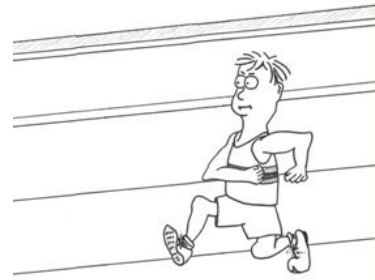
See the example 'Stronghold-Buster'

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A LONG-TERM VIEW

Compare Paul's analogy of a race: We need to know where we are going (spiritual maturity) and, like Paul, commit ourselves to run the race for the long term.

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things"
(Philippians 3:13-14)



'If we feel we have to do everything at once we are likely to start but not finish, to burn out and conclude that we have failed. If, however, we set out a long-term plan, we can deal with one area at a time and are sure we really have changed our thinking before moving on to the next area.'

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PRACTICAL STEPS

- * Use the Walking In Freedom 21 Day Devotional
- * Make yourself accountable to someone
- * Go through the teaching again

In The Coming Week

Work out a stronghold-buster for the most significant lie you have uncovered & start work on it.

Big Question (to consider before the next session)

When another Christian does something wrong, what would be a good way for you to respond? The Bible tells us not to judge others but it also makes clear that Christians sometimes need to be disciplined. What is the difference?

EXAMPLE OF A 'STRONGHOLD-BUSTER'

Taking Comfort In Food Rather Than God

The lie: that overeating brings lasting comfort.

Proverbs 25:28

Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

Galatians 5:15

So I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Psalm 63:4-5

I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Psalm 119:78

May your unfailing love be my comfort...

Lord, I renounce the lie that overeating brings lasting comfort. I announce the truth that You are the God of all comfort and that Your unfailing love is the only legitimate and real comfort. I affirm that I now live by the Spirit and do not have to gratify the desires of the flesh. Whenever I feel in need of comfort, instead of turning to foods I choose to praise You and be satisfied as with the richest of foods. Fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit and live through me as I grow in self-control. Amen

Tick off the days:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40		