

# Adulthood

Wednesday, December 7, 2011

*"...I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father." (1 John 2:13)*

## **A. The stage in which Christians are spiritual "young adults"**

1. This refers to all, male or female, young or old chronologically, who are "strong in the Lord"

2. These are those "who have overcome the wicked one"

*"...I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father...I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one." (1 John 2:13, 14)*

a. They are not perfect (not without sin), but are moving toward more Christ-likeness:

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

- Must be instructed that people have a natural tendency to sin, that we all are capable of sinning, that we do sin, and that God has provided a process of ongoing forgiveness;
- Sin must be taken very seriously;
- Confession and repentance is an ongoing process;
- What took place at Calvary is embraced and everything is evaluated through the Cross;
- Spiritual warfare - the reality of warfare (the tactics of our enemy regardless of origin: manipulation, intimidation, domination and learning to recognize each and not yielding to these);
- Spiritual armor, an understanding, availability and daily application;
- All people are sinners by nature and by practice;
- Process of conversion - all our sins are forgiven - past, present, and future;
- Understanding that even after we become Christians, we still sin and still need to confess;
- This kind of confession is not offered to gain God's acceptance, but to remove the barrier to fellowship that our sin has put between us and God;
- It is difficult, however, for many people to admit their faults and shortcomings, even to God. It takes humility and honesty to recognize our weaknesses, and most of us would rather pretend that we are strong. But we need not fear revealing our sins to God - He knows them already;
- God will not push us away, no matter what we've done. Instead He will draw us to Himself as we confess our sins.

b. Their faith has had time to be tested, and they have demonstrated that they are truly "born of God"

*"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)*

- Since wickedness is all about us and life problems are overwhelming, we learn that while evil is stronger than we are, God is stronger than evil.
- The victory is won by sacrifice - Christ's death in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, and the sacrifices we make because of our faith in Him. As we face the battle with Satan, we should not fear it or try to escape from it, but we should loyally serve Christ, who alone brings victory (see Romans 8:34-39). It is through God's Word and by His Holy Spirit that we can overcome this world.

*"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." (Rev. 12:11)*

*"...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5:4, 5)*

- Obedience: Jesus never promised that obeying Him would be easy. But the hard work and self-discipline of serving Christ is no burden to those who love Him.

- Spiritual Stress Testing/Load bearing: learning the rhythms of God's grace, His assignments, and realizing the difference between a Saul-type ministry and a David-type ministry:

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)*

- These are those who have struggled with Satan's temptations and have won; they are becoming seasoned young warriors.

- As young adults move from victory to victory, they grow in their relationship with Christ as characterized by:

- Deepening desire for God's Word (reading their Bible daily is desirable as food for the body);
- Walks in the Spirit - from time to time in the flesh; but knows the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit and desires the Spirit;
- Active in serving others, giving, etc.;
- Not easily swayed or deceived by false doctrines;
- Grounded in the basics - growth evident by the fruit of the Holy Spirit;
- Increasing desire for fellowship with other believers;
- Lessened desire for worldly possessions; selfless ambitions; spirit of competition greatly reduced;
- No difficulty in repenting/forgiving others;

- Increasing compassion for the lost;
- Actively assisting in the spiritual development of others;
- Growing sense of God, His character and His will;
- Life not filled with fear, anxiety, growing in continuous peace;
- Seldom covetous, boastful, prideful, manipulative, etc.;
- Seldom financial difficulties (living within means...limited debt);
- Seldom desires pleasure; sensational, roller-coaster type life;
- Life marked by growing disciplines (physically, mentally, and spiritually);
- Growing victory over sin;
- Growing, powerful prayer life;
- Sincere interest in worship;
- Accountable to leadership;
- Overall, balance life-style;
- Growing degree of grace and mercy toward others and self.

## **B. The source of their strength is the Word of God:**

1. Only as the Word of God "abides" (remains) in them are they strong:

*"...I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one." (1 John 2:14)*

*"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." (John 15:42).*

2. Even as David saw the value of letting the Word of God abide in his heart:

*"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)*

- Hiding (keeping) God's Word in our hearts is a deterrent to sin. This alone should inspire us to memorize Scripture. But memorization alone will not keep us from sin; we must also put God's Word to work in our lives, making it a vital guide for everything we do.

3. For this reason, then, we need to heed the admonition of Peter:

*"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1 Peter 2:1-3)*

4. Evidences of healthy growth include:

- Less influenced by selfish desires and places an ever increasing measure of value in the well being of others; "I" and "Me" are increasingly being replaced with "You" and "Us";
- More desirous of allowing God's plans to be realized than self goals;
- Becoming more controlled by the Holy Spirit as opposed to fleshly desires.

## **C: Teaching:**

It is necessary that believers in this stage continue in the basic disciplines of the faith; they must be taught and be thoroughly grounded in sound Biblical doctrine and that they learn that all teaching must be tested by God's inerrant, infallible Word. It must be understood that a person's character, behavior and future are all shaped by what a person believes to be truth (see Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; 17:19). The following serves as an overview of material that must be taught and lived out by the disciple.

1. God's Word: the source of your strength;
2. The Source of Power: the Holy Spirit filled life;
3. The Enemy: we're not alone;
4. God's righteousness (the Book of Romans);
5. Promises Of God To Be Victorious: understanding Satan's tactics and your weapons to overcome him;
6. The Disciplines of Our Faith: basic toolset;
7. Applied Kingdom Stewardship: fully understanding that we are managers, not owners.

It is only as young warriors have demonstrated time and again that they are in fact growing stronger in the Lord, as reviewed and confirmed by another more spiritually mature believer, that they then have progressed to the final stage of the Christian life...