



# Attitudes of the Heart

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The Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV)

# Attitudes of the Heart

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# Preface

Many churches put an inordinate emphasis on outward conformity and reformation and teach very little on spiritual attitudes of the heart. For this reason, when I became the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in April of 2010, one of my first priorities was to teach a series on internal attitudes that the Holy Spirit desires to produce in every Christian. This book is the culmination of that series.

## How to use this Book

**Open the Bible.** This book is designed for Bible study. In order to fully benefit from the studies contained here, you must be willing to open your Bible and search the scriptures for answers. These studies are based upon the King James Version of the Bible. If you are accustomed to reading another version you may need to have both opened in order to discover the right answers.

**Take your Time.** The purpose of any Bible study is not to race to the finish line. If your time spent studying scripture does not produce a better understanding of the word of God then it is in vain. Take your time going through these studies. Stop and think about what you've read and take the time to apply the truths to your life.

**Reflect.** Throughout these studies you will see the symbol  followed by a question. There is no room to write an answer because these are designed for meditation. Take a minute and think about how the question applies practically to your life. Apply the study and be willing to change where God prompts you to. You will also see questions prefaced by **Think**. These were originally questions for open discussion in our church. There are no right or wrong answers for these just your own personal opinion.

**Pray.** Bible truths are only imparted by the Holy Spirit of God. While you study, pray that God would help you to understand and apply His word to your life.

## Contact

For more studies and audio sermons visit: [www.rickcowan.com](http://www.rickcowan.com) or [www.calvarybaptistwindsor.com](http://www.calvarybaptistwindsor.com)  
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# 4



## Growth

### 2 Peter 1:5-7

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;  
And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;  
And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

**I**n the last two lessons we dealt with two foundational attitudes – faith and obedience. The Christian’s entire walk with God can really be summed up as a daily exercise of these two attitudes. This lesson naturally flows from the previous two. When a Christian man or woman consistently exercises his faith through obedience he will inevitably advance in Christian maturity. This increasing maturity is what we call *spiritual growth*. *Growth* is our next attitude of the heart.

📖 2 Thess 1:3. **Q.** Why did Paul thank God for the Thessalonians?

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📖 2 Peter 3:18. **Q.** What two things does Peter tell us to do?

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Peter indicates that *growth* is actually a command from God. God instructs us to grow spiritually and He provides all the means necessary to do so. He expects our hearts to be orientated toward spiritual growth, which makes this a legitimate *attitude of the heart*.

## What Spiritual Growth is Not

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Before we get into a Biblical understanding of what spiritual growth *is*, let's consider what it *is not*. First of all, *spiritual growth is not a means by which we become accepted by God.*

 Eph 1:6. **Q.** What has God “made us” by His grace?


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**Q.** What is significant about the fact that this statement is in the past tense?


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 2 Cor 5:21. **Q.** Why was Christ “made sin” for us?

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 Philippians 3:9. **Q.** Whose righteousness do we have? How did we get it?

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We were accepted by God the moment we received Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord by faith. God's acceptance of us had nothing to do with our worthiness. He accepted us “while we were yet sinners” (Rom 5:8), while we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1) and while we were the “servants of sin” (Rom 6:17). He did it, not because we deserved it, but for the “sake of Christ” (Eph 4:32). This acceptance was immediate and irrevocable (Heb 13:5). Having been accepted by God on the basis of Christ's righteousness and not our own merit, it makes no sense to attempt to *earn* His continued acceptance through obedience or spiritual growth. Every Christian should strive for continual obedience to the Lord, but this is the outworking of our acceptance by God and not the reason for it.

 **Think.** *What pitfalls might a Christian encounter if he believes his acceptance by God is dependent upon the rate or quality of his spiritual growth?*

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Next, consider that *spiritual maturity is not necessarily linked to how long someone has been saved.*

📖 Job 32:9. **Q.** What *cannot* always be said about “great” or “aged men”?

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A Christian’s stage of spiritual growth is not necessarily related to how long he or she has been a Christian. Some grow fast, some grow slow, and some recede in their growth. There *should be* a definite progression in our spiritual growth all throughout our salvation, but unfortunately this not always the case.

📖 Heb 5:11-14. **Q.** v12. What did the writer to the Hebrews believe the Hebrews should have been able to do?

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v11-12. **Q.** What was the writer not able to do because of their immaturity?

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v14. **Q.** Spiritual maturity does not necessarily relate to time. How does one become spiritually strong?

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🧠 **Think.** *What could be some of the negative results if a Christian does not grow at a rate proportionate to how long he has been saved?*

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**Do you believe that the length of time you have been saved, and your current stage of spiritual growth are proportionate? If not, what has stunted your spiritual growth?**

Next, consider that *spiritual growth and Bible knowledge are not synonymous*

📖 1 Cor 8:1. **Q.** What affect can knowledge have on a man?

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🌱 **Think.** *Considering 1 Timothy 3:6 how might equating knowledge with spiritual growth lead to problems in the church?*

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Head knowledge and spiritual growth are not the same. Growth comes as a man learns scripture, obeys scripture and becomes closer to God as a result. There are many men who can quote scripture and have knowledge of doctrine, but who do not have the spiritual wisdom or fruit that accompanies growth. A man who learns, but does not grow is susceptible to pride. He can often cause undue discord in the church by his immature reactions to what he perceives to be false doctrine. He has not yet grown to the point where he can handle himself with the grace, meekness or compassion that comes with spiritual maturity.

“*A man who learns but does not grow is susceptible to pride.*”

Now, understanding what spiritual growth *is not* let's look at a passage of scripture that deals with the *stages of spiritual growth*.

## Stages of Spiritual Growth

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📖 1 John 2:12-14. **Q.** What are the three stages of growth found here?

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There are two different terms for *children* in this passage. The first in v12 seems to encompass *all* Christians. This is not an uncommon usage in scripture. Jesus, Paul and John all used this term to refer to the people of God in general (John 13:33, Gal 4:19, 1 John 2:1). Verse 12 indicates that there is something that all children of God have in common, regardless of their stage of growth – that their sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ.

In verse 13 we find another greek word translated “children.” This word refers to those Christians who are **spiritually immature**.




## Children

 v13. **Q.** Why did John write to these “little children?”

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 **Think.** *What are some of the characteristics of a physical baby? Using John’s analogy, how can we relate those characteristics to an immature Christian?*


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A spiritual child doesn’t know much. What he does know is that his sins are forgiven and that he has a new heavenly Father. For the most part, this is the entire span of his spiritual knowledge – that he has entered into a new relationship with God.

Spiritual childhood is a necessary and wonderful stage of spiritual growth. The presence of spiritual babes in the church is an indication that a church is growing and people are getting saved. That being said, when this stage of growth persists for too long it becomes abnormal and even detrimental to a Christian and the church at large.

 1 Cor 3:1-4. **Q.** Considering Paul’s tone in this passage, what did he *expect* from the Corinthians? What did he find?

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**Q.** What were some of the evidences of the spiritual immaturity of the Corinthians?

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As we see in this passage, and as we have already seen in Heb 5:11-14, there is an expected time when a spiritual child should mature. This maturity might happen at a different rate for each Christian, but that doesn’t mean there is not an *expected* rate of spiritual growth. When a Christian passes this point and remains spiritually immature, there is a good possibility that there is something wrong in his spiritual life. Paul expected a natural progression of growth to take place in the Corinthian’s lives, but did not see it. He went on throughout his epistle to correct false doctrine and to rebuke sin. The Christian who remains immature may have misconceptions, false doctrine or sin in their lives.

Consider your own life. Have you passed the childhood stage of spiritual growth? What is different in your life now that you have achieved a measure of spiritual maturity?

📖 Eph 4:11-16. **Q.** This passage indicates there are gifted men whom God has given to the church. These men are to use their spiritual gifts to mature the church (v12-13). According to verse 14, what is one of the results of spiritual growth?

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Spiritually immature Christians are susceptible to false doctrine. It is easy for them to be led astray by cults or other false teachers (Gal 1:6-7, 2 Cor 11:1-4). Like a child, they lack discernment, are vulnerable and are in need of protection from those who would do them harm (1 Cor 4:14-16). They have a basic knowledge of God but have not yet progressed to the point in their *knowledge of the son of God* (Eph 4:13) that they can refute false doctrine or defend the faith.

### ***Young Men***

📖 1 John 2:14. **Q.** For what reasons did John write to the “young men?”

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**Q.** John indicates that men and women at this stage of spiritual growth have “overcome the wicked one.” How did they do this?

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Satan’s chief approach to harming Christians is not through temptation to sin, but through the lure of false doctrine. He often will “disguise himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14). This “light” often comes in the form of false doctrine and cults. The spiritual young men have overcome the wicked one by becoming established in their understanding of the gospel through the study of the word of God. They have built upon the emotional and relational aspects of salvation and have added a solid, biblical theology.

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*They have built upon the emotional and relational aspects of salvation and have added a solid, biblical theology.*  
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📖 Col 2:6-8. **Q.** v7. What three terms are used here to refer to spiritual stability?

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Q. v7. The Colossians were to be established in the faith as they had been \_\_\_\_\_


Learning and applying scripture is the key to spiritual growth. This is the main tool which God has left us with in order to ensure that we mature spiritually. Even the spiritual gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4 are really just different ways of ministering the *word of God* to promote spiritual growth.

 2 Tim 3:14-17. Q. What four things is scripture good (profitable) for?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual growth depends upon our consistent learning and applying of God’s word. Through scripture we learn doctrine, are reprov’d, are corrected and are instructed in how to live righteously. It is through scripture that we are equipped for “every good work.” The spiritual young man has learned this and spends quality time studying the word of God.

 1 Peter 2:1-2. Q. According to this passage, how should we feel about the word of God?


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We will never progress from spiritual immaturity and instability to being firmly grounded in God’s word if we do not have a sincere, heartfelt desire to study scripture. The growth of many Christians is stunted because they do not have the right view of the word of God. They have failed to incorporate it into their daily lives and have failed to learn how to study.

**REFLECT**  
*BEEFECT*


**Do you study the word of God? Basically, studying scripture is reading it with the intent of understanding and applying it. What must you change in your life in order to be able to say that you faithfully study scripture?**

 **Think.** *Spiritual young men know doctrine. They understand the word of God and are rigid defenders of it. They are ready and willing to go to battle over right doctrine, yet they have much growth ahead of them. What are some ways that they might make their immaturity obvious?*

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 **Think.** *Bible knowledge is necessary to overcome Satan, but it is not enough for full spiritual maturity. What do you think the spiritual young man must have before he can be seen as a “spiritual father?”*



Has your knowledge of scripture ever lead you to pride? How might you remain rigid in your defense of scripture, but also show compassion and humility toward others?

### *Fathers*

1 John 2:13,14. **Q.** Why did John write to the spiritual fathers?

Php 3:10. **Q.** What was Paul's desire? \_\_\_\_\_

Paul was one of the greatest Christians who ever lived. He was a spiritual father to many churches, yet one of his sincerest desires was to “know God.” This speaks of more than a simplistic awareness that God is our father. To “know God” in this sense is to have an intimate relationship with Him. These spiritually mature Christians have progressed from a simplistic knowledge of God their father as spiritual children. They have learned scripture and have become defenders of it as spiritual young men. But they have progressed even further ,by not only knowing scripture, but by living it. They have entered into an intimate relationship with God the father.

**Think.** *Considering 1 Peter 5:10 and James 1:2-4, What are some things that may have occurred in the spiritual father's life that has promoted his spiritual growth?*

The spiritual father has experienced answers to prayer. He has endured trials with God at his side. He has seen the word of God proven true over and over again. He not only knows scripture, but he has applied it, proven it and lived it. He has prayed for wisdom and has received it. The spiritual father bears the fruit of the Spirit and has developed a Christ-like character. He not only *knows* scripture, but he has the wisdom and discernment needed to practice and share it.



Are you a spiritual father? What needs to change in your life before it can be said that you have an intimate relationship with God the Father?

## Review: Growth

1. We do not gain acceptance by God through spiritual growth, but what negative effects might a lack of spiritual growth have on our relationship with God?
2. In your own opinion, what types of things might keep someone from growing at a reasonable rate? (Also consider 1 John 2:15-17)
3. Have you ever met someone who could quote scripture but was obviously not very spiritually mature? What impression does this leave on people? How could it hurt them?
4. Why do you think Satan chooses to use false religion and false doctrine to lead immature Christians astray? Why is it effective?
5. Spiritual young men know scripture. They have a solid understanding of theology. Yet in today's church there seems to be very few who really understand doctrine. Why might this be so?
6. How can the church help change this?
7. Why do you think trials and suffering are so effective in producing spiritual maturity?
8. How might a trial in the life of a Christian fail to lead to spiritual maturity?