

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ
371 W. Main Street
Greenwood, IN 46142
(317)888-8288

www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org

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Are You Growing Up?

By Mike Pittman

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

"...but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head - Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

What do all of the above verses have in common? It is clear, isn't it, that they encourage Christians to grow. Are you growing? Let's think about some things which might be an indicator that you are growing up.

You are controlling your speech. "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect ("mature" - M.P.) man, able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2).

What does it say about us when we go around gossiping, backbiting, tying, and speaking unkind words? Isn't it saying that we have some growing up to do?

You are eating solid food. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age... (Hebrews 5:12-14). It's ok to be "a babe." It's not ok to stay one. Progressing to meatier teachings of the word is a sign of growth.

You are becoming less gullible. "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect ("mature" - M.P.) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about

2

with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-15). We all need to get to the point where we can identify truth and error. We need to be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) and be searchers of the scriptures. We should be serious students of the Bible and not have to be spoon-fed the word of God.

You are acting more mature. You are not petty and selfish - you are thinking of the needs of others and of their feelings. You are not easily offended and vengeful. You do not lose control and throw temper tantrums.

Are you growing up?

A Healthy Church

By Dan S. Shipley

I had suspected that we were abusing the word "sound" in reference to churches, preachers and others, but didn't realize how much until I heard a member tell of having a cousin that was not sound and had to be straightened out on the issues. It was not until later that I

learned that "cuz" was 'a deacon in the Baptist church!

"Sound" suffers no injustice when applied to either people or churches, provided its use is warranted and in keeping with its scriptural sense. God employed this word "hugiaino" to convey the distinct idea of general healthiness and wholeness (1 Tim. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:3; & Titus 1:13, e.g.); therefore we would do well to use it thusly. As physical health is more than merely having a few healthy organs, so spiritual health involves a great deal more than just being straight on whatever the current issues happen to be. Perhaps if we would speak in terms of spiritual health instead of soundness" we would not be so apt to be misunderstood. For instance, I would welcome a "Directory of Healthy Churches". Trouble is, who would compile the listings? Who outside the local church could say it was healthy and who inside the local church would say it wasn't.

In the case of the Laodiceans, God has shown us the possibility of a church being blind to its own condition (Rev. 3). They saw themselves as being spiritually healthy, having

(need of nothing while God saw them as being on their spiritual deathbed “miserable and poor and blind and naked.” Being sick is bad; being sick and not knowing it is worse. Worse, because remedies are neither sought nor received by those who think themselves healthy. If self is to be examined with reference to being in the faith (**2 Cor. 13:5**), why not the many “selves” who act as one? A little honest introspection will show us that being healthy before God is more than big memberships, big buildings, big contributions, having “big” preachers and taking “big” stands on issues.

Let us see that a healthy church is one whose members are truly converted to Christ. Not to the church; not to the family or the preacher; but to the Lord! Everything depends on our attitude toward Him! To love Him is to keep His commandments (**John 14:15**); to serve Him is to serve others (**Mt. 25**). He must be the leaven of our lives; we must continually strive to conform to His image and be careful not to repeat the mistake of the Ephesian church by leaving our first love (**Rev. 2:4**).

Let us further see that healthy doctrine is the lifeblood

of healthy churches. All members must know and love Bible truth. They don't resent it being preached plainly and forcefully, they love it (**1 Thess. 2:10**); they desire it (**1 Pet. 2:2**) because they hunger and thirst after righteousness (**Matt. 5:6**). But they not only love truth, they love each other as taught by Jesus in that truth (**Jn. 15:12**). When Christians are cemented together in a local work by love for the Lord, love for His truth, and love for each other, there will be a striving together to do and be all that God wants — and there will be a healthy church!

A Few Make History

By Robert Turner

Some brethren assume the continuity of a faithful, visible, functioning church, from the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection until now. It must be “assumed” — it cannot be proven — nor do I believe either is essential. But on that assumption, there is a “necessary inference” that should shake us up a bit.

If there has always been a “faithful few” it is because there has always been a few who acted independently of the majority — who thought for themselves — who refused to go along with the elders or the preacher “for the sake of

peace.” History is filled with proof of continual change which constituted apostasy from the divinely ordained standard. Such changes (we do not refer to changes of no scriptural consequences) had to be resisted — by people who knew the difference in essentials and non-essentials, and who refused to accept as a matter of faith or standard for fellowship anything for which there was no divine authority.

In every generation there had to be a few who endured the name “Anti” or its equivalent, and went about the business of maintaining a small (minority) scriptural church regardless of how this affected their secular business and social relations.

The key was, of course, independent Bible study, which directed dedication to Christ rather than to the “party” or popular opinion. The faithful few knew both who and what they believed (**2 Tim. 1:12-14**), and on this basis they both spoke and acted (**2 Cor. 4:13**). They had convictions — vital, personal, motivating convictions.

But the folk today who rest their hope upon party affiliation, and seem most anxious to assume the historic continuity of such a party; are often the least informed, and less likely to have strong convictions based upon independent Bible study.

Had you lived in the “dark ages,” would you have been among

the “faithful few”? We all like to think that we would have been; but the truth can be read in our present day record. Do we stand with the “faithful few” today, regardless of consequences?