

## 7 Stages of Christian Growth

*“May grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ”*

- 1. NEWBORN** – *“Artigenneetos brephos” “As new born babes”* 1Pet. 2:2  
One of the first things done to a newborn is to bathe it. When one trusts Christ Jesus they are born again by the Spirit and are to be baptized. A newborn is full of life but not knowledge. A **newborn Christian** has salvation’s joy of grace like the man who believed and was baptized; *“he went on his way rejoicing,”* Acts 8:39. If things could just stay that way – but that’s not maturity. The world, flesh (sin nature), devil, disciplines of life, doctrine, discernment and church truth are far from his mind. He is *“unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe,”* Heb. 5:13. As milk is desired by a baby, so we are to *“desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,”* 1Pet. 2:2.
- 2. CHILD** – *“Paidion” “I write unto you, little children”* 1John. 2:13  
This Greek word is used to denote a child from a few months to 12 years old. John uses this term to distinguish a newer believer from the more mature. These are what we call toddler years and pre-adolescent years. They are marked with energy and maturing growth – but far from an adult. Guidance and disciplines are now needed to train the child. As a **Christian** grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord he begins to discover that there are many things in the world, himself and man’s religion that he should separate from, as they are harmful. Growing pains are present. He needs the care of the true church so they will *“be no more children, tossed to and fro,”* Eph. 4:14.
- 3. TEENAGER** – *“Sarkikos - Neepios” “unto carnal even as unto babes”* 1Cor. 3:1  
It is God’s will that a child grows into a young adult called *“young men”* that is strong in the Word and overcomes, 1Jn. 2:14. The rebellious stage is not God’s plan but it can happen. This teenage phase is a developed body but a mind that is not – but thinks it is. **The Corinthians**, while saved for a time, were called carnal (fleshly) babes. They were divided, arguing, doing nothing about sin, glorying in their gifts and knowledge of their liberty, while rejecting other’s consciences and Paul’s authority. They had a parasitic tendency to take and drain. Paul’s counsel: *“let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”* Peter’s was: *“ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder,”* 1Cor. 3:18, 1Pet. 5:5.
- 4. YOUNG ADULT** – *“Neaniskos” “young men, because ye are strong”* 1Jn. 2:14  
John uses this term to describe a believer who has matured beyond a child. He is now strong and has overcome Satan through a working knowledge of the Word of God. In our culture we usually refer to young adults as those in their 20’s or 30’s. By now they have an education in either schooling or work experience. Some are reproducing their own families and are now more givers than takers. **The believer** at this stage is sound in the faith and has found his gifts in serving others in the church in glorifying the Lord. His love is controlled by right judgment, Php. 1:9. But he needs to remember he hasn’t arrived yet and *“press...for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,”* Php. 3:14.
- 5. OLDER-MIDLIFE** – *“Presbuteros” “Rebuke not an elder...elder women”* 1Tim. 5:1-2  
The word elder does not always refer to a church elder but also an older man or woman.

John also distinguishes between young men and the more mature with the word ‘pater’ or father. We look at a person in mid-life as older in their 40’s or 50’s. Some have fathered or mothered grown children and have tasted some sorrows of life. **This believer** learned that *“tribulation worketh patience, And patience experience; and experience, hope,”* Rom. 5:3-4. He has come to know God in an intimate way as *“the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort”* in weakness, trials and sufferings, 2Cor. 1:3. But he must beware of a mid-life crisis where he becomes weary of the *“the good fight of faith”* and faints.

**6. FULL AGE** – *“Teleios” “strong meat belongeth to them of full age”* Heb. 5:14

This is a maturity that is perfected in *“the stature and fullness of Christ”* and able to keenly discern good and evil and *“the deep things of God,”* 1Cor. 2:10, Eph. 4:13, Heb. 5:14. Culturally, full age is usually a person in their 60’s, 70’s or up. While their physical energy is down, their wisdom and experiences are up. Here **the believer** just doesn’t know about God but knows God. He has found his life by losing it.

By God’s rich grace the full age believer can say in the words of Caesar: “Veni, vidi, vici” – I came, I saw, I conquered. Or better in the words of Paul: *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,”* 2Tim. 4:7. Yet discouragement can come where we no longer feel useful to the Lord due to a lack of energy. But praying and being an example in the many ups and downs are great encouragements to the younger.

Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;	Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;	All in all forever,
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word;	Once I tried to use Him, Now He uses me;	Only Christ I’ll sing;
Once His gift I wanted, Now, the Giver own;	Once the pow’r I wanted, Now the Mighty One;	Everything is in Christ, And Christ is everything.
Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone.	Once for self I labored, Now for Him alone.	Hymn – A. B. Simpson

**7. LIKE CHRIST** – *“Homoios Kristos ” “we shall be like him [Christ]”* 1Jn. 3:2

Full age is not the end. Internally the believer is now being *“conformed to the image of His son.”* But **the believer** is promised that when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear, *“we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is,”* 1Jn. 3:2. Our lowly bodies will be changed into ‘doxa soma’ – *“fashioned like unto His glorious body,”* Php. 3:21. It will be:

W e shall see His face	“LIFE”
O n higher ground forever	
N ever to experience God’s fiery judgment – saved	Beautiful babies – Tender toddlers
D elivered from our wretched sin nature	Cute children – Tumultuous teens
E ternally free from Satan	Teachable twenties – Tireless thirties
R eleased from a corrupt worldly system	Fiery forties – Forceful fifties
F ully enjoying the best of our brothers and sisters	Serious sixties – Sacred seventies
U nsurpassed glory in the new heaven and earth	Aching eighties – Shortening breath
L oosed from death, sorrow and pain	<i>Death – The Sod – GOD!</i>

“When as a child I laughed and slept – *Time Crept*      When as a youth I dreamt and talked – *Time Walked*  
 When I became a full grown man – *Time Ran*              When older still I daily grew – *Time Flew*  
 Soon I shall find in traveling on – *Time is Gone*      **O, Christ, to behold thy beauty then”**