

It's Time To Grow Up

1 Peter 2:1-3

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow me in your Bibles. I hope you have them open. Beginning in verse 1 of 1 Peter 2. Peter says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings, as newborn babes..."—or newly born ones—"...desire the sincere milk of the word..."—why?—"...that you may grow thereby, if so be..."—verse 3—"...that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

I heard a term this week that really caught my attention. It was the term "Peter Pan syndrome." Now I heard the term, and I thought, "This has got to be a joke." Peter Pan syndrome. And I understood the significance of the idea that a person doesn't want to grow up. But I actually Googled that, and I was amazed at how much information came up. Even in Wikipedia, there's quite a few articles about it. It's the pop-psychology concept of an adult, usually a male, who is socially immature. You ever know somebody like that? A grown man that is acting like a boy; doesn't want to get married, doesn't want to have kids, doesn't want to hold down a job, wants mom and dad to take care of him, wants to just have a good time, and basically just refuses to live up [grow up?]. We've actually coined a term for that. I found it in the Urban Dictionary. The word is a "manolescent." The dude is a manolescent. I thought, "This is really crazy." What we called them was just babies, you know. It's a grown man that hasn't gotten out of diapers socially and doesn't want to take responsibility and doesn't want to grow up.

It's interesting that as I read about this Peter Pan syndrome, it actually made reference to Michael Jackson and his Neverland and his fascination with Peter Pan and his desire to never grow up and to be a child his whole life. So it is something that we find today. People just don't want to grow up. They don't want to mature. And I know it's challenging—the growing pains. The going from adolescence to adulthood is a very hard transition.

But sadly this morning, as we look at this text, I believe that we find Christians who are following the Peter Pan syndrome spiritually, and they don't want to grow up. Now Peter, in our epistle—not Peter Pan, but Peter the Apostle—tells us in verse 2—I want you to look at it with me. He says, "As newly born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow by it"—or—"that you may grow thereby." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Good advice. So a child speaks like a child, a child acts like a child, but when you become a man or an adult, you put away childish things.

So my question for you as a Christian today is, "Have you put away childish things?" Have you put away the things of your spiritual infancy, and are you willing to grow in your walk and your relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you growing as a child of God, or do you want to remain a spiritual adolescent? Now the theme of this entire epistle, in chapter 5, verse 12, Peter says, "This is the true grace of God wherein you stand." And so the title of my whole series in Peter is "Stand," and it's broken up into three sections: Standing in Salvation, Standing in Submission

and Standing in Suffering. We're still in the section of salvation and how we should live as saved people. And Peter told us we need to live in holiness. Peter told us we need to live in a reverential fear of God. Peter told us that we need to love one another with a pure heart fervently. And that we've been born and given a new nature, into God's family, therefore now, as newly born ones, we need to feed on God's Word, "that we may grow thereby."

Actually verses 1-3 of chapter 2 begin back in chapter 1, verse 22. It's one section. So this is the second half of the sermon I preached two weeks ago on "Love One Another"; that is, growing in the Christian life. Growing in holiness, growing in reverence and fear of God and growing in love for one another.

Now Peter gives us three steps to take if we're going to grow. This is simple but not simplistic. And I want you to see these three steps. Step one, step two, step three are verses 1, 2 and 3. Really simple if you're taking notes. Step one is in verse 1. It is we must "lay aside." We must lay aside. I want you to notice it in verse 1. "Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and all hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speaking." Now notice in verse 1 that Peter opens with a "wherefore." So he goes back to verse 22 of chapter 1, and he says that we have "purified our souls in obeying the truth." We should "love one another with a pure heart fervently." Then we were born again of the Word of God. So what he's basically saying in the second chapter is now, go on to grow, go on to mature, go on in Christian love, learn to love one another, which is the Christian life.

Now I want you to notice that Peter says that you were born into God's family in chapter 1, verse 23. Now you need to "lay aside," verse 1 of chapter 2. Now this laying aside in verse 1 of chapter 2 is a picture of taking off soiled garments. Now I trust that most of you come to church today—you put on a clean outfit, you put on clean clothes. The other day I was working in the yard, and I got my shirt all soiled. And I didn't realize it until hours later when I'd run some errands, and I got home and taken off my shirt and all this dirt falls off my shirt. I'm thinking, "I probably should have changed my shirt before I ran my errands, because 'There's the dirty pastor'" you know. Wherever I go I run into people, and I have dirt in my hair, and it was all over my back and stuff. But as I took my shirt off, all this dirt comes flying off. I shook my shirt like a good, good adult man, and I put it in the clothes hamper. I want my wife to hear this; she's here this morning. You talk about Peter Pan syndrome—why won't men put their clothes in the hamper? Why do they throw their socks all over the house? Because they are Peter Pan; they don't have to grow up, you know. So I put it in the hamper, and my wife washes it, I put a fresh shirt on. But this imagery—I said all that to say this: "laying aside" is literally the phrase used for taking off soiled garments.

So here's the first step in its negative: If you're going to grow, we need to get rid of sins in our life if we are going to grow as God's children. Sinful attitudes and words that hinder my growth. "Laying aside" is a command. In the Greek, it's an imperative. When he says there in verse 1, "Wherefore laying aside," it is a command. It's not an option. And it's in the tense of "once and for all." So you take that soiled garment off. You take the malice off, the envy off, the jealousy off, and you lay it all aside that you may grow in your walk with Jesus Christ. You don't condone

these sins, you don't excuse these sins, you don't cover these sins. You take them off or put them off.

Now all of these five sins mentioned in verse 1 are marks of immaturity. Note that. They are marks of immaturity. How do you know as a Christian if you're still a spiritual infant? When you'll be practicing these sins. How do you know if you're growing as a Christian? Then you're going to take off these sins. If these sins are still prominent in your life, you're a spiritual baby. You might not even be a spiritual baby; you might be unregenerated or maybe you're not even saved and you need to be born again into the family of God.

Now what are these sins? There's five of them, and let's look at them individually. The first thing we're to take off if we're to grow is "all malice." Now I want you to note the repetition of the word "all" there. "All malice." Three times he uses the word "all." It's an all-inclusive word. Malice. It's used for evil. It's translated "ill will" and "spite." It's the desire to get people back for hurting us. It's a spirit of unforgiveness. It's saying, "I'll get you" or "I'll pay you back" or "I'm going to do something mean back to you, because you've done something mean or hurtful to me." "You've hurt me. Now I want to hurt you." That's what malice is; it's the desire to hurt someone else. And we won't lay it aside.

I heard the story of Leonardo Da Vinci. As he was painting The Last Supper, someone had hurt him deeply. And he had an enemy that he disliked. And as he was painting the people in The Last Supper, he actually painted the face of his enemy in the place of Judas Iscariot. He goes, "I'm gonna get him. I'm gonna paint him as Judas in here with the disciples." And then he took out another brush, and then went, afterward, to paint the face of Jesus, and it wouldn't come together for him. And he tried again and again, and no matter how much he tried, he couldn't paint the face of Jesus. And then he realized that until he let go of his malice and his hatred, he wouldn't be able to see the face of Jesus clearly or paint Him. And so he took his brush back out, and he repainted the face of Judas, taking out his enemy. And then, and only then, could he go and paint the face of Jesus.

I believe that there's a lesson in that for us as Christians. If you have malice in your heart toward somebody, you're not only a spiritual infant, but you're not going to be used by God. God cannot use you when you are filled with malice and hate and unforgiveness toward others. And you won't be able to clearly see the face of Jesus.

The second sin that we need to take off, like a soiled garment, is "all guile." "All guile," verse 1. It's the sin of deceitfulness. Other modern translations translate it "deceitfulness" or "crookedness" in dealing with people. It disrupts our fellowship. Now an interesting thing about this word "guile" is that it's the very word used for the word "fishing hook."

Now I'm not a fisherman. The only time I went deep-sea fishing with a friend—he had a boat, and he took me out and went all the way out to San Clemente Island. I love the ocean, but I'm usually surfing. I'm not way out there on a boat. And I don't know how to fish and everything. And he handed me a pole, and I see this boat coming real fast right up to us. And this boat

came up, and the ocean police—whatever you call the guys, you know—Coast Guard. It was like the fishermen police, I guess. You can tell I'm a real fisherman. And it was a game-warden type guy, and he pulls up and says, "Can I see your license." I actually said this. I said, "My driver's license?" He said, "No, sir. A fishing license." And it's like the thought never crossed my mind. Fishing license? I don't have a fishing license. "What do you mean 'fishing license'?" "Well, sir, you got..." I got a huge fine; it was like \$185, you know. I'm just holding the pole. I didn't even catch a fish. That's the last time I ever went fishing, by the way. But you know, you guys that like to fish—you are deceivers. Because you don't want that fish to know what's under the bait; you have a hook lurking in that bait. You even call them "lures" you know. You put the bait on there. "Shush; don't tell the fish." You deceivers, you! You wanna hook 'em.

Well that's the very word used for this word here. And it means that they're deceiving, they're deceptive in their dealings with people. They're not honest. II Corinthians 8:21, Paul says, "Providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." I love that. You know what a Christian is to be? To be an open book. He's to be an honest person. We're to "speak the truth in love."

I heard the story of Abraham Lincoln. You know he's called "Honest Abe." And he was a lawyer, and a man who was kind of crooked wanted him to defend him in a case in the court room. And Lincoln said, "You know, you got a good case technically, but you know you're guilty, and so I advise that you find yourself another lawyer, because if I'm trying to defend you, I will be thinking in my mind, 'Lincoln, you're a liar. Lincoln, you're a liar.'" And he said, "And I might just forget myself and say it out loud." So he said, "You better find yourself another lawyer." You know, as Christians, we are to be honest in all our dealings with people. If we're going to grow as a believer, we have to abandon, or take off, deceit.

The third thing we get rid of is hypocrisy. And we've talked about this sin before. It's the sin of play-acting or pretense. Some are pretending to be what they are not. Being a "phony baloney." I heard of a dear black preacher in the south that said, "Be what you is and not what you ain't, because if you ain't what you is, then you is what you ain't." "Wow, preach it brother." I like that. Be what you is. And that's what a Christian should be; the real, genuine thing. And if you're play-acting, then you're not growing as a Christian.

And then number four in verse 1, notice it's envy. Now these are sins that are acceptable among the saints. These are the saints-acceptable sins. The New Living Translation has this as "jealousy." We understand that. That's a jealous spirit. A jealous spirit. And by the way, this is a common sin in the church. It's a malicious grudge toward others, who have what you want. Somebody calls you up on the phone and says, "Man, praise God! You can't believe it! Somebody just gave me a brand new BMW!" "Praise the Lord. I'm really happy for you [gritting his teeth]." You hang up the phone, go, "God! I am bummed out right now! I deserve that car! I'm a better Christian! I'm more spiritual. I go to church more often. Why didn't I get that car?!"

So have you ever gotten mad when somebody else has something good happen to them? What is wrong with us? "Hey, we're going to Hawaii." "I've never been to Hawaii." "Yeah, we're

going to do a whole vacation in Hawaii.” “I always wanted to go to Hawaii. Why do you get to go to Hawaii? I want to go to Hawaii” you know. And you’re just jealous. And maybe you’re a young person, and all your friends are getting married and you haven’t gotten married yet. Especially you ladies, you young girls, you know. It’s like you’re going to your friends’ weddings and weddings. “So when will it be my wedding?” you know. And it almost gets to where you go to a friend’s wedding, and you’re all bummed out. Like, “Yeah, congratulations [with clenched teeth].” Like, “That should be my wedding! I should be marrying that dude right now. I’m a better catch than you are!”

And we’re like jealous because God does something good for other people. I have a few friends that just amaze me on the positive side. One of the stand-out qualities is when anything good happens to somebody else, they rejoice. When something bad happens to someone else, they weep. They “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” You know, that’s a sign of maturity. That’s a sign of growing up in the Lord. You become spiritually mature. You put aside jealousy.

Then there is also fifthly, and lastly, “evil speakings.” Slander. Literally, speaking against or talking down another person. We call it “backbiting.” Notice in verse 1, it’s “all evil speakings.” It’s getting down on other people. Christians like to do that. They get together, and like, “Who can we get down on? And who’s weird that we can talk about?” Shame on us. We shouldn’t be backbiting, is what it is. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of building up, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” God help us to think before we speak. Is it true? Is it loving? Is it edifying? Three questions you can ask before words come out of your mouth: Is it true? Is it loving? Is it necessary? It may not be necessary. Do I really need to say that? I find it quite often, that’s one of the things that really helps me. Do I really need to say this right now? The answer is “No.” What value is it going to have? None. It may be true, but it’s not loving. It may be true, but it’s not necessary, so you don’t need to talk about it. And it’s actually talking behind other people’s backs. That should not be characteristic of a true child of God.

So if we are going to keep growing as believers, we need to grow in holiness and love, which I believe are synonymous with casting off these sinful deeds. So take a moment, step one, and ask yourself, “Are there dirty garments that I need to take off? Do I backbite? Am I jealous? Do I have malice in my heart toward other people? Am I practicing hypocrisy or duplicity in the way that I live?” Those are the negative.

Now we move to the second step, verse 2. And the second step—write this down—is we must feed on the Word. This is the point that many Christians are aware of but, again, we don’t do. We don’t deal with sin, and we don’t feed on the Word of God. Or we feed on malice, envy, jealousy and hypocrisy, and we lose our appetite for the Word of God. And by the way, I think there’s a significant tie-in here. If you don’t deal with these sins in your life, you will not hunger for God’s Word, verse 2. If you don’t do what it says in verse 1—lay these sins aside—you’re not going to have an appetite for God’s Word. It’s going to spoil your appetite. You eat junk food, you don’t want good food. You snack between meals, you don’t want dinner. So I believe

it keeps us from growing, because we're losing our appetite for the Word of God.

Go back with me now to verse 2. He says this is what you need to do. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby"—in order that you may grow. Now Peter is using an analogy. The analogy is a newborn babe. His first analogy is take off soiled garments. His second analogy is, like a baby desires milk, you as a Christian should desire the Word. Why? Because this is how you're going to grow. As a matter of fact, this is the only way you can grow. If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times, and I'll say it again. The only way for you to grow as a Christian is by feeding on this book we call the Bible. You can't grow by Christian entertainment. You can't grow by going to church. You know you can't grow by going to church? Now if you're going to church where you're getting taught the Word and you're feeding on the Word, and you feed yourself during the week, you're going to grow. I'm just giving you appetizers on Sunday morning. But I do pray that it kind of develops in your taste buds, a palate. When you come on Sunday and we study the Word and you go, "Wow, that's good. Wow, I didn't know that was in the Bible! What else is in the Bible?" And you start studying the Bible on your own. That's what I'm here to do; I'm here to develop your taste buds by giving you the pure Word of God, the unadulterated Scripture, that you develop a flavor and a taste and a desire and a hunger for the Word of God. It's not enough for you to just come to listen to the preaching on Sunday. You must pick up your Bible and study it every day.

Now the analogy of a newborn. Those of you who are parents, you have children. You know that when a baby comes home from the hospital—the minute it's born, what does it want? Milk; right? It doesn't want a new watch. It doesn't want an iPhone. Doesn't want a car. He doesn't ask for a Dr. Pepper or a Coca-Cola. "Hey doc. You got any Coke?" Maybe in a commercial, but not in real life. When the baby goes, "Waa, waa"—that's my impersonation of a newborn baby—what does that baby want? One thing and only one thing. Milk. Whether it be mother's milk or formula, that baby wants milk. Milk is the perfect food. "Every body needs milk." Right? "Got milk?" As a Christian, we need to hunger as a baby.

Now a couple of misconceptions about this text. Some conclude that he's speaking to baby Christians. So if you think, "Well, I'm a mature Christian; I'm into the 'meat' of the Word. I don't bother with the milk of the Word. This doesn't pertain to me," that's not the point. The point is, as a baby has a desire for milk, so you as a Christian, should desire God's Word. Evidence that you're a child of God is your hunger for the Word of God. Nature determines appetite. You know why dogs eat dog food? I studied all week to come up with this. You ready? Because they're dogs. Wow, that's profound! Cats eat cat food. Why? Because they're cats. Nature determines appetite. I'm not attracted to dog food. It doesn't appeal to me, because I'm a child of God. I love God's Word. I hunger for God's Word. What does a baby naturally hunger for? What does a baby naturally desire? God's Word. He's not saying you're all a bunch of infants, and you shouldn't have the meat of the Word, but you should have the milk of the Word. He's saying you should just want the Word.

And notice it's the "pure." That's the "sincere" in the Greek, the unadulterated. J. Burnham Magee, who teaches and preaches—he did before the Lord took him home—the whole Bible,

interprets that as being the pure milk of the Word. It means all of the Bible. The Old Testament and the New Testament. You read all of the Scriptures. You feed on all the Scriptures. I believe my job as your pastor is to teach you “the whole counsel of God,” from Genesis to Revelation. To share the Word of God with you, so “that you might grow thereby.” And this is my prayer for this church: That we be a congregation that is marked by desire, a desire for God’s Word. When you come to this church with a hunger for God, you come to this church wanting to know God. And where’s God found? He’s found in His Word. The Greek word is “logos.” I believe it’s a reference to the Scriptures. When I became a Christian, I hungered for God’s Word. I studied God’s Word.

And, again, Peter is saying this. In the Greek, it’s an imperative. That means, it’s a command. He commands us, verse 1, to lay these sins aside. He commands us, verse 2, to have a desire for God’s Word. Just like a baby desires milk, so you should desire God’s Word. If you don’t have a hunger and a desire for God’s Word, you have a couple of issues. You need to pray for desire, or you need—“Maybe I’m not really a Christian.” Or maybe you’re a sick Christian. You know, when a baby doesn’t have an appetite, guess what? That baby is in trouble. When you can’t get a baby to eat—when you can’t get an adult to eat, that adult’s in trouble. The only way to grow is by intaking nourishment. And the only way we can grow spiritually is by spiritual food. And the only spiritual food is in the Bible, God’s Word. Christian books are fine. Christian movies are fine. Going to church is fine, but there’s no substitute for the Word of God.

And that’s my prayer for our church: That you desire God’s Word. That you have a passion for God’s Word. What we have in the church today is a vitamin B deficiency. It’s called “Biblical illiteracy.” Biblical illiteracy. You know, when Jay Leno used to go out on the street and interview people—there’s one show Jay goes out on the street and he’s interviewing people, and he asks them, “Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?” You know what the most common answer was? God helps those who help themselves. That’s a Ten Commandment? That ain’t even in the Bible! God helps those who help themselves. Not only in our culture —“Well, that’s Jay Leno. He’s out on the streets, you know, in New York. And no wonder nobody knows the Bible.”

But you know, in the church, it’s no better. We are plagued by Biblical illiteracy. Woodrow Kroll said, “Bible illiteracy is not a problem in the church; Bible illiteracy is the problem in the church.” You know the number-one reason people give for not reading their Bibles? “I don’t have time.” You have time to sleep. You have time to eat. You have time to watch basketball. You have time to do the things you want to. So it’s not a priority. The second leading cause of people not reading the Bible was, “It’s not a priority in my life.” It’s not a priority. Reason number three, “The Bible is boring.” You think a baby is bored with milk? [spits] He spits it out. “I want Coke.” You ever try to give a baby something other than milk? [spits] He spit it out. Put a little something on your finger here, you know, and see if they have a positive—[spits] they spit it out. They’re smart. They know what’s good for them. Wish to God that we as Christians are spitting things out that are harmful and only taking in that which is good for us. It’s a vitamin B deficiency in the church; we don’t read our Bibles.

And leading reason number four, “I can’t find what I want in the Bible.” What do you want? I heard the story of a little seven-year-old girl that had her mother’s brand-new Bible, and she was going through the Bible and circling every place she found the word “God.” And her mother kind of like, “Ah, that’s my new Bible, sweetheart. What are you doing?” She goes, “I want to make sure I can find Him when I need Him. I’m circling the name ‘God’ so I can find Him whenever I need Him.” I love that.

You know, when you open the Bible, guess what? You find God in an hour of need. God will help you through life. He’ll help you grow in life. He’ll help you with your marriage, with your children raising, with your job—all of life. All we need for life and godliness is found for us in the Word of God. But sadly, we lack desire. That’s the problem, because we forget the Bible is the Word of God. Back in chapter 1, verse 23, the Bible is the Word of the Lord [verse 25?]. Chapter 1, verse 25, the Bible is living. Chapter 1, verse 23, the Bible is eternal. Chapter 1, verse 23, it abides forever. You also jump down to chapter 1, verse 25, the Word of the Lord endures for how long? “For ever.” “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” but Jesus said, “My Word shall never pass away.” When you start looking at the subject of God’s Word, it’s as vast as God Himself. And you cannot separate God from His Word. In 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” It is God breathed, and it is profitable; it brings salvation, it brings sanctification and equips us for service. It brings us to salvation, it has a sanctifying influence on our life and it equips us in our service to God. And then verse 2 of chapter 2, we grow thereby. The only way to grow is when we are feeding on God’s Word. Are you doing that? Have you laid aside? Are you hungry for the Bible? Do you have an appetite for God’s Word? Have other things taken its place?

Here’s the third and last step, and I won’t be long. In verse 3. The first thing you do is lay aside, the second thing you do is desire and then third thing you do is you remember. Remember God is good. He closes the section in verse 3 by saying, “If so, be...”—now in the Greek it should be translated “Since it is.” The word “if” is not questioning if you’ve tasted. It’s making a statement. “Since you have tasted...”—and tasted means that you have experienced —“...that the Lord is gracious...”—or what?—“...good.” Amen? How many of you have “tasted that the Lord is good”? You know you have come to Jesus Christ, you’ve tasted Him. You know, that is so good. Here’s the point. If “you have tasted of the Lord that He is good,” why would you want anything else? And why wouldn’t you hunger for nothing but?

Now I don’t know if you could call it healthy food, but the best carrot cake I’ve ever eaten in my entire life is made by my wife. Now I don’t say that just because she’s my wife. She makes, in the history of mankind, the most insane carrot cake. And you put it in the refrigerator, every day it gets better. To the last bite, you get raptured when you eat it. It is the best carrot cake known to man. And it’s ruined me. It’s spoiled me. I can’t eat carrot cake anywhere else or anybody else’s. You know, I go to restaurants. Carrot cake. “No, no, no, no, no. You haven’t tasted Kristy’s carrot cake. You can’t eat that stuff.” I mean, once you’ve tasted something really good, you never want to go back; right? Once you graduate from Cheetos to filet mignon—once you graduate from something bad to something really good, you’ve got a new palate. You’ve got new taste buds. It’s amazing.

And if you've "tasted that the Lord is gracious"—if you've tasted that the Lord is good, why would you want anything else but God's Word? This is your food. This is your nourishment, this is a "lamp to your feet and a light to your path." The psalmist says, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is..."—what?—"...good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him." Amen? So why would you want anything else? It's a light. It's a map. Comforts me when I'm discouraged. It's promises from God in here. This book is a love letter from God. The only book God ever gave us. This is God's book to you. Why would you not want to read it? Why would you neglect? God gave you—if you had kind of a love relationship with somebody and you were exchanging letters and you found out all the letters you sent to them they never opened and they never read, what would that do to you? God sent you a love letter. And you've never read it? You never open it? I believe that this book can keep you from sin, but sin can keep you from this book.

So you need to lay aside all of those bad attitudes and sinful behavior patterns, and then you need to start feeding on the Word of God. And then you need to remind yourself—how easily we forget—how good God is. We need to stop and remember the horrible pit that He took us from and all the blessings of the goodness of God in our life. And then we need to say, "Lord, I want more of You. I want more of You." Amen?