

Christians, like babies, are expected to grow. When one is born again, there is an expectation that the young believer will grow into spiritual maturity. Satan and his demons have many weapons that they use to prevent a new believer from becoming all that God has called them to be. One of these tools is complacency, settling for the status quo and not growing. The terrible truth about complacency in the Christian life is that it leads to atrophy and death.

In 1 Peter 2:1, the Apostle instructs his readers to put off malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. These are all things that hinder growth in our spiritual lives. We are really good at identifying these vices in other people's lives, but we often excuse them in our own lives.

Let's look at each one briefly:

Malice:

Malice means the intent, or the planning to do some harm or evil to someone else. Like any sin, it begins in the mind. Malicious intent comes from festering thoughts. One of the best definitions I read for Malice is "congealed anger".

Malice leads to **Deceit:**

This is craftiness or acting with impure motives. Using devious words to get what we want. A classic example of deceit in the Bible is the account of Annanias and Saphira in Acts 5.

Deceit leads to **Hypocrisy:**

Hypocrisy is pretending to be what we are not. The church is often accused of being filled with hypocrites.

If I claim to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and love my neighbor as myself, but my lifestyle outside of the church does not back that up, I am a hypocrite.

Hypocrisy is hiding our true self.

Hypocrisy leads to **Envy:**

At its root, envy is a lack of faith. It is not trusting that the Lord is good and that what He gives us is sufficient and good for us. Envious people are not able to celebrate with other people when they are blessed.

Ultimately envy leads to **Slander:**

Finally, the malicious thoughts can no longer be contained, and we begin to verbalize our feelings. Slander is bringing someone down to make yourself look good. Another definition of slander is evil speaking. Most of the time, slanderous people hide their own sin.

The Antidote:

In verse 2, Peter gives the antidote. The reason we act with malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander, is because we are spiritual infants. Verse 2 reads, *“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.”*

A baby knows instinctively when they need milk, and where to obtain that milk. Just as babies desire healthy milk, so to, Christians should desire the healthy milk of God’s word.

Sadly, when we harbor these sins, we will be sick, and we will not desire the milk of the word of God. A Christian grows by feeding on the Word. Allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and our minds.

When we lose our appetite for the Word we will stop growing.

Sadly, we live in an entertainment culture, driven by video clips and sound bites. People have no appetite or desire to read the word of God, rather they will spend hours watching video clips, even “Christian” videos. There are millions of hours of video content by people who claim to be knowledgeable in the Word of God. We spend hours watching these videos before reading the Word of God for ourselves. But you will not grow on secondhand food, you need to feed on the Word of God for yourself.

As we grow, we find out that the Bible is milk for new believers and also meat for those who have grown in their faith. Charles Spurgeon said, *“Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years.”*

However, there are many things that hinder our appetite for the Bread of Life. When we consume internet videos, social media, inappropriate movies and the like, content that we know is against the will of God for our lives, it will ruin our appetite for the truth of God’s Word.

Grow into salvation:

Verse 2 ends with, *“That by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”*

Nutritionists will tell you that you are what you eat, and the purpose of feeding on the Word is to grow in our salvation.

We rightly celebrate when someone is saved. New believers are a thing to celebrate in the church and it excites us, but that is not the end of the journey. Salvation is so much more than a way to avoid hell. We are saved for more.

A real danger in the church is that we don’t challenge people to mature. We are thrilled when people are saved and baptized, but then we give the impression that it is okay to sit on the sidelines and simply be entertained by Christian activity. Sadly, people who sit on the sidelines for too long end up becoming critical and prideful.

Humility comes from realizing our inadequacy. You only really realize your inadequacy when you are stretched to do things for the Lord that you have never done before or struggle to do.

As Christians, we have been saved from death and saved for life, and that eternal life starts the moment you are saved. Being born again must be followed by growth.

Maturing Christians are growing in the Word. They are peacemakers, not troublemakers, and they promote the unity of the church. Our greatest spiritual growth takes place when we are forced to rely totally on the Lord. As we grow in the Lord, he will lead us into areas of ministry or situations that require us to grow in faith.

You may be called to some area of ministry that you don't feel equipped to do. That is good, because none of us should ever think that the Lord needs us because we have something special to contribute that no one else has. That is a sure sign of immaturity.

What is God calling you to do that is will stretch you?