

Move on in maturity!

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[0 : 00] So there you have it, Harvey is 65 years old and he's a thumbsucker. He doesn't apologize for it, but he does recognize that his habit is a shameful thing, which is why he doesn't do it in public.

It's something that six-month-old babies do, not 65-year-old fully-grown men. Well, the writer of Hebrews is speaking to Christians, and he pulls no punches.

They've been Christians for quite a while. They're not six-month-old babies. They're not even six-year-old kids. They're adult Christians. But he says to them, you're like Harvey, an adult being a baby.

You still need milk. You need the bottle. You can't handle solid food. He exposes their shame. Now picture in your mind a congregation full of Harvey's, adults sucking their thumbs.

It's a picture of profound immaturity. It's a picture of Christians who don't grow up. And the writer of Hebrews says to them, I'm not scared to be hurt.

[1 : 11] I make no apologies. This is you. And if this is you, that's a big problem.

Because this is not something harmless. This is evidence of stunted growth. And stunted growth is dangerous. Now according to the National Health and Morbidity Survey, 20.7% of children in Malaysia under five still suffer from stunted growth.

That's one in five children. And stunting is not just about being short for your age. It has negative long-term effects. It could lead to slow mental development, reduced learning capacity, lower productivity due to poor health in adult life, a weakened immune system, and thus a higher chance of contracting chronic diseases.

And you know what? It's the same spiritually speaking. If you're a Christian, and you're not growing, you're stunted. And that would be very bad for you.

And the Bible actually says, either you're growing, or you're regressing. There's no middle ground. Either you're a tree by streams of water, bearing fruit, as you grow your roots deeper, week by week, month by month.

[2 : 41] Or you're a bush in the wastelands, your leaves withering, and being blown away as the heat comes. And so the writer of Hebrews has come to warn.

He speaks plainly, because he loves you. And he wants you to be a healthy tree, not fading bushes. Now, if you've just read this passage that we've just heard read on its own, you might think that the writer of Hebrews is simply being grumpy. Maybe he's one of those people who can never be pleased.

He's always complaining about how the preacher is bad, the worship team is bad, the ushers are bad. And so it's tempting to dismiss him as the guy who always grumbles, but never encourages. But you wouldn't get that impression if you read the entire book of Hebrews. For the writer, time and time again, keeps assuring his people.

[3 : 43] Now, last week, we talked about being anchored in Christ. From the book of 2 Thessalonians. And in the book of Hebrews, the writer also stresses that repeatedly. He says, Jesus can be your anchor, because Jesus is the best.

Jesus is better than the Old Testament prophets. Jesus is better than the angels. He's better than Moses. And that's what you would find if you were to read chapters 1 and 3 by yourselves later on. And Jesus is the best high priest. That's why one chapter before this chapter, in 4 verse 16, he says, you can approach God's throne of grace with confidence and find grace and mercy there in your time of need.

The writer is assuring his hearers. Jesus is your anchor. And so don't dismiss the writer as a grumpy old man.

Not when he takes so much time to bring reassurance. And when he moves from assurance to warning, as he does this morning, take him seriously.

[5 : 01] Yes, he warns you in very bold and blunt terms. But that's because he loves you. Like a father who's warning his child not to play near the edge of the cliff.

And so Casey, some of the words said might be very strong this morning simply because this portion of God's word is full of bite.

But that's because God is your father who loves you and he doesn't want you to drift away. He doesn't want you to fall off the cliff. And I, as your pastor, am the same.

And so let's listen to his voice. Let God help us to see where we are immature. And then let him move us on to maturity. Now what does God want to say to us today?

To ensure that we don't turn into a congregation filled with adult thumbsuckers. Well, here's his big point. Don't be sluggish listeners, but open your ears.

[6 : 11] Don't be sluggish listeners, but open your ears. In verse 11, the writer says this. We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

Now clearly he's in the middle of discussing something. We have much to say about this, he says. But what's this? What's he talking about? Well, at the end of chapter 4, he's been talking about Jesus, the high priest, and it's a subject that he will stay on until chapter 10, verse 18.

And in chapter 5, verse 10, he's just introduced Jesus as being a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek. Now tell me, when you hear the name Melchizedek, what are you thinking? Maybe Melhu? Maybe, oh no, that's one of those funny Old Testament dudes, right? Oh no, irrelevant.

Probably none of you get very excited about Melchizedek. And it probably wasn't too different amongst these Hebrew Christians either. They arrive at church on a Sunday, the preacher gets up, and then he says, today we will be having a sermon on Melchizedek.

[7 : 37] And everyone is thinking, Melchizedek? Actually, pastor, can't we have a sermon on five ways I should handle my money? Six pointers from the Bible about parenting, or maybe how to achieve inner peace when things are chaotic?

Something more modern, something more applicable? To which the writer of the Hebrews replies, well, actually, there is so much about Melchizedek that is so amazing, so astonishing, so applicable. If you just took the time to listen and to absorb, but here's the problem, verse 11, you no longer even try to understand.

Actually, the NIV translation probably softens it a little bit too much. You see, if you have the older NIV, which is the NIV that Edward read from, it says, you are slow to learn.

And in the newer NIV on the screen, it says, you no longer try to understand. But remember, the book of Hebrews is originally written in Greek, and the Greek word that is used here is actually the word notroy.

[8 : 58] And if you come down with me to Hebrews 6, verse 12, for a moment, you'll notice that your NIV says there, it's on the screen, we do not want you to become lazy. And that word lazy there is actually that Greek word notroy.

You can see that in the brackets. And so the writer is really saying, here's the problem. You're notroy.

You're lazy. You're sluggish. In fact, in the Greek, the entire phrase is, don't worry, I'll read that for you, it's literally notroy gegonate thais akorais, which means you are sluggish in hearing.

Now, perhaps the New Living Translation captures the meaning best amongst the English translations. You are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen.

You see, the issue is not that the teaching about Melchizedek was too complicated to understand. The problem wasn't that they lacked the necessary IQ.

[10 : 08] The problem, the writer says, isn't your intelligence. It's your inclination. You're like children, he says, watching your favorite cartoon when mom says, okay, stop watching, time to set the dinner table.

And then the children pretend that they didn't hear clearly or didn't understand and carry on watching the TV show. They don't want to listen.

And because of this sluggish hearing, they were experiencing stunted growth. All throughout this book, the writer repeatedly encourages the Christians to tune into God's voice.

Look at some of what he said before. In chapter 2, verse 1, he says this, we must pay careful attention therefore to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.

In 3, verse 7 to 8, he says, quoting Psalm 95, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.

[11:19] In 3, verse 13, he says, but encourage one another daily, as long as it is caught today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

And the context there shows that it's encouraging one another in particular to keep listening to God's voice. But if we don't want to listen, if we become sluggish listeners, if we reject the ministry of the word of God, if we choose to play down the teaching of the Bible, well, there's consequences. Down in chapter 6, verse 8, consistently rejecting God's word would mean becoming a land that produces thorns and thistles, which is worthless and in danger of being cursed.

Consistently and persistently rejecting God's word means judgment. And so the writer says, don't be sluggish listeners, open your ears.

And so that's the strong word that the Bible wants to deliver to us this morning. The writer wants to wake us up. He doesn't want us to remain in immaturity, to fall away and then die.

[12:41] That's how high the stakes are. And he doesn't want us to ignore the warning signs. Imagine if you were a villager living around Mount Tarawera in New Zealand in 1886.

Mount Tarawera is an active volcano. Roughly 10 days before it erupted, big waves began appearing on Lake Tarawera.

The rocks around there began emitting hot water. Both are signs of increasing volcanic activity. A few people even reported seeing omens that something bad was about to happen.

And so from a supernatural perspective, perhaps there was a warning sign there too. Then hours before the eruption, earthquakes began to rock the area.

Now all these are warning signs that the volcano is about to blow. But what if you, like some did, ignored the warning signs?

[13:43] You heard them, you saw them, but you ignored them. Well when the volcano erupts, it's too late. you would die.

And so the writer is asking us to take heed. Don't be sluggish listeners. Open your ears. Now, you might ask, what are some of the warning signs that we're becoming sluggish in hearing?

How do we know if we are stuck in spiritual immaturity? Well the writer gives us three warning signs here, and so let's take them one by one.

The first is this, you're unteachable. You're unteachable. That's what verse 11 says, that's what you are if you don't bother to understand.

You don't want to listen. And I think there are two components to an unteachable spirit. One is a sense of apathy.

[14:52] You simply don't care. Maybe once upon a time, when you first became a Christian, you had an intense longing to know God and what he said.

You were at a church every week. You were at Bible study every Friday evening. You read every recommended Christian book. You were regularly talking with your brothers and sisters about how to live for Jesus.

You were like a baby who's hungry for milk. And when baby gets hungry, she doesn't hold back. She cries. And you kept crying out for nourishment, for sustenance from God's word.

You know, that ferocious appetite of yours was a sign of God's grace in you. But then as time went on, something happened.

at some point you stopped listening. Maybe it wasn't really your fault at first. Maybe for whatever reason perhaps there was a season where you couldn't receive much good Bible teaching.

[15:59] Or maybe you were sick for an extended period. Or maybe your church didn't have a pastor for a while. But then you got used to it and you no longer look for God's voice in the scriptures.

You became lethargic. You got distracted by other things. Not that hobbies and interests in themselves are wrong, but those things began to divert you from time spent listening to God.

You don't care anymore. The second component to an unteachable spirit, I think, is a lack of humility.

You simply don't want to know more. Now, this can show itself in different ways. It's when you don't want to admit that you might be wrong or ignorant and therefore need remedial teaching.

It's when you assume you already know what's being taught even when you don't. It's when you get offended when someone tries to teach you something or correct you and you say, I already know. [17:13] or you say, what does he know? It's when you can't take instruction from someone whom you think is in a junior position or lacking in years of experience.

Do any of these statements apply to you? I know that they apply to me sometimes and so I have to go and say sorry to the Lord.

But here's the thing, if you are teachable, then you'll be eager to learn and to grow. You'll be willing to say, I don't always know. Indeed, even if it's a familiar subject, you'll say, I can learn something or at least be refreshed.

There was a pastor who tells of a time when he ran into an elder from his church and his elder was a very gifted concert pianist and he ran into him on the train and so he asked him, oh, where are you going?

And then the elder replied, ah, to a piano lesson. Oh, this student of yours lives very far away? Oh, no, no, no, no, I'm not going to teach, I'm going to take a piano lesson.

[18:28] He was a fine concert pianist, still willing to take lessons. He had a teachable spirit. He wanted to know more.

And so my brothers and sisters in KEC, are you teachable? When given opportunities to feast on God's word, do you care enough to learn more?

do you exemplify the spirit of Proverbs 4, 5-6? Get wisdom, get understanding. Do not forget my words or turn away from them.

Do not forsake wisdom and she will protect you. Love her and she will watch over you. Do you love the wisdom of God's word?

Or do you simply not want to learn? do you think you know it all already? But what if you don't? Well, this takes us to our second warning sign.

[19:37] You're still a baby needing milk, not a chef giving out steak. You're still a baby needing milk, not a chef giving out steak.

Verse 12. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.

You need milk, not solid food. And so the writer is asking you, how long have you been a Christian? Five years?

Ten years? Twenty years? Well, if you're asked, can you explain the basics of the Christian faith? What is grace? Can you explain it properly? And grace isn't the same meaning as love, grace isn't the same meaning as salvation. Can you explain it?

[20:37] What are the basic guidelines for faithful interpretation of the Bible? Could you help a young believer know and begin to know how to read it well? And if you can't do that, then I'm afraid the writer says, you're sluggish.

You're still sucking your thumb. You're an adult acting like a big baby. After all, think about it. When you are a baby, it's completely appropriate to just drink milk. And so if you're a new Christian, it's completely appropriate if you're still trying to figure out where the book of Romans is in the Bible, or you're not always sure what the pastor is referring to when he uses Bible words like Gentiles or covenants, or you're uncertain how to pray.

I mean, that's appropriate to your stage. But imagine now that you're a grown man, and milk is all you ever drink. It's completely inappropriate and unhealthy as well.

And so it would be completely inappropriate if you've been a Christian for a long time, and you still have no idea what's in the book of Ephesians. It would be concerning if you still had no idea what's the difference between legalism and obedience.

[22:05] It would be strange if you're praying, Heavenly Father, thank you for dying on the cross for me, and you have no idea what's wrong with that prayer.

You see, the longer that you've been a Christian, the stronger your biblical foundations ought to be. If you've been a Christian for five months, then your aim is simply just to understand the basics and become familiar with the Bible stories and passages.

That's completely appropriate. And if that's you today, if you're at that stage, then I encourage you, keep learning, keep getting familiar with the Bible. Join our Bible study groups, find a good mentor. But if you've been a Christian for more than five years, then you should have an appetite for more. You want meat. You would say to yourself, okay, I've learned the basics of how to read the Bible.

I'm now ready to actually begin reading the Bible on my own. I'm hungry to know more. Well, let's do a short book. What's the basic message of the book of Colossians? What is post-overall point and how does it impact the way I live?

[23 : 20] You would say to yourself, well, I learned at baptism class that to be justified means to be declared righteous in Christ. But what else is there to learn about the doctrine of justification?

justification? You see, and when my friend comes to me in tears and she asks me, how can God love me when God hates sin and I've sinned again for the thousand time?

Well, how can I apply the doctrine of justification to care for her? And if you don't have a clue what I'm talking about right now, and you've been a Christian for more than ten years, then you should be very concerned because it means you're still on milk.

You're happily sucking your thumb. And that actually means you're very sick, spiritually speaking. Now, perhaps you might be thinking, ah, that's just Pastor Brian, he has high expectations, he's setting the standards high, probably too high.

But let me stress this, these are not my expectations or standards. That's simply the expectations and standards found here in Hebrews chapter 5 verse 12.

[24 : 44] These are God's expectations for you. Let me read it again. By this time, you ought to be teachers.

That's what the writer says. God is going to be set apart to become pastors or preachers. But he is expecting long-time Christians to have a good grasp of what they believe, why they believe, and to be able to encourage someone else with the word of God.

If you're a long-time Christian, God expects that right now, actually, you can be a good influence on someone else by the way you help them to see God's truths and God's perspectives from the Bible. Indeed, that's why he says in 6 verse 1, let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity. Is that you?

Yes. It's easy to stick to the familiar verses, the familiar truths, it's very easy to stick to the ABCs, easy to stick to the same old cliches.

[26 : 00] Pray, God will provide, God will make a way. Even, let's be gospel-centered. But we just stick with cliches.

We'll only know God in a very shallow way. You know God the way you know our chief minister, simply at a distance, without any substance.

God will take the time and effort to truly get into the Bible, to see how it all comes together, how we fit into the story that God is writing for his world, we get to taste how good the Lord really is.

You see, if you drink only milk, that means you'll miss out on the joys of eating delicious barbecue chasio, or a pan-fried rib-eye steak with balsamic vinegar, or steamed sea bears ngong-ya style. And so if you ever only look at those isolated verses on your fridge magnets, like Philippians 4 verse 13, you will only ever taste God in a superficial way.

[27 : 10] You wouldn't know all the diverse ways he is good and sovereign and just and strong and kind. And your growth is stunted.

Here's a recent example. Last year we did the book of Numbers. I think it was probably the first time for all of us that we've looked at this book in any detail at all. And we could also easily have been put off by it.

It's too boring, it's too complicated, it's got nothing to say to us. And to be honest, at the beginning of the series I thought to myself, oh dear, what have I gotten myself into? This is hard to preach.

But I think we can all say by the end that we've been very blessed by it. You see, if we had just given up and we had been happy with just milk, not meat, we would have missed out on so much. We would have not understood the depths of God's faithfulness as much as I hope we do now. You see, it's hard work, but there is reward. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

[28 : 23] And so my challenge to KEC is, are you ready to move on from milk? Many of you have been Christians for a long time, but is your thumb still stuck in your mouth?

Isn't it time to take it out? last year, I asked our elders, our deacons, and our home fellowship group leaders to try to read at least two Christian books from a reading list that I produced.

Well, this year, why not our entire congregation try to read at least two Christian books from our library? In fact, I've just produced a reading guide for our library, which is available or soon to be available from our librarian.

Now, why not pick two books from that guide? Why not sign up for the classes that we have? And if you feel like, actually, before I move on, I need a refresher.

I need to make sure that my foundations are solid. Well, there's no shame in that. And you can also use Christianity Explored for that purpose. Christianity Explored isn't just for non-Christians, but it also works well for any Christians who want to solidify their foundations.

[29 : 35] Now, one or two of us did exactly that the last time it was run. And they'll all tell you that they greatly benefited. Now, before we move on, let me just address one more question that might be at the back of our minds for one or two of you.

Now, how does all this talk about moving on in maturity fit with our conviction to be gospel-centered? Because, you know, isn't the gospel the basic stuff?

And now it seems you're saying that we should move on from the gospel to more advanced things? Well, let me answer that briefly. Remember what the writer to the Hebrews actually wants to talk to them about?

he wants to tell them all about how Jesus is the great high priest in the order of Melchizedek. And in chapter 7, he will explain to them the significance of that.

And the gist of it is that Jesus, if Jesus is from Melchizedek's line, he is the guarantor of a better covenant. He's a permanent and perfect priest.

[30 : 43] And that means he can truly meet our greatest need. He can save us. It's reality, not theory. Jesus himself is truly good news.

In other words, the writer of Hebrews isn't about to teach us new things that have nothing to do with the gospel. Rather, by teaching about Melchizedek, he's going to teach us stuff that helps us to know, understand, and love Jesus more.

He's not asking us so much to move beyond the gospel as to go deeper into the gospel. And just like after many decades, there can be things about our best friend or our spouse that we didn't know, and so there is a bottomless well when it comes to knowing Jesus.

He is so much bigger than just John 3, 16, and it would take us an entire lifetime to see how the gospel reveals God's glory in all of its fullness. And so moving on in maturity doesn't mean moving on from the gospel and leaving it behind.

And by the way, just to make it clear, moving on in maturity doesn't just mean filling your head with facts about the Bible either. No, moving on in maturity simply means knowing and loving Jesus more and more and more.

[32 : 14] Well, more briefly, the third warning sign that we're stuck in spiritual immaturity, when we're unable to discern between good and evil, when we're unable to discern good from evil.

Look at verse 13. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness, but solid food, is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

The writer tells us that one defining characteristic of the mature is that they know what's good for them and what's bad. For these Hebrew Christians, it meant that they would know why going to Jesus is good and why going back to Judaism is bad, because that was their great temptation.

For us, it might mean being able to tell why the teachings of somebody like a D.A. Carson or Tim Keller is good, and why the teachings of somebody like Robert Sassanga or Joseph Prince or Bill Johnson are bad.

It should be obvious. The contrast is like night and day. And the mature are those who are not just able to see whether the teachings of someone is good or bad, but also discern their lifestyles or their conduct.

[33 : 43] Why? Because in verse 30, notice that the mature are acquainted with the teaching about righteousness, whereas the immature are not. In other words, the more you understand your Bible, the more you can train your mind to use the logic of the Bible.

And as you work out the implications of the gospel, you can discern who is better, who is, who is, who, you can discern, sorry, you can discern better who is being shaped by the gospel and who is not.

For instance, if you work out that Christ suffered for you, that's a gospel truth, and you read that no servant is greater than his master, that's a Bible truth, then you would realise the implications of the gospel is that to walk in Christ's footsteps would mean suffering of some sort.

1 Peter 2 would tell you the same. And if so, then you would discern that any message that emphasises victory only and never suffering is incorrect.

You've acquainted yourself with the teaching about righteousness. And 2 Peter 2, we won't have time to look at it now, helps us to understand that we also discerned preachers by their fruit.

[35 : 04] What kind of people do their message produce? Where does their message ultimately lead you? If you're mature, you're able to discern.

But the question you ask me then is, how can I train myself in discernment? God do? Well, look at verse 14 again and notice what the mature do. They have constantly fed themselves solid food. They didn't have to get a seminary degree, they didn't have to have a genius IQ, they simply readied themselves to consume solid food constantly, and they gave up on all those sugary cereals. And as they abounded more and more in depth of knowledge and insight, God gave them maturity and helped them to become more discerning.

They began to learn how to make good decisions, ones that are pleasing to the Lord, and they begin to keep themselves blameless for the final day.

[36 : 17] So once again, my brothers and sisters, this is what God is calling us to, move on in maturity. Chapter 6, verse 1, therefore let us move on beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Now let me just give you the basic idea in those two verses. It seems to be this. The Hebrew Christians who were Jewish had the Old Testament with its various teachings and rituals. That was the foundation. But now that Christ has come, they had to move beyond just the Old Testament, because Christ now brings those teachings and rituals of the Old Testament to fulfillment.

And so they follow Christ now not so much by trying to do all those rituals and all those acts, but by following Christ. And that meant moving beyond our familiar external forms of Judaism and deeper into their newfound Christian faith.

And that's what the writer is urging them to. And we too move forward in a similar way. To be mature, we have to become dissatisfied with just the external forms of behavior and ritual.

[37 : 46] Of dutifully just coming to church, just putting some money in the offering bag, and then forgetting everything once it's 10 a.m. on a Sunday. We need to know Jesus more and more, to know the gospel more and more, and to know the Bible more and more, even though doing so is less safe.

Yes, it will make your life more complicated, but it's the better way. Taste and see that the Lord is good. But we must never forget that all of this is still dependent on God.

Our progress in maturity remains anchored in Christ. Just look at 6 verse 3. And God permitting, the writer says, we will do so.

In other words, only God will let us push forward. And so that means we have to keep praying. And moving forward means being patient and being ready to trust Jesus.

You know, just come down with me a few more verses down to 6 verse 12. And look at how the writer encourages us to follow in the footsteps of those who are ready to move on in maturity.

[39 : 03] 6 verse 12. We do not want you to become lazy, he says, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

And so these people through faith and patience just kept walking with the Lord, trusting that God would give them their inheritance at the end of the day. And so this is our vision.

Don't be satisfied with milk. Don't be an adult thumb sucker. Grow up in our salvation. Now as we wrap up, I just want to address one more thing.

How does this vision impact our practice as a church? Well yesterday we had our leadership morning and we said a number of things. But one of the big things we said yesterday was this. As a church we want to offer not so much a manual but a road map. As a church we want to offer not so much a manual but a road map. Let me explain.

[40 : 06] What is a restaurant manual? A manual is a list of options from which you can decide what to eat and what not to eat. And we get to decide what to eat. And so if we love chocolate milk we will always order chocolate milk.

And if we don't want the meat we can always choose not to order the meat. But what is a road map? It's simply a map that shows you how to move from point A to point B. It tells you how to get to your destination. And I hope it's clear by now that God wants us to move to a particular destination to maturity in Christ. And so what that means is that what we need is more a road map.

How to get from A to B. Rather than a menu. And so as a church we don't just want to put on a list of activities from which we can just pick and choose like a menu. rather we want to slowly begin making sure that all the things we do in church is helping us to move from point A to point B from infancy to adulthood.

[41 : 13] But of course there are various stages between infancy and adulthood. You grow from being a toddler to a child to a teenager to a young adult and ultimately an adult and a parent.

Let me just give you a visual representation of what that looks like on the PowerPoint. You see this is how we begin isn't it? We begin as someone who is dead.

We're not yet a Christian. But then God gives us new birth through the gospel and so we become an infant and as an infant we begin to learn the basics of the Christian faith. And as we move on in maturity we become a child.

We begin to learn and apply the Bible's wisdom and truth and to serve. And then we become a young adult beginning to learn and grow to be a disciple-making disciple. And ultimately a parent which is someone who can say to someone else imitate me even as I imitate Christ.

And all of us are on this lifelong journey if we are Christians. And the point today is not so much to get into debates about whether am I at this stage or am I at that stage or what are the exact characteristics of this stage or that stage.

[42 : 21] You can see that I'm very general in my descriptions of each stage but the point is we want to move forward in maturity. And as a church we have to organize ourselves in such a way so as to help us move forward.

And so let me just give you a little example. For example why do we have Christianity Explored? Well it's mainly to help people in the power of the Holy Spirit move from death to new birth as they hear the gospel.

And so on this chart it's to help them move from being dead to being an infant by the power of the Holy Spirit. And as I said earlier it can also be used to help people grow who are those who are at the infant stage and they want to keep growing and it will help them to grow towards being a child. And by God's grace I'm so grateful that that's what's happened the last few times we've run Christianity Explored. But you see we don't want to just stop there. we want to think okay let's say that somebody's become a Christian through Christianity Explored.

Well what's next on the roadmap? We don't just want to leave them as an infant. No what can help him or her grow from infancy to childhood? Well it could be something pretty informal maybe just a more experienced Christian offering to meet up with this new Christian for two months and going through the basics of the Christian faith with him or her.

[43 : 48] That might not be an official church thing but it's a good thing to do. Or it could be something more formal. Maybe we might think okay the next point on the roadmap for this person is to get him or her into a Bible study group, a home fellowship group of some sort.

Maybe we think oh okay that's a bit difficult for that person to move straight from Christianity Explored to a home fellowship group so maybe we need something in between. Maybe we need to start a new Christians group.

And perhaps as that person goes into the new Christian group that would ease his or her way into a home fellowship group where he or she can grow to be a child.

And then as she and he continues to develop perhaps one of the days we realize oh he or she has leadership potential. And so we begin to think of ways where we can train him or her.

And so that means we might put on a leadership training of some sort. And so to put a visual representation on this it could look something like this. Okay that's not very clear but that's alright. Right?

[44 : 52] From Christianity Explored to a new Christians group to a home fellowship group to a let's say a home fellowship group new leaders training. Now this is just an example. But the point is this.

The way we want to do church is to help us facilitate our spiritual movement towards maturity. as a person is progressing through Christianity Explored to a hypothetical new Christians group to the

home fellowship group and so on.

We want that person to also be progressing from childhood, from infancy to childhood to spiritual adulthood. Now like I said this is just an example.

It won't necessarily look like this. And in real ministry of course it's more messy than this. And it's also very important to remember that it's not so much about the program but the actual Bible teaching that happens in those groups and trainings that brings about growth.

But my big point is this. As a church we simply want to help each other to move towards our ultimate destination of maturity and Christ.

[46 : 04] And so as a church we want to begin thinking more in terms of a roadmap approach to ministry. And I know it's not natural for us to think like this.

I myself have to be quite intentional to think this way. And so it will take repeated reminders, it will take discipline, it will take training for us to do so.

And this will be a long-term project. It will take quite a number of years I think before as we try to work out and think what does it mean to implement a roadmap approach to ministry.

But I think this is where we need to move forward as a church to help us to move forward in maturity. But remember Hebrews chapter 6 verse 3, God permitting we will do so.

And so we need to pray. As 6 verse 1 reminds us, we need to be taken forward in maturity by God and not just do this by ourselves.

[47 : 12] Well, church, shall we do this? Let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.