

# Three Stages of the Christian Life

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen discusses the three stages of the Christian life, emphasizing the importance of growth from spiritual infancy to maturity and the dangers of worldliness.*

**Scripture:** 1 John 2:12, 1 John 2:15-17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the three stages of the Christian life outlined by John in 1 John 2:12-14: spiritual babyhood, spiritual youth, and spiritual maturity. He emphasizes the importance of starting with the foundational knowledge of forgiveness of sins and God as our Father, progressing to having God's Word abiding in our hearts to overcome Satan, and ultimately knowing God intimately to become spiritual fathers who can guide others in the church. Poonen warns against loving the world and its temptations, highlighting the dangers of lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride, which hinder our love for the Father.

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## Transcript

In 1 John 2:12-14, John writes about three stages in the Christian life, spiritual babyhood, spiritual youth and spiritual maturity.

Babes are those who know only the forgiveness of their sins and that God has become their Father. These are two things that all babes in Christ must know. That is the foundation and the starting point of the Christian life. You can't grow if you don't start on this clear foundation. The next level of maturity is when we learn how to have God's Word abiding permanently in our hearts so that we are strong and can overcome Satan (2:13, 14). From there, we must grow and become spiritual fathers to others. They know God and His ways intimately - which is more than just knowing Him as their Father. When you become mature, you know God personally, the values He has and the principles by which He works, etc. Such fathers can guide other believers - and that is the greatest need of the hour in our churches today.

Those who only talk about the forgiveness of sins and how God is a good Father Who cares for all their earthly needs and heals their sicknesses and provides for them, are babies. They are like babies who keep saying, "Mamma, Dadda". We all begin there. But we must not remain in that state. We must grow up and learn how to fight Satan. Then we have to go beyond even that. We must go on to know God intimately. That is the greatest thing of all. Then we can be a blessing to many in the church as "fathers".

To all these believers who are at different levels of maturity, John gives an exhortation: "Don't love the world or the things in the world" ( 2:15). Do spiritual fathers also need an exhortation not to love the world? Yes. Even the most mature Christian in the world is in danger of loving the world at any time. So even he needs the exhortation, "Don't love the world. If you love the world, you cannot love the Father."

There are three things mentioned here that constitute what John calls "the world": the lust of the flesh - sexual passions, overeating, laziness; the lust of the eyes - the desire to buy everything that we see, which is related to the love of money; and pride - the greatest sin of all. These three things characterise this world system. Anyone who loves any of these things cannot love the Father. But all these and the world will pass away very soon. Only the one who does the will of the Father will remain forever (2:17). That is something we must always bear in mind

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