

Principles for Measuring Progress

By Earl Radmacher

Earl Radmacher:

Thank you. You just can't beat a man like Ron Hafer, you know, after playing so ferociously last night, and I understand winning, he comes back with all this vim, vigor, and vitality that he has this morning. He's a pretty terrific fellow. Thank you, Ron. The reason I appear all the time is because I've got so much to learn. Most of these other guys have got it all learned already, but I have to keep learning. I had a little Bible study up in my Church on Wednesday nights and just about eight or ten guys there. And one of the fellows said to me one Wednesday night, he said, Why do you keep coming to this? He said, you're not learning anything from us, and why do you keep coming? And I said, If I am not learning anything from you, then they just as well bury me because I'm dead already. When a person stops learning, they are useless. And I feel that until the day that we go to be with the Lord, we got to keep learning. And then I won't need to learn anymore because I'll be like him, and I'll see him as he is, and I'll be like him, and I won't need to learn.

But up until that time, I need to learn. So this week has been a learning experience for me. And I'm not saying that because that's the thing to say at the end of the conference. I'm saying that because there have been some specific things that have happened in my thought life this week that have resulted in some changes that have already begun to take place, and the results of those will be seen, God willing, in the months and years to come, and maybe in a few years when I come back again, I'll share with you what some of those things were, if indeed the change has worked. But God has been at work in my life this week, and I hope he has and yours as well. I

don't know how you could possibly look at the word of God intensively and not be changed by it. That's why my life, verse 2 Corinthians 3:18, is so meaningful to me. That we all with unveiled face. Beholding, as in the mirror, the glory of the Lord are changed, are metamorphosed, into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord becoming more like Christ.

I'd like to give you this morning in this concluding session a couple of principles for measuring your progress under Christ likeness, from Hebrews 5:11-14. Unfortunately, Hebrews five and six have oftentimes become such a battleground between Calvinists and Arminians that I think we lose the whole point of the passage. To me, Hebrews is a tremendously practical book, especially in our day when we have so very many people who are recently born again, at least by their own confession, and need to move on to maturity in Jesus Christ. It's wonderful to have new Babes in a nursery, but it is not so good if you become overwhelmed by the nursery. And America probably has the largest spiritual nursery that it's ever had in history. And consequently, if we do not see some immediate progress toward maturity, there will be the problems of deceitful workers among them. There will be false prophets, false teachers, much as there was in the Corinthian Church, and it will be devastating. So America in its state of affairs right now is really wide open to the pursuit of the cults. And I believe it's really important that I be moving on to maturity in Christ.

John Hunter did a commentary on Hebrews and title, "Let Us Go On." Actually, that title was used prior to John Hunter by W. H. Griffith Thomas. "Let Us Go on." And they took that from Hebrews six, verse one, Let us go on to perfection or let us go on to maturity in Christ. And that really is the whole theme of Hebrews. And I think their commentary is rightly named. Let us Go

on. For he is talking to those who have begun and in some senses have run well, but they have fallen by the wayside. They have fallen off the track. They have fallen away from progress under maturity, and they have fallen back to the beginning. You cannot stand still in Christ. I can say with assurance at the end of this week now you are either better off or worse off than you were when we started the week, but you are not the same. It's impossible to confront the truth of God and be the same. You will either be harder toward it and therefore it will have been worse for you to be here or you will be softer toward it, and you will have made changes in your life.

You cannot stand still in Christ. All the time you are either moving forward or you are moving backward. The change may be almost imperceptible, but change there will be you cannot really plateau. You will be moving forward or you will be moving backward. And in chapter five of Hebrews, the writer is moving into some really high level teaching on the person of Christ. He is right in the middle of that when it apparently occurs to him that the people who he is addressing himself to are not really with him. And thus in verse eleven, he says of this high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, of whom we have much to say and hard to explain, and most of us stop there and we say that certainly is true. Hebrews is really a tough book, this doctrine of the Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus Christ, that's just too tough for me to handle, and we blame it, therefore, on the content. The only problem is he is not referring to the content. He is referring to the listener. He says, What I have to say to you is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing.

It's even easy for that to happen in a week like this. By the end of the week you can become dull. The King James rendered it dull of hearing. Usually the New American standard improves on the

King James, but it didn't do a bit of good there. It renders at dull of hearing also, and dull of hearing just isn't the way we speak. I don't talk to you about being dull of hearing. That sounds good for poetry. Dull of hearing. You don't know whether to commend me or hit me for saying that of you. If you would translate it more pungently in 20th century like you would say, since you have become so stupid, that would get more to the heart of it. Or maybe someone would say thickheaded, muddleheaded. You're not with it. Now when you make that kind of a statement, you may have a battle on your hands. It's plain to see that this writer had never taken a course by Dale Carnegie on how to win friends and influence people, or he'd have better sense than to make such a statement to these people that you're dull of hearing. You're stupid. So he moves right into a defense of his statement by saying in verse twelve his reason for his charge.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God." Teach those again to you. "And you have come to need milk and not solid food for everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Wrapped into that little exhortation are two principles, one I call a time principle and the other a practice principle. The figures used in the text are milk and meat, and I think really they relate closely to time in Christ and practice of truth. Now look back at verse twelve again. He says, "by this time." What time? How much time? Well, you say probably he's referring back to their time in Christ. "By this time in your life in Christ, you ought to be teachers." Now, I think I probably do not need to defend the fact that he's not talking about formal teachers here. For other passages of

God's word, make it clear that not everybody has a gift of teaching, but here he is laying it on everybody.

So he must be using teaching in a less formal sense than the gift of teaching. And I take it that what he is saying. By this time you ought to be giving out through whatever your spiritual gift is. You ought to have had opportunity to have taken in enough that by this time it has been translated out through your life. So God lays on them a timeline. God has an expectation for my growth. God is not content for me to merely come in the family and then mark time until he takes me home. He has high expectations for my growth. Now I don't want to depreciate my new birth. The scripture certainly doesn't depreciate it. It talks about the Angels in heaven rejoicing when one comes to Jesus Christ. There's a celebration at the birth and we all celebrate when a child comes along. We are excited. We are thrilled about that, at least that we usually are, unless too many have come before, I suppose. But at least in my case the four were well received. The order was not proper. The first one was supposed to be a boy, and so her name was Tim until she got to the hospital, and then we had to quick come up with Becky.

But probably God was even right in that in the one girl and the three boys and each one of them met with great excitement. We were glad they were there, and in the case of the first one, I made a lot of preparation for her. For him turned out to be her long before she ever came. I had a stack of books that I read about children and what could be expected by way of progress in their little lives. I remember reading Margaret Bailey Jacobson's book, *The Child in the Christian Home*, and it told you what ought to happen in the first month, in the first six months, in the first year, and then the second year and third year on up to twelve years. I practically had those things

memorized, and I watched Becky very, very carefully to see if she was really on target and, you know, when she would first turn over and then when she would pull herself up into a sitting position on the rails of the baby bed, and then when she would stand and then when she would first crawl and when she would take her first step and then when she would run and with regard to her vocabulary, when she would say "Dada" first, and that always came before "Mama" and I watched these things and they were quite exciting.

I had expectations and sometimes she was ahead of schedule, and obviously I could explain that she was my daughter. She was precocious, and when she was behind schedule, of course the book was wrong, but I watched her and I had expectations. Now was that wrong? I think not. We anticipate that people are not only going to be born, but those who are born are going to grow. Why is it that Christians then don't have the same expectation of themselves and of others? Why do we rejoice when somebody is born again and not seem to be really very concerned if they don't make any progress on the maturity? The Secretary that I had before the present one came in one day announcing that she had just had a new nephew. Her brother and his wife had had a baby, Josh, and she was really excited. He was the future quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys and just a perfect specimen of a human being. Good looking, little boy, well shaped, and my she was proud of him, and she would sing his praises. And then I recall that she began to say less and less about him, and it bothered me a little bit.

And I asked her one day, what about Josh? And she said in a very sober response that Josh had this particular disease, and I can't even give it to you now, but it simply meant dwarfism. And Josh, she said, is not going to grow to full stature as a man. He never will be that quarterback.

And I remember every week they took him up to Seattle for hormone treatment and paying a great deal of money to spur his growth. And it may be that some of you have had contact with that kind of a problem. It's not an easy problem to handle, but one nice thing about it is it doesn't have any eternal consequences. Physical stunting is not a long-range problem. Spiritual stunting is. And isn't it interesting that I can get so terribly concerned about physical dwarfism and be relatively unconcerned about spiritual dwarfism? But regardless what my expectations are or aren't, God has them. God has expectations for me to grow into a usable soldier in the army of Christ. And when it happens that I am not fit for service, that is a grave disappointment to God. As in Luke 9:57-62, where he speaks about the one who is not fit, he's not usable.

Great disappointment. You say, how long does God give me to grow up? Well, if he had an infallible timeline that fit everybody, he would have put it down here, wouldn't he? They didn't put it down. However, we might gain some ideas by looking at comparable situations. If you keep your finger in Hebrews five and turn back to 1 Corinthians three for just a peek here at another group of people who had a similar problem. It says in 1 Corinthians three and one, "and I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to Babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able, for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" Did you notice the timeline in verse two? He says, When I was with you, I fed you with milk and not with solid food. How long was he with them? Remember back to your survey courses, 18 months. And then he leaves them.

And now he writes back to them. How old are they now? Four years old in Christ. And whereas at 18 months he did not hold them culpable, at four years, he does. You see, at 18 months, he says, I fed you with milk and not with solid food because you were not able. Even now you are not able. And somewhere between 18 months and four years, Paul held them culpable for their lack of growth. Now everybody has their own set of circumstances. I have my hereditary problems. I have my environmental problems, all different kinds of Givens that are true to each one of us. And God doesn't deal with us as machines. We are individuals. He knows us very personally, but the principle is the same. God does have an expectation of growth as any father would have. And God does have a timeline that is relative but similar. A man came up to me after one week of meetings and he said, you know, I just really appreciate this week. I've learned so much this week. He said, you know, I'm just a Babe in Christ. He said, Many of the people in this Church, I mean, boy, they have been Christians for 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, or some have even been Christians 50 years.

And he said, I'm just a Babe in Christ. He said, I've only known the Lord ten years. I didn't have the heart to tell him what Paul might have called him. Babe at ten years? What kind of demands do I put on myself to grow up? So the first question I need to ask myself here as a checkpoint practicing self observation self examination is how long have I known Jesus? What may be a legitimate expectation of growth in my life? And I say that not to be sadistic, but self observation is the first step in behavior change. And if I do not carefully look at myself and evaluate, I will not take the steps of progress onto maturity. So the writer in Hebrews five looks at them and says, I'd like to be able to dig into this deeper, but I can't because you're so dull of hearing. Why? When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that someone teach you all over

again. Why? There's a principle woven in there that if you don't use it, you lose it. And that's very pertinent to this week. Been a good week.

A lot of time invested in it, a lot of money invested in it. If you don't use it, you'll lose it.

Seminary students that take not only Greek but Hebrew. And a couple of years after they're out of seminary, they can hardly quote the Alphabet. If you don't use it, you'll lose it. How long have you known Jesus, how much progress might be legitimately expected by God of you unto maturity? I woven into the middle of that. He keeps talking about milk and meat. He said that back in 1 Corinthians three to the Corinthians. The writer here says it to these Hebrew Christians. Milk and meat. What is milk? What is meat? As I was growing up in Christ, I was taught that milk is the gospel and meat, that's doctrine, as though the gospel isn't doctrine. Or meat, that's not only doctrine, that's heavy doctrine, that's prophecy. Ah, give me the meat. Ezekiel 38, the King of the north. That's the meat, is it? Where do you find that in scripture? Where in the scripture does the scripture ever divide content from content and call one milk and the other meat? Never does it.

But you will invariably find people talking about. We want to get into the meat, talking about another area of content. Let me submit to you that meat is not content. Meat is use practice. Milk is data, content, all of it. You see a little clue, I think, to that in verses 12 to 14. When you read the phrases that describe it, he says that you need someone in verse twelve to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God. And you have come to need milk. First principles. Milk. The word is stoicheia, and there is a division of chemistry. I don't think I have this right, but it's something like stoichiometry. Do any of you take that? It's dealing with the elements, and that's

what stoicheia referred to. Now, they didn't know in their day like we know today what the elements are. In fact, their philosophers and scientists referred to the stoicheia as Earth, air, fire, and water. Those were the smallest things out of which everything else was made. We know better than that today. We know the smallest thing is an atom. No, we've gone beyond that too, haven't we?

We're getting very, very close to the scriptural definition that the things which are seen are made out of things which do not appear. Those are the stoicheia, the basic building blocks of the universe, the things out of which everything that is made is made. That's the database. That's the milk. Let me put it in a mathematical sense. When I was in grade school, they made me memorize by rote memory, the addition tables and subtraction tables and division tables and multiplication tables. They didn't even give me the accompaniment of music to do it. Just memorize it. And I work like everything. One plus one equals two. Two plus two equals four. And I won't go any further. I don't want to make a mistake, but I memorized those things. I had them down cold. Then I went to high school and I took every math course they had to offer. In high school, I took beginning algebra and advanced algebra. I took plain geometry and solid geometry. I took trigonometry and calculus. I took every math class in Washington High School in Portland, Oregon. And do you know what they never, ever in those three and a half years of high school, ask me to repeat those addition tables and subtraction tables again. What a mag...

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Voiceover:

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Earl Radmacher:

And I took every math course they had to offer in high school. I took beginning algebra and advanced algebra. I took plain geometry and solid geometry. I took trigonometry and calculus. I took every math class in Washington High School in Portland, Oregon. And do you know what they never, ever, in those three and a half years of high school, ask me to repeat those addition tables and subtraction tables again. What a magnificent waste of time. Here, I spent all that time in grade school memorizing his stuff. I got to high school. They never asked me for it again. Was that a waste of time? There's no way I'd ever work a problem in trigonometry without it. You see, I never again said One plus one equals two. Two plus two equals four. There's no way I would work a problem in trigonometry without being sure that those things were true. I had left them behind. I had gone on from them. And now I could put them into practice to solve huge problems in mathematics that would build great structures.

You can go down here on the freeway and you can see highway after highway on top of each other. Four and five high structural engineers have worked out heavy math in building great structures. That's fun. Much more fun than one plus one equals two. Two plus two equals four. But if they didn't believe that two plus two equals four, they'd never build that bridge. The first is milk. The second is meat. The first is the database. The second is the application of it to life. Look at the way it characterizes the second in verse 14. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age. That is, those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern or distinguish good and evil. You and I live in a world that clouds the issue of right and wrong and good and evil. And we need people who really have the data base down so that they can apply all of those elements to the solution of the heavy problems of righteousness. What is right? What is

wrong? If I don't have a full database, I won't be able to tell for sure. Or I may blow myself up in the laboratory because something has been left out in my understanding of the data.

Therefore, as a newborn Babe, I need to desire the sincere milk of the word. How much of it? All of it. I've heard people foolishly say, well, brother, you don't need to be a theologian to serve Christ. All you need to know is John 3:16. Well, bless your heart. If all I need to know is John 3:16, why didn't Jesus just give me John 3:16 then? Or some people who are the more advanced students they get John 3:16 and John 5:24 in Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23 and Hebrews 9:27 and first John 5:10-12 in Revelation 3:20. And they have their handy dandy "Soul Winners guide," and that's all that they need. Well why didn't God just give us that? God gave me 66 books, and God is very restrained. The Gospels teach me that if Jesus were to give us everything he could have given us, the world couldn't have contained the books. Can you imagine what a dilemma that would be? Not even microfiche could solve the problem. God really restrained himself and he gave us 66 books. Why? Because I need to know 66 books. And every problem I will ever face in life is covered in those books, either in principle or in practice.

This book is a book of milk and meat. You say, well, wait a minute. I thought you said milk was the data and meat is the practice. That's right. It's a book of data and practice. You see, that's what's different between my Bible and my systematic theology. My systematic theology is very pedantic. It's full of data and very little application to life. It's organized that way. The Bible contains a systematic theology, but it is not a systematic theology. If you were to take all of the milk out of it and organize it and systematize it, you would have a fully coordinated systematic theology. But it has more than that. It has practice, and it presents that practice in many different

ways. And sometimes it presents it in a drama, sometimes it presents it in a poem, sometimes it presents it in narrative. They're all different kinds of literary genre for bringing out the practice. The solid food of the milk, the data. And so earlier in the week, I shared a couple of examples of solid food. The reaction that Joseph had to the treatment by his brothers is an evidence of solid food. He programmed in data concerning God, data concerning himself.

He had that woven in to the grid in his heart. And then when the time for action came, he was able to respond sensibly to that in practice because he had a full course of data. Milk and meat. Elements, database, and practice. Use. I have to have both because if I do not use it, I will lose it.

One of our psychology students, Randy Marsh, presented a paper to me the other day that I've been going through this week that has really excited me. And he has shown the results of several papers on psychological experimentation with cognitive behavior and demonstrating that centralization of belief is directly related to behavior. And so I take in data, cognitive input, and I accompany that with practice, and that reinforces it, and that makes it central. So it changes it from a belief to an attitude. There are a lot of things that have been said to you this week from the word of God. They may be things that you believe. If you will accompany that belief with a practice, you will centralize it and make it an attitude. That will be solid food.

Verse 14 "Solid food belongs to those who are of full age. That is, those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised so that they can distinguish good and evil." Some time ago, a student and his wife invited Ruth and me to their home for Sunday dinner. And they really wanted to put on their very best. They wanted to show their love, and so they really put their effort into it. And

this young lady had just had a baby a few months before. And so she was trying to feed the baby there in the high chair and take care of the things that were being baked in the oven and also watch the things on top of the stove and also set the table and a few other things. And my wife noticed that, boy, she was really trying to do an awful lot at the same time. And she didn't want to interfere, but she said that, could I do something? Is there something I could do to help? And she said, oh, if you just feed the baby. One, it had been a while since Ruth had done that, but she thought she could warm up to it again. And so she went over to this beautiful little object dressed in a little pink dress, seated in her high chair.

And she had a bowl of something there. I don't know, it was something slippery, like yogurt or pudding or whatever. And Ruth got that spoon out and she got a teaspoonful of that stuff and put it up to the baby's mouth. And obediently that baby just opened her mouth right up, and she had this pretty little pink tongue inside. And Ruth slipped that spoonful of food in, and the baby just rolled her tongue up like that. And she spit it back out again, right down her chin. And we all looked at her, we said, Isn't that cute? And so Ruth thought, I'll just scoop that back up again. She scooped it back up, and then the baby opened her mouth right up again. And Ruth just stuck that back in again. And that baby spit it out. And then she smiled so big. And we all said, Isn't she cute? Now, what's cute about that? We understand that, don't we? We say she's a baby. And that made it cute. Ruth thought, I know what I'll do. I'll get that in there, and then I'll get this bottle of milk up there. As soon as I get it inside, I'll jam that bottle of milk in that'll get it all thin and it'll run down.

And it did all over her dress. That was a third dress that day. And we're standing there saying, Isn't she cute? She's a baby. Nobody would have been sympathetic if I'd have gone out and got a cat of nine tails and whipped the daylights out of that baby. We understand that, don't we? You don't do that. We understand and God understands. She's a baby. Now, I said earlier, I have four kids. How do I know? I've got their pictures here. And that's Becky, she's 24. That's Tim. He's 22. And John and Dan, 16 and 15. Now, I'm going home this afternoon and we're going to have dinner together tonight, all of us at the table. And as we sit down at the table, Tim is sitting on my right, and all of a sudden I look over at Tim and Tim's food is running down his chin. And all of a sudden Tim just spits his food all over the table. Now, am I going to get up and run for a stick of wood and hit him? No, I'm going to run for the phone, call my doctor and say, "Doc, help. Help. My 22 year old boy, Tim, is sitting at the table spitting food all over the table. Help! Help!"

Is it strange that I should be upset if my 22 year old boy is still spitting food like that six month old baby girl? Why is it that we are so bothered by people failing to grow up physically and it could concern us less when they fail to grow up spiritually and they're still spitting and wetting their pants, etc. I believe that I need to think through God's legitimate expectations of me to grow up. There is something more than a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. But that's not the whole of it. God didn't give birth to us to be babies. He gave birth to us to become soldiers in the battle that we fight for the souls of men, and we need to grow up. And so I would ask you at the end of this conference to ask yourself two questions. How long have I known Jesus? What are the legitimate expectations he could have for me? And

secondly, how does my life today differ from my life six months ago or my life one year ago?

You may say, hey, I can't quantify that.

Yes, you can. Yes, you can. Don't kid yourself. You know, and I know that there are things that we perhaps are not doing today that we were doing a year ago that were no good, and we praise God for that. We've gotten rid of some habit patterns that were detrimental. They were not influential for good. We've dropped off some things take time to praise God for that. And maybe there are some things that we have added to our life that weren't there before that are good, that are a step forward, praise God for it. But then also look at myself and ask, are there some things that have been hanging on for years that I've been playing with and I need to be done with. What is my practice? What is my solid food today as compared to a year ago? And Torrey conference may be the golden opportunity to think that through. A week of absence from classes, no tests. The only test really, really is what will you do with the investment of this intensive week? Will you change some specific areas that will demonstrate a movement on to maturity for Christ? Let us go on.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you that you do not allow us to just sit and soak but you, by your spirit, keep urging us and prodding us and moving us on. There are all kinds of good things, Lord, we have heard this week things that we believe if we were to put them in a doctrinal statement. But, Lord, they need to move from beliefs to attitudes. So help us to accompany belief with action which will reinforce and centralize our belief into genuinely Christlike attitudes. In order that people may see Christ with less distortion in us than they have seen him before. Thank you, Lord God, for the wonderful provision of this week. And thank you, thank you, Lord, for

the changes that you've brought in my own attitude and life situation. I praise you in Jesus name
Amen.

Announcer:

Let's stand together, please and let's sing the chorus, "In My Life Lord Be Glorified" as we
conclude the conference.

[Musical Interlude] "In my life Lord be glorified, be glorified. In my life Lord, be glorified
today." In this place. "In this place Lord, be glorified, be glorified. In this place Lord be glorified
today." Thank you. You are dismissed.