

# godsend – learning for mission

## Bible study resources

### *Unit 14. Grow disciples*

Edited extract from John Piper, “By This Time You Ought to Be Teachers.” Hebrews 5.11–14

To read the whole article, go to [www.desiringgod.org/messages/by-this-time-you-ought-to-be-teachers](http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/by-this-time-you-ought-to-be-teachers).

There is something wrong with the Christians the author of Hebrews is writing to. . . . It’s the disease of dullness of hearing. . . .

Dull hearing does not mean there is anything wrong with your physical ears. It means there is something wrong with your heart. The heart is not eager and diligent to embrace God’s promises and turn them into faith and practice. . . .

The promises come to the ear, but there is no passion for them, no lover’s embrace, no cherishing or treasuring; and so no faith and no patience. . . .

Dullness of hearing is a kind of hearing with the ears that is unresponsive in the heart. It doesn’t embrace the word of God with faith. . . .

Hebrews 5.11 says that there is so much more that the writer wants to give to his readers. If they had more grace to hear, they would receive more that the writer has to give. But they are becoming hard and dull, and in danger of throwing away the little they have.

That’s the disease. Now what about the remedy? . . . The key verse is verse 14. “Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

Now ask yourself this question: If solid food is only palatable—digestible—for the mature, with what food do you then become mature so that you can eat the solid food? The answer is milk. You become mature with milk.

The problem with these Christians is not that milk is weak or that babes can’t eat steak. The problem is that babes are not exercising with the milk they have.

You see the key word there in verse 14: you become mature by “practice” or exercise or habitual responses to the milk. . . .

What verse 14 is saying is that if you want to become mature and understand the more solid teachings of Scripture, then the rich, nutritional, precious milk of God’s gospel promises must transform your moral senses—your spiritual mind—so that you can discern between good and evil. . . .

If you want to eat the solid food of the Bible, you must exercise your spiritual senses so as to develop a mind that discerns between good and evil.

What this means is that if you want to grow up and feast on the fullness of God’s revelation, you don’t do it by jumping from milk to meat.

You do it by the way you drink the milk. The milk has to make you a certain kind of discerning person before you can digest the meat. . . .

Education is not the key to maturity. The key is the way you drink the milk. So let me close with three steps in how to grow with milk to maturity.

- 1) You drink in the milk. Read and listen to the message of God's promises in the Bible.
- 2) Savor, swallow, digest, and be satisfied. This is crucial. Learn to love the taste of the milk. When the promises of God are tasted, the milk satisfies. And when it satisfies, it transforms your values and priorities.
- 3) With a heart satisfied with God, discern good and evil. Hundreds of decisions you make day in and day out are not spelled out explicitly in the Bible. You have to apply general Biblical principles to what you watch on TV, political positions you take, how you spend your money, where to live and much else. Applying Biblical principles to these decisions is what discerning good and evil is about. And learning how to do this comes from "practice" (verse 14) and from regularly immersing yourself in Scripture. . . .

This is the remedy for "dullness of hearing." Drink with delight until the desires of your heart are so transformed as to become the discernment of good and evil. Then you will be mature and ready for meat.