

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 -Spiritual Babies - 27 September 2015

Today, we arrive at Hebrews and chapter 5. Hebrews is one of the last few books in your Bibles. So, if you have it with you today, turn with me to Hebrews chapter 5. We will be concluding this chapter this morning.

This is a picture of my son, Matthias. Cute huh? He's three years' old. But let me tell you something about Matthias. He really hates to be called a baby. His brother, Shawn, sometimes likes to tease him and will say, "Matthias, you're such a baby." And Matthias will be very angry and he will vehemently retort, "No, I'm not a baby. I'm a big boy." This is what Matthias wants to be. He wants to grow up. He doesn't want to remain a baby. And I think that's true for Christians as well.

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If you believe in Jesus Christ, if you are born again, I believe the deep desire of your heart is not to remain in spiritual infancy but to move on to maturity. And so, this morning, we're going to look at the subject of spiritual babies, how the author of Hebrews identifies a problem in the church – that there are many of them who have been in the faith for quite some time but they've remained infantile, they've remained as spiritual babies. And I find this a very encouraging subject because as we look at what he says, we may be encouraged to move on and grow, and be mature in Jesus Christ. Notice this is what he writes:

11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles [pastor: "or the Word"] of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:11-14 ESV)

This is a passage about spiritual babies. Why, because the author says, right now, you can't tolerate solid food, you can only drink milk (Heb 5:12). And he says you are but a child (Heb 5:13). The word "child" here is very precise. It's literally, in the Greek, a word that means "no talking, no speech". So it refers to someone, probably one year and below, hasn't learned how to talk. And so he says this describes you, you ought to be someone mature, feeding on solid food, teaching others but at this point of time, you are still drinking milk. In Hokkien, we say "chiak guni". You've not moved on very much. So spiritual babies – that's all we're going to look at today. Are we one? Why are we one and how can we move on to maturity? That's all we're going to cover in this sermon.

1. The Result of Spiritual Infancy

The first thing I want to consider is: How do you know if I'm or you are a spiritual baby? What are some of the marks, what are some of the characteristics or the result of spiritual infancy? It's very easy. It's very simple because it's a tremendous illustration of infancy here. And the author says, number one, a child or an infant, a spiritual baby cannot digest a lot of things. He cannot have the capacity for solid food. He can only receive the basic principles of the oracles or the Word of God. You need milk, you cannot take solid food (Heb 5:12).

Now, I think this is very easy to understand. There is no baby in the world I have known, no baby less than one year old who is able to sit at the dining table and take a drumstick and eat it like this. Have you ever seen a baby do that? No. Have you seen a baby take a knife and a fork and cut his slab of steak and, "Wah, juicy"? Now, I've never seen a baby do that. Why, because a baby doesn't have the capacity to digest drumsticks or steak. I mean it's just too tough to chew, it's... He's either I think "bogeh" (means toothless in Hokkien), or okay, some may have teeth but not strong enough. The muscles are not strong enough; the gut is not ready for solid food.

And spiritual babies are the same. They can only receive the basic principles, the ABCs of the Bible, but they can't know very much more. They can't know the deeper, richer truths in Scripture. Now, you may... he may be able to understand sin, he may be able to understand faith towards God, he may know what it means to have your sins washed, he may know what it means to rise from the dead and have the final judgment that is to come. Now that... those things he may be familiar and those things are mentioned in Hebrews 6.

But when you talk about Melchizedek, he says indigestion, too "chim" (Hokkien word which means profound). I can't understand Melchizedek, I can't understand the priesthood of Jesus. And so, the author laments, he... I can almost hear him sigh: "I wish I could tell you more but you're like babies, you can't take very much. That's probably what a spiritual baby struggles with. There are deeper things, richer things, more nutritious teachings in the Scripture, but you won't, you can't, because you're still immature in the faith. Now, this problem of a little capacity for knowledge, a little capacity to know God's Word is very prevalent.

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I read about this survey done by George Barna. He's a famous name in statistics in churches in America. And he gives some rather shocking statistics, but it may be true:

"48% could not name the four Gospels.

52% cannot identify more than two or three of Jesus' disciples.

60% can't name even five of the 10 Commandments.

50% thought Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.
61% think the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.
71% of them think the expression "God helps those who help themselves" (Ben Franklin) is a Bible verse."

For example, he says 48% of churchgoers in America could not name the four Gospels. Can you? Can I arrow one of you and test? No lah, it's too stressful. You say, "What four Gospels? What is first... what is four Gospels in the first place?" You may not even know or some of them, they may say, "Ahhh, I think it's Matthew, Matthias, Shawn..." No, no, no, not that ah. What are the four Gospels? They struggle with this – no knowledge. They may hear Jesus and that's all they know.

52% cannot identify more than two or three of Jesus' disciples. Peter... Peter... Peter... And all they can remember is Peter. How about this: 60% can't even name five of the ten commandments. You want to try? How about this: 50% thought Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. This must be the champion one. 61% think the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham – that's sad. 71% of them think the expression "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse.

The level of biblical illiteracy is shocking, but that's what church, that's what Christianity sometimes have become. When people are infantile, they cannot accept much, they just want the very, very basic things. The scripture is not preached, the Bible is not understood and that's what we will end up with. So churches have a role to feed the infants, but churches are to help people move on from infancy to maturity as well.

So spiritual infant has little capacity for truth. And at the very same time, they therefore have very little understanding of how to apply truth and that I think is what the word "discernment" is all about. The mature have "their powers of discernment trained" (Heb 5:14). They know how to assess, judge, reason based on biblical principles, they know how to apply. But spiritually young, immature Christians cannot.

And again, think about a baby. It's very true, a baby has very little power of discernment, isn't it? You pour lots of things in front of the baby and if it's small enough, colourful enough, he probably will stretch out his hand, grab whatever is in front and put it into his mouth. It doesn't matter if it is Nutella or his poo-poo. As long as it has a different colour, interesting look, he probably would take it and if he takes it, he would put it in his mouth – little power of discernment.

Now, a spiritual baby has very little discernment. That's why the Scriptures say that children are easily tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine – very little ability to smell a false teacher, very little ability to guard themselves against false teachings. Why? Little knowledge, little discernment. And so, when they see someone charismatic, eloquent, they see a church that is big, they say that must be of God and they swallow it

wholesale, not knowing that they're not drinking milk but poison.

But that's a baby, that's the problem with spiritual infancy. And so, they cannot know the Word of God, they don't really know how to apply it in their lives and therefore they don't quite live out what God wants them to live out. And so, they can't be teachers (Heb 5:12). Mature people are teachers. You say, "Pastor, you are the teacher." No, no, no. According to this text and in many other teachings of the Scripture, teaching, discipling is not limited to pastors or elders. It is the ministry of every one of us, that's the great commission. It's given to all of us to be discipling. But there are many people who are not discipling. Why, because they are still spiritual babies. If you do not know what is right or wrong, what makes you think you can help others? You can't. The baby can't. In fact, a baby won't.

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A baby doesn't care about anybody else, right? Those of you who're parents and you've babies, you know your babies don't care about you. If he's hungry, doesn't matter whether you've slept or not, he will wake you up. "Waaa!" You don't give him milk, he'll cry even louder. You can't say, "Baby, mummy never sleep. Please let me sleep, please take pity on me." "Waaa" even louder at you. I mean a baby has no regard. That's what spiritual infancy would look like. No, I don't really bother whether you know the Bible, whether you're walking in Jesus, I just want my needs met and I would not teach.

But the mature is so different, if you think about it. The mature man in Christ loves and savours steak. Grown man loves steak, right? Wah, juicy steak, I love it. Don't give me milk, "tolong" ("please" in Malay); it doesn't satisfy me. I want steak because I know it's tasty, it's wonderful. Mature man, mature Christians are able to discern what is good and bad. Mature people are here to help others, serve others. It's quite the opposite of spiritual infancy.

My friends, you have been in church for a long time, some of you and because you have been in church for a long time, you think that chronological age equals spiritual age. You think just by going, getting on in years, you are more mature. Now, test yourself based on Scripture: What is your capacity for truth, what is your grasp for Scripture and what is your commitment to serving others? Are you discipling? I mean it is a very sad thing when a church that gathers regularly for many years think that we're mature when we've not really been serving people, we have not invested in lives, we are not discipling others. Say whatever you want. The Scripture says you ought to be teachers, but you're not.

The Punggol dream, to me, is a call for maturity. Why? Well, if we are going to Punggol and things remain as we are, we probably don't have to do very much. But it is our firm belief that when we go Punggol, there will be many people who will join us – many who

are unsaved, who I hope will come to know the Lord, many who are maybe young Christians, babies. Who is going to take care of the baby? Pastor? I don't have so many hands to have so many milk bottles, you know, and real discipling is life on life. That's what God is calling you to do, that we will mature and there will be teachers, disciplers of the multitudes.

I imagine Punggol to be a giant nursery. All of you, fathers and mothers in the faith, but be sure you're fathers and mothers mature in Christ. That's the call, that's the challenge, that's the urgent need today. The urgent need today is for you and I – all of you, please – to realise God is calling us to discipling, God is calling us to great commissioning, God is calling us therefore to maturity. Start today, if you've not already begun.

I want to clarify something. Pastor, you make it sound as if spiritual infancy is a very bad thing, that is detestable and so on. No, I'm not saying that because all of us begin as infants once, isn't it? And infants are very cute; we love to carry them, so cute. Their skin so soft, wah, I touch my son's one, jealous man. Soft like nothing, bouncy like nothing, it has that bounce and the... Well, it's just different kind of a texture.

Babies are lovely, but babies shouldn't look like this (pastor showed a picture of a baby with an adult face). I mean if you're 20 years in church, and you're still a spiritual baby, something is very wrong. How come you are not growing up? I say, therefore, to you spiritual infancy is not the problem. It's perpetual spiritual infancy, it's spiritual stagnation, it's arrested development that is the problem. How do you know if you have arrested development in your life? Well, you see the results – little capacity for truth, little grasp of Scripture, little commitment and actual discipling of others. Say whatever you want, those are the marks of spiritual infancy.

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2. The Reason for Spiritual Infancy

The question now is: Why? Hey, how come I see in the church some people growing really well and then there are those who never really grow? Five years, look the same, 10 years still behave the same way. Why is there such a disparity of spiritual progress? What's the reason for spiritual infancy perpetuating? What's the cause?

The author here gives us the answer. He says, "About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing." (Heb 5:11) Wow, this is a very interesting word. This word ("dull") occurs only two times in the New Testament and the word in the Greek literally means "no push". That's what it is: no push, no drive, no effort, no desire, no push. The other place this is found is in Hebrews 6 and verse 12, where it says: "so that you may not be sluggish".

And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

(Hebrews 6:11-12 ESV)

It's the same exact Greek word. The ESV translators translated it in two ways, but really it's the same word: "no push". So these are people who come to church or maybe read their Bible, but when they hear, they are "dull" – no push, no effort, no real desire, just going through the motions. To help you with the understanding of this word "sluggish", "no push", "dull", this text (in Heb 6:11-12) is really useful because while it says here "so that you may not be sluggish", it gives you the opposite here where it says "we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness".

The word "earnestness" is the opposite of "sluggish". The word "sluggish" is really the opposite of "earnestness". You say, "What is earnestness?" "Earnestness" in the Greek here is the word "spoudé", from which you get the word speed or even a swimming brand "Speedo". Spoudé, haste, speed, activity, earnestness, effort – that is what this word represents.

So the problem with the churchgoers in the time of the author is that they have become dull of hearing, they have become slack, complacent, with no real desire. And that's a very dangerous thing, do you realise that? Because some of us may come to church and just go through the motions and you say, "Pastor, you're doing all the work. I just want to pass this time. I want to fulfil my religious duty."

I ask you: Are you applying yourself diligently to hearing, because that's the key, that's the key. You say, "What's the difference between someone growing and someone not growing?" This is the key: the heart. Let me say, the problem is not in the ear. The ear hears the same thing, but it's the heart that won't hear. So Jesus says "take heed how you hear", because it determines everything.

Now, were the people always like this – dull of hearing, right from the beginning? No, because the author says "they have become". I checked it in the Greek. It's literally "they have become". In other words, they were not like this originally. But maybe in the beginning, they were enthusiastic, someone like yourself. You can almost see yourself, right?

In the beginning, you're enthusiastic, you want to learn the Scriptures but with time, you let the things of this world crowd out the pursuit for God and you become dull. You became complacent, you take things for granted, you assume that just coming here, osmosis will take place. My mind doesn't need to be engaged but somehow God's truth, pastor's words will go into me and I'll be godly just by coming to church. Wah, 练成神功 ("liàn chéng shén gōng" – a Chinese phrase that one says when he has achieved a

remarkable feat). No, it doesn't work this way. It doesn't bypass your effort to consider, to think.

Some of you are therefore, last time sit front row as I always say, two years later, second row, fourth row, tenth row and then eventually out of this hall. And maybe now, you say, "I won't attend, I just go Youtube and listen." And soon enough, you don't listen. You say, "Why?" It's not about aircon, it's not about lights, it's here (referring to the heart). And this is the key determinant to spiritual stagnation or progress.

Sometimes, you say, "Oh, we don't go because Singapore is a very difficult environment ah, so much pressure, so many temptations. Aiyah, I also won't grow very much reading the Bible because I'm not the 'tak chek' (studious in Hokkien) type lah. I don't study very well"; or "Pastor, you very lousy, you don't teach the Bible properly that's why I don't grow." It's very easy to point your finger everywhere else but the Scripture says the problem is that you are dull of hearing (Heb 5:11). So that is the sad reality.

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So, the result of this dullness of hearing is spiritual infancy whereby you can't really stomach a lot of truth, you do not know the Bible, you can't apply that to your life effectively, you're not skilled in the word of righteousness, you can't teach others. So it's all because of this dullness of heart towards God's Word. But I do not want to talk so much about what the problem is, without giving you the solution. So the author here now gives you a remedy.

3. The Remedy for Spiritual Infancy

What's the cure? What's the deliverance from spiritual infancy? How can we move on? Well, if I were to give you one principle, it will be simply this: If dullness is caused by laziness of the heart, then maturity must be achieved by diligence of the heart. Very simple, right? I do not grow because I'm lazy. So how can I grow? I must be diligent, I must be earnest, I must have spoudé in my life. So what do you do then, to have spoudé in your life? Where can I channel my diligence to? Three simple things.

a. Drink the Word of God

First thing is that you must drink the Word of God, very straightforward. You want to grow? Then drink the Word of God. He says you need milk (Heb 5:12). The point is, you need the Word of God to grow. Yes, that's all you can take right now, but drink it now and you can move on, you can grow, you can develop.

Now, it's not just the Hebrews author who wrote this. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby." As

little babies, crave for "guni" (that is) crave for milk so that you may grow thereby. Seek the pure unadulterated Word of God – that's what you should do. Drink. Babies who drink well grow well, we all know that.

A story is told of D.L. Moody, Dwight Lyman Moody. He came to know the Lord in his life and it was said that he grew rapidly. Why, because he has a voracious appetite for God's Word. In fact, he was so fast in his spiritual walk and growth that there are Christians who have been in the faith for longer embarrassed by him.

An author (Ethel Barrett) who wrote about D.L. Moody says: "His robust spiritual health and bounding energy disturbed their napping." These Christians who've been there for 30 years are sleeping, dull of hearing, so they are not growing much. He was too much. "So, while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing until he left them far behind; he grew more in a few years than they did in thirty."

You know what a picture, what a picture for you to consider? 30 years as Christians and still drink "guni" – spiritual babes, but Moody moved on rapidly. You want to grow, you want to be used of God for great things? Drink milk, drink the milk of God's Word.

It is said during the Great Awakening, I read this (by author F.R. Webber), and it said during the revival in 18th century England, "Men and women studied shorthand in order that they might take down the sermons." Imagine that. They were so keen to make sure they know God's Word, they are not just listening, they want to copy, they want to take notes and because they can't keep up, they go and learn shorthand. And men were walking around "with a portable inkwell strapped about them, and quill open thrust over an ear, hasten to join the long assembling on the village green."

Today, with your iPad, your iPhone, pen – no need to bring the inkwell... "Wah lau" ("oh dear" colloquially), you spill how? All over your clothes. You don't have to... It's so easy, you don't have to queue; there are lots of good materials, Bible study materials, out there. The problem with us: the heart is not there. They had all the disadvantages but they made sure they were drinking the milk of God. How about us? What is your pursuit for truth?

Today, I find that pursuit for truth is so lacking when "Oh, the Bible study a bit far, cannot go. Oh, takes too much time, cannot go. I got to wake up early, don't want to go." It must be really convenient before you want to be part of anything. And we say we love God's Word, and we say we want to be mature in Jesus – don't kid yourself. Diligence without which there is no growth. The milk of the Word I've tasted it in my life is really, really good for growth. I'm not sure whether it's Similac or Enfagrow – whatever I don't know, but this brand of milk from the Scriptures is really good for growth.

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When I was a young baby, young baby in Christ, I'm thankful for the ministry of this church. I still remember 20 years ago, Pastor Paul would conduct Bible studies. Now, that's not a very big group of us but there's a good size of people who were hungry for milk. I still remember those days – Tuesday 6:45 to 10pm, Shenton Way at International Plaza; Saturday 9am to 12pm, another Bible study; Sunday after the service, one more Bible study. I was just like a baby. I want more milk, please. I really rejoice in the availability of Scripture to feed this soul that has absolutely nothing.

I remember my wife would send me tapes from the church she was in in England, magazines and... and those were the days. I remember my childhood, spiritual childhood; it's drinking time. How are you drinking? You say, "Pastor, cannot find milk." I can tell you where the milk can be found, a lot of places, no excuses. Grow, drink up.

b. Digest the Word of God

Not only do we need to drink the Word of God, I think in this text, there is something else about the Word of God and that is: you need to digest. One scary thing when kids drink, drink, drink and they don't digest is the next moment they all puke it out, right? So it's very important to digest the Word of God. What do you mean by digest? Make sure you have it in you. What do you mean?

I think the word "discernment" tells me about digestion. Discernment is the ability to think, to consider, to reflect, to meditate, so that you have a certain perspective. You see, I think studying the Scripture is not just memorising verses, knowing where this verse is found. You got to understand the Word. You got to understand truth. It's almost like in school, there are students who are very diligent in memorising the textbook, but those who do well are not just memorising. Those who do well understand what they memorise. Chinese, we say 不要死读书 ("bú yào sǐ dú shū" – not to study mechanically).

"Dead learning" won't... it doesn't help you, you got to understand. And I think this is what it means to have discernment – to digest so that you don't have the problem of indigestion. And you're just full of facts, but no transformation of life. Is it easy to think and reflect and meditate upon the Bible? Is it easy? I don't think it's easy.

It's not easy because the word here (in Heb 5:14, which says "powers of discernment trained by constant practice") is the word "trained" and the word "trained" is the word that is used to give us the English word "gymnasium". So this discernment is hard work, you got to train one, you know? You got to work at it, think through it, discuss it, reason through it. I think one thing lacking in modern churches today and in modern Christianity is the lack of thinking.

Most of us are simply like this: you have a problem in your life, you don't really know

the Bible so you go to your pastor and say, "Pastor, what should I do?" You want your pastor to think for you, right? This doctrine, correct or not? Don't know, ask pastor. Don't know, ask pastor. Everything you ask someone else.

The picture is this: I drank the milk, I digest it, I give it to you. "Eee, eee" (exclamation expressing disgust colloquially), yeah that's something like that, you know? You need to digest it, you need to think through it, and it's hard work. It's hard work to discuss Scripture in a logical and engaging way, but you need to. I think it's very helpful to be in communities where you talk and you discuss live at Scripture. What should we do in this? What should we do? What are the principles? And that goes beyond rote learning.

Richard Baxter, the puritans of old, they make it so plain and clear. He says, "Make it your work." Hearing the Word of God is work. The preacher works but the listener also works.

"Make it your work... With diligence to apply the word as you are hearing it... You have work to do as well as the preacher... you must open your mouths and digest it, for another cannot digest for you... therefore all the while be at work, and abhor the idle heart in hearing..."

– Richard Baxter

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So make sure you're thinking it through. Don't just read the Bible for the sake of reading it. Study, understand, apply. So what do we do, Pastor? At the end of the day, I am still not very clear. Well, maybe this may help. The author in the book of Hebrews have regularly been addressing this issue of a dull heart, actually. So he says:

2:1 Pay close attention to the message you've heard

3:1 Consider Jesus.

3:8 Don't harden your hearts [pastor: "it's a problem of the heart, not a problem of the ears"] like Israel did in the wilderness.

3:12 Take care, lest you have an evil heart of unbelief.

4:1 Fear, lest you fail to enter God's rest.

4:11 Be diligent to enter God's rest [pastor: "again, spoudé, earnestness"] lest you fall by disobedience.

4:14 Hold fast [pastor: "hold tight, don't let go"] to your confession.

10:25 not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging...

c. Do the Word of God

So I say to you, you want to grow in your spiritual life? Wonderful, then drink, then digest and then finally, do the Word of God. Let these nutrients go into your body and let

it be lived out, do it. And the more you do, the more you exercise, the stronger you get, the bigger you get. So drink it in, digest it and live it out. Do the Word of God, and this is what everyone understands. Robertson McQuilkin says:

"The goal of all Bible study is to apply the truth of Scripture to life. If that application is not made, all the work put into making sure of the author's intended meaning will have gone for naught. In fact, to know and not do, doubles the offense of disobedience."

Drink it. Digest it. Obey it. (John) Piper puts it simply:

"The pathway to maturity and to solid Biblical food is not first becoming an intelligent person, but becoming an obedient person."

Sometimes, we think that only those who are President's Scholars will be able to understand the Bible really well. No, not true. It's obedience that's the key because if you're willing to obey and you obey, God gives you more light. Why would He give you more light if you're always learning but not willing to obey? So the key is doing the will of God. And again, the last one from A.W. Pink. He says:

"Our progress comes from "using the light we already have, putting into practice the truth already received... Unless this is done, we [move backward], and the light which is in us becomes darkness.

Manna not used breeds worms (Ex.16)! Milk undigested – not taken up into our system – ferments."

Simple, plain and clear. James tells us, be doers and not hearers only because a man is blessed in his deeds. So you want to grow, then you got to drink, digest and to do God's Word. Fight spiritual infancy, move on to maturity. Reminding you, we need to show the same "earnestness" (Heb 6:11), zeal, passion, drive, push, effort to drink, to digest, to do. Well, how do we conclude? We need a conclusion, right? I think I've pretty much squeezed as much truth there is in these verses as I could.

And so, I was thinking about concluding this message this week and I was working on the sermon in the playground. I was with my kids, had some swing time, they had a wheel of time and when they had enough, they had their own play time so they entertained each other. And so, I was working on my sermon, thinking about things, and half an hour later, I was checking on them, what they're doing and I realised that Shawn had been hammering something. It was background noise, "tok, tok tok, tok, tok" all the while, but I didn't really bother with it. But half an hour later, I went to check on him. He's taking a small piece of rock and hammering a big piece of rock. I took a picture and he is like this.

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I say, "What are you doing for so long, using a rock to hammer another rock?" He says, "Daddy, I am looking for treasure." "What treasure?" You tell me that there are treasures inside, right? And so he was looking for treasure. I say, "Did you find anything?" He says, "Yeah, I found something." And I took a good look. "Neh." "Huh, what, what, what? Where's the treasure?" Can you see it? (Pastor showed a picture.) Well, the apparent treasure is this, this little thing, not taken very clearly but it's supposed to shimmer and glitter in the light. It's a kind of a crystal, a kind of a quartz thing, so the camera doesn't quite capture it.

And so Shawn says, "You see, there's a gem, there's a jewel there. I want to get it out." I say, "You mean you've been hammering on this for the past half hour just for this thing?" He says, "Yes, daddy. Come help me. Come help me." Now, I'm employed to help him as well. So I take the rock and hammer it as well. Took a few minutes, I gave up, it's so difficult to hammer. He kept on hammering, and eventually he got this little piece of thing out and it looks like this on his hand. Can you see it? We brought it to the jeweller and it's diamond, you know? No lah, of course not. Wah, all of you think really got jewel ah? But, of course I didn't do that and I didn't want to disappoint him. So he thinks it's jewel, he thinks it's very precious, he's been keeping it. "Daddy, I found a treasure." I was so happy for him, he was happy for himself.

Well, as we walked away, he was saying, "Daddy, I worked really hard for this, you know?" I say, "Yeah, very hard, hammering for the past 40 minutes, 50 minutes." But he said, "Daddy, I started a long time ago." I say, "When?" "I started in term 3." "Huh, term 3? Shawn, what is it now?" "It's term 4, week two. I started in term 3." "What, term 3? That's like 12 weeks earlier. You mean every week when you come to the park, you look for this rock and you hammer it?" "Yeah." That is diligence for you. For this lousy, little piece of thing, he was willing to invest himself to make sure it comes out.

My friends, you have something far, far, far more precious than this little crystal even if it is diamond. It is nothing compared to the beauty of Jesus in your life, but you know what? It takes effort, it takes diligence to chisel away the flesh, the sin, the weaknesses of our lives so that the beauty of Jesus may be seen. Would you do that?

I guarantee you, I guarantee you, if you are a follower of Jesus, there is something heavenly and magnificent hidden right inside, and if you put yourself to diligent effort, you will see it one day. I pray Gospel Light will be a church where the glittery jewels of Jesus Christ would be manifest when we go to Punggol. May the world know our Saviour through us. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

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It does not yet appear what we shall be. We do not know what we will be like in one

day's time, in one week's time, in one month's time. But I know that when Jesus returns, we will be like Him and that will be a magnificent day. But before He comes, He has a responsibility entrusted upon you. He wants you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. He wants you to grow in godliness. He wants you to move on to maturity. And my friends, this is not going to happen just like that – you can't drift into godliness, you can't somehow wake up one day and decide that you are godly. No, it begins with diligence, it begins with commitment, it begins with earnestness, it begins with a heart that is attentive to Scripture.

How has your reading of the Bible been? How has your reflecting of the Bible been? How has your obedience to God's Word been? Maybe in this week, maybe in this month, there is something you need to repent of right now. Can I encourage you to come to God with confidence and boldness this day? Maybe there's a fresh commitment, there's a plan, a drinking plan, a reading plan you need. Begin today.

I see each one of you right here and there is a beautiful potential for the life of Christ to manifest Himself more and more. The greatest waste in this world is that a Christian dies as a spiritual infant. For 10 years, for 20 years, for 30 years, he remains status quo, and all the riches of God's blessings lie hidden beneath his life. But the most beautiful thing in this world is not Everest, is not Niagara Falls; it's the mature follower of Jesus Christ who understands, who lives out the Bible, who sacrifices his life for others, who teaches men and women the way of Jesus, who in his life, leaves behind the aroma of Jesus Christ.

My friends, I'm looking at either the greatest waste or the greatest wonder. I'm looking at you. Where would you choose to be? I pray this morning, you will make a decision for Jesus – not just an emotional decision here but a steadfast commitment before the Lord to drink, to digest and to do. Fight that infancy, fight that dullness, grow up and let your life count.

You know something I should say to you as well, is that when the author writes these words in Hebrews 5, the context really is this: If you have remained spiritual infants, could it be that you never really know Jesus in the first place? Could it be that you're not growing because you never had that spiritual life to begin with? All please, do not let that be your state but show the same diligence to manifest the Word of God, that you may on the final day really be someone who has followed Jesus. Now, if you know today you're not growing because you have not trusted in Jesus, this time is also a time for you to repent and to believe, to make sure of your salvation in Jesus Christ. Cry out to Him for grace to change your heart.

So Father, this morning, We thank You for Your Word. I pray this will not just be another sermon we accumulate knowledge about, but this will be a personal challenge in all our lives. Little by little, day by day, little by little in every way, make us more like

Your Son, Lord. Give us a huge appetite and desire for Your Word. Give us the strength to pursue relentlessly the Scriptures. And I pray that we will be people with obedient hearts to live out Your Will. Lord, I pray that You will chisel away the impurities of our lives, that the gem and the jewel of the light of Jesus will be seen.

Father, I commit ourselves to You, I commit our friends who are here who may not know Jesus as yet to You. Work in their hearts, work in all our hearts today. May this call to maturity be realised amongst Your people. We thank You. We pray all this now in Jesus' Name. Amen.