

1 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV)

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.”

In life, every person naturally progresses through two key stages: **childhood** and **adulthood**. Each stage requires guidance and leadership. Theologically, this progression is often used as a metaphor for spiritual maturity. Just as a child lacks the cognitive and moral capacity to govern their own life, a new believer in Christ starts under the “tutor” of the law or religious rules (Galatians 3:24), needing external guidance.

For example, a young child cannot lead themselves because their mind isn't mature enough to distinguish right from wrong or understand life's

principles. So, they need parents or guardians to set rules—whether the child likes them or not. These rules become commands to obey.

That's why children are made to follow routines—wake up early, attend school, do homework—not because they want to, but because adults impose discipline for their own good. This reflects the spiritual childhood stage where obedience is driven by external authority rather than internal conviction.

What Changes When a Child Becomes an Adult?

As the child matures into adulthood, an internal change happens: they begin to understand and accept rules because they see their benefit. Spiritually, this parallels the believer's growth from law-based obedience to Spirit-led righteousness. The mature believer obeys God not from compulsion but from heartfelt love and understanding (Romans 8:4).

Parents can then trust their grown children to lead their own lives responsibly. Likewise, God calls His people to spiritual maturity where they live by the Spirit, not by the letter of the law.

Example of a Student: Primary School vs. University

In primary school, children have strict rules: attend classes, wear uniforms, and face punishment for mistakes. But in university, students have freedom and responsibility—they attend or skip classes by choice, because they understand the importance themselves.

The university still has rules but trusts students' maturity. This is similar to the New Covenant experience believers have under the Holy Spirit.

The Church's Spiritual Journey: From Childhood to Adulthood

The Old Testament Church (Israelites in the wilderness) was spiritually immature and needed the Law (Torah) as a tutor (Galatians 3:24). The Law given through Moses was strict and punitive, designed to teach obedience through commands and consequences. This was God's way of guiding a "childlike" people who couldn't yet live by faith and inner conviction.

For example, the Ten Commandments were absolute rules, and breaking them brought serious penalties (Exodus 20).

God's Promise of a New Covenant

The prophet Jeremiah foretold a coming new covenant, where God's laws would no longer be external but written on hearts:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NIV)

"The days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel...
I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be my people.
They will all know me, from the least to the greatest,
for I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more."

This prophecy is fulfilled on **Pentecost** (Acts 2), when the Holy Spirit was poured out, marking the Church's transition from spiritual childhood (law-based obedience) to spiritual adulthood (Spirit-led life).

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit writes God's law on believers' hearts, enabling them to obey God out of love and conviction rather than fear or obligation. This is true freedom—**grace**—that fulfills the law in spirit and truth (Romans 8:2-4).

Galatians 5:18 (NIV)

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Romans 8:2 (NIV)

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death."

Romans 8:4 (NIV)

"So that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Spiritual Maturity and True Holiness

Mature Christians don't obey rules just because God commands

them—they live holy lives because they love God and want to honor Him. True holiness is not legalism but a joyful response to God's grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 (NIV)

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.”

If someone lives only by the letter of the law—avoiding sin or certain behaviors because of fear or obligation—they remain a spiritual child. But those led by the Spirit live in freedom and produce genuine fruit.

Conclusion: Where Are You Spiritually?

Are you still a spiritual child, bound by legalistic rules? Or have you matured into spiritual adulthood, led by the Holy Spirit? Seek the Holy Spirit's filling, for He is the seal of God's ownership (Ephesians 4:30) and the key to true freedom.

God bless you richly.

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