

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
March 30, 2013
Hebrews 5:11-14
“Milk to Meat”

Memory Verse

“Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” Hebrews 5:14, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: *Approach the Throne: Part 3 – Jesus Makes Us Mature (Hebrews 5:11-14, 6:1-3)*

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 5:11-14

Sunday School Title: *“Milk to Meat”*

ESS: The mature believer feasts on God’s Word regularly, combines it with faith, and implements it in daily life.

REVIEW: Last week, we talked about what Jesus offers us as the perfect High Priest. Reread Hebrews 7:23-27. How is Jesus unique among all High Priests?

This week, we’ll read a harsh indictment against the original readers of Hebrews. Part of their problem was their refusal to move past the principles of the Old Testament to embrace the New Testament. One main purpose of Hebrews is to encourage this group of Jewish believers to see the Old Testament as a shadow and view Jesus and the New Testament as the fulfillment or reality. It was tough going, though, because these believers had trouble moving past their Old Testament knowledge and heritage. Like the original readers of Hebrews, we too must move past some of our own obstacles if we are to grow closer to Christ and mature in our relationship with Him.

What are some things that you need to move past in order to pursue Christ and grow closer to Him?
(Example: doubting salvation; focusing on what God can do for you; living in guilt; etc).

***The **BOLD** points match the learner’s guide. The underlined words are blank in the learner’s guide.*

READ Hebrews 5:11-14

PART 1: THE PROBLEM

1. SLOW TO LEARN

The author of Hebrews takes a momentary break from teaching about Jesus as High Priest and issues a reprimand to his readers. In verse 11, the author says he has much more to teach them, but he is limited because they are *“slow to learn”* (NIV translation). Other translations say *“dull of hearing.”* The original Greek word used here for *dull* means “no push.” It describes a person who is numb or thick – a person who is difficult to teach because he has been gradually lulled to sleep by neglecting the truth. The person of “dull hearing” hears the teachings of Christ, but it goes in one ear and out the other.

Describe a time when a noise became so common that gradually it just became background noise. You became so used to it, you stopped recognizing it. This is how a person of “dull hearing” hears the teachings of Christ. It’s just background noise that is easily tuned out.

The person of “dull hearing” hears the truth, but he does not embrace or act upon it.

Would God describe you as “dull of hearing?” What sometimes causes us to be “dull of hearing?” When was the last time you heard the truth and it changed your life?

READ Hebrews 4:2.

This passage tells us that hearing God's Word does us no good unless we combine it with faith and allow it to bear fruit in our lives. That was the problem with the original readers of Hebrews. They knew the truth, but they weren't combining it with faith and action. "They had the truth in a factual and superficial way, but the truth did not have them" (John McArthur, "The Tragedy of Rejecting Full Revelation").

Truth is transformative. It changes us. But truth must first be combined with faith. Are there any Biblical truths that you know factually but have trouble acting upon in faith?

2. REGRESSING, NOT PROGRESSING

Hebrews 5:12 says that, despite the length of time the Hebrews had known the truth, they weren't yet ready to teach others and move on in maturity. In fact, the opposite was true! Instead of moving forward in their relationship with Christ, they had regressed! They had slipped backwards in their spiritual lives so much that they needed someone to "teach the elementary truths of God's word all over again." Instead of maturing in their relationship with Christ, their hearts and minds became dull and they reverted to their immature, childish ways. Though they should have been ready for solid food, they still needed milk. Now milk isn't a bad thing. In fact, babies are born needing milk for nutrition. The problem comes when a person grows and matures and should be eating solid foods, but still only feeds on milk.

In our Sunday School lessons and sermons at church, do you think we offer more milk or solid foods in terms of teaching Biblical truths? In your own life, are you still feeding on milk or are you digging into God's Word and feasting on solid food? Are you progressing towards maturity or regressing back to immaturity?

PART 2: THE SOLUTION

1. EAT AND EXERCISE REGULARLY

Hebrews 5:14 says, "solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." So how does a believer graduate from milk to solid food? By eating frequently and exercising. Think about it. If you only feed a baby milk once a week, he won't grow or mature appropriately. In fact, he would be pretty miserable and unhealthy! As Christians, we often only "eat" spiritual food once a week at church. The rest of the week, we starve ourselves spiritually. We will never graduate from milk to the solid food or mature in our relationship with Christ until we learn to nourish ourselves with God's word on a regular basis. We must feast on God's Word regularly! Hebrews 5:14 says the mature take in the Word of God "constantly." Go back to the example of a baby. The more milk a baby drinks, the more his body develops and matures. Eventually, he will be ready to graduate to solid foods. Similarly, the more we eat and digest God's Word on a regular basis, the more our souls will mature and become ready for the more challenging solid foods of the Word.

And once we're eating regularly and getting the nourishment we need, we must exercise to develop and strengthen our muscles. Just like a baby learns to run by first building his muscles through crawling, pulling up, and walking, we too must exercise our faith in order to grow and mature. Hebrews 5:14 says mature believers have "trained themselves." This indicates an intentional use of God's word in everyday life. When God's word nourishes us, we must combine it with faith and act on it in our lives! The truth is useless if it does not show up in the decisions we make and the priorities we hold on a daily basis. We feast on God's Word not to become plump, lazy Christians. Instead, we feast on God's word for nourishment so that we may have strength to be "doers" of the Word.

2. DEVELOP DISCERNMENT

Hebrews 5:14 says that mature believers are able to "distinguish from right and wrong." Just like a baby lacks discernment to know what should and should not go in his mouth, so too does the immature Christian lack the discernment to live out God's Word. This discernment is developed through consuming God's Word, combining it with faith, and acting upon it in daily life. When we study God's Word and live according to it, God produces the fruit of righteousness in our lives. In other words, studying and obeying the Word of God develops a type of discernment within you that enables you to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, true and false, helpful and harmful, righteous and unrighteous. The mature are characterized by a lifestyle of holy decision-making. Each decision they make on a daily basis – how to spend time or money or energy – is based on the Word of God.

What drives your decisions? Is it the Word of God, or other priorities? Are you motivated by God's promises or by selfish ambition?

CONCLUSION: The mature believer feasts on God's Word regularly, combines it with faith, and implements it in daily life.

APPLY

How often are you feeding on God's Word? Make an effort this week to nourish yourself daily by studying God's Word.

Are you combining the truth with faith? Ask God to reveal to you an area of your life in which you're failing to obey His Word in faith.

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your personal study. This is NOT the lesson.)

Study Guide by David Guzik, 2001. Available online: www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david

Since you have become dull of hearing: This explains why the writer doesn't go into the topic of Melchizedek right away. He wants to address some critical basics before going on to more intricate topics, but their spiritual condition makes it **hard to explain**. He fears the discussion of Aaron and Melchizedek and Jesus will sound too academic and theoretical to his readers. At the same time, he recognizes this says more about his **dull hearers** than the *message*.

Being **dull of hearing** is not a problem with the ears, but a problem with the heart - you just aren't really interested in what God has to say to you. Not wanting to hear the Word of God points to a genuine spiritual problem! These Christians who felt like giving up with Jesus were also **dull of hearing**. The dullness usually comes first, then the desire to give up. Watch out when the Word of God starts seeming dull to you! They have **become dull of hearing**. **Become** is an important word. It indicates that they didn't start out that **dull of hearing**, but became that way.

By this time: According to the time they had been followers of Jesus, they should have been much more mature than they were.

You ought to be teachers: It wasn't that these were unique people who would hold a unique role of teaching. Instead, they **ought to be teachers** in the sense that all Christians should be teachers. There is an important sense in which every Christian must be a teacher, because we can all help disciple others. We really only master something after we have effectively taught it to someone else. Teaching is the final step of learning.

You need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God: This isn't to their credit. It isn't that **the first principles** are "beneath" the mature Christian. Rather, the sense is that one should be able to teach one's self, and remind one's self of these **first principles of the oracles of God**.

And you have come to need milk: **Milk** corresponds to the *first principles* of Hebrews 6:12. **Solid food** is the "meatier" material such as understanding the connection between Jesus and Melchizedek. It isn't that **milk** is bad; but these Christians should have added **solid food** to their diet. Peter reminds us all *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby* (1 Peter 2:2).

In the original language, the sense of **for he is a babe** is *for he has become a babe*. There is nothing more delightful than a true babe in Jesus. But there is nothing more irritating and depressing than someone who should be mature but who has **become a babe!**

Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps your Christian life is unstable. Babies are handed from one person to another; babes are *tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine* (Ephesians 4:14-16).

Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are divisive in your Christian life. Babies each have their own crib that they stick to; babes have their particular denomination or church that they think of as "my church."

Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are star-struck by Christian celebrities of one kind or another. Babies are focused on one particular person (mommy); babes glory in men (*I am of Paul, I am of Apollos*).

Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are spiritually asleep. Babies need a lot of sleep; babes spend much time spiritually asleep.

Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are fussy and cranky with others. Babies can be cranky; babes will fuss over any little thing.

Is unskilled in the word of righteousness: Those who have *become* babes reveal themselves because they are **unskilled in the word of righteousness**. We don't expect brand new Christians to be *skilled in the word of righteousness*, but those who have been Christians for a time should be.

Who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil: Our **senses** are **exercised** (trained by practice and habit) **to discern both good and evil** (doctrinally, not morally). How are our **senses exercised**? Plainly, **by reason of use**. When we decide to **use** discernment, we mature.

These Christians demonstrated immaturity by both their lack of discernment between **good and evil** and in their contemplation of giving up with Jesus. The mature Christian is marked by their discernment and by their unshakable commitment to Jesus Christ. The ability to **discern** is a critical measure of spiritual maturity. Babies will put *anything* in their mouths! Babes are weak in discernment, and will accept any kind of spiritual food.

Have their senses exercised: It can be said that all five human senses have their spiritual counterparts.

We have a spiritual sense of taste: *If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious* (1 Peter 2:3). *Taste and see that the LORD is good!* (Psalm 34:8)

We have a spiritual sense of hearing: *Hear and your soul shall live* (Isaiah 55:3). *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (Revelation 2:7).

We have a spiritual sense of sight: *Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law* (Psalm 119:18). *The eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened* (Ephesians 1:18).

We have a spiritual sense of smell: *He shall be of quick scent in the fear of the LORD* (Isaiah 11:3, RV margin). *I am full, having received from ... you, a sweet-smelling aroma* (Philippians 4:18).

We have a spiritual sense of touch or feeling: *Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD* (2 Kings 22:19). *The hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness* (Ephesians 4:18-19).