

1-9-2022, COTR Texarkana

Title: The Big 10...the Path to Spiritual Maturity

Purpose: Series purpose: Provoke people to actively pursue spiritual maturity by applying the Big 10 causes for spiritual growth.

Truth for Today: Spiritually mature believers survive trouble and are fruitful because they're founded on the Rock.

Text: Matthew 7:24-27

Topic: Spiritual Maturity, Spiritual Growth, Backsliding, Trouble

The Big 10...the Path to Spiritual Maturity

I. Introduction Proverbs challenge app pic

A. Context, Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 7:24-27 (NLT) "Anyone who **listens** to my teaching and **follows** it is wise, like a person who builds a house on **solid rock**. 25 Though **the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock**. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, **it will collapse with a mighty crash**."

1. **2 pics of houses**. Jesus is describing survival in a violent storm. Today a wise builder puts footings deep in the ground and attaches the building to steel and concrete to survive high winds and torrential rains. The foolish builder has doesn't have a strong foundation and suffers for it. Jesus used the example of a house but He's talking about our spiritual life. Some people survive trouble, and some are devastated. Some continue serving God in adversity while others fall away from God. It depends on our foundation, i.e., our spiritual maturity.
2. Today we'll begin a New Series called, 'The Big 10...the path to spiritual maturity'. In the coming weeks I'll teach you about the power of daily disciplines and experiences that are proven to produce spiritual maturity. I'll weave in issues of the heart and our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Today we'll talk about the need for spiritual maturity: (1) The shaking that's going on in the world, (2) The Christian life is to be a process of continual spiritual growth, (3) Why do we need to pursue spiritual maturity in 2022?

B. Truth for Today: Spiritually mature believers survive trouble and are fruitful because they're founded on the Rock.

II. I believe God is allowing our world to be shaken to draw people to Him.

A. [Heb. 12:26-29 (NLT)] When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "**Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also**." 27 This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain. 28 Since **we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable**, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him...

1. This speaks of a coming judgment of the world, the destruction and recreation of the heavens and the earth.² What endures forever is the KOG. Quote [Haggai 2:6-

7 (ESV) For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth...7 And **I will shake all nations**, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.] Nations are people, **Picture** sign raining fish,

2. Just as earthquake swarms are often precursors to larger earthquakes, I believe the world is experiencing a shaking from God through covid to awaken people to their need for God. In our battle against covid, man's best efforts are not enough. **Picture!** A research station in Antarctica is battling a COVID-19 outbreak despite being located in one of the most remote corners of the world. 11 of the 33 workers have tested positive for the virus. The first case was reported in a worker who had traveled to Antarctica from South Africa. Before arriving in South Africa, the workers were required to have a negative covid test at least 72 hours prior to the flight. The employees then had to quarantine in South Africa for 10 days and take another covid test five days into the quarantine period. Once the quarantine period was over, each person was required to take another test 48 hours before their flight to Antarctica and 5 days after arrival. It was on the 6th day after arrival that the first worker tested positive. The workers had all been fully vaccinated.
 3. **Our best efforts to stop and contain covid fall short and create other problems.** Everything in our society is being affected. Airline flights are cancelled, supply chains are disrupted, and businesses suffer. The government helps with money, and we have the worst inflation in 40 years. Schools close to protect kids and depression, anxiety, suicide and drug and alcohol abuse skyrocket.
 4. **What's going on? I believe God is allowing the pestilence to shake the world so people will realize we are helpless and need Him.** Christians aren't exempt. Some Christians turn their back on God while others get spiritually stronger. What's the difference? Maturity. Weak, baby Christians flounder while mature Christians find God's help to survive and thrive.
- B. **3 options in the New Year: (1) Stay where we are spiritually, (2) Backslide/ give up on God and go back in the world or (3) Grow stronger/ mature in our walk with God. I'm choosing the path of maturity; how about you?**
- III. **The Christian life is to be a process of continual spiritual growth**
- A. **Hebrews 5:12–14 (NLT) You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others.** Instead, you need someone to teach you again the **basic things about God's word. You are like babies** who need milk and cannot eat solid food. 13 ...14 Solid food is for those who are **mature...** **Pull up** **[1 Corinthians 3:1–3 (NLT)]**...I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were **infants (NKJV babes in) Christ**...3 for you are still controlled by your sinful nature....Aren't you living like people of the world?]
1. There is a pattern of growth for babies. They start being selfish, helpless and dependent, but they are supposed to grow up, learn to walk and talk. One day they leave home get married and take care of themselves. Everyone knows something is wrong if you're 30 years old and still living at home playing video games. **Pic**

2. It's the same spiritually. We're born again as a baby in Christ. We don't know the Bible, we live by our passions and feelings, we're selfish. But when we're truly saved a change happens. We start following Jesus and live for him. The Bible becomes our guide. We start caring for others and not just ourselves. We find happiness, not just in earthly pleasures and hobbies but in serving the Lord. We start telling other people about what Jesus has done for us and we start using our money to advance the KOG. Something happened. It's called salvation and sanctification/ spiritual growth. It's God's plan for every one of us.
3. Def. sanctification: The act of making holy, i.e., our desires are purified; we turn away from sin and the world, and live a life devoted to God.

IV. Why do we need to pursue spiritual maturity in 2022?

- A. Parable of sower; the seed is the Word of God, and the soil is our heart's response to God's Word. [Mark 4:3–20 (NLT)] A farmer went out to plant some seed. 4 As he scattered it across his field...5 seed fell on **shallow soil** with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. 6 But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and **since it didn't have deep roots, it died**...16 The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. 17 But **since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word...**
 1. There is a danger for those without deep roots, i.e., lack spiritual maturity. Trouble makes them backslide/ fall away from God and give up. Deep roots anchor us to God and when trouble comes, we're able to not only survive but thrive. That's why we're doing this series. I want to help you develop deep spiritual roots so we can face whatever the future holds.
- B. There's another reason to become spiritually mature. [Vs. 20 And the seed that fell on **good soil** represents those who hear and accept God's word and **produce a harvest** of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"] The goal of the **Christian life is bearing fruit**, i.e., being productive for God and accomplishing God's plan for our life. God called me as a 20-year-old to pastor a strong local church, but I wasn't ready. I had to mature to fulfill my calling.
- C. **Picture**, Big 10 flyer: The Big 10 is a prescription/ recipe for spiritual growth. It's Biblical, practical, and proven to work if we will develop spiritual disciplines and experience the work of God in our life. I've been a pastor 40 years and have watched some Christians backslide and some finish strong. The difference is in their commitment to spiritual growth. // lifting weights makes us physical stronger; doing and experiencing The Big 10 will make us spiritually stronger.

V. Conclusion What do you want your spiritual life to be like in 2022? 2 pics of houses

Are you satisfied where you are, or do you want more?

- A. Paul, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived. [Ph. 3:10–15 (NCV)] I want to know Christ and the power that raised him from the dead. I want to...**become like him**...12 **I do not mean that I am already as God wants me to be.** ...13...but there is one thing I always do. **Forgetting the past and straining toward what is ahead,**

- 14 I keep trying to reach the goal and get the prize for which God called me...15 All of us who are **spiritually mature** should think this way, too...
- B. As we start 2022, let's not be content where we are. Let's leave the past behind and commit to grow spiritually so we can survive whatever troubles the future holds and become the person the Lord created us to be.

VI. Response

- A. Prayer
- B. Souls

VII. Bibliography/ Resources: Logos Bible Software and Library, Platinum Edition, was used to prepare this message.

1. <https://abc7news.com/covid-outbreak-in-antarctica-research-station/11425767/>
2. Hodges, Z. C. (1985). [Hebrews](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 811). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.