



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

J.J. Turner, Ph.D. ©

I remember the first time I saw “Little Billy.” I was visiting in the home of my new best friend, Junior. In the corner of the living room was a baby bed and lying in it was a person. I walked slowly over to see the person. There curled in a fetal position was a skeleton of a figure that I learned was “Little Billy.” He was 15 years old but looked like he was 5 or 6. When I asked what was wrong with “Little Billy,” his mother said, “Little Billy hasn’t grown like other boys.” I was shocked. I thought all kids grew up and became older people. No so! Billy died two years later.

I am amazed and blessed to watch my grandchildren develop. My grandson called me the other day and in an excited voice said, “Pop’s, I have grown a whole inch this summer!” I responded in an excited voice assuring him that he was on his way to becoming “a big man” someday.

Sadly, there are numerous developmental disorders. These may include social skills, body height and weight, language and speech disorders, motor skills disorders, cognitive reasoning disorders and academic disorders, to name a few. While these developmental disorders are serious, there is a disorder equally or more serious. It is a failure for a Christian to develop spiritually.

We begin our spiritual journey as “new born babes in Christ” (1 Peter 2:2). From spiritual infancy we have a growth target “into the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-16). This doesn’t happen over night and requires the proper diet, exercise and discipline. The Hebrews writer addressed it in these words: *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food”* (Hebrews 5:12).

How do you measure spiritual development? It is not measured by claiming it, sitting in a church building and talking about it, or pretending you have it. Spiritual development is documented by fruit. The fruit of the Spirit as outlined by Paul: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law”* (Galatians 5:23, 23). The status



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of your spiritual development is also revealed in your attitudes; this is why we are commanded to *“have the attitude of Christ”* (Philippians 2:4-9).

How have you developed in Christ? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in every area of your life? Are you still in the infancy state, needing milk and strong teaching from God’s word? What does your weekly spiritual diet and exercise program look like? Are you a “Little Billy”?