

Lesson #16

The Milk and the Meat

The five foundational principles are referred to in context as the “milk of the word.”

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. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

— Hebrews 5:12- 14 (NKJV)

The scriptures contrast this milk to solid food (referred to in some translations as *meat*), which is for the mature. Peter used this analogy (1 Peter 2:2) as did Paul writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:2). Maybe you are thinking, “Yes, yes! I get it! Let’s move on. I want some meat! Okay, so let’s take a little test. Close your eyes for a moment and see if you can verbally recite the five principles in order.

—

If you were able to quote these beginning elements of the oracles of God - Congratulations! But as pointed out in the previous lesson, the ability to quote five points from memory does not necessarily mean they are understood or are being practiced.

The New King James Version uses the word *discussion* in Hebrews 6:1.

Therefore, leaving the ***discussion*** of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

— Hebrews 6:1-2 (NKJV) emphasis added

We are encouraged to move on from the *discussion* of these principles, but *not from the practice* of them. The main point to be taken from the passage above is the writer’s desire to see the principles being *practiced*, not simply *discussed* or learned academically. The aim is to move on from discussion to doing, from academics to application — to teachers, not simply students.

Milk Is The Framework

The point was made at the beginning of this study course that the five principles from Hebrews 6:1-2 provide a primary framework of understanding to which we can add many topics and teachings. The foundational principles must be a continual part of our core knowledge providing direction and structure as we move forward and take action.

Comparing the body of Christ to the human body is a commonly understood metaphor used in the Bible. Also commonly known is that milk provides essential nutrients such as calcium for building strong bones and teeth while meat (or solid food) provides protein which is more for building muscle. Our bones and skeletal structure (from milk) is the framework upon which we build muscle (from meat). Muscle connected to bone is what makes action and movement possible and allows to do feed ourselves and others instead of depending on others to do things for us. With that in mind, we must ask: “Do we ever get to a point of physical maturity where our bones are no longer needed?” Of course not! Without the milk and bones, there is no need for the meat and muscle.

A body builder who is adding more and more muscle, does not ignore his bone structure. He continues to nurture his bone structure with the nutrients that keep it strong. In fact, if things are working correctly, his bones actually become stronger from load bearing exercises due to the slight flexing of the bones and their cellular regeneration.

It would be absurd to only build muscle mass without strong bone structure. Yet Christians often think they can become spiritual power lifters and accomplish God’s work without giving continual attention to the foundational framework provided by the elementary principles of the oracles of God. Thinking we don’t need ongoing foundational practice makes as much sense as a man having his bones surgically removed because he has reached adulthood and is no longer a child.

The teachings of the elementary principles of the oracles of God are not simply fast-food stops along life’s journey which we quickly forget as we move on down the road to the “really important stuff.” These principles, and the direction they give us, must be continually in our consciousness as we add the meaty knowledge that lies ahead. Like our bone structure, these principles provide the mechanical leverage that our muscles need to lift us off our beds and move us into action. Without the elementary principles giving us direction and purpose, we become like musclebound invalids whose only purpose is simply to flex in front of the mirror.

Classic Academics

Those being addressed in Hebrews, Chapter 5, were classic academics. For them it was all about head knowledge, instead of action. They were interested in knowledge, but not obedience to God. Jesus was speaking to this type of person when He said, “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*” (John 5:39-40). Paul warned Timothy regarding such people, describing them as always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim 3:7).

I am reminded of the people Paul encountered in Athens who “...spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear something new” (Acts 17:21). Then Paul touched on at least three of the 5 principles as he spoke to them.

Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

— Acts 17:22, 30, 31 (NKJV)

Notice in the passage above that Paul addressed their dead religion and challenged them to repent. This is the essence of principle 1: Repentance from Dead Works and faith Toward God. Then he framed this challenge to repent in principles 4 & 5, speaking of coming judgment and resurrection.

Balanced Nutrition

The Hebrews who were being addressed at the end of Hebrews, Chapter 5, were classified as immature and in need of milk because they were not teaching others. Looking at the five foundational principles as “five food groups” from which we get a balanced diet provides yet another analogy.

Everyone knows that we need a balanced diet from all the food groups to be healthy - everyone of course, except for the immature or undisciplined. That is why milk is for babies, they are not mature enough to manage a healthy diet plan from the wide variety of items on the doctrinal menu. But they can get all they need from milk because milk is the product of a mature person with a healthy diet combined into one menu item.

Therefore, I submit that the meat of the word is not moving on to different topics (or telling or hearing something new). It is simply learning to feed one’s self and others in a balanced way using the five foundational principles as a general guide. This is the definition of maturity.

Paul essentially made this point to the Corinthians when he referred to them as “babes needing milk” and to himself and Apollos as ministers, God’s fellow workers (see 1 Cor 3:1-9). Paul and Apollos were mature builders, but the Corinthians were immature and what they were building was not strong and healthy. It would not stand the test of fire (see 1 Cor 3:10-15). This is why we must not overlook the concept of “balanced nutrition.” Some foods taste good and others don’t, but we need them all. The same is true of the foundational principles. It is common for us to fill up on things like faith, grace, and resurrection power, but forget to partake of repentance, holiness, and judgement.

The Ministry of Righteousness

We also see in Hebrews another description of the meat of the word when it says “... *everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe*” (Heb 5:13). The flip side of this statement would mean that he who *IS* skilled in the word of righteousness is not a babe but *IS* mature. Therefore, the word of righteousness, is the food of the mature, or the meat.

The Apostle Paul spoke about being a minister of the New Covenant, not just a academic or a teacher of the letter of the law (Old Covenant) describing his ministry as a “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:4). He described this as “ministry of righteousness,” and spoke of the greater glory that comes with it.

For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

— 2 Corinthians 3:9 (NKJV)

The definition of righteousness (from the Strong’s Greek Dictionary) is *equity (of character and act)*. This reminds us of what Jesus said, “... *he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also;*

and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12 NKJV). This goes with the point we have been making - The meat is putting the principles into action.

Paul also wrote to Timothy about being equipped for every good work, or in other words, moving from discussion to doing and from academics to application.

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

– 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

There is a difference between the *Ministry of Righteousness* and *Training in Righteousness*. Our goal is to become mature and move from Training in Righteousness to the Ministry of Righteousness. As we move from milk to meat, from pupil to teacher, the textbook remains the same (see chart below).

Training In Righteousness	Milk	Immature	Pupil	Academic Letter of the Law	Hearer of the Word
Ministry of Righteousness	Meat	Mature	Teacher	Application Action	Doer of the Word

In the next lesson, we will look at the ministry of righteousness as it relates to bringing the powers of the age to come into this present age.