



SCRIPTURE: 1 John 2:12-14: **long-game**.

The Urban Dictionary says the **long-game** is having a **long** term plan, **long** term goals, or doing things now that set you up for the future.

You can play the **long-game** when it comes to dating, creativity, business strategy, education, and financial planning and gardening.

All require the ability to see and work for what is in the future, not just the here and now.

Paul wrote this to Timothy...

2 Timothy 4:7-8

⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

To win in the Christian life you have to play the **long-game**.

Today in John's letter, he stops to remind the churches of the long game called the Christian life...

First John 2:12-14 is a six-line poem where John addresses three different groups of believers.

John speaks to **new Christians - older Christians - and those in between**, in that order. He then talks to each again, in the same order.

New Christians are reminded of their forgiveness through Christ, older Christians of their faith in an eternal God, and other of their spiritual strength to overcome "the evil one."

John describes in this poem...

Three stages of the Christian life...

1 John 2:12-14

¹²I am writing to you, dear children,
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

¹³I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.
I am writing to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.

¹⁴I write to you, dear children,
because you know the Father.
I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

The Stage of Infancy

IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE "LITTLE CHILDREN"

1 John 2:12; 14

¹²I am writing to you, dear children,
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

¹⁴I write to you, dear children,
because you know the Father.

Both terms used by John normally refer to infants

Throughout the NT, those who are new Christians, or immature Christians, are thus spoken of as "babes in Christ"

Hebrews 5:12-13

¹²In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

This can be a difficult time, in which a Christian...

Is still more worldly than spiritual. Paul writes to the church in Corinth...

1 Corinthians 3:1

¹Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.

Paul also acknowledges that the lack of maturity can be a source of anxiety for those trying to lead them along...

Galatians 4:19

¹⁹My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you

NEW CHRISTIANS CAN TAKE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM JOHN...

Because their sins have been forgiven in Christ!

1 John 2:12

¹²I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

Forgiveness is not based upon maturity or perfection... But upon the blood of Jesus, and upon our willingness as Christians to confess our sins

1 John 1:9

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Admit. Acknowledge. Accept.

Because they have "known the Father" they have fellowship with the Father, which is John's definition of "eternal life"

John 17:3

³Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

They may be "babes", but they have "eternal life" in Christ!

1 John 5:11-12

¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

And John wants them to continue to believe!

1 John 5:13

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

When an "infant in Christ" feeds upon the milk of the Word, has been cleansed of sin by blood of Christ, and remains in fellowship with the Father it will not be long before they enter...

The Stage of Youth

1 John 2:13b; 14c

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

“Young men,” is not literal... John is writing about **ALL CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE ATTAINED A CERTAIN LEVEL OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY.**

Men or women, young or old in their lives but have attained a certain level of maturity as christians...

Those who are **“strong in the Lord.”**

All those who have **“overcome the evil one.”**

Not that they are perfect. Remember John says...

1 John 1:8

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But that their faith has had time to be tested, and they have demonstrated that they are truly "born of God"

1 John 4:4

⁴You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

1 John 5:4

⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

There is a strength and stability that comes with maturity in Christ. The winds of the storms of life do not blow over those who have deep roots in Christ.

THE SOURCE OF THEIR STRENGTH IS THE WORD OF GOD...

1 John 2:14b

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

David wrote about God's word...

Psalms 119:41-42

⁴¹May your unfailing love come to me, Lord, your salvation,
according to your promise;

⁴²then I can answer anyone who taunts me, for I trust in your
word.

Christians who are devoted to God's word grow deep roots. They will be nourished from the depths of good soil found in the truth of God's word.

Peter says...

1 Peter 2:2-3

²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it
you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted
that the Lord is good.

As Christians continue to grow they grow deep roots.
Roots that are firmly established in God's word.

And those maturing trees provide fruit for others as well.

The Stage of Maturity

1 John 2:13a-14b

¹³I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

Again, I take the term "fathers" figuratively. I believe John is referring to Christians, male and female, who have reached the highest stage of the Christian life.

They have had experience, having progressed through earlier stages of the Christian life (infancy, strength)

They have even produced spiritual offspring, by leading others to Christ. Paul wrote this to the church at Corinth...

1 Corinthians 4:14-15

¹⁴I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. ¹⁵Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

John then goes on to say about these spiritually mature christians...

1 John 2:13a-14b

¹³I am writing to you, fathers,
because you **know him who is from the beginning.**

I write to you, fathers,
because you **know him who is from the beginning.**

Maybe there is a distinction between those who are new to faith... "they know the Father," and those who are mature... "they know the Son."

As babes in Christ, it can be said that even in our infancy we can "know" the Father, that is have an intimate relationship with Him and experience the eternal life which He gives.

But only with time, and with opportunity to "walk just as He walked," can it be said that one has truly come to "know" Jesus.

This is why Peter wrote...

2 Peter 3:18

¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

And that's the goal. To grow. To become mature. To become more and more like Jesus.

SGL Questions

1. What are your feelings on yard work? Is it therapeutic for you or do you see it as a result of the fall?
2. Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8 Discuss the idea, “the Christian faith is a marathon, not a sprint.”
3. What does it mean for someone to be an infant in faith?
4. Read Hebrews 5:12-13. What are spiritual milk issues? What are spiritual meat issues?
5. What do you believe the spiritual responsibilities are for a mature believer?
6. How does a person become a mature believer?
7. Read Psalm 118:41-42 - what does David say he desires? If this is our desire as well, how is it a help to us?
8. What does it take for a Christian to grow deep roots?
9. Read James 1: 22-25 what is the importance of not just knowing the Word?