

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

John Edwards

Each year an untold number of children are diagnosed with developmental disorders. Just as a child may have a developmental disorder, there may be children of God who fail to develop properly. This series takes a look at developmental disorders among God's family.

GOD'S FAMILY. God surely has a family as Paul wrote, *“Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named”* (Eph. 3:15). There is no greater family relationship than that of God's family. God is the *“Father”* (Eph. 4:6) and those in Christ are His children (Eph. 1:3-6). The Galatian Christians were told, *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:26-27). To be a child of God is to be an heir of God as Romans 8:17 says, *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...”* Are you in God's family?

GOD EXPECTS HIS CHILDREN TO GROW AND DEVELOP. Just as we expect our children to crawl, walk and run, God expects His children to

grow and develop. Peter declared, *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Pet. 2:2). Again it is written, *“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 3:18). As we observe our children from day to day, how troubled we would be to see our child lagging behind in his or her development. Being concerned parents, we would do everything we know to identify the problem and what can be done to correct it. In like manner, as God observes His children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Heb. 4:13), how do you suppose He would feel to see His children not growing as they should?

EVALUATIONS ARE NEEDED PERIODICALLY. Most parents take their children to a competent and qualified physician for a check-up ever so often. A child with a developmental disorder may undergo formal evaluations to measure growth and development. As children of God, there is a real need for periodic evaluations to make sure we are developing properly from a spiritual standpoint. Paul instructed the Corinthians, *“Examine yourselves...”* (2 Cor. 13:5). A good time for some self-evaluation is while eating the Lord's supper as Paul said,

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28). If we do not examine ourselves frequently, we may have a developmental disorder and not know it! After reading this, check up on your own spiritual growth.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES OF A DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER. Here's a list of common symptoms to look for:

May be deficient in knowledge. The child of God must ever be *“increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Col. 1:10). Increasing knowledge requires increasing study! Timothy was instructed, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God...”* (2 Tim. 2:15). A *“lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6) is suggestive of a developmental disorder. As you evaluate your spiritual development, is your knowledge any greater today than the year before?

May be unable to teach. Hebrews 5:12 records, *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers...”* The Great Commission places teaching responsibility upon the Lord's disciples as Jesus charged, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...”* (Mt. 28:19). The inability to teach others the word of God may hint at a delay in one's spiritual development. Are you *“apt to teach”* (2 Tim.

2:24)?

May require milk and not meat. Paul wrote the Corinthians, “*I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able*” (1 Cor. 3:2). Those who “*have need of milk, and not of strong meat*” (Heb. 5:12) have some growing up to do. When it comes to meat, are you able to bear it?

May not be involved in the work of the Lord. A reading of Ephesians 4:16 shows that every member of the Lord’s body has a part to supply in the Lord’s work. For this reason Paul commanded, “*abounding in the work of the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58). Whenever I’m not involved in the work of the Lord, it’s an indication that I’ve got a developmental disorder. As a member of the Lord’s body, have you been supplying your part?

May not associate with other Christians. Mature Christians enjoy each other’s company. This is why we “*Use hospitality one to another*” (1 Pet. 4:9). When a child of God

keeps to himself and avoids association with his brothers and sisters in Christ something is seriously wrong. Do you seek opportunities to be with fellow Christians? Are you “*given to hospitality*” (Rom. 12:13)?

May be carnal. There are basically two groups of people: the carnal and the spiritual. In discussing the immaturity of the Corinthians, Paul said, “*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*” (1 Cor. 3:1). Paul wrote the Romans, “*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*” (Rom. 8:6). Which mind do you have?

May be given to envy and strife. Envy and strife were evidence that the Corinthians had some growing up to do as Paul declared, “*For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” (1 Cor. 3:3). Envy and strife should have no place in our heart (1 Pet. 2:1). Mature Christians are ever “*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of*

peace” (Eph. 4:3) and have no part in “*sowing discord among brethren*” (Prov. 6:19). How about you?

May not put first things first. The Lord’s mountain sermon teaches us, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Mt. 6:33). We must put the Lord’s church and God’s commandments first, above everything else! When we allow things to interfere with our service unto the Lord, it is suggestive of a developmental disorder. Are you putting first things first?

May not assemble regularly with the saints. The apostle to the Hebrews commanded, “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...*” (Heb. 10:25). The “*empty seat*” (1 Sam. 20:18) says some of God’s children have a developmental disorder.

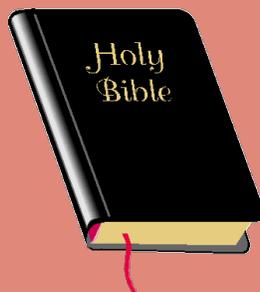
May be of little faith. There are different degrees of faith: “*strong*” (Rom. 4:23), “*dead*” (Jas. 2:26), “*little*” (Mt. 6:30). Have you had a check-up on your faith?

The Terre Haute **SPEAKER** is published weekly by the church of Christ at Terre Haute, Indiana.

Assembling At:
4017 E Margaret DR
Terre Haute, IN 47803
[Exit 11 (I-70) W on HWY 46,
W on Margaret DR approx. 1 mile]

Assembling Times:
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