As human beings we carry feelings within us that, instead of helping us grow, destroy our being with the fury of a hurricane or tornado, disrupting everything in its path. In the key verses for today (vv. 1-2), the apostle Peter invites us to get rid of all those feelings that prevent our spiritual growth, just as weeds prevent the growth of a plant.

Peter writes of getting rid of five emotional hurricanes. The first is malice, which is where we keep bad thoughts toward our neighbors, nurturing antagonism, raising grudges, and feeding the desire for revenge. The second is guile, which fuels dishonesty and lack of transparency. Insincerity turns us into something we really are not. He writes about envy, the “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage.”1 And finally, slander—the “oral communication of false statement injurious to a person’s reputation.”2

The apostle urges us to free ourselves from these five behaviors that cause harm not only to others but also to our inner being. He encourages us, with the impetus that characterizes a hungry newborn child, to desperately seek the source of sustenance able to nurture our spirits and bodies and provide the nutrients we need.

I remember when our three children were young. And hungry. They let us know about it in very dramatic ways. They could not talk, but they could get our attention at any time, day or night. Children don’t care what you are doing, how busy you are, or if you are trying to sleep. They only care that they are hungry, and they need the nourishment of milk for their little bodies. In a matter of days, weeks, and months, you can see the difference. They gain weight and start to grow. Their skin and hair look different.

That impatient or desperate search for spiritual milk is a need that arises from our new birth in Christ. When people accept Christ, they often hunger for the gospel. We must nurture a continuous desire to daily nourish our lives with the necessary elements. This makes it possible to grow and develop fully in the gospel so that each day we resemble Christ.

When our bodies are nourished properly, our health gets better, the body is strengthened, and our energy is at its maximum level. And when we nourish ourselves with unadulterated spiritual milk, no room is left for the viruses of malice, deception, hypocrisy, envy, and slander to enter and harm us. Our bodies repel them because we have the necessary nutrients for the body to be protected during its growth.

The unadulterated spiritual milk causes us to grow in the maturity of Christ and his holiness. “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Our Christian life must be constantly growing with the desire to be better every day—to look more like Christ, to imitate his example, to walk with those in need, and to make a difference in a world desperately reaching out for help. As Paul wrote to the Philippians: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press

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on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12 NIV). Christians should not stop running—or eating spiritual food—until we reach the goal of imitating Christ.

Blessings!
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Andrew Bodden, a Honduran native, serves as a program director for Mennonite Central Committee East Coast, providing leadership to the programs in New York, Philadelphia, Florida, Puerto Rico, and to the Young Adult, and Peace and Justice programs. He also connects with Anabaptist pastors and churches on the East Coast and in Puerto Rico. Andrew has worked in multicultural settings in Central and South America, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and the United States. He is an ordained minister in the Atlantic Coast Conference and serves as vice-chair of the Mennonite Mission Network board.

Looking for participant guide page numbers in the leader guide? The page numbers in the leader guide work for both guides.

Resources for this session

- These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each weekly session. Marnie Klassen, a fifth-year Bible student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, is the presenter for unit 3, Our Holy God. The videos are free and available on MennoMedia’s YouTube channel.
- “Cornerstone”