

## Going on to Maturity

C.S. Lewis, on the freedom of reaching maturity:

When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am 50, I read them openly. When I became a man, I put away childish things -- including the fear of childishness and the desire to be grown-up.

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A familiar Mother Goose rhyme goes:

PUSSY CAT, PUSSY CAT, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

I'VE BEEN TO LONDON TO VISIT THE QUEEN.

PUSSY CAT, PUSSY CAT, WHAT DID YOU THERE?

I FRIGHTENED A LITTLE MOUSE UNDER THE CHAIR.

Like that cat, Christians sometimes settle for petty involvements, trivial pursuits – chasing mice – when we have the opportunity to spend time with royalty, with the King! Instead of remaining content with minimum daily requirements, we can deepen our relationship with God and grow into maturity.

Source Unknown.

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In *The Last Days Newsletter*, Leonard Ravenhill tells about a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village who walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked, "Were any great men born in this village?"

The old man replied, "Nope, only babies."

A frothy question brought a profound answer. There are no instant heroes--whether in this world or in the kingdom of God. Growth takes time, and as I Timothy 3:6 and 5:22 point out, even spiritual leadership must be earned.

William C. Shereos.

Hebrews 6: 1 – 3 “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.

As in the natural life when a baby is born and grows up to adulthood so spiritually a person comes to Christ and is born again needs to grow up to spiritual maturity.

Luke 2: 52 “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.”

Jesus grew (matured) holistically – mentally, physically, spiritually and socially.

### Spiritual maturity is Christlikeness

It includes but is not:

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| • Going to church             | Many unbelievers are in church every Sunday                             |
| • Praying more                | Even the Muslims pray 5 times a day                                     |
| • Knowing the Bible more      | Many non-Christians can quote much of the Bible                         |
| • Getting on well with people | There are a lot of very nice unbelievers out there                      |
| • Doing Christian service     | Some do it for the wrong reasons (Philippians 1: 15)                    |
| • Serving the poor            | Hindu, Muslim and secular humanitarian groups are also serving the poor |

So then if these services and the things that we do do not constitute spiritual maturity then what do we mean by maturity. First let us look at what the immature Christian looks like.

## 1) The Immature Christian

- Is religious but is still concerned about his own life, riches of this world and pleasures of this life – being happy
  - Luke 8:14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.
- Always want their own way.
  - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 Brothers 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. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?
  - Worldly
  - Jealousy and quarreling
- Being right on any issue is more important than relationship
- Holds grudges and refuses to forgive when wronged or apologise when wronged someone.
- Prefers the letter of the law than the spirit of grace
- Will always seek his own will above that of God – is in general self-centered.

## 2) The Mature Christian

- Reflects the character of Christ in all circumstances
  - We can measure our maturity by the way we respond to unfavourable circumstances
  - The time between being hurt and forgiving the offender is measurable. The more mature, that is more Christ like, we become the quicker we will be able to forgive.
  - Another example would be the amount we lose or hold our temper when under stress.
- A desire to be holy rather than happy
- Seeks to honour God at all times even if it means loss to himself. Desires to carry his cross
- See things the way God sees them – looks at circumstances through the eyes of faith
- Prefers to die right than to live wrong
- Rejoices at the advancement of others even when he is overlooked.
- Has a humble willingness to serve others – does not seek to be served
- Has an intimate relationship with God
- Walks in integrity – does the right thing even when no one is looking. Not skin deep.
- Hang that question up in your houses, "What would Jesus do?" and then think of another, "How would Jesus do it?" for what he would do, and how he would do it, may always stand as the best guide to us.

Charles Spurgeon

## 3) Growing Mature

- Spiritual maturity does not come about in time with more knowledge, but by being obedient to the will of God.
  - James 1: 4 tells us that perseverance must finish its work so that you may become mature.
    - James 1:4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
    - Maturity comes about by doing the right thing in the midst of affliction
    - Making the right choices and responding correctly in the bad choices
  - The fruit of wisdom is Christlikeness, peace, humility and love. And, the root of it is faith in Christ as the manifested wisdom of God
- J. I. Packer
- Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from His fruit, and no effective witness without His power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead. John Stott