

Going on to Maturity

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.

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 1 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 Christ likeness

It includes but is not:

- Going to church
- Praying more
- Knowing the Bible more
- Getting on well with people
- Doing Christian service
- Serving the poor

Many unbelievers are in church every Sunday
Even the Muslims pray 5 times a day
Many non-Christians can quote much of the Bible
There are a lot of very nice unbelievers out there
Some do it for the wrong reasons (Philippians 1: 15)
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 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.
- Always want their own way.
 - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?
 - 1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 3 uses words such as:
 - o Worldly
 - o Jealousy and quarreling / strife
- 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.

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 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
 - Making the right choices and responding correctly in the bad choices