

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Introduction

- 1) **Ephesians 4:11-15** – the spiritual process of growing up to maturity in Christ
 - a) Children (v. 14) – grow up (v. 15) – full grown [mature/perfect] (v. 13)
- 2) **Maturity** is a key stage of life which is gained by knowledge and experience
 - a) Experience is a teacher that passes on knowledge over time, not all at once
- 3) A great generation full of knowledge and experience is passing away – what have we learned?
 - a) Have I grown to spiritual maturity? Am I still childish in my spiritual life?
- 4) How can an immature Christian survive the hazards of life and gain the maturity to be a strong, successful child of God? How can other mature Christians help?

I) **The Dangers Facing Those Lacking Spiritual Maturity**

- A) Inability to discern deceptive teachings (Eph. 4:14)
- B) Bad choices that create serious and life-threatening problems (Lk. 15:11-16)
- C) Distraction and hindrance by the things of this earth (Lk. 8:14)
- D) The affliction of selfish and illusory pride (1 Tim. 3:6)

II) **What is Needed by Those Lacking Spiritual Maturity**

- A) **Training** – by those who have the knowledge and experience
 - 1) The instruction of wisdom gives knowledge and discretion (Prov. 1:2-5, 7)
 - 2) “Train up” (*Heb.* chanak; Prov. 22:6); “bring up” (*Gk.* ektrepho; Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 4:6)
 - 3) Constant need for those who can do the training/teaching (Heb. 5:12)
- B) **Willingness to Learn**
 - 1) Seek and listen to knowledge (Prov. 1:33; 2:1-9)
 - 2) Hear and hold on to wisdom (Prov. 4:10-13)
 - 3) A willingness to listen to proper knowledge and experience that will help keep one out of trouble and falling into destruction (Prov. 2:10-13; 4:14-15)

III) **How to Gain Spiritual Maturity and Experience**

- A) Study God’s word (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18)
- B) Watch mature Christians in word and deed (Heb. 13:7; Phil. 3:17; 4:9)
- C) Go and do (Lk. 10:1-3)
 - 1) A young driver can know how a car works and every rule of the road, but need experience and time on the road
 - 2) Getting involved in evil is not good experience (1 Thess. 5:21-22)

IV) **Marks of Spiritual Maturity**

- A) Unselfish, genuine love for God and one another (1 Jn. 5:3; Rom. 12:9-10)
- B) Sincerely works toward unity in the truth (1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:1-2)
- C) Confidence and strength to face any situation (Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:6-7)
- D) Not intimidated or fearful of any adversary (1 Sam. 17:34-37; 1 Pet. 5:8-9)
- E) Desiring and feeding on the “strong meat” of God’s word (Heb. 5:13-14)
- F) Senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14; 1 Jn. 4:1)
- G) Have constant control of thoughts, words, emotions, actions (Jas. 3:2, 13, 17)
- H) Willing and able to teach and lead the inexperienced (2 Tim. 2:2; 3:10, 14)

Conclusion

The proper spiritual knowledge and experience will equip us to meet ever-increasing daily challenges. Have you grown and matured as a child of God? Have you learned from your experiences, both good and bad? Can you teach and lead those young in the faith? If you are not a Christian, you need to be born again to gain the hope of eternal life!

“Maturity Is...” by Mackey W. Harden

A reader in Chapel Hill, N.C. wrote Ann Landers and asked her to return her definition of maturity. As I read through the 8-point definition, I immediately realized that these principles also applied to maturity concerning spiritual matters. The New Testament certainly teaches that we as Christians must grow to maturity, striving to be full-grown in our spiritual lives (cf. Eph. 4:12-16; Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:18).

- (1) **Maturity** is the ability to tolerate injustice without wanting to get even. Commonly known as retaliation, the Bible strictly teaches against it. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Mt. 5:44). The mature Christian is the one who will practice this principle in his daily life (cf. Rom. 12:14-21).
- (2) **Maturity** is patience. It is the willingness to postpone immediate gratification in favor of the long-term gain. Christians must indeed endure and forego some of the pleasures of this life if heaven is to be our home. Moses is a good example of one who was willing to do so (Heb. 11:24-27). James said "that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4).
- (3) **Maturity** is perseverance, sweating out a project in the face of heavy opposition and discouraging setbacks. It surely takes a mature Christian to have the kind of steady persistence that is needed to live a faithful life, overcoming the many obstacles that come along. The Bible tells us "not to be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). We must be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).
- (4) **Maturity** is the capacity to face unpleasantness and frustration, discomfort and defeat without complaint, collapse or attempting to find someone to blame. The mature Christian must pick himself up after a fall and keep trying. Paul did (Phil. 3:12-14)! When discomfort and defeat come our way, we must deal with them in an uncomplaining manner. The mature Christian will be content in whatever circumstance he finds himself (Phil. 4:11-13), realizing that he "can do all things through Christ. "
- (5) **Maturity** is humility. It is being big enough to say, "I was wrong, " and, when right, the mature person is able to forego the satisfaction of saying, "I told you so. " Jesus not only taught humility (Lk. 14:7-11), He also exemplified it in His life (Phil. 2:1-8). Jesus said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (Jas. 4:10). Peter said that we are to "clothe ourselves with humility" (1 Pet. 5:5-7). The mature Christian is one who does so.
- (6) **Maturity** is the ability to evaluate a situation, make a decision and stick with it. The immature spend their lives exploring possibilities, changing their minds and in the end do nothing. The mature Christian has made the commitment to live for the Lord and has conviction enough to stick with it! Yes, we must be willing to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3), "ready always to give an answer of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). We must be decisive if we are to be full-grown Christians, striving to be stable in all our ways (Eph. 4:14; Jas. 1:5-8).
- (7) **Maturity** means dependability, keeping one's word, coming through in a crisis. To be dependable means to be worthy of trust; reliable. There are many Christians who are not trustworthy and reliable. This ought not to be! We as Christians need to be reliable and keep our word. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (Jas. 5:12; cf. also Mt. 5:33-37).
- (8) **Maturity** is the art of living in peace with that which we cannot change, the courage to change that which can be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference. If a person is truly a mature person he will not fret and worry about anything! Jesus said we are not to be anxious about the necessities of life, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you " (Mt. 6:24-34). Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). (via Guardian of Truth, May 5, 1983)