

Growing and Maturing

1 Corinthians 13:11-13— *“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*



Considerations for maturity in the Christian life:

- Maturity is not always recognized as easily as you think.
- Understanding maturity is vital in keeping disasters from happening in personal lives, families, and churches.
- A person’s ability to self-govern himself is a great indicator of his maturity.
- God has designed levels of authority to help us in the maturing process.
- Maturity is fully expressed by applying the Scriptures to our lives and being a doer of the Word of God.
- A person that suffers well will mature. The person grows in seeing God’s perspective. (*faith*)
- A person’s maturity is important in their ability to resolve conflicts. (*hope*)
- A person’s maturity will be tested through relationships in which they have God-given responsibilities. (*love*)

False assumptions regarding maturity:

- *A person’s age dictates their maturity.* The opposite is true however; age does not dictate a person’s level of maturity.
- *A person’s giftedness demonstrates they are mature.* Giftedness will only take a person so far.
- *A person’s lack of maturity somehow makes them less valuable.*
- *Maturity will just happen naturally.* Maturing cannot be left to chance, and it does not happen to necessary levels without important relationships in our lives.

Evaluating Levels of Maturity (adapted from *The Life Model*, p.35-55)

We see a pattern in Scripture of varying levels of maturity and responsibility.

1 John 2:13,14— *“I write to you, **little children**, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, **fathers**, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.”*

A. Childhood Level Maturity

1 Corinthians 3:1-4— *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. **I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?”***

- **Primary tasks** to be completed during this state: learning to receive from others and taking care of self
- **Resulting problems** in adult life when this task is not completed:
 1. Weak or stormy relationships
 2. Not taking responsibility for self

The principle of **self-government** is *“God ruling from the heart of the individual.”*

Self-government is not having an independent spirit; it is applying Biblical principles in one’s decisions and being led by God’s Spirit.

Important childhood tasks to be completed:

1. Lives in joy: expands capacity for joy, learns that joy is one’s normal state, and builds joy strength.
2. Develops trust.
3. Learns how to receive.
4. Begins to organize self into a person through relationships.
5. Learns how to return to joy from every unpleasant emotion.
6. Asks for what is needed/ can say what one thinks and feels.
7. Learns what brings personal satisfaction.

8. Develops enough persistence to do hard things.
9. Develops personal resources and talents.
10. Knows self and takes responsibility to make self understandable to others.
11. Understands how he or she fits into history as well as the “big picture” of what life is about.

Hebrews 5:12-14— *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**”*

B. Adult Level Maturity

- **Primary tasks** to be completed during this stage: taking care of two people simultaneously and sacrificially taking care of children.
- **Resulting problems** when this task is not completed:
 1. Lacks the capacity to be in mutually satisfying relationships.
 2. Distant or conflicted family relationships.

Important adult level maturity tasks:

1. Cares for self and others simultaneously in mutually satisfying relationships.
2. Remains stable in difficult situations/ knows how to return self and others to joy.
3. Bonds with peers/ develops group identity.
4. Takes responsibility for how personal actions affect others, including protecting others from self.
5. Contributes to the community/ articulates “who we are” as part of belonging to the community.
6. Expresses the characteristics of his or her heart in a deepening personal style.
7. Protects, serves, and enjoys one’s family.
8. Is devoted to taking care of children without expecting to be taken care of by the children in return.
9. Allows and provides spiritual parents and siblings for their children.
10. Learns how to bring children through difficult times and help them return to joy from other emotions.

C. Elder Level Maturity

- **Primary task** to be completed during this stage: Sacrificially taking care of the community.
- **Resulting problem** when this task is not accomplished: The overall maturity of the community declines.

Important elder level maturity tasks:

1. Establishes an accurate community identity, and acts like self in the midst of difficulty.
2. Prizes each community member, and enjoys the true self in each individual.
3. Parents and matures the community.
4. Places a high value on being a spiritual family to those with no family.

Personal Evaluation Questions

1. Am I growing in the area of self-government?

1. Do I take responsibility to make myself understandable to others?

2. Have I learned how to return to joy after feeling unpleasant emotions?

3. Am I learning to care for myself and others in mutually satisfying relationships?

4. How do I respond to suffering? Am I learning to see God's perspective in my sufferings?

5. In what areas of my life does God want me to mature?

