

# MYTH OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

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## MYTH

### DEFINITION OF MYTH

- MYTH ARE
- FABLE
- FANTASY
- FICTION
- ILLUSION
- IMAGINATION
- LEGEND
- PARABLE

### 1. CHURCH ATTENDANCE/RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY = MATURITY

This couldn't be any further from the truth of Scripture. Nowhere does the Bible indicate that attending any kind of gathering or zealous religious activity will produce mature believers. Granted, we are informed in **Hebrews 10:25** not to forsake the fellowship.

We know that much can be gained from fellowship in terms of encouragement, support, and edification. But to equate that one hour a week to the "prime time" material for one's spiritual maturity is a very weak understanding of the Christian life.

The primary problem with this way of thinking is that it assumes a false definition of maturity. In this type of thinking, maturity proximity or familiarity with church things proximity or familiarity with church things. Unfortunately, a lot of Christians assume that their proximity to spiritual activities or their history with religion equates to maturity. We have not been called to attend services; we've been called to follow a Person. No amount of religion (no matter how sincere it may be) is no substitute for a relationship with God

### 2. KNOWLEDGE = MATURITY

First of all, it would be a step in the right direction if every believer actually read their Bible every day; but we all know that's not the reality. Knowledge isn't the goal. Transformation is the goal. (2 **Peter 1:5-8**, **Colossians 1:28-29**) In order for transformation to take place, we are commanded to obey Jesus (and by proxy, all of Scripture) and put everything we learn into practice. In order to obey Jesus we must first know what Jesus has said and that requires listening to, reading, studying memorizing and meditating on studying, memorizing, and meditating on Scripture. *Don't miss this:* Real life transformation begins with your personal intake of God's Word on a regular basis.

Let's be honest, we all know Christians who know a lot about the Bible but their lives don't look like they've spent much time with Jesus. Clearly, there's a huge difference between knowing about God and knowing God. In order to be transformed by the Word, there must be application and practice of God's Word as well. Therefore, within the power of the Holy Spirit: Knowledge + Application = Transformation Unfortunately, many Christians live their whole lives skimming the surface of God's Word and memorizing a small handful of passages that they use over and over again.

Once again, while this is a good place to start, let's not miss that fact that the Word of God is an endless source of life transforming truth. If this is all the further we go, there's nothing *fresh* about their our of God's Word. The more we digest it the more the Holy Spirit has to work with in molding and shaping us and refining our molding and shaping us and refining our character (**1 Timothy 4:8**).

In addition, there are dozens of passages in the Bible that warn us that there is serious danger in hearing the Word but not applying it and one of the most clear passages is Jesus' words in **Luke 6:46-49**.

In addition, in John 10, Jesus uses the word "listen" five times in one chapter as He refers to His relationship with His people (the sheep) and how they hear His voice, they listen, they obey, and they follow (**John 10:27**). In James, we read that hearing without doing is foolishness and we're literally deceiving ourselves and our religion is a joke (**James 1:22-25**).

### 3. AGE = MATURITY

We all know this isn't true. How do I know? Well, we've all met college students who are mature far beyond their years and act like spiritual adults and yet we've also met older believers in their 60's, 70's, or 80's who act like spiritual teenagers. How does this work? Well, clearly maturity can't necessarily be measured by time alone.

There are multiple factors that reveal a person's maturity and often time isn't the primary factor. We see this reality in Scripture when the prophet Samuel anoints a teenager named David to become king. However, we see that while David was anointed at a young age he also matured with age unlike his predecessor, King Saul. While Saul had the outward appearances of maturity (a strong, handsome, charismatic leader) he was inwardly a man with weak character. Look at this graphic below that represents a biblical diagnostic tool for the spiritual maturity continuum Notice that we all move from being "dead" in our sins (**Ephesians 2:1-3**) and by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, we become children of God (**Ephesians 2:4-10**).

Then we are "*infants*" in Christ primarily characterized by ignorance. This describes every new believer every fired up and yet completely oblivious to a thousand important truths and realities. That's why discipleship is so critical at this stage. From infancy, we grow up and become "*children*" who are know a few things but now we're primarily characterized by selfishness. Who can't relate to this reality; personally, or in discipline someone else!? The primary call of Jesus is the denial of self and taking up our cross daily (**Luke 9:23-26**).

As we mature, we move from being incredibly self-centered to being more others focused as we see in the graphic below. The next phase of growth is the “*young adult*” season where we’re not only concerned about others but we’re also becoming more and more concerned about how our life is aligned with the will, purpose, and agenda of Jesus.

In this season, we mature to the point where our habits, our passions, and our convictions radically change and become more and more Christ-centered. Lastly, a person who is radically committed to Jesus will mature further and become a person that is more concerned with building God’s Kingdom than their own.

They will be people that are passionately committed to fulfilling the Great Commission and taking the gospel to the ends of the earth Why? Because that mission is the mission of God and His game mission is the mission of God and His game plan hasn’t changed; the primary means by which He accomplishes His mission is through disciple-makers making disciple-makers.

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Remember that the key is this: a person could potentially mature through this continuum and be 30 or 93 but the determining factor isn’t their age; it’s their spiritual maturity category (dead, infant, child, young adult, or parent). One important observation to note is the reality that everyone has a “*next step*”. No one has arrived at perfection this side of eternity.

#### **MATURITY MYTH #4: SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS AUTOMATIC ONCE YOU ARE BORN AGAIN.**

Evidently a lot of churches believe this myth, because they have no organized plan for following-up new believers and no comprehensive strategy for developing members to maturity.

They assume that Christians will automatically grow to maturity if they attend church services. Yet, the truth is that spiritual growth is intentional. It requires a commitment to grow. A person must want to grow, decide to grow, and make an effort to grow.

#### **MATURITY MYTH #5: SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS MYSTICAL, AND MATURITY IS ATTAINABLE BY ONLY A SELECT FEW.**

The truth is that spiritual growth is very practical. Any believer can grow to maturity if he or she will develop the habits necessary for spiritual growth.

Paul often compared training for the Christian life to the way athletes prepare themselves and stay in shape. We need to take the mystery out of spiritual growth by breaking the components down into practical, everyday habits.

**MATURITY MYTH #6: SPIRITUAL MATURITY CAN OCCUR INSTANTLY IF YOU JUST FIND THE RIGHT “KEY.”**

Many sincere Christians spend their entire lives earnestly searching for an experience, a conference, a revival, a book, a tape, or a single truth that will instantly transform them into a mature believer. Their search is futile. The truth is that spiritual growth is a gradual process of development. There are no shortcuts to maturity.

**MATURITY MYTH #7: SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS MEASURED BY WHAT YOU KNOW.**

Many churches evaluate spiritual maturity solely on the basis of how well you can identify Bible characters, interpret Bible passages, quote Bible verses, and explain biblical theology.

While knowledge of the Bible is foundational to spiritual maturity, it isn't the total measurement of it. The truth is that maturity is demonstrated more by behavior than by beliefs. The Christian life isn't just a matter of creeds and convictions; it includes conduct and character.

**MATURITY MYTH #8: SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A PERSONAL AND PRIVATE MATTER.**

This is an American aberration of the truth. The idolatry of individualism in our culture has influenced even the way we think about spiritual growth. So much of the teaching on spiritual formation is self-centered and self-focused without any reference to our relationship to other Christians. This is completely unbiblical and ignores much of the New Testament. The truth is that Christians need relationships to grow. We don't grow in isolation from others.

**MATURITY MYTH #9: ALL YOU NEED IS BIBLE STUDY TO GROW**

Many evangelical churches have been built on this myth. I call them “classroom churches.” The truth is that it takes a variety of experiences with God to produce true spiritual maturity. In addition to Bible study, it takes worship experiences, ministry experiences, fellowship experiences, and evangelism experiences. In other words, spiritual growth occurs by participating in all five purposes of the church! Mature Christians do more than study the Christian life—they experience it!

**CONCLUSION**

God created man perfect, complete, and mature. God wants only the best for us. We know this because God sent His Son into the world to be an example for us and to redeem us.

When we follow Jesus' example, we can become the perfect, complete, mature people that God wants us to be (*Philippians 4:13*). God created us to be bold and to soar with the eagles (*Isaiah 40:31*).