

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE HABIT

Theme: Spiritual Maturity

Philippians 3:13-15

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SPIRITUALLY MATURE?

I do not mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection... *But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus possessed me. [13] No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. [15] Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. [16] But we must hold on to the progress we have already made. **Philippians 3:13-16.***

According to this passage, the spiritually mature are those who “press on” and “look forward” toward the dream God has for them. If I want to become spiritually mature, I need to focus on progress and growth. Not on being perfect, or having the right behavior, but on who God wants me to become. If you want to work on becoming spiritually mature, ask yourself this question: What have I been avoiding maturing and growing in? I often hate feeling stuck and stagnant, but do not usually view the solution as maturity. So, I decided to look up what the Bible says maturity really means, and how to become mature myself. None of us will reach maturity in Christ overnight. It takes time.

The saints of God can tell they are growing when they “outgrow” childish things, trust implicitly in the Lord’s promises, and begin bearing fruit to His glory. Peter said, “*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (**2 Peter 3:18**). Paul thanked God for the growth of the Thessalonian saints: “*We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth*” (**2 Thessalonians 1:3**).

WHY SHOULD I BE MATURE?

It is the only way to access God’s purpose for me I am doing something brand new, something unheard of. Even now it sprouts and grows and matures. Don’t you perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and open up owing streams in the

desert. **Isaiah 43:19**. God can open paths in the wilderness and owing streams in the desert. That means in your life, God can work to guide you to a new stage in his purpose, plan, or destiny for your life – even if you feel you are in the “wilderness” or the desert. But new things always require growing, maturing, and progressing. And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that *you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you]*. **Romans 12:2** AMP

The more spiritually mature I become, the more I can see and understand God’s will and purpose for me. When I get consumed with “this world” – people’s view of me and how I measure up to others, for example – I don’t grow or mature, nor do I see God’s purpose for me.

If I want to see God’s purpose, I need to change who and what I let in Quench me.

WHAT DOES SPIRITUAL MATURITY LOOK LIKE? MATURE PEOPLE ARE HUMBLE

God, the Master, was delighted with Solomon’s response. And God said to him, *“Because you have asked for this and haven’t grasped after a long life, or riches, or the doom of your enemies, but you have asked for the ability to lead and govern well, I’ll give you what you’ve asked for-I’m giving you a wise and mature heart.*

There’s never been one like you before; and there’ll be no one after. As a bonus, I’m giving you both the wealth and glory you didn’t ask for there’s not a king anywhere who will come up to your mark. And if you stay on course, keeping your eye on the life-map and the God-signs as your father David did, I’ll also give you a long life.” Because Solomon was humble enough to admit he didn’t know how to lead well, and to ask God for help, God gave him a wise and mature heart.

The more humble I am to ask for help, the more I will actually get that help and grow and mature. This also means that the more proud and self-reliant I am, the more spiritually immature I will be. What are some things you feel like you can’t accomplish on your own?

Do you get frustrated and keep trying to take it on yourself, or are you humble enough to ask God for his help? Yet we do speak wisdom among those spiritually mature [believers who have teachable hearts and a greater understanding]; but [it is a higher] wisdom not [the wisdom] of this present age nor of the rulers and leaders of this age, who are passing away So I, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called [that is, to live a life that exhibits godly character, moral courage, personal integrity, and mature

behavior-a life that expresses gratitude to God for your salvation], It takes humility and maturity to express gratitude for what God has given me – it means I didn't achieve it myself. Choosing to grow and mature is an expression of gratitude to God. Does my life erect gratitude for what I've been given? Would God say that how I'm living is worth as much as what he's done for me? The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. It's that simple. That is the substance of our Message. We preach Christ, warning people not to add to the Message. We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity.

To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less. That's what I'm working so hard at day after day, year after year, doing my best with the energy God so generously gives me. **Colossians 1:26** MSG. To be spiritually mature is to be basic and not overcomplicated. Paul says it's simple – stay focused on Jesus, and you will become mature. When we focus on anything other than God and Jesus, we overcomplicate things. But when we simplify things by deciding to focus on just being close to God and Jesus, that is when we grow.

MATURE PEOPLE KNOW GOD

With smooth words [of flattery and praise] he will turn to godlessness those *who [are willing to] disregard the [Mosaic] covenant*, but the people who [are spiritually mature and] know their God will display strength and take action [to resist] **Daniel 11:32** AMP.

In this scripture, Daniel is prophesying about a corrupt king who will be able to sway certain people to turn away from God. Daniel says that the king will be able to use artistry and praise to convince people to disregard God's Words ("*Mosaic covenant*"). But he will be unable to sway people who are spiritually mature. According to this scripture, the spiritually mature: know God have the strength to take action to resist pressure, temptation, and conformity.

"I am the Vine; you are the branches". When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you cannot produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the fire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. *This is how my Father shows who he is-when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples* **John 15:5** MSG

Is your relationship with God intimate and organic? Are you always looking for ways to grow and know God better or are you willing to stay stagnant? Jesus says that the way God shows people who he is when we mature and are fruitful. So when we decide to stay stagnant and immature, we are unable to show others who God is.

MATURE PEOPLE ARE PERFECT (GOD'S DEFINITION)

You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect. **Matthew 5:48** AMP. This is how God defines perfect: growing into spiritual maturity, and actively including God into my daily life Am I perfect in God's eyes?

I may even be “*perfect*” in people's eyes, but if I am not constantly growing and actively looking for how to integrate God into my life, I'm not perfect to God. Jesus answered him, “*If you wish to be perfect [that is, have the spiritual maturity that accompanies godly character with no moral or ethical deficiencies], go and sell what you have and give [the money] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me [becoming My disciple, believing and trusting in Me and walking the same path of life that I walk].*” — **Matthew 19:21** AMP.

The rich young ruler was “perfect” – he followed all the rules – but he wasn't perfect to God because it wasn't his priority to be close to God. He seemed more interested in getting a condemnation that he was doing. everything right than he was in following Jesus. When Jesus showed him how he could be perfect by loving and sacrificing for God and other people, he walked away.

How do I try to be perfect, but refuse to do the actual things that will make me perfect in God's eyes? The more I try to reach maturity on my own – being perfect, following rules, doing everything myself – the more frustrated I'll be because this kind of growth only comes from God. Am I frustrated by my stagnation and lack of growth? How much am I trying to do it alone?

MATURE PEOPLE LOVINGLY LEAD

With many stories like these, he presented his message to them, telling the stories to their experience and maturity. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his disciples, he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots. — **Mark 4:33** MSG

Jesus was aware of the maturity level of those he was speaking to and met them where they were at. Leading means the teaching to people's experience and maturity. It means not expecting everyone to be at the same spot. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. **Ephesians 4:15** NIV

Do I see speaking the truth as loving others? Who is not growing and maturing because I'm refusing to speak the truth in love? When others “*speak the truth in love*” to you, do you recognize it as part of God's process of helping you become mature?

Now, those who are mature in their faith can easily be recognized, for they don't live to please themselves but have learned to patiently embrace others in their immaturity. **Romans 15:1** TPT

The Bible says this is the easily recognizable mark of maturity: mature people are faithful, selfless, patient, and non-judgmental. They embrace others' immaturity, take them where they are at, and don't emotionally react to their mistakes or sins. What is "easily recognized" about me? Is it my maturity? Or is it my quickness to judge or control?

HOW TO BECOME SPIRITUALLY MATURE

1. VALUE CORRECTION/TRAINING

Let the righteous [thoughtfully] strike (correct) me-it is a kindness [done to encourage my spiritual maturity]. It is [the choicest anointing] oil on the head; Let my head not refuse [to accept and acknowledge and learn from] it; For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds. **Psalms 141:5** AMP

Do I value correction like this? This psalmist saw it as kindness – he saw it as the way for him to reach spiritual maturity. Do I not just welcome correction, but chase after it? Without it I will never learn and stay spiritually immature. The beginning of wisdom is: Get [skillful and godly] wisdom [it is preeminent]! And with all your acquiring, get understanding [actively seek spiritual discernment, mature comprehension, and logical interpretation]. **Proverbs 4:7** AMP When I actively seek spiritual discernment, I will get understanding, wisdom, and maturity.

Do I have understanding for my future? Then I need to actively seek spiritual help from God and from spiritually minded friends. Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deceit in any way. — **James 1:2** MSG. Do I let pressure do its work so I can be mature? Or do I always try to stop it short or get out of it prematurely?

2. FIGHT FOR IT

In their mother's womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity, he contended with God. **Hosea 12:3** AMP. To contend is to "struggle to surmount." It actually takes maturity to struggle and wrestle with God. What have you given up wrestling with God about?

3. CLEAN HOUSE

So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You've had a taste of God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God's pure kindness. Then you'll grow up mature and whole in God. — **1 Peter 2:1** MSG. Do I make a clean sweep of my sin? Or do I leave its dust and cobwebs behind? I need to be radical in my repentance and change if I am going to mature and access God's "pure kindness." What do I need to "make a clean sweep" of? What sins have I left behind in my heart?

4. DON'T GO IT ALONE

I am praying not only for them but also for those who will believe in me Because of them and their witness about me. *The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so they might be one heart and mind with us. Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me. The same glory you gave me, I gave them, so they'll be as united and together as we are- I in them and you in me. Then they'll be mature in this oneness, and give the godless world evidence That you've sent me and loved them in the same way you've loved me.* **John 17:20** MSG. When we are united, we become mature together. Do you get for unity with those around you? Or do you allow disunifying sins like competitiveness, jealousy, pride, or bitterness to live in your heart and relationships?

5. STOP MAKING IT ABOUT MYSELF

Why is it that he gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for him, building up the Church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity; *Ephesians 4:12* TLB. God gives me my strengths and abilities to help his church grow and mature. Am I doing my part? Me choosing to grow and mature isn't just about me. If I don't grow, I stunt the body from growing.

That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles but waded right in and helped out. *"I took on the troubles of the troubled,"* is the way Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for us. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next.

May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we'll be a choir-not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus! **Romans 15:3** MSG.

Do I take on others' troubles or do I just try to make life easy for myself? God makes me mature so that I can help other people. Jesus didn't make life easy for himself because he saw his life was bigger than himself. If I make the maturing process all about myself and don't see the need for me to "*wade in and help out*," I'm just going to take shortcuts and try to make it easy on myself.

For us to attain spiritual maturity at its zenith we need to SEE BEYOND THE
OBVIOUS
MEDITATION
DECISION MAKING
INNOVATION
EXCELLENT
PRAYER