



How Do We Gain Maturity?

Are You Now Mature?

One of my favorite individuals in the Bible is David. As has been noted, he was a “man after God’s own heart” and yet he certainly was not perfect. As we consider the topic of maturity, it strikes me that it is not simple and straight forward concept. Just looking at David, it is not easy to assess. For example, when he was a young teen, caring for his family sheep, was he mature when he fended off the attacks of bears and lions? Well certainly it would seem so. When David came to the battlefield camp of the Israelites per his father’s instructions to bring food and drink to his older brothers and their fellow soldiers and he asked around about the Giant Goliath and the bounty that would be paid by the king to whoever killed Goliath, was he mature? His brother thought he was acting childish. When David as a teen fought and killed Goliath, was he mature? How about when he helped lead King Saul’s army into battle, still as a very young man, had he become mature? Was David mature when he ran off and left his wife behind in his escape from King Saul and his intent to kill David? Did David reveal his maturity when he required as terms of his accepting the surrender of Abner and the army fighting against him the return of his wife Michal whom he hadn’t been with in ten years and had remarried someone who thoroughly loved her? Was David mature when he slept with the married Bathsheba and then had her husband killed? Did David become mature at the end of his life when he ordered that Shimei be executed despite him posing no threat to the kingdom after he had promised him he would live? Is maturity a straight line...do you automatically reach it after a certain amount of time?

The Apostle Paul, who had become a keen observer of the human condition and was an expert on the area of maturity had this to say about it. **It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.** (Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV) Paul tells us that there are two parts in the development of maturity. The first is the attainment of unity in the faith. I saw an article pop up on a national news feed discussing the proliferation of Christian denominations. We know that there are thousands of them and new ones yearly. Many inside and outside Christianity wonder why there are so many different Christian groups who interpret the Bible and practice their faith in such varied ways. One might ask why husbands and wives don’t always agree, why children don’t share their parents’ politics or morals. That is just how things are right now.

I find it fascinating how unique were Jesus’ insights into the Bible. Just one example illustrates this. When asked by a group of Jews who didn’t believe there was a resurrection how it could be, He provided an answer that I never would have expected. **But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.**" (Matthew 22:31-32 NIV) Not in a billion years would I have made that connection. Of course it is marvelously insightful and thoughtful but it is still far from how you or I have ever seen those verses. What strikes me here is that we may be and probably are way off base at times in how we interpret the Bible and the way we see God. However, the Lord will eventually fix that and we will

see everything from His point of view. I love how many times it was said of Jesus, that the crowds were “amazed” at His teaching. It is frustrating right now how many arguments there are between good Christian people about the Bible but soon enough that won't be the case. We will understand everything not from our point of view but that of Jesus and then we will get it right.

There is a second area of development that results in maturity. That is the “**knowledge of the Son of God**”. The term knowledge here describes the coming to knowledge of something, a personal experiential knowledge. It is more than just having something explained to you, it is seeing it for yourself, exploring it and discovering how something is. To be mature requires a growing intimacy with Jesus, a personal understanding of Him and His personality and ways. Maturity is defined by Paul as “**attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**” That is a far cry from just growing older and gaining life experiences. It implies an immersion into Christ, a full blown saturation of His personality and ways remaking yours. You cannot be mature without Jesus dominating how you think, process events, and live your life. We may get older but that is just aging. We mature when how we respond to things is directly connected to Christ inspiring and empowering our reactions.

Maturity develops in three ways. One, we read the Bible. For centuries there were no Bibles available and maturity depended on listening carefully to what the priest or pastor read and keeping it alive in one's mind. Now you have easy access to it and the Bible simply must be read by those who want to develop into mature and wise children of God. Jesus made full use of His opportunities to study the Bible and get it into His head. It was hard work for Him to gain access to the Scriptures but for you it is as easy as downloading a Bible app and opening it up on your phone or tablet. Each day the Bible should be read if you want to move forward in your life. Let it shape your thoughts and correct your actions.

That leads us to the second way to grow up or become mature. Do what the Bible says to do. It is foolish to have that great word of God in your mind and then ignore it. All sorts of problems with family members, friends and issues at work could be eliminated just by doing what you see the Bible tells you to do. I struggle with not holding grudges and letting the past stay in the past. I don't do so well sometimes with forgiveness. As old as I am, I still have a lot of work to do and it just involves following the Bible and being driven by it...letting what I see in the Bible decide my actions rather than my emotions or my sinful ways. What is the point of God giving us all those great lessons on living if we don't put them to use? It is like hearing that a tornado is coming through town and not doing anything to prepare. You could lose everything. There is so much joy and contentment to gain just by following the Bible!

Third, we must keep our mind on Jesus if we want to mature. We call it praying but it is nothing more than thinking about Him and talking to Him either out loud or within. Constantly bring your mind back to Jesus. The more you do so, the more mature and complete you will become. Pray for people you see. Ask God to guide you each step of the way. Make the most of every opportunity to let Him guide you and to become aware of His presence. The more you do so, the more your personality will be immersed in His and what comes out of you will reveal the impact He has had on you. I love the little account in the Bible where a crowd of Jewish leaders was present when Peter and John were brought in for questioning. The two disciples had caused quite a stir in Jerusalem with their teaching and preaching. What astonished these leaders was the way Peter and John came across. **When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.** (Acts 4:13 NIV) That is how I want to be and perhaps you do too. How you act and the way you think looks an awful lot like Jesus. It is called maturity.