

ence. I will say what I want to! Paul taught, **“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”** (Eph. 4:29). The immature won’t be cautious in what they teach. If it is a novel thought, I will express it. The mature will remember Paul’s charge to **“hold fast the pattern of sound words”** (2 Tim. 2:13a).

6. My Faith. In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul explained why God set different workers within the church (v. 11), **“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (v. 12). The goal of this is **“the unity of the faith”** unto the shaping of the **“perfect”** (or **“mature”**

NASB) man in accordance with **“the stature of the fullness of Christ”** (v. 13, NKJV). What will this mean for my personal faith? It means we **“should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”** (v. 14). A goal of our work together in the church is unity and soundness of faith and doctrine. If I am immature, I may be swayed by any **“wind of doctrine”** that comes along. The mature will **“test all things, hold fast to what is good”** (1 Thess. 5:21). May we no longer be children, but **“grow up in all things”** into Christ (v. 15).

Conclusion. When growth and development stops in our bodies we know that something is wrong. If we fail to mature spiritually, we are not what God would have us to be. This can have serious consequences within the Lord’s body, the church. If we want our churches to grow, let’s make certain that each of us strive diligently to **“press on”** towards maturity, striving towards **“that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of”** us (Phil. 3:12).



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10:30 AM
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Deacons:
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Walker McNear
Sam Nunn
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Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

Maturity in the Church

By Kyle Pope

As God created human life, we are not born full-grown. From the moment of conception, a process of growth and development starts that continues in various stages until we die. As the Holy Spirit informs us of the nature of our spiritual life in Christ, He compares it to this same process. In Christ, we are **“born again”** (John 3:3, 7; 1 Pet. 1:23), starting out as **“newborn babes”** feeding upon the milk of God’s word we **“grow thereby”** (1 Pet. 2:2). Continuing this process leads to maturity in behavior and understanding (1. Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Phil. 3:15). The failure to develop leaves one **“a babe”** even when he or she ought to be **“of full age”** with **“senses exercised to discern both good and evil”** (Heb. 5:13-14, NKJV).

Our relationship with one another in the church brings people of diverse backgrounds, personalities, temperaments, and economic status together in a spiritual family because of **“our common faith”** (Titus 1:4). Within this assortment of individuals is a wide array of spiritual maturity. This can produce some challenges as we work together. Maturity does not always correspond to one’s age. An older Christian may have come to Christ late in life or failed to mature as the years have passed. Some younger Christians may have made devotion to Christ such a priority in their lives that their spiritual maturity surpasses the age of their bodies. We don’t wear color-coded badges that identify our maturity level, and if I am spiritually immature, I may resent being viewed that way. So, ultimately this must be some-

thing in which we individually assess our own growth, development, and maturity recognizing that we all have work to do.

How My Immaturity Can Affect the Church

There are many ways that spiritual immaturity can impact our work and relationships within the local church. Let's consider a few:

1. My Faithfulness in Worship. If I have not grown to view the worship of God as a priority, I may allow other interests or opportunities to take me away from times of worship and Bible study. Jesus taught that His disciples should **“seek first the kingdom and His righteousness”** (Matt. 6:33a). If I choose a concert, a game, a movie; if I would rather relax at home, go

fishing, camping, or shopping; if while on vacation I don't seek out faithful brethren with whom to assemble and worship; if I see some times of assembly as *necessary* but others as *optional*, am I really seeking God's kingdom **“first”**? Do I truly “desire the pure milk of the word” that I **“may grow thereby”** (1 Pet. 2:2)?

2. My Attitude toward Responsibilities. There are many responsibilities involved in work within a local church. Men are assigned to lead prayers, serve the Lord's Supper, lead singing, and count the contribution. Teachers prepare classes and students (children and adults) are given lessons they are responsible to complete. Some clean the building, prepare the Lord's Supper, print visitor's cards and post them, take pictures for the directory and post or print them, order material, or make repairs around the building. Men are assigned to do sermons, special lessons, or invitations. What is my attitude toward these responsibilities? Do I treat them as important? Do I consider it an honor to fulfil them or do I neglect my responsibilities? Do I give the same diligence to carrying out these duties that I give to assignments at work, school, on my team, or to my favorite hobby? If I am immature, I may approach these things half-heartedly. I may cause other people to have to scramble at the last minute to cover my duties. I may discourage my brothers and sisters when they look around at my unfinished work or when I come unprepared for classes. The mature soul will remember Paul's words, **“whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men”** (Col. 3:23).

3. What I Wear. The Bible does not proscribe a dress code, but it teaches principles. It teaches Christians to dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:9). It teaches that **“nakedness”** is to be covered with clothing that covers the upper body and thighs (Exod. 28:42; Isa. 47:2-3). It teaches that in acts of worship I should give God my best, not my leftovers (Mal. 1:6-8). How will these principles impact what I wear when I assemble with my brothers and sisters to worship? If I am immature, I might decide that since God sees me when I dress in shabby clothes relaxing at home it doesn't matter how I dress when I come to worship Him. Or I might go to the other extreme and dress in clothing so expensive that I flaunt my wealth and social status. As a woman, I might wear leggings so tight they look as if they have only been painted on my naked legs and bottom. I might wear skirts that expose my thighs, or have plunging necklines that expose my chest, back, and upper body. Do these things show reverence to God? Do these things show respect for my brothers and sisters in Christ? Will my shabby clothes discourage them? Do they show that I consider worship something special? Will my immodest clothes tempt fellow Christians to lust while they are trying to worship? Will my fancy expensive clothes shame my brethren with smaller bank accounts? Paul urged the Philippians, **“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”** (Phil. 2:4). Do I think about others in the clothes I wear or disregard them?

4. How I View My Brothers and Sisters. Those in the world live **“in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another”** (Titus 3:3b). That's not how it should be in Christ. Jesus taught, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13:34-35). Our fellow Christians are not flawless. They will disappoint us. They will hurt us. They (like us) will say the wrong things, do things they regret, or things that hurt

us. How will I view them? If I am immature, will I assume the worst about them? Will I hold a grudge over every slight they ever commit? Will I refuse to forgive them? Will I try to destroy their reputation with others? Perhaps if I think I am mature, and see them as immature, I will show no patience as they grow. Every misstep, naive action, or deed they commit in ignorance I will resent and shun them with no effort to help them grow. That's not love and that is not maturity.

5. What I Say. Our tongue is a powerful tool. It can encourage, build up, and comfort or it can slander, discourage, and cause wounds that never heal. Paul taught the Colossians, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”** (Col. 4:6). If I am immature, I will give little thought to what I say. If you make me mad, I will let loose and let the words fly. Maybe I won't use the *worst* curse words, but I will come the closest to them I can. It doesn't matter if those who hear me can't tell the differ-



Olsen Park Church of Christ