

Maturity Is A State Of Mind *Philippians 3:1-16*

A Short History Lesson:

Philippians 3:2-3 & Galatians/ Romans 3:19-23, James 2:10-11 & Galatians 3:24

- **Before “Worship Wars”:** There were circumcision & diet wars!
- **The Big Debate:** Did Jesus fulfill OT laws or do they still apply today?
- **The Key Question:** What was their ultimate purpose?
 - ✓ A stairway to heaven? ✓ A signpost to Jesus?

Today’s Passage: Beware! Religion Can Keep You From Knowing God!

- ✓ Avoid the dead-end called rules & rituals. (vs 1-3)
- ✓ Avoid the self-deception called heritage & self-discipline. (vs 4-9)
- ✓ Take the highway called following Jesus. (vs 10-16)
John 14:6

Following Jesus: A Mature Perspective Never Forgets. . .

Philippians 3:12-16

- ❶ As long as I’m alive – I haven’t arrived.
Philippians 3:10-14/ 1 Corinthians 10:1-12
- ❷ I need a mirror more than binoculars.
Matthew 7:3-5 & Galatians 6:3-4
- ❸ The right path is seldom the easy path.
Philippians 3:12-14/ 1 Corinthians 9:24-27/ 2 Timothy 2:3
- ❹ Success isn’t forever and failure isn’t final.
1 Corinthians 10:12/ Revelation 12:10, 1 John 2:1-2 & 1 Timothy 1:12-16
- ❺ The best way to follow Jesus is one step at a time.
Philippians 3:15-16/ Proverbs 4:18/ Philippians 2:13

Growth Group Homework

For the week of February 12, 2006

QUICK REVIEW: This weekend we took a look at spiritual maturity from the angle of how a spiritually mature person thinks of and perceives their spiritual life. Looking back over your notes, what did you find most challenging or interesting from this week's message?

MY STORY

1. Many people have pointed out that there is no coasting in our walk with God. We are "growing or slipping backward." From your perspective, what are some telltale signs that a person is moving forward?

What are some indicators of stagnation and slipping backwards?

2. When it's pointed out that the right path is seldom the easy path, what is your response? Does it motivate you or discourage you?

DIGGING DEEPER

Pastor Larry pointed out five important truths that a spiritually mature perspective never forgets. While each one is important, at various seasons of our life one truth may be more important than another. Below are some questions focused on a couple of these important principles.

1. The process of maturing can be hard work. Paul often used the analogy of athletic competition to help Christians understand their part in growing up. How do the following verses increase your understanding of what it takes to develop a spiritually mature perspective?

Philippians 3:13-14

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. [25] Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. [26] Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. [27] No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2 Timothy 2:5

Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. [2] Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Now read Matthew 11:28-30. How do you see Jesus' promise to give us rest fit with this week's teaching about the "easy path"?

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

2. King David experienced both great success and extreme personal failure. He was chosen by God as king, killed Goliath and reigned as a powerful king. He also committed adultery and murder and did a poor job of parenting his rebellious children. The Psalms below give us an up-close look at David's relationship with God during his time of great failure. Read each one and jot down how David responded.

Psalm 51:1-12

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
[2] Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
[3] For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
[4] Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right when you speak
and justified when you judge.
[5] Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
[6] Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
[7] Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
[8] Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
[9] Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

[10] Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
[11] Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
[12] Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Psalm 32:1-5

Of David. A maskil.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. [2] Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. [3] When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. [4] For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah [5] Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"--and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

What can you learn from his prayer life that will help you develop a similar perspective?

3. Adam and Eve had a very different response to God after they sinned. Read about it in Genesis 3:6-13. How does their response to God differ from David's?

Genesis 3:6-13

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. [7] Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

[8] Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. [9] But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

[10] He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

[11] And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

[12] The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

[13] Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Looking at your own past mistakes and failures, do you tend to respond to God more like David or Adam and Eve?

Bob Buford writes, "*Too many people approach the second half of their lives with regrets over the first half . . . regret is a tough emotion to live down; it haunts you in ways that will sap your strength and*

inspiration to go on to better things.” Can you think of any real life examples that prove this insight to be true?

4. When children learn to walk, they typically start with a shaky step and a nearby parent’s steady hand to protect and lead them. This weekend we were encouraged to focus on one step at a time as we follow Jesus.

How does that principle work out in your own spiritual journey?

As we take the next step in obedience (whatever that might be) God is along with us every step of the way. In Psalm 23 we have a vivid description of how God stays with us. Read Psalm 23 and jot down any of David’s words that relate to where you are in your own journey today.

Psalm 23:1-6

A psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

[2] He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

[3] he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

[4] Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

[5] You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

[6] Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

Taking it Home

1. Supposedly, growing Christians think and live more and more like Jesus as we learn to follow Him well. Stop for a couple minutes and ask God about how you’re doing. Ask Him what the next step to become more like Him is – and then just listen to your heart and the Holy Spirit.

What is God telling you?