

The cliché is tired but true: everyone gets old Not everyone grows up

- We've all know the person who never grew up... a sibling who has never gotten their life together. A parent who seemed more immature than their children. A friend who has rejected all responsibility.
- Immaturity is easy to see in others. But here is my question: Do we notice it in ourselves? What if we were the immature ones?
- Over 7 years ago, I was given a sabbatical...
  - Just because you age does not mean you mature!
  - Just because you suffer, does not mean you mature!
- It's what happens *in* the hard times and *through* the years, how you respond to them that works *for* or *against* maturity.

**Maturity is a sign of where you are headed. It is also a sign of who you will become along the way.** (Address non-Christian and Christians)

- And so, a lack of growth should be like an alarm bell!
- Even in a year of crisis, we may be tempted to think that issues of maturity are less important. Nothing could be farther from the truth! MATURITY MATTERS NOW.
- Why talk about marriage in 2020? About work ethic? About community? Because these things shape how you will engage with all the other things! God cares about BOTH mission and maturity! God cares about breadth AND depth! God cares about both the position you take and the person you become! God cares about your convictions and character! God cares about both what you believe and how you behave!
- And I believe spiritual maturity is a secret weapon for an age of uncertainty and hostility. Maturity matters now.
- Paul the Apostle is concerned that we are all headed in the right direction. And so, speaks to us where we are at. And in doing so we learn mature people are not born, they are made. Mature churches are not born, they are made so... by the gospel.
- Paul in Ephesians chapter 4 gives us a picture of maturity, and what must we learn? That maturity is practical, possible powerful

## **1. Maturity is Practical**

- a. Paul's concern here is to live out what we believe. No doubt, this is what everyone aspires to, but for the Christian it is essential! And it doesn't happen automatically.
- b. Nor does not happen in isolation. Maturity is a kingdom family project! He is not here describing internal experience, but outward behaviours! It has to be worked out with others. So, what does maturity look like practically? 5 descr.
- c. **Cultivating Humility (v 2a)** "Be completely humble"  
Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. If pride puts you at the center, humility moves you from the center. Pride looks at what you can get *from* people, humility looks at what you can give *to* p
  - i. If I consider you above me and you consider me above you, think of what happens: we have a community where everyone is looked up to, and no one is looked down on. Are we cultivating this? It's part of maturity.
- d. **Displaying Gentleness (v2b)** "Be completely humble *and* gentle" or meek, as some translations say. Paul is not saying to be a doormat. Meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control.
  - i. In a culture of outrage and wrath, being gentle means you engage in the topics not to win an argument but bring healing to a person.
  - ii. Gentleness does not mean we approve wrong-doing and sin, but we engage with a broken heart, longing for healing because we know what it means to be healed. Why? Because Jesus has loved us at **our** worst, we can love others at **their** worst!
  - iii. Being gentle is not about being weak. In fact, it's one of the most courageous and heroic ways you can respond
  - iv. If you are prone to be *insensitive* and *overbearing*, you need to work on and practice gentleness!
- e. **Practicing Patience (v2c)** be patient- or literally, long-tempered! Making allowance for the shortcomings of others,

knowing and *deciding beforehand* that you will not be quick to jump to conclusions and you suspend your assumptions

- i. If you are quick to get angry and write people off, you need to work on patience!
- f. **Developing Endurance (v2d)** “bearing with one another”
  - i. With faults, weaknesses, and disagreements on secondary things. Expect to encounter them!
  - ii. If you are unable to deal with the weaknesses and shortcomings of this church, you need endurance!
- g. **Showing Love (v 3)**— He summarizes with love, which is really a commitment to all the previous practices in verse 2!
- h. Now, most of us believe in these virtues... *for other people*! But the only way we will grow is if each one of us take up the responsibility of practical maturity and unity!
- i. Verse 3, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit! This practical maturity will lead to visible unity! (It’s not an event!)

## **2. Maturity is Possible**

- a. The odds may feel as if they are against you, that you won’t mature, won’t last, won’t grow... but the power of God changes the odds!
- b. I LOVE that when the NT speaks of how the church is supposed to be, supposed to function it ASSUMES all the challenges! And says, “Against all the odds, you can grow!”
- c. Ephesians 4 tells us that true spiritual maturity happens corporately, but it’s not all on us!

### **d. God empowers our growth (v 4-6)**

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

- e. Paul emphasizes the unity of the faith through a sevenfold use of the term “one” We are all built up on one foundation! One source of power! One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One baptism, One God and Father. It is this shared faith that empowers our growth!

- f. Listen, new behaviour comes from new life!
  - i. God grants you the power to grow!
  - ii. You don't mature so that God will accept you, God accepts you so you can mature!
  - iii. Maturity is not based on how hard you **try** it's based on who you **trust**!! Trust in God for your growth!
- g. This is why Paul does not tell us to attain unity, but maintain
- h. Maturity is working on the unity that already exists from God
  - i. We grow together (community project!) but we grow the same way we get our gifts... by GRACE>

**i. God empowers our gifts (v 7-12)**

"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

The point that Paul is making here is that these gifts are not earned or deserved they are given as... grace gifts from Christ

- a. To drive this home he quotes the book of Psalms about God's royal victory and generosity and applies it to Jesus  
This is why it<sup>[a]</sup> says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.' <sup>9</sup> (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)
- b. Jesus is pictured here as the hero that defeated the enemy ascended to heaven and shared his treasure with us! And those treasures are powerful spiritual gifts and abilities.
- c. For everyone! A ministry, something we can offer to others
  - i. V 11 gives us a summary of leadership gifts. (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers)
  - ii. V 12 gives us a summary of the purpose of our gifts! For building each other up! For maturity!
  - iii. Giftedness and maturity are not the same thing! But gifts, used rightly, can help us all mature!
- d. We are empowered by God to grow and help others do the same... Gifted leaders and members all operating under the in the power of the Spirit under the authority of Scripture!
  - iv. No one should feel left out of the growth process!
- e. In a world where abilities of others often create insecurities in ourselves, where we compare and compete, the church is

radically different! Our growth comes from God, and our gifts come from God. Maturity is possible because of God.

- f. All of our contact with each other is to be life-giving, a resource to one another that promotes health in Christ!
- g. And the result is *WORTH IT*.

### **3. Maturity is Powerful**

- a. What can we come to expect as we mature? Well,

#### **b. You become resilient against lies (v 13)**

“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. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

- i. Growing in knowledge and understanding of the truth is your diet for maturity! As you build this spiritual immune system, you guard against errors and lies!
- ii. The contrast is the young and immature who are easily taken advantage of: scattered, unstable, isolated
- iii. If you are not growing, you become vulnerable to lies and half-truths that are dangerous!
- iv. Learning the truths of Scripture like a necessary meal for your soul Learning to stand on your own two feet!
- v. But more than that, most of all:

#### **c. You become a reflection of Jesus (v 15-16)**

*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. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

- d. Paul never loses sight of the main thing, the overarching goal... to become like Christ! For Paul maturity only moves in one direction: Jesus!
  - i. We all need each other, we are all gifted and empowered to serve in order to become more like Jesus, and in doing so, he teaches us dependency
  - ii. “Joined and held together by every Joint” v 16
  - iii. And we are to *continue* into maturity.

- e. But maturity is not for the sake of maturity, its about becoming like Jesus! This should be our goal in this season! In every part of life! HE IS THE MAIN thing. And if we lose the main thing we lose everything!
- The evidence of this maturity is love. And where does this love come from? It comes from King Jesus!
- Just as a king would go out to meet the enemy who threatens to enslave his people, Jesus left his throne in heaven to come and rescue us from sin and eternal separation
  - It says “he descended!” from his glory to take our punishment for sin that *we deserved* on the cross!
  - And just as a victorious king would return to his people with the spoils of battle, Jesus rose again so that we could have the greatest gift of all... a relationship with him! His love!
  - (invite Brian up)
- **If you are not a Christian** - Begin the relationship with Jesus today
- **If you have fallen away** – return to the relationship! (online!)
- Repeating a prayer doesn't save you, its trusting Jesus that saves you. But I want to lead you in a prayer that *expresses* that trust.  
**Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord Savior.**
- Church, let's continue in relationship, return to the source and commit knowing His ultimate gift is what empowers your growth.
- **The question is: Are you in?** Jesus was all in for you.
  1. Prayer Team available on sides next to “Prayer Team” signs (wearing green shirts).
  2. Communion Elements available near the welcome tents for you to partake as you would like to.
  3. Address online people: Ie. “If you're watching online and would like prayer, or would like to know more about Jesus, you can click the “connect with God” button on the home page of our website or click the link in the YouTube description of this video.”