

Marks of Maturity

It is no secret that we are again and again exhorted to grow, to mature, to press on to the high calling which is in Christ. As the scripture says, we are to

2 Peter 3:18 - 18 But **grow in the grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. NIV

Or Paul speaking in

Eph 4:15 - 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things **grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. NIV

Indeed the very purpose of God in our salvation is that we be conformed into the image of Christ. That our character, our thoughts, our words and our deeds would become like those of God's Glorious Son, and our Savior, Jesus Christ. This then, is paramount for us as Christians. Its time we grew up, that we are no longer like infants, but rather becoming mature, godly people who think, act and speak like Christ.

God expresses the intensity of His desire for our maturity through Paul in;

Gal 4:19- 19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth **until Christ is formed in you**, NIV

Now I don't know how many of you have had the pains of childbirth, but you get the picture of an earnest longing --- and longing for what --- until Christ is formed in you!

What a glorious purpose, until Christ is formed in you!

What a glorious desire! until Christ is formed in you!

These then should be things evident, if indeed Christ is being formed in us. Not that we have been perfected already, but that these marks are seen in us and are also ***increasing in measure***. These are distinguishing marks, which show the reality that we have truly believed upon Christ, and have willingly submitted to His Lordship.

Humility

A maturing Christian is one who is growing in humility. This most godly of virtues is indeed an illusive one, but one we are in desperate pursuit of! To be humble my friends can be a very hard thing. Our flesh and pride cry out against it day and night, always demanding our own rights and seeking to exalt ourselves above others. But this is not so of Christ, therefore, it cannot be so of us! Let us humble ourselves in the esteem and honor of others. Here the scripture is crystal clear;

1 Peter 5:5-6 All of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,** because, **"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."** ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. NIV

Friends, it is vital to our maturity that we live in a recognition of our desperate need for God. We are utterly dependent on Him for all that we have, our food, our shelter, our health, yes, even our next breath. Let us therefore humble ourselves and be thankful for all that has so graciously given us! Let us not become proud or ungrateful, grumbling and complaining about the circumstances of our lives. But may we in humility, serve God and praise Him for the wonderful things He has done!

The maturing Christian sees others as better than themselves. He or she has a genuine humility, which continually seeks the highest good of others around them. It requires us to feel that in God's sight we have no merit and to in honor prefer others above ourselves. It looks not only to its own needs, but also to the needs of others. Paul writes to the Philippians;

Phil 2:3-4- ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, **but in humility consider others better than yourselves.** ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

A maturing Christian lives in a continual denial of self, and selfish desires which war against our soul. Humility recognizes its own wickedness and depravity before God, and its own desperate need for His grace to be saved, to be purified and to please God. Humility springs from the conviction that man, is made of dust, totally dependent on God for life and breath, is sinful and in need of a Savior, and destined for hell apart from the grace of God. ----- God lives with the humble!

Isaiah 57:15 - ¹⁵ For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, **but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,** to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

A maturing Christian is one who is growing in humility!

Knowledge

A maturing Christian is one who is growing in knowledge! This knowledge we speak of is more than just knowing things about God, but it is to know God. It is to have a daily, vibrant relationship and fellowship with Him. This we call "true knowledge!" Then as we have come to know Him, how can we, but be transformed by this glorious relation with the Holy One and King of Kings, Jesus Christ! It is then, of great importance that we allow this knowledge of God to transform our thinking! ---- We must begin to "THINK" like Christ and see our world through the lens of our relationship to Him!

This we call our **worldview**. We see or view the world based on our knowledge of God.

This worldview when it is employed has amazing power to transform our life, so that we may become like Him. All of this flows from a knowledge of who God is and how we are to relate to Him!

Romans 12:2 - 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will. NIV

In order to renew our minds, we must feed the mind with the knowledge of God. Our minds must be continually washed by the water of the Word! And for what purpose?

So that “you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.” How will you know who God is and what He expects of you unless you come to know Him through the revelation of His Word?

A maturing Christian is one who spends quality time in prayer and meditation on the Word of God. He or she has learned that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

A maturing Christian seeks for God like a hidden treasure, willing to give all that they have to possess Him and Him alone! Solomon writes;

Proverbs 2:1-6 - My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and **if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure**, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. NIV

A maturing Christian is one who is growing in knowledge!

Love

A maturing Christian therefore, and most importantly, is growing in love. Growing in love! Primarily, a love for God, and the product of that, a love for others.

Love for God

A maturing Christian is growing in their devotion, in their affection, in their love for God!

This love for God is seen in a **godly affection for Christ**. It is a longing for relationship with Him, and an earnest desire to know Him and commune with Him. It is a love for

what He loves and hatred for what He hates. It is an adoration, an exaltation, an ascribing of worth and virtue to God.

It is a valuing of Him above all other things! --- It is to worship God!

This love for God is seen in a *desire for the Word of God*, a hunger and a longing for the truths and the commandments of God. It is a yearning, which realizes without the Word, we will perish. As Job cried out,

Job 23:12 - 2 "I have not departed from the command of His lips; **I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.** NAS

This love for God is seen in *obedience to His commandments*. A mature Christian understands that obedience is absolutely vital to his relationship with Christ. You cannot say you love God with your mouth and deny Him with your actions! Will one continually pour out their hearts in praise to God, only to curse Him with a shameful life that brings reproach on His name!

1 John 1:6- 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and **yet walk in the darkness, we lie** and do not practice the truth; NAS

No this love is a love, which finds ready repentance and a willing heart to do His master's bidding! It is the joy of our heart to obey Christ!

John 14:15 - 15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. NIV

1 John 5:3 - 3 **This is love for God: to obey his commandments.**

Love for Others

A maturing Christian is one who fulfills the law of Christ, which is to love one another. He or she has an overflow of divine love, which springs from their hearts, running over into the lives of people around them.

Rom 13:9-10 - 9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. **Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**

In 2 Thess Paul affirming and exhorting the Thessalonians for their growth writes;

2 Thess 1:3 - 3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the **love every one of you has for each other is increasing.** NIV

Let this LOVE then be theme by which we live our lives and grow up in our salvation. Let it be fired by a love for God and a sincere and divine love for those around us.

Marks of Maturity

1. It is no secret that we are again and again exhorted to grow, to mature, to press on to the high calling which is in Christ. As the scripture says, we are to grow in the _____ and _____ of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (**2 Peter 3:18**)
2. God expresses the intensity of His desire for our maturity through Paul in; **Galatians 4:19-** 19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is _____ in you,
3. A maturing Christian is one who is growing in _____.
4. **1 Peter 5:5-6** All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God _____ the _____ but gives _____ to the _____." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.
5. **Phil 2:3-4-** 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others _____ than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your _____ interests, but also to the _____ of others.
6. Humility recognizes its own _____ and depravity before God, and its own desperate _____ for His grace to be saved, to be purified and to please God.
7. A maturing Christian is one who is growing in _____!
8. This we call our _____. We see or view the world _____ on our knowledge of God.
9. **Romans 12:2** - 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the _____ of your mind. Then you will be able to _____ and _____ what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.
10. A maturing Christian is one who spends quality _____ in prayer and _____ on the Word of God.

11. A maturing Christian _____ for God like a hidden treasure, willing to _____ that they have to possess Him and Him alone!
12. A maturing Christian therefore, and most importantly, is growing in ____.
13. This love for God is seen in a *godly* _____ *for Christ*. It is a longing for relationship with Him, and an earnest _____ to know Him and commune with Him.
14. This love for God is seen in a *desire for the* _____ *of God*, a hunger and a longing for the _____ and the commandments of God.
15. This love for God is seen in _____ *to His commandments*. A mature Christian understands that obedience is absolutely _____ to his relationship with Christ.
16. **John 14:15** - 15 "If you love me, you will _____ what I command.
17. A maturing Christian is one who _____ the law of Christ, which is to _____ one another. He or she has an overflow of _____ love, which springs from their hearts, running over into the lives of people around them.
18. **2 Thess 1:3** - 3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is _____ more and more, and the _____ every one of you has for each other is _____.

A maturing Christian is one who is growing in Humility,
Knowledge, and Love!

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