

## Maturity As A Believer – Ephesians 4.11-16 Pt. 5

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4.11-16, ESV).<sup>1</sup>

### Memory Verse – Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ – Ephesians 4.15

As we grow in Unity of Faith and our Knowledge of the Son of God, we will become more Mature Believers. But just like in our physical life, we still have set backs and do not always act as mature as we should. Today we are going to look at a few ways we can continue to grow in our spiritual maturity as a believer and watch out for the pit falls that might come.

First, we must understand as a believer in Jesus Christ we all start at the beginning. Now what do we mean by this? We all start as new born babies, needing the milk of the Word, we need to begin with the small things and work our way up. And just like in our physical life, some will catch on faster, grow faster, and understand and develop skills faster than others. There is nothing wrong with this as we will all reach heaven because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Second, we can never be satisfied with one place. Peter tells us, “As newborn babies want milk, you should want the pure and simple teaching. By it you can mature in your salvation, because you have already examined and seen how good the Lord is” (I Peter 2.2-3, NCV).<sup>2</sup> But once we begin to grow from this milk we need to begin to dig deeper into the Word and look for the meat and potatoes, so we can put some muscle on our spiritual bodies.

Paul, speaking to the church at Corinth said, “For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still worldly. For since there is envy and strife among you, are you not worldly and behaving like mere humans?” (I Corinthians 3.1-3, CSB).<sup>3</sup>

What was he talking about, “babies in Christ?” The church at Corinth, were still living in the flesh, they claimed to be followers of Christ, yet even with Paul’s teachings they had not grown any. If we had a new born, who we had given milk to every day yet it was not growing we would think something was wrong. We would take it to the doctor and try to figure out what and how to get it to grow.

Paul says, I wanted to give you more, help you to grow, yet you were still on milk. Here is why, you are still immature, people of the flesh, living in your fleshly desires. The author of Hebrews writes, “Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” Hebrews 5.13-14, NIV).<sup>4</sup>

Third, we must have an appetite for the right things. In the world today there are all kinds of things we can eat to fill our spiritual bellies, from cults, to false religions, to antient meditations. While some of these things on the surface might seem good and harmless fun, something to try and quit when we want; we may never know when their poison has killed us.

Therefore, we need to put the truth of the Word of God into our lives as this is the only thing, we know will not harm us, and is breathed out by God, profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Eph 4:11–16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>2</sup> *The Everyday Bible: New Century Version*. (2005). (1 Pe 2:2–3). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Standard Bible*. (2020). (1 Co 3:1–3). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> *The New International Version*. (2011). (Heb 5:13–14). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3.16-17, ESV).<sup>5</sup>

There are probably more things we can do to grow and mature as a believer, but these three are a good start; realize we all start at the same place, do not get stuck in one place, and have an appetite for the right things. Now let us look at a couple of ways to maintain our maturity. It is one thing to be mature, and quite another to act mature.

First, we must find ourselves time to spend in the Word of God. If we cannot make time and spend time in the Word of God then we can never expect to grow or mature in Christ. Also our relationship with Christ will be lacking, causing us to have difficulty knowing what God wants for us in our life.

The Lord said to Isaiah, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55.8-9, NASB95).<sup>6</sup> This is true for us today; so how do we know the Lord’s thoughts, and know His ways? We get in His Word and search it out, study it, and seek to find what He has in store for us.

Second, through prayer. When we spend time in prayer we are communicating with our Heavenly Father, asking Him for guidance, directions, sharing our thoughts, desires, helps, needs, concerns, supplications, and intercessions for others. It is with prayer we stay in touch with the will of the Father. Jesus said, “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16.23-24, ESV).<sup>7</sup>

Did Jesus mean whatever we ask we would get? No, it might seem like it but let us look at two other scriptures: Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14.123, ESV).<sup>8</sup> And, “And this is the boldness we have in God’s presence: that if we ask God for anything that agrees with what he wants, he hears us. If we know he hears us every time we ask him, we know we have what we ask from him” (I John 5.14-15, NCV).<sup>9</sup>

Let us look at these for just a moment together, Jesus said, ask it is yours the Father will give it to you. But then Jesus said, whatever you ask in My name I will do so the Father will be glorified. And finally, John writes, if it agrees with God, or is according to His will then He will give it. Are we starting to see a pattern, when we pray it is not about our wants and desires but how we line up with God. When we do, then we will start to see prayers answered which will cause us to pray more.

## Application

1. On a scale of 1-10 where would you rank your spiritual maturity level? 1-None – 10 – Complete Spiritual. Why did you give yourself this ranking and what is keeping you from moving forward?
2. How long have you been a Christian? Have you grown any from that date? Would others agree with you?
3. Deeper Thinking: Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-4– Explain how this passage shows us the importance of the “Maturity”? How does the flesh keep us from maturing as believers? You can use scripture or other illustrations to back up your discussion.
4. Commit to learning Ephesians 4.15 and Witnessing to someone about what God has done for you.

## Prayer

God of Heaven and Earth, thank You for Your love and compassion. You never give up on me and may I never give up on You. Give me an opportunity to share Your gospel and to have confidence along with a fearless heart to be a leader so others will hear and know who You are. This I pray in Jesus Christ’s Name, Amen.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (2 Ti 3:16–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>6</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. (1995). (Is 55:8–9). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 16:23–24). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, (Jn 14:13)

<sup>9</sup> *The Everyday Bible: New Century Version*. (2005). (1 Jn 5:14–15). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.