

GROWING IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

by Abri Brancken – 11 Sept 2016

Let's take a closer look at what the Bible says about growing in spiritual maturity. Here are 12 important points to consider and remember:

1. MATURING SPIRITUALLY IS A PROCESS

...but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ;
- Ephesians 4:15, ASV

Spiritual maturity does not come over night. You cannot buy maturity. It takes time to grow up and mature in your relationship with God and your understanding of God's Kingdom. Also, spiritual maturity is not final. The growing process is a continued process and as long as you are alive you need to continue to mature spiritually. You cannot and should not get to a place where you stop growing spiritually.

2. SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT AUTOMATIC

Some believers make the mistake of thinking that spiritual maturity is automatic. It is not. It takes a lot of discipline, commitment, focus, obedience and faith to mature. There is no quick and easy way, no shortcuts. Growing in spiritual maturity requires a radical reordering of your priorities and focus in life. As a child of God you no longer live for yourself and your own desires, but you have changed over from pleasing yourself to pleasing the LORD and learning to obey Him in your everyday life.

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. - Hebrews 5:12-14, NASB.

3. OLD AGE DOES NOT REFLECT SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Just because someone is physically mature (old) does not mean that he or she is spiritually mature. Spiritual maturity is not connected with the human aging process and cannot be measured in calendar years. Don't make the mistake of thinking that because you are aging, you are progressing in spiritual maturity as well. Someone in their twenties can be spiritually more mature than someone in their sixties. Spiritual maturity is linked more to intensity of years rather than extensity. Growing towards spiritual maturity is an attitude of life.

4. SPIRITUAL GIFTS DO NOT REFLECT SPIRITUAL MATURITY

It is important not to confuse the possession of spiritual gifts, e.g. healing, prophecy, etc. (1 Corinthians 12) with being spiritually mature. A believer can possess amazing gifts, but can

be spiritually immature at the same time. Remember that the spiritual gifts are exactly that, it's a "gift from God" to an individual.

The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the believers in Corinth in which he addressed this very issue. The believers in Corinth operated in many of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:7), yet they were not mature in their walk with the LORD (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). They had the spiritual gifts but they lacked discipline, character and spiritual maturity. Are the spiritual gifts important for us today? Absolutely! We cannot do without them and should desire them, especially prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1), but the gifts do not reflect the depth of a person's spiritual maturity.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

- Colossians 3:12-15, NASB.

5. BEING A CHURCH MEMBER FOR YEARS DO NOT REFLECT SPIRITUAL MATURITY

There are many Christians who have been attending church services for many years, yet they are still immature in the LORD. How long someone have been "going to church" or how often they attend church services is not a reflection that someone is mature in their walk with God. A mature Christian is one who realises the he or she does not yet know it all and that they need to continue to grow. The more you know, the more you know you don't know! The maturing believer is willing to surrender himself, fully, to the moulding process of the Holy Spirit and does not pride himself in what he knows, but humbly continues to pursue truth on a daily basis, allowing it to change his life.

6. YOUR GOAL SHOULD BE "CONSISTENT GROWTH"

One of the key elements to spiritual maturity is consistency. You need to persevere in applying truth in your daily life. It is very important that you are consistent in allocating time to read and study the Bible, prayer, fellowship with other believers and stewarding. Spiritual discipline is vital. The writer of the book of Hebrews talks about the important for us as believers to continue progressing toward maturity (Hebrews 6:1).

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- Romans 12:1, NASB.

7. APPLY BIBLICAL TRUTH TO YOUR LIFE EVERY DAY

Although it is very important to study the Bible and to gain knowledge about the ways of God, it is as important that you apply Biblical truth to your life. Knowledge about the Bible in itself is not beneficial unless it is applied to your life. Biblical principles need to be worked

out in daily obedience in order to grow spiritually. The goal of Bible study is not simply an intellectual exercise in order to gain knowledge, rather it should lead to transformation. In order to bear fruit, truth must be applied. There are many people who can quote Scriptures but their lives do not reflect the truth that comes from their mouth.

8. TO MATURE YOU NEED TO CHANGE YOUR THINKING

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:2, NASB.

The “world” in Romans 12:2 refers to the “spirit of the age”, the popular view of a non-believing society that rejects God and His revelation. As a born again believer you do not belong to this world, but to God. You are in this world, but not of this world (John 15:19).

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,
- 2 Corinthians 10:5, NASB.

9. DEPENDENCY UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is vital that you develop a dependency upon the Holy Spirit, for without you surrendering to the Spirit’s guidance and empowerment you cannot enjoy communion and fellowship with the LORD and you will not mature. The more you learn to rely on and depend upon the Holy Spirit, the more you will be able to recognise God’s working in your life and the more breakthroughs you will begin to experience. The Holy Spirit is there to instruct you and lead you into truth.

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.
- 1 John 2:27, NASB.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
- Galatians 5:16, NASB.

To “walk” by the Spirit implies that you walk (live your life) from the inside out. Most people make decision in life solely based on what they see, hear, experience and think. You are not supposed to be primarily guided by your 5 senses, but rather by the Holy Spirit. Your natural environment should not guide you in how you live, act, respond, etc., but your decisions should be guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Walking in the spirit will enable you to live with a purpose in view. You have a goal, a vision, something to attain and that is to mature spiritually by living for God’s glory in everything you do.

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. - John 6:63, NASB.

10. SPIRITUAL MATURITY REQUIRES A COMMITMENT TO OBEDIENCE

You will not grow effectively if you are not obedient to the LORD. Continued spiritual growth requires a commitment to obedience. Seeing that the Holy Spirit is here to help you mature, you should always aim at honouring His presence in your life and not to disobey or grieve Him. When you choose to partake in something that is sin, it saddens the Holy Spirit as sinning is not what you are called for in Christ. Sin is destructive. Rather, surrender to God's Spirit and enjoy your life living at peace with God.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. - Ephesians 4:30, NASB.

11. YOU HAVE WHAT YOU NEED IN ORDER TO MATURE

When you became in believer in Jesus Christ, you have been given all you need for spiritual maturity.

... seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, - 2 Peter 1:3, NASB

God is your Source and because He is with you all the time you have access to whatever is needed for you to mature. He your provider and He is the One that enables you to grow and become what He has called you to be. All growth comes by grace through Him.

12. YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THE PROCESS

When it comes to your journey towards spiritual maturity you do not have to make it on your own. There is help, a lot of it.

Firstly, **Jesus** said: *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* - Matthew 28:20, NASB.

Secondly, the **Holy Spirit** is with you to comfort and lead you. *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;* - John 14:16, NASB.

Thirdly, God has provided the Body of Christ with people who have been called by God to help His children mature in Him. These people hold the offices of **apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers**.

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service... Ephesians 4:11-12, NASB.

Fourthly, there are **other believers** who can and will support you in your growing process.