

Measure Your Maturity

Air Dates: December 26-30, 2022

Day One

As we close out this year of 2022, it might be helpful if we measured our faith to see how mature it is. So, I want to suggest some biblical ways you can measure your maturity and find out if you're growing up in Christ as you'd like to be.

Our bodies mature on us, whether we like it or not, but spiritual maturity is not something that just happens. We have to be intentional about growing more mature spiritually. So, if we could measure spiritual maturity, how would you measure up?

We sometimes say of children "he's big for his age," meaning his physical stature is larger than most boys his age. Could anyone say that about your spiritual stature? Are you big for your spiritual age? Or is your growth stunted?

When we recognize that our child is not as mature as he or she should be in some area, we go to a specialist and try to figure out why our child is smaller than she should be, or slower, or less active. Don't you think we should be equally sensitive to our own spiritual maturity, and recognize areas where we need to "grow up"?

One way to find out how much you've grown in your faith walk is to pay attention to what comes out of your mouth—to measure your words. The book of Proverbs has lots of good advice about controlling our tongues, and in chapter 17 it gives us a clear measure of our maturity:

The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues (17:27-28).

Measure your maturity by whether or not you are restrained in what you say. That simply means you think before you speak; you ask yourself, "How would I feel if someone said that to me?" You consider whether you need to say it or not. You remember Ephesians 4:29, which says to let nothing unwholesome come out of your mouth, and therefore you use words with restraint.

This is one of the most important measures of maturity, because until we learn to control our tongues, we remain in that immature stage, we're not where we should be, and we need to start growing up. Make it a matter of prayer and ask God to help you control your tongue.

Day Two

Have you ever said to someone, "Oh, grow up!"? Surely there are times when we want to take someone by the shoulder and say, "Oh, grow up!" I'm just wondering if God ever wants to say those words to me—or you.

I'm talking about how we can measure our spiritual maturity. Are we growing up in Christ? The Apostle Paul addressed this issue of maturity as he wrote to various churches. In Ephesians 4 he wrote that we should 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. Then we will no longer be infants. . . instead. . . we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (4:13 – 15).

What are some measures of our maturity? I first pointed out that our words reveal our maturity. A mature Christian is one who controls her tongue. Another measure is our motivation. What is it that motivates you to serve Christ?

King David gave a strong exhortation to his son, Solomon, who would take the throne after him. We read in 1 Chronicles 28:

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought (verse 9a).

We can put on a good front and fool others, but we can never fool God. He knows our thoughts and our motives. This is an area that I often think and pray about, because I am well aware that I rarely, if ever, have totally pure motives. I want to, but tucked way underneath, in my heart of hearts, I often have to admit to pride, wanting the praise of people, doing what I do because it makes me feel good.

I have finally come to the conclusion, that this side of heaven I'm not likely to ever have completely pure motivation, but as long as I'm aware of it, praying about it, and desiring to serve God out of a pure heart, he will know and understand. And he will reveal my wrong motives and help me to grow up in this area.

So, another strong measure of our spiritual maturity is our motivation—why we do what we do. Check it out.

Day Three

We often measure our growth in many areas of our lives, such as skills we've acquired, experience we've gained, education we've acquired, and we're quick to update our resumes, so to speak, and let the world know how we have grown. But how often do we take time to measure our spiritual maturity and growth?

The writer to the Hebrews is warning them about falling away from the faith, and he writes: "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (5:11-14).

This is a real measure of spiritual maturity—whether or not we are eating solid food or we're still living on milk. What does that mean? It means that if you're living on milk, you're still a baby Christian and you're not growing in your knowledge of God's Word. Obviously, this is directed to those who have been Christians for a while, who ought now to be ready to teach others, but instead still need to learn the elementary truths of God's Word.

You can measure your spiritual maturity by how much you really desire to get into the Word of God, to know it at deeper and deeper levels. I think of a friend in my class at church who is so thrilled because she has the opportunity to take some college-level Bible classes and learn more. She just beams as she tells me how much she loves these classes and how she is learning so much. I have watched her

grow up to maturity in Christ because she has an insatiable desire to know God's Word, and she makes it a high priority.

If your Bible is hardly ever open from one Sunday to another, if you're not regularly involved in a Bible study of some kind, if you are still in "elementary school" when you ought to be in "college," then you're still a baby in Christ, and you need to grow up.

As I look back over my life, the years I lived in disobedience to God's principles were the years I almost never opened my Bible. The Bible will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from the Bible. So, how do you measure up?

Day Four

On a scale of one to ten, how would you measure your spiritual maturity? As far as I know, there are no scales for measuring spiritual maturity, but there are biblical mile-markers that can tell us if we are growing up in Christ as we should be.

In Philippians 3 Paul talks about his own growing-up process, saying "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (verse 12). Becoming mature in Christ is a process, and we must be intentional about pressing on. The Apostle then says, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me. . ." (3:13b-14).

Notice that he keeps talking about pressing on, never giving up, always striving to be all that God has created him to be in Christ Jesus. I believe one of the sure signs of our spiritual maturity is whether or not we truly press on, to put our past behind us and to go for the goal—the good works God created us to do.

The enemy of your soul would love to keep you mired down in your past. If he can saddle you with regrets, with bad memories, with bitterness, with anger—any or all of those—as you dwell on your past, then he knows you'll never grow up. Whether your past is filled with your own wrong choices and their consequences, or with unfair treatment or abuse of some kind, living in the past will cripple you and your spiritual growth will be stunted.

In Isaiah 43 the Lord says, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland" (18-19). Dwelling in the past causes us to miss the new things God has for us, and we are then stuck in our wildernesses and wastelands, never growing into the fullness of what Jesus died to give us.

If your past has you mired down, I pray that you will press on, and with God's help, put that past behind you, so that you can perceive the way that God is making for you.

Day Five

This is program number 9205. For 9205 days, or over 1800 weeks, I've been broadcasting this daily edition of our program. These milestones cause me to stop and think about God's goodness to allow me this privilege all these years.

But milestones should also cause us to stop and measure our progress. I've been talking about measuring our spiritual maturity, and I can't help but ask myself at this program marker, have I grown as a Christian over these many years, as I should have? Does Jesus say to me, "You're big for your

age, Mary,” meaning I’ve pressed on and learned and grown up in Christ? Or does he say, “You’re not where you should be after all these years”?

Dear friends, it is so important that we regularly and sincerely take stock of our spiritual progress and make sure we’re doing the things we should be doing so that we are growing up in Christ, not remaining babies, not mired down in the past, not making the same mistakes we’ve always made. Here are some questions to ask yourself to measure your spiritual maturity, based on what we’ve talked about:

- Is your tongue more under control today than it was a year ago, two years ago? Do you think before you speak, choose your words carefully, and just simply stop talking so much?
- Are you motivated to serve Christ out of a pure heart, just to please him, or are you trying to please people and gain their approval?
- Do you love God’s Word more than you used to? Are you spending more time studying it? Is it more and more the true bread of your life? Do you ever memorize some of it?
- Are you allowing your past to keep you from growing up in Christ? Are you living in bitterness or regret, which keeps you from pressing forward for the good things God has for you?
- And most importantly, are you loving Jesus more and more with each passing day? Do you frequently and fervently thank him for what he has done for you? Does it break your heart to think that you have broken his heart through disobedience?

I urge you to measure your maturity; ask God to show you where your growth is stunted, and then do the things you need to do to grow up in Christ. That is where the abundant life is; that is where you will regain the joy of your salvation and know the peace that passes understanding.