

Ephesians 4:11–16

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be **mature** in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be **immature** like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Summary Statement:

Jesus gives gifts to the Church so that through the preaching of the Word, Christians are equipped to use their spiritual gifts, resulting in maturity, and the building up of the Church.

What Spiritual Maturity is NOT:

1. Old Age: Just because you are accumulating more grey hair, does not mean you are accumulating more maturity; just because you have accumulated more years, doesn't mean you have accumulated more wisdom and maturity.
 1. Just like addictions to drugs and alcohol can hit the pause button on one's maturity and development, so accepted patterns of behavior expressed in response to conflict keep one from developing maturity.
 - For the addict, look at the bank account and spending, for the Christian look at conflict resolution. ***How you resolve conflict will tell you how mature you are.***
 - Each time we resort to anger, or passive-aggressive behavior, or co-dependency we miss out on the opportunity to develop maturity.
 2. You have heard it said, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." Instead of growing older meaning we are developing more maturity, it can mean we are getting more set in our ways.
 3. Saying things like, "that's just who I am, or that's just my personality" shows that we are justifying our sin and have given up the struggle for more maturity.
 4. When growing older doesn't mean growing wise and growing in maturity, do you know who takes the biggest hit? The generation that follows.
 1. **ILLUSTRATION:** My dad
 5. What happens when grandfathers are not grand, and great grandfathers are not great? Immaturity and lack of wisdom become systemic, perpetual, and embedded in one's family tree.
 6. The Bible says "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" and our family trees are destroyed for lack of wisdom and maturity.
 7. Grown men and women acting like children is all too common in our society, and sadly can be common even in the Church.
 8. There is a difference between growing old, and growing up.
 - *"For, after all, you do grow up, you do outgrow your ideals, which turn to dust and ashes, which are shattered into fragments; and if you have no other life, you just have to build one up out of these fragments. And all the time your soul is craving and longing for something else. And in vain does the dreamer rummage about in his old dreams, raking them over as though they were a heap of cinders, looking in these cinders for some spark, however tiny, to fan it into a flame so as to warm his chilled blood by it and revive in it all that he held so dear before, all that touched his heart, that made his blood course through his veins, that drew tears from his eyes, and that so splendidly deceived him!"*
 - — Fyodor Dostoyevsky, White Nights and Other Stories

2. Growing in Knowledge, even biblical knowledge, does not necessarily growing in maturity.
 1. Gaining knowledge is valuable, but it is only in the application of that knowledge to our own lives that we gain maturity.
 1. You can know all about forgiveness, but until you are willing to forgive you do not understand forgiveness and are still immature.
 2. Bible study can be largely an intellectual exercise that leaves the life unchanged.
 - **This is largely why we switched to Community Groups**
 3. Knowledge that does lead to more humility and maturity leads to more pride and arrogance.
 4. Knowledge that leads to pride does not lead to more maturity but becoming more unteachable, and can solidify one in their immaturity.
 5. So its not how much we know so much as it is how much we apply and how much we obey of what we know.
 6. Remember, according to John 1:17, Jesus came in grace and truth. Truth without grace is immaturity and often displayed in young men who have truth, but not enough maturity to speak that truth in love.
3. Maturity is not instantaneous.
 1. Hebrews 6:1 says, "Let us continue progressing toward maturity."
 2. Maturity realizes there is always room to grow.
 3. The more mature you are, the more you realize you need to mature.
 4. Thinking you have arrived is immaturity.
 5. Spiritual Maturity does not result in your telling people you are mature. If you have to tell someone how mature, spiritual, humble, or knowledgable you are, most likely you have some growing to do.
4. Having Spiritual Gifts does not equal Spiritual Maturity
 - **1 Corinthians 1:7** Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ
 - Yet Paul goes not to say 2 chapters later in **1 Corinthians 3:1–3** Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. ² I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, ³ for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?
 - Maturity is not the possession of gifts of the Spirit, but the production of the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23).
 - Galatians 5:22–23 ²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.
 - This is a description of a spiritually mature Christian.
 - It is sadly true that not all spiritually gifted believers act and react in a mature way.

Immaturity

1. Taking things personally
2. Holding grudges
3. Makes the Church responsible for their spiritual growth.
4. Thinking your environment has to be a certain way for u to thrive
5. Happiness means acquisition of things
6. I'm unique and no no one has my struggles
7. I'm the exception to orthodox or standard Christianity
8. Thinking God works on your timing
9. Jumping to conclusions
10. Needing others to validate ur sense of self worth

11. Serving for the praise of people and getting angry when u do t get it
12. Cut themselves off from their mentor and instead prefer the company of those complicit with their apathy.
13. Thinking the voices in your head are the Holy Spirit
 - **Illustration**- answering the phone
 - Recognizing a loved ones face blind folded
14. Jumping into ministry before counting the cost
15. Make decisions but can't keep them and complain about what they committed to.
16. Get easily distracted from their mission
17. Start things they don't finish due to neglect or forgetfulness.
18. Force others to walk on eggshells around them lest they be offended. Certain topics are passively declared off limits.
19. Stay on the outskirts or periphery of community lest they experience accountability.
20. Define the Church as a loose connection of Christians acquaintances in order to avoid accountability.
21. Immature Christians are their own pastors and deacons to themselves.
22. Immature Christians claim revelation from the Holy Spirit that is contrary to revelation from Scripture.
23. Immature Christians talk about the person instead of going to the person.

We r a great people but we can still take things personally and jump to conclusions
Maturity is quick to forgive and slow to judge

Mature

- A spiritually growing person is not someone who repents less and less, a spiritually mature person is somebody who repents more and more quickly, more genuinely, and is more sorry for the sin from the heart, not just sorry for the consequence of the sin.
 - A spiritually mature person is someone that when you criticize them, and even if your criticism is half wrong, they take the half that's right and say, "I think you have a point."
 - A spiritually mature person is someone who is quick to admit they are wrong.
- ***The essential property for growth in maturity, for success, even to rise out of poverty, and to be like Jesus on multiple levels is the ability to make sacrifice because He made the ultimate sacrifice.***
- I've seen people attempt to crawl up out of poverty and fail and I've seen people succeed. Most fail, and the difference is, those who succeed are willing to make personal sacrifices over time.
 - The same is true for those seeking Christian maturity.
 - Most people prefer change to come in the form of clicking their heals together.
 - Just because you have been a Christian a long time doesn't mean you are mature and doesn't mean you are willing to make personal sacrifices that would result in your maturity.
- I. Mature Christians let Jesus reign in every area of their lives, immature Christians compartmentalize and giving him only sections while seeking to be their own God in every other area.
 - (a) They make Jesus not King of their life but merely a figurehead with no real power. They don't submit to His will, they submit to their own will.
 - II. Mature Christians are marked by humility
 - III. Mature Christians not only know God's word, but they apply God's Word beginning with themselves.
 - IV. Mature Christians live to serve others.
 - V. Mature Christians love people who don't yet love Jesus.
 - VI. Mature Christians are able to learn from people who are less mature than they are.
 - VII. Mature Christians set and live out personal standards that are higher for themselves than they are for other people.
 - VIII. Mature Christians seek out the truth for the purpose of repentance and change.

- IX. Mature Christians seek out discipleship.
- X. Mature Christians seek out accountability.
- XI. Mature Christians seek out transparency.
- XII. Mature Christians make wise commitments and follow through with them over time.
- XIII. Mature Christians take initiative in serving and meeting the needs of others.
- XIV. Mature Christians submit plans to wise leadership for confirmation.
- XV. Mature Christians understand the needs of the many are greater than personal preferences.
- XVI. Mature Christians often serve outside their comfort zone.
- XVII. Mature Christians seek out and submit to Spirit ordained leadership as a means of submitting to God's Word, as a means of submitting to King Jesus.

Purpose of teaching, being equipped to use one's spiritual gifts resulting in the building up of the Church, and the growth in maturity.

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION: I used to fly off the handle and I brought this into my marriage. When Rebekah and I first started dating she would see me often have to go back and ask forgiveness from people.

This year God has done a special work in our marriage. Just when you think it can't get any better, our relationship has become even more amazing and its because I've grown in my maturity.

- Are you willing to call out the areas where you are immature?
- Are you willing to let a mature Christians speak into your life and advise you where you need to grow in maturity?
- Are you willing to struggle against the areas in your life where you are immature and to begin to respond in different ways than you did in the past.
- Are you willing to ask forgiveness from God and from those who have been on the receiving end of your immaturity?