

- Introduction
  - Today we are going to look at the importance of spiritual maturity.
  - Sometimes people think that it's good enough that they know the absolute basics about being a Christian and leave it at that, with no desire to have a deeper relationship with God or to learn more about what God desires from them.
    - Some look at being a Christian as simply a check box, that yes I believe so I'm saved and going to heaven. Then they choose to live their lives anyway they please.
    - They look for just enough to get by instead of desiring spiritual maturity.
    - If you look at spiritual maturity as a class you have those that do just enough to pass the class with a D-, while there are those that strive for an A+.
  - We are going to look at why it is important that we do desire to strive for spiritual maturity.
    - There are several benefits to us personally and for others. Because if we strive to be spiritually mature, we will be able to do what God has called us to do more effectively.
    - It also keeps us in a closer relationship with God.
      - If one is very spiritually immature, it could be easier for them to drift away from God.
      - But if they are mature and firmly rooted this isn't likely to happen.
- The problem of spiritual immaturity | Hebrews 5:11-14, 6:1-3
  - **Read Hebrews 5:11-14, 6:1-3**
  - The Hebrew writer was concerned about the spiritual maturity of his listeners.
    - He was genuinely concerned for them knowing how important it is for all Christians.
    - He wanted them to be able to move on from the foundations to learn more about the deeper truths about Christ and to have a closer relationship with Him.
    - **One of trust and obedience.**
  - **We move on but yet we do not abandon the foundational truths, because we cannot stand without them.**
    - While he is concerned about maturity, he is not telling us to abandon our foundation.
    - As he speaks of moving on this is not to discount them of course because without the foundation of repentance and faith we have nothing.
      - Repentance, Faith, resurrection and eternal judgment
  - **However, there is a time when we fully understand these things that we need to move on to other spiritual truths that God wants us to learn.**
    - The growth does not simply end the day we become saved. In fact it is only just the beginning.
    - To be a Christian is a lifelong process where we are continually growing in our faith and have a closer relationship to God.
  - **If we are "lazy" or "dull in hearing" in our spiritual walk, we will not be able to comprehend God's truths that He desires to teach us.**
    - In 5:11 our Hebrews writer makes the statement that he has a lot to say about something but that it's difficult to explain because his listeners have become too lazy or "dull of hearing" to understand.
      - **He felt this to be an important subject, but his listeners however were not in a position where they could understand.**
      - He wanted to teach them more about Christ however his listeners' apparent "**spiritual lethargy**" was preventing them from being able to comprehend and properly understand what he wanted to tell them.

- **When Christians become lazy in their spiritual walk, they are not open to learning the truths that God desires for them to learn.**
  - This is no different than if you were taking a class for some subject of study you were interested in.
  - You took the class to learn, but if you didn't put any time into it or you were dull in hearing to the teachings how can you learn how can you grow?
    - **Just because you aced preschool doesn't mean you're done and you don't need to learn anything else!**
  - We must guard ourselves from spiritual laziness and simply taking God's truth for granted. That we know enough to get by and that's OK.
  - The entire bible is God's inspired Word to us, while we certainly don't have to understand everything to be saved the **benefits** to learning as much as we can and **Applying** it to our lives, **will strengthen our faith and we will grow in our spiritual maturity.**
    - **If a few verses from the Bible can lead us to a relationship with Christ where we become saved, why would we not want to see what the rest of Scripture can do for us?**
  - **What are the effects of being lazy at your job or in school? If an individual is "mature" are they more likely to succeed in school or on the job?**
- **Signs and effects of spiritual immaturity**
  - **The spiritually immature Christian will look like the unbelievers in the world.**
    - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
      - "Brothers, 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, because you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still fleshly. For since there is envy and strife among you, **are you not fleshly and living like unbelievers?"**
    - That had to have hit Paul's listeners to the core, Paul made it clear that they being Christians didn't look any different than the unbelievers in the world.
    - **One of the things about living a Christian life is that we are SUPPOSED to be different, we will look different.** A Christian will not be conformed to the world.
      - **If we look no different than the world this is a major flag that we are spiritually immature.**
    - This doesn't mean that we must be perfect and that we will never sin, but a Christian will strive to obey God and to live their lives in obedience to His commands.
      - **This is counter to our culture!**
    - **Christians are to be pure and faultless so that we will stand out from the rest of the world.**
      - Philippians 2:15
        - "So that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world."
        - How can we "shine" if we don't look any different?
    - **In what ways have you seen spiritual immaturity in your own life (past or present) because you didn't look any different than the unbelievers? What was the impact?**

- **The spiritually immature Christian will not uphold biblical values in the face of opposition and persecution.**
  - The Bible more and more goes against the grain of society especially on many social issues.
  - The Christian is called to stand firm on God's truths, but one that is immature in the face of opposition will follow the worldly perspective or popular opinion.
    - Especially if following Christian values and truths would be looked down upon from a worldly perspective.
    - Abortion, sexual immorality and marriage etc.,
  - **The spiritually mature Christian will stand counter to the world and will uphold biblical values in the face of opposition and persecution.**
    - The mature Christian will know that the Scriptures have the final authority over man.
    - **That regardless of popular public opinion or even the law of the land that the Bible shows us absolute truth and what is right and what is wrong.**
    - A mature Christian will stand their ground even in the face of opposition from the world.
    - The mature Christian will not compromise their beliefs so that they can "fit in" with the world.
    - **What are other examples of a how a Spiritually mature Christian withstands the world?**
- **The spiritually immature Christian will not devote much time to prayer, studying God's Word or striving to be around other believers.**
  - The one who is immature does not see the need to be in frequent correspondence with God. They will pray very infrequently.
    - **The immature Christian will go to God in their time of need when life is hard.**
    - **But the immature Christian when life is seemingly going OK will neglect their relationship.**
    - Prayer is only used when the Christian "needs" something.
    - **The mature Christian strives to have a close relationship with God and frequently prays.**
      - The mature Christians understands how important it is to have that close relationship. That God is our Heavenly Father and he desires us to come to Him.
      - The mature Christian will pray and go to God for all aspects of their life regardless if they have a need or not.
  - **They will rarely study the Bible, let alone read it on their own time. They lack a hunger for God's Word.**
    - The spiritually immature Christian will rarely read the Scriptures nor feel that it is all that necessary.
    - Opening their Bible on Sunday morning is enough and there isn't any need to study throughout the week.
    - They acknowledge that it is good to read and study but will rarely if ever make time to do it.
    - **Scripture is not a priority.**
    - **The mature Christian makes reading and studying Gods' Word a priority in their life.**

- They have a hunger to be in the Scriptures and to study God's truths.
    - The mature Christian knows that God will speak through His Word and seek Him in His Word.
  - **They lack the desire or passion to be around other believers by attending church or small group.**
    - **The spiritually immature Christian will attend church out of obligation, not because they really want to.**
    - There is little to no desires for Small group bible study, Sunday School, Wednesday nights, revival and other special events.
    - They would prefer to socialize with the unbelievers in the world and their activities as opposed to their fellow Christians.
    - **The mature Christian attends church and small groups because they want to.**
      - The mature Christian knows that they get feed by coming to church and hearing the Word of God.
      - They know how important it is to have fellowship with other believers to learn and to grow.
  - **How do you see spiritual maturity or immaturity affect your Christian walk?**
  - **The spiritually immature Christian will have a greater struggle during times of trials or sufferings.**
    - All Christians regardless of your level of spiritual maturity will go through a hard time. This could be divine, self-inflicted or Satan initiated.
    - However, the Christian who is immature will have a much more difficult time.
      - They will lack the strong faith to completely give their situation over to God.
        - **A spiritually mature Christian understands that there will be difficult times and that all situations can be given to God.**
        - But one who is immature will be quicker to attempt to try and solve their problem on their own without God.
      - **They may question God's ability to help them.**
        - One who is spiritually mature knows that God can do anything, and He has the ability to help us in any circumstance.
        - But one who is immature may question God's ability to help them during a difficult time.
    - **Why do you think that a spiritually immature Christian would have a harder time than one that is more mature during a trial or time of suffering?**
  - Situation:
    - A man and his wife are going through difficult times. They are experiencing financial issues, health problems and dealing with the loss of a loved one.
    - Let's look at this couple from 2 different levels of spiritual maturity.
      - Compare the extremes of immaturity and mature.
    - **I want to know what the likely responses will be from this couple based on their level of spiritual maturity.**
- **The benefits of Spiritual maturity.**
  - **Spiritual maturity has a lot to do with obedience, trust and action**

- **It is not simply “bible knowledge”.**
  - Just because you are knowledgeable about the Bible does not necessarily mean that you are spiritually mature, but it certainly helps.
- A spiritually mature person will read and study because they know that to grow, they must have a deeper relationship with Christ.
- **It is how we apply God’s truths.**
  - Faith in God beyond just salvation.
  - One who not only desires to be obedient but also lives it out daily.
  - Strives to do what God has called them too.
  - Will trust God in everything regardless of the circumstance.
  - When life is hard, they lean on God instead of turning away.
- **The spiritually mature will demonstrate faith and perseverance.**
  - Hebrews 6:11-12
  - The righteous shall live by faith
    - Romans 1:17
      - “For in it God’s righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.”
  - **A mature Christian will strive to be like the heroes of faith in Scripture who demonstrated their faith and perseverance.**
- **A spiritually mature person knows that they can put their complete trust and faith in Christ regardless of the circumstances.**
- **A spiritually mature person knows that growth comes with obedience, which even though obeying God may be difficult, at times and we may struggle, but we know that is what God wants from us.**
  - Paul’s prayer for the spiritually mature
    - Philippians 1:9-11
      - “And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you can approve the things that are superior and can be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.”
- **The spiritually mature has discernment**
  - **As it is said in the end of verse 14 if one is spiritually mature, they can discern good and evil.**
    - Hebrews 5:14
      - “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their **powers of discernment trained by constant practice** to distinguish good from evil.”
    - **Discernment is also gained through experience.**
    - **What does this look like?**
  - This can go many ways but one that is important is false teachings and doctrine.
    - There are those that call themselves Christians in the world who are not and teach a false doctrine.
    - But if we are spiritually mature and have studied His Word and understand God’s truths then we can discern what is right and what is not.
- **Why does Paul say that discernment is used to distinguish good from evil?**
- **What are other benefits of having spiritual discernment?**
- **We are to be teachers of God’s Word.**

- **In 5:12 it says that at this time his listeners should have been teachers of God's Word**, instead they were in a state where they had **become so lazy and** dull of hearing that they needed to hear the basic principles of God's revelation again.
- **These Christians had been converted for some time**, how long we cannot say but it was long enough that our writer knew they should have grown in their spiritual maturity to a point where they should have been teaching others.
  - A new convert is not expected to be teaching from day 1, but that is something that all should strive for.
  - However, these Christians were not teaching others, it seems they knew barely enough to be saved themselves let alone being able to share the Scripture with others.
- **All believers are to be teachers**
  - All Christians are supposed to be teachers of God's Word. Now that may be scary at first to think that we all must become bible scholars.
  - **But that is not the case. Teacher used here can be of many levels.**
    - All of us need to **know enough about Christ so that we can fulfill the great commission** so we can spread the Gospel to others.
      - Matthew 28:18-20
        - "Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
      - We teach our children, our neighbors and friends at work about Christ. This does not have to be deep theological discussions.
    - **There are two questions that all Christians need to be able to answer for themselves.**
      - **What do I believe?**
      - **Why do I believe it?**
        - **Faith isn't blind you have a reason why you believe.**
  - The teaching of Scripture is necessary so that we can be complete and equipped for God's work.
    - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
      - "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness. So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
    - Spiritual maturity is obtained by growing closer to God through prayer and reading His Word, not by drawing away.
- **Knowing that we are supposed to be teachers, does this affect your view on your spiritual maturity?**
- **If we are spiritually mature, how will this help others?**