

This Sunday, Dusty challenged us with a message on Christian maturity in part two of our series in Colossians, The Born Supremacy. Maturity affects our thinking, emotions and actions. Spiritual maturity is a big theme in the book of Colossians (and throughout the New Testament). In Colossians 1:28-29 Paul writes: *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone FULLY MATURE in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.* As Christ-followers, our greatest goal should be to become more like Christ, i.e. spiritually mature. The definition of maturity is to be “fully developed”. In this Scripture, Paul is saying that he is contending tirelessly for us to be fully developed in Christ. If Paul takes this so seriously, there must be some weight in maturity.

When we find that our thinking, decisions, actions, dreams, emotions, attitude and lifestyle becomes Christ-centred, we become powerful agents in a broken world.

Paul and Peter use pictures of weaning a baby from milk to solids to illustrate spiritual maturity: Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people *who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly —mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly.* 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:1-3.

John McArthur explains spiritual milk like this: “Milk, not a reference to certain doctrines, but to the more easily digestible truths of doctrine that were given to new believers.” He compared milk to solid food by saying, “solid food, the deeper features of the doctrines of scripture. The difference is not in kind of truth, but degree of depth. Spiritual immaturity makes one unable to receive the richest truths.” Milk is like pre-digested truth, easy to swallow whole, but meat requires development of teeth and the action of chewing. There is more involved in the process of eating solid food.”

Spiritual maturity determines the depth of which we can receive truth. Paul is telling us that we need to grow from being demanding babies drinking milk to strong and giving Christ-followers feeding on solids. So how do we measure our spiritual maturity? By looking at the fruits in our lives.

3 SIGNS OF SPIRITUALLY IMMATURE CHRISTIANS

1. Slow to learn deeper truths

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! Hebrews 5:11-12

2. Worldly behaviour (Still trying to please everyone but God)

I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. 1 Corinthians 3:2-3

3. Inability to self-feed spiritually

One spiritual ‘meal’ a week on a Sunday is like eating one meal a week - you’ll eventually starve to death.

3 SIGNS OF SPIRITUALLY MATURE CHRISTIANS

1. Unconditional Love

I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:1-3.

Love is central to the Gospel. It's why Jesus came, why Jesus died, and why He is coming back again. How hard are you contending for those who don't know Christ? And what about the people you have never met that don't know Him? Our ability to love unconditionally - beyond race, culture, financial position, education, preference, age and morality - reflects our spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity is to be like Jesus. *My goal (AMBITION, PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE) is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Colossians 2:2. What's your goal (AMBITION, PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE) when it comes to loving others?

2. Rooted & Built up in Faith

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7. Spiritual maturity is the ability to stand firm regardless of the storm you're in. Are you deeply convinced that through the hurt, pain, hardship, loss, confusion, and all the obstacles life throws at us, Jesus is alive and worth living for? That He is in control and worth dying for; and that nothing in this world compares to serving Him and living wholeheartedly for Him?

Are you convinced that through it all, that to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21)? Or is doubt and questioning your main focus in the bad times?

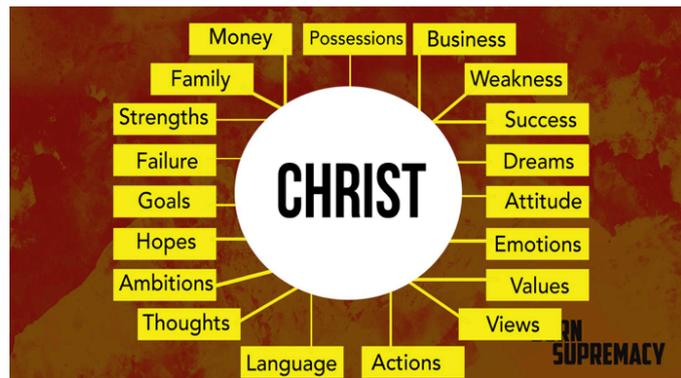
Paul wrote the book of Colossians while in prison and yet he starts with the supremacy of Christ. He begins with the ability to look up, cheer up and continues to live up in all standards of his life because his spiritual maturity has allowed him to receive deeper truths!

3. Mature Christ-followers are Christ-centered

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ, you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:9-12.

When we live a Christ-centred life, we are more concerned with pleasing God than pleasing ourselves or others. A Christ-centered life lives Christ's teachings and loves people as Christ did.

Is Christ at the centre of your life or is he just a part of what you do?



HOW DO WE MATURE?

1. Daily devotions with God
2. Time spent daily in the Word
3. Time spent daily with God's people

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Icebreaker: (Choose one question)

- From childhood til now, which stage of your life have you enjoyed the most so far?
- From childhood til now, which stage of your life have you found the most challenging so far?

Questions: (Choose two or three)

1. What stood out to you from this Sunday's message?
2. What things have helped you most to grow spiritually?
3. Dusty gave three signs of maturity:
 - Unconditional Love - of those we know and those we don't.
 - Rooted in our faith (in spite of tough times) - not blown around by trials.
 - Christ-centred (see the two pictures at the end of the resource)
 Which of these is the biggest challenge for you?
4. Read and discuss Colossians 2:6-7. Which phrase in these verses stands out to you the most? And why?
5. What are some steps you can take to grow your faith? What kind of "spiritual workout" would increase your stamina for the Christian journey ahead this week?
6. How can you learn more about Christ this week?

PRAYER POINT

Read out loud Paul's prayer for spiritual growth in Ephesians 3:14-21. Make it personal by changing the 'you' to 'us' or 'we' as you read it.

ACTION POINT

Find a place to be alone with God this week. Ask Him to help you realise whether He simply has a place in your life or if He has first place in your life. Ask Him to help you see where you are not making Him first. Begin with one thing to change that will let Him know you are serious about your relationship with Him.