

MATURING IN CHRIST

Today's world is characterized by many inventions which meet people's needs quickly and easily: instant foods, instant electronic communication, instant information stored in high-speed computers. Christians must remember, however, that there is no such thing as "instant maturity" in the Christian experience. Becoming a Christian begins a lifelong adventure of knowing God better and loving him more.

"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed. Thus you will prove in practice that the will of God's good, acceptable to him and perfect."

ROMANS 12:2, PH

MOVING TOWARD MATURITY

1. You took your first step toward spiritual maturity when you put your faith in Christ. List here and on the next page the important points of the gospel message, with scriptural references:

2. Read Ephesians 4:11-16.

a. What is God's desire for you? *Verses 13, 15*

b. What are some characteristics of immature Christians ("children" or "infants")? *Verse 14*

c. According to this passage, what characterizes a spiritually mature person?

3. Contrast man's old nature with the Christian's new nature. *Ephesians 4:22-24*

OLD NATURE NEW NATURE

4. Consider 2 Corinthians 3:18.

a. Into whose image are you being changed?

b. Who brings about this change?

c. Are you completely changed all at once?

5. What do the following verses in Romans tell you about your relationship to Christ?

a. What has already happened to you? *Romans 5:8-9*

b. What should you be doing now? *Romans 6:19*

c. What can you expect in the future? *Romans 8:16-18*

These three aspects of salvation in Christ are helpful in understanding God's plan for believers:

Justification	<i>Past</i> tense—I have been saved . . . from the penalty of sin	My <i>position</i> is in Christ.
Sanctification	<i>Present</i> tense—I am being saved . . . from the power of sin	My <i>condition</i> is becoming like Christ.
Glorification	<i>Future</i> tense—I will be saved . . . from the presence of sin	My <i>expectation</i> is to be like Christ.

6. Think carefully about Colossians 3:2-4. How do these verses relate to the preceding chart?

YOUR STARTING POINT

7. Examine Colossians 2:6-7. How did you begin your life in Christ?

How should you continue to grow? _____

8. Consider Romans 5:1-5. Because of your justification by faith in Christ, what practical benefits are yours to experience?

9. Read Ephesians 1 and list several things which you have “in Christ.”

THE PROCESS OF GROWTH

10. A revealing parallel exists between physical life and spiritual life. What can you learn about this parallel from the following references?

1 *Thessalonians 2:11* _____

1 *Timothy 4:8* _____

Hebrews 5:13-14 _____

1 Peter 2:2-3 _____

What other illustrations of this parallel do you know?

11. What things listed in Romans 5:17 can you receive?

What will this enable you to do? _____

12. Meditate on Romans 6:11-13.

a. What should you count as true about yourself? Verse 11

b. What should be your present relationship to sin? Verse 12

c. What must you not allow? Verse 13

d. What action should you take? Verse 13

e. How would you explain the truth of Romans 6:5-6?

13. God intends for you to reign in life (Romans 5:17), not for sin to reign in your life (Romans 6:13). What application do these verses suggest for your life?

14. Paul stated that Christians are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), but your relationship to God does not end there.

a. According to Ephesians 2:10, what are you?

b. Is God still working in you? _____

c. What is God doing? *Philippians 1:6* _____

As you reflect on your life, be thankful for all that God is doing in you. Conflicts in your life should encourage you because they indicate that God is still working in you, changing you to be like Christ. Take a moment to express your gratitude to God for what he *has done, is doing, and will do* for you.

Our outer person is merely God's frame—the real picture is the inner person which God, the Artist, is still creating.

HOW TO LIVE

15. What guidelines for your life as a Christian do you see in these verses?

Romans 8:4 _____

2 Corinthians 5:7 _____

Ephesians 5:2 _____

1 John 2:6 _____

16. Using 1 John 1:6-10, contrast those who walk in fellowship with God and those who do not.

PEOPLE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD PEOPLE NOT IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

**THE
MATURE
LIFE**

17. What attitude should a mature Christian possess?
Philippians 3:13-15

18. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. While awaiting eternity with Christ, what should Christians be doing?

What fact can motivate you to do this? _____

19. What are some areas in which you can experience spiritual growth?

2 *Peter* 3:18 _____

1 *John* 4:16-17 _____

20. Consider 2 Timothy 4:7-8. What statement was Paul able to make concerning his earthly walk with Christ?

What did he expectantly await in the future? _____

Remember These Points

- God intends Christians to mature and become like Jesus Christ. God has saved Christians from the penalty of sin. They are presently engaged in a conflict with sin, but can anticipate a sinless future with Christ.
- Faith in Jesus Christ marks the beginning of Christian growth. The believer has God's resources available to him to help him grow.
- Spiritual growth is similar to physical growth. It takes time as God works in the believer's life. Christians should reign in life, recognizing that God is bringing to fulfillment the work he began in them.
- Growing in Christ is similar to walking. Led by the Spirit, Christians are to walk in faith and love and in fellowship with Christ.
- A mature Christian is one who continues to follow Christ, abounding in his work and experiencing his grace and love. God does not forget the work of the believer and will one day reward him.