

MATURING IN YOUR FAITH

PREFACE

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ONE OF TRANSFORMATION

Do you want spiritual excellence in your life? Do you strive for greater understanding? We all desire to grow in God. I would assume that there would be none among us that in the least would like to make more sense of the Christian life. There is an innate desire within the Christian to want a spiritual experience, a real manifestation of God's power.

What is that power? How do we unleash it? How do we define it? What is the metric by which we measure it?

I believe that God's Word is faithful to instruct us towards His power.

Are we 'here' in our walk, but we would like to get to 'here'? Surely progress is on the believer's to-do-list.

Well you're in luck! Here are a couple of options. [SHOW BOOKS](#)

Questions of spiritual excellence, spiritual victories and breakthroughs, greater understanding, this is language you could expect to read on the back of one of these books. In fact here is a summary of one of them:

BECOME A BETTER YOU - JOEL OSTEEN

As one of God's children, you have within you everything you need to reach your highest potential.

Follow seven key precepts:

1. Keep pressing forward
2. Be positive toward yourself
3. Develop better relationships
4. Form better habits
5. Embrace the place where you are
6. Develop your inner life
7. Stay passionate about your life

Faith is important but faith alone is not enough. Faith must inspire action, an attitude of expectancy and preparation for a positive future.

Are these the hidden mysteries of God that will catapult you to higher ground?

INTRODUCTION

When we evangelize the good news to a lost world, our message of hope is accompanied by testimonies of God's power, love, healing and victory. We passionately lay out the benefits of the Christian life. The world watches to see if our claims are true.

We can not afford to not obtain spiritual excellence.

The benefactors of a healthy spiritual life require that we pursue spiritual excellence e.g. marriage, parenting, relationships, work life, our call and purpose, emotional peace and stability, our decisions and choices, the pursuit of holiness. These critical areas demand health.

If we are to be honest, are we Christians that are marked by growth and maturity? Here lies the biggest obstacle that we need to maneuver around this evening, many of us lack the contrition to admit our immaturity. It is natural for us to have a generous view of our spiritual condition, it may not be an accurate view, but most certainly a generous one.

Our self evaluation of maturity is often skewed, it's like driving, everyone thinks they are tremendous at driving.

The Christian life shouldn't be immune to criticism and review. Throughout the epistles the Apostle Paul is determined to hold the Christians feet to the fire.

When it comes to measuring the believer we can be found deficient, lacking obedience and spiritual health.

What are the markers of spiritual immaturity? Questionable understanding of His Word, sin abounds, unhealthy or broken relationships, poor decision making, an emotional driven walk, pride—doing what is right in your own eyes, not walking in the spirit, general confusion on spiritual things.

Tonight I want to encourage you to engage your responsibility to *work out your Faith with fear and trembling* ([Philippines 2:12](#)).

SALVATION DISCLAIMER

It would be remiss of me to not clarify that our salvation, our eternal security is not found in our performance or actions, or even maturity. There is no prejudice to the saving work of Christ.

ROMANS 10:9

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

We are not saved by works, but we are saved *unto* works.

There is a distinction between our salvation and transformation; albeit one begets the other.

There is a pandemic in today's culture and generation of malnourished churches. With congregants who profess Christ and the Lord and Savior but they never progress from saving the Faith.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CAN BE WEIGHED

Whether we like it or not we can be weighed as Christians. We must *live a life worthy of the call we have received* (Ephesians 4:1).

SOTERIOLOGY IS COMPRISED OF THREE MAJOR PARTS:

Justification: Past, positional sanctification, penalty of sin

Sanctification: Present, practical sanctification, confession of sin

Glorification: Future, ultimate sanctification, removal of sin

Justification is the complete work of Christ, the penalty of sin has been paid. As we rest in the eternal security that comes from the work of Christ, we are to put our hands to the plough pursuing sanctification. We are to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, becoming image bearers of Him. This is our response to the atoning work of Christ; as we anticipate our future glorification. The effort and energy we expend can and must be measured, not to abrogate the atoning work of Christ, but to pursue Sanctification.

- The Bible admonishes the believer about immaturity
- Growth and maturity are the markers of true discipleship
- We can be measured and weighed as Christians
- Our *maturity* is proportional to our *sanctification*

HEBREWS 5:12-14

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Paul indicts the church by confronting their spiritual condition—*you ought to have grown, but you still need milk.*

In a few weeks there will be an addition to the Lawrence home, as my wife and I have a baby on the way. As I anticipate the revocation of all sleep privileges, I consider the fact that my new baby will be on a milk diet, which is completely acceptable and expected. What isn't adorable is a 5-year old on a milk diet, or a teenager still knocking back baby formula.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:2

I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able.

What is not becoming or charming for the believer is to remain in infancy, or as a spiritual toddler. My son, Oliver is four and half years old, and we get excited and celebrate with him as he grows in understanding and behavior. Equally we should anticipate and be excited about spiritual growth and understanding.

We have hope and salvation in Christ, and it is secure; we are sealed to the day of redemption ([Ephesians 4:30](#)). But we are running a race and we are fatigued and weak.

WE ARE TO BE FRUITFUL CHRISTIANS

If you recall in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus clearly teaches that Christians will produce varying amounts of crop?

PARABLES: THE SOWER, PASTOR JACK HIBBS - JANUARY 16 & 23, 2013

MATTHEW 13:23

But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

- Fruit is referring to the '*production off*' or '*the bringing forth*', in particular, spiritual fruitfulness
- Believers will vary in their fruitfulness; there is a distinction between how we all walk and grow as believers
- It is the degree of devotion and growth in your life
- The measure that we allow God's Word to transform our lives is directly proportional to fruitfulness of our lives
- Consider the typical agricultural return of first century farming. 7-10 percent return was normative, and here Jesus is promising something outstanding. [GENESIS 26:12 AN EXAMPLE OF 100 FOLD](#)
- We can try and subscribe to some kind of *spiritual-communism*, but the Bible tells us otherwise

HOW DO WE MATURE IN THE THINGS OF GOD?

2 PETER 1:1-11

1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- In this passage Peter enumerates the principles of spiritual growth
- The promise to this text is to bring us into all things pertaining to life and Godliness
- This passage has to be one of the most practical, transformative, instructional directives given to the believer
- Unlike Ikea instructions, we are given a detailed method towards maturity

VERSES 1-5

The first part of this passage is God's declaration or promise:

- V.1 To those who have obtained like precious faith
- V.2 Knowledge of God, and His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness
- V.4 Exceedingly great and precious promises,
- V.4 Escaped corruption of the world

VERSES 5-11

ADD

- I love that this word it is more than just a causal supplementation, it shouldn't be liked to seasoning your meal with a splash of this or that
- To furnish or support
- To supply in copious measure
- The believer is to saturate his life with these attributes

FAITH

- Faith in Christ is what distinguishes us from the world

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- Spiritual life must exist first before there can be true godliness
- It is not by godliness that we obtain life, but by life, godliness
- The word Faith (pis-tis) is the confidence we have in God

VIRTUE

- Moral goodness, or excellence
- Goodness is one of God's characteristics
- The intent of thought, course and action towards God
- We should feel compelled to take on the likeness of a good God
- We should be compelled by the Spirit of God to pursue righteousness

KNOWLEDGE

- To obtain knowledge and understanding of Spiritual things
- The Bible is clear that the *knowledge of God* is the most valuable knowledge a human being can possess
- The meaning of this word is not some causal acquaintance about God, rather a thorough intimate understanding of
- Spiritual knowledge of His truth. A discernment of righteousness and sin. [1 Corinthians 2:13](#) reminds us that prior to the Holy Spirit illuminating His Truth we were without understanding of spiritual realities
- Spiritual knowledge is not privileged to the unbeliever
- We come into the knowledge of God through His Word

JOHN 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

SELF CONTROL

- As we exercise knowledge may it promote self control
- The greek word here is to have ones passions under control
- We are to exercise temperance
- We can be slack in our self control, we ride on the back of *grace*, and allow dishonoring behaviors to remain

ROMANS 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

We would benefit greatly in building a relationship with temperance.

PERSEVERANCE

- As we walk in obedience to the knowledge of Him, and we exercise self-control in our behaviors, and we can expect there to be resentment, a lost world finds truth as an irritant. It pushes back adjacent righteousness
- Our obedience acts a judgment on their behavior, or in the least a contrast
- We must be steadfast in the conviction of His Word
- These latter days will polarize the Church, society will corner you to pick a team
- We pursue what is right—we don't give up and we don't give in

GODLINESS

- *God likeness* is clearly our hearts desire, it is the high water mark of kingdom living
- We are all pressing towards this, often with no real sense or course towards it
- It isn't without design that Godliness would be the result of knowledge, virtue, self control, and perseverance. That actual makes sense, the former promotes the latter

Surely we are to be marked with Godliness if we are to be equipped for brotherly kindness.

The first five qualities are inward, the last two are outward; they are made able by the former.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS

- Brotherly kindness translates as a fervent practical caring for others
- The unity of the brethren is one of the highest testimonies for God's love
- Brotherly kindness speaks of having affection for one another

JOHN 13:34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

1 JOHN 4:20

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

ILLUSTRATION: JOINING A DIVIDED TEAM

LOVE

- Brotherly kindness is concern for others' needs, love is desiring the highest good for others
- This is the kind of love God exhibits toward sinners ([John 3:16](#); [Rom. 5:8](#); [1 John 4:9-11](#)).
- This speaks volumes of our relationship to the world.

ROMANS 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:2

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

CONCLUSION

These imperatives are behavioral; they are decisions. You either chose to do them or you don't. We need to have an appetite for these behaviors.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

THE DIFFICULTY

These things are difficult—self control, perseverance, knowledge, brotherly kindness. Some or all these things don't come natural for us. It is rather sanctifying; but we must remember the fundamental axiom of kingdom living *is* sanctification. Consider how sanctification manifests in the attributes Peter lays out. Dying to self and selflessness will become our mode of operation.

Fulfilling these imperatives is the true form of worship.

THE RETURN

God's promise of maturity and blessing:

- We will partake of the divine nature of God ([V4](#))
- We will escape the corruption of this world ([V4](#))
- We will experience exceedingly great and precious promises ([V4](#))
- We will not be barren and without fruit ([V8](#))
- We will not stumble ([V10](#))
- We will be thoroughly equipped for every good work ([2 Timothy 3:17](#))

RECAP:

Faith - add Virtue

Virtue - add knowledge

Knowledge - add self-control

Self Control - add perseverance

Perseverance - add Godliness

Godliness - add Brotherly kindness

Brotherly kindness - add love

Love - highest command

Consider how the aspects of your life might benefit from this process? Marriage

Peter anticipates his impending death (V12-15) he is compelled to prepare the reader for things to come. Chapters 2 & 3 are a forewarning about destructive doctrines, the doom, depravity and deception of false teachers. Peter's war cry for spiritual growth should not be under emphasized in our convictions.

Human behavior needs to validate its belief. We need to experience something true and profound about what we subscribe to. When we lack understanding, growth and maturity we lack the true impact and transformation of God's truth, this compels us towards spiritual error. Threaded front and centered throughout the epistles is the warning against false doctrine, and the wrong conclusions about God.

As society becomes more debase, and parts way with God. As aberrant theology tickles the ears of the hearer we need to be equipped and isolated against anything that seeks to dilute God's Truth. Maturity and understanding on spiritual things are the antidote to this strain of error.

What Peter lays out for the Christian will ready us for life, and ready us for this world.

2 PETER 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.