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# Centrality of Maturity in the Home

## Ephesians 4:11–16

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**Introduction** Recently a pastor in our area left his church to start a new, emergent style religious gathering. He is no longer a “pastor”; he is now a “life coach”. Life coaches? Pastors are helping people to grow up, yes; but, life coaches?

Growing up:

In different countries...

In different eras...

In different homes...

Into what?

Adult immaturity

Personal maturity

Christian \_\_\_\_\_?

Do we think about what maturity means for our sons and daughters?

Do you work at it in a Biblical manner?

What is the relationship between maturity and wisdom?

### Pattern of Maturity

The unfolding of redemptive history is a pattern for maturity. Listen to two important texts and we will focus on the second.

Colossians 1:25-29

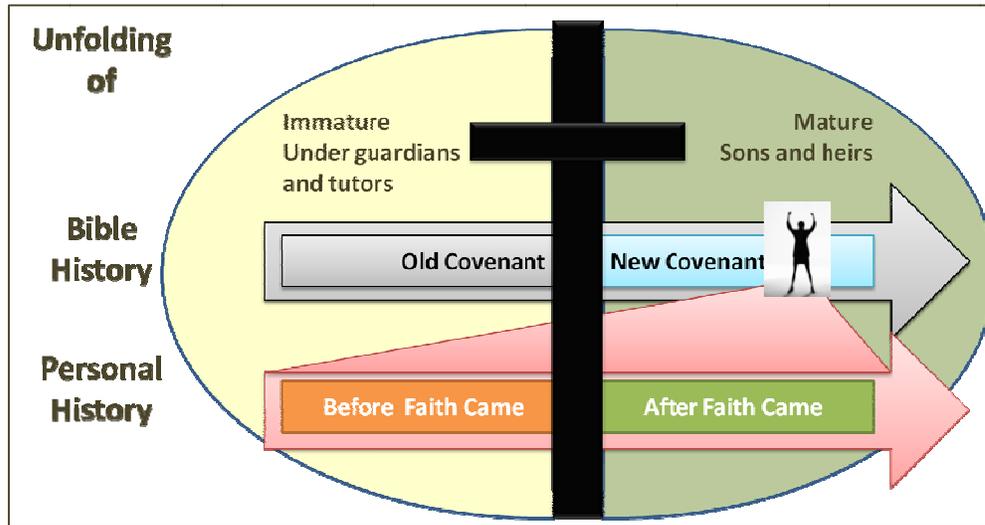
<sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Galatians 3:23-4:7

<sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

<sup>1</sup> I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, <sup>2</sup> but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. <sup>3</sup> In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Paul, in a complex and elegant argument, overlays the progress of redemptive history with our personal life. The easiest way to understand this is with a graphic.



**Illus 2 - Pattern for Maturity**

Using the analogy of children in the home, we are shown that Old Covenant era was one of infancy, childhood and immaturity. Before the foundation of the world, God designed how the progress of history and the development of revelation were going to run side-by-side. The coming of Christ and His death on the cross are the events that mark the inauguration of the New Covenant age. Because of passing that milestone, children now are recognized as full sons and heirs.

Then Paul uses the redemptive history as a template to interpret our own personal history. Before we were converted, we lived under the old realm in ignorance, sin and depravity. But now that faith has come, we are now living in Christ, in the realm of the new as *mature sons, joint-heirs with Christ*. Paul is then encouraging believers to grow into the maturity they have been placed into. This mature sonship then is an important element of understanding how we grow as persons and as Christians.

*Bringing your home to maturity means helping everyone in our households to grow into personal and spiritual maturity in accordance with God's design and agenda.*

## Wisdom for the Mature

## 1 Corinthians 2:6–10

With this same idea in mind, Paul says that the giving of these truths is among the mature.

<sup>6</sup> Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— <sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

The point here is that *if* the wise of this world and rulers of this age had understood what the Old Covenant was actually pointing to, in order to subvert God’s agenda, they would *not* have crucified Christ. But, God through His Spirit has now revealed that unimaginable and unfathomable love for us. This revelation is among the mature – that is, those who have moved from an Old Covenant faith to a New Covenant faith. They have understood the wisdom of God in the message of Christ and the cross and have embraced it.

So there are false wisdoms that are expressions of immature religions. This would include any religion which doubts or denies that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior and Sovereign. The rulers of this age were both the Romans and the leaders of Judaism. Since they were functioning on the wisdom of the old realm, both the wise and the wisdom of this age are doomed to pass away.

Look at the context of Isaiah 64:4 which is quoted here. The plea is for God to come *as He did at Mt. Sinai*. God’s people are sinful, wicked, rebellious and disobedient. But God will do a saving work that is an unimaginable expression of God’s love for His people. And it will culminate in God being sought by all the people groups (Isaiah 65).

*Bringing your home to maturity means understanding and applying the flow of the Bible centered on Christ and living in the New Covenant.*

## Mark of Maturity

## Philippians 3:12–16

There is the maturity of moving from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant that is simply salvation. But then there is another kind of maturity that comes from having a biblical perspective on ourselves.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Here is another of those “jerked out of context” verses. We are not being exhorted here just to forget whatever bad experiences or memories we may have from the past. In the context, what Paul is forgetting is all his own good works and self-righteousness. There was a self-identity and righteousness connected to

being a Jew, knowing his tribe, being in the right religious denomination, a Pharisee, and perfectly keeping the Law. This is what he is forgetting.

There is a present striving for God's prizes. He is pressing on to living out the righteousness that comes from Christ alone. He is pressing toward the upward call in Christ, toward his heavenly home. So, he is no longer getting his identity or righteousness from anything or anyone but Christ alone.

This way of thinking then is underscored as the mature way to think. He appeals to the mature to think like this. Quite naturally, since the Old Covenant is the realm of immaturity and childhood, then we who live in the realm of maturity of the New Covenant are to not rely on the righteousness that comes by good works and the Law but the righteousness that comes from Christ.

This will affect our daily living. As Christians, it means that our first and primary identity is no longer national, denominational or Old Covenant. If we are to think like mature Christians, then we are to live out an identity in Christ. He is our righteousness and our wisdom.

*Bringing your home to maturity means that you will teach everyone in your home the peril of self-righteousness and the greatness of our righteousness in Christ so that those who believe, live in the light of that reality.*

## Provision for Maturity

## Ephesians 4:11–16

In God's household, His kingdom, He has provided the means for those who believe to grow into maturity.

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Enabled leadership is provided by God to His church. They function within roles and offices in the church. They are enabled by God's Spirit. Their purpose is to teach and train so as to produce an equipped membership who are stable and mature in faith and prepared for serving. God's people then have an engaged maturity that participates in serving.

The aim of all of this is to produce mature people as measured by Christ. The inter-working of these serving people will continue to foster the cycle so that through this ministry, God continues to provide all that is needed for the functioning of the body of Christ.

*Bringing your home to maturity means helping each one grow to maturity by depending on the Spirit to enable us to teach them what they need to know, to equip them to usefulness and engagement in ministry.*

## Example of Maturity

## 1 Corinthians 14:20-25

We are given an example of what maturity ought to look like in practical living in this text.

<sup>20</sup> Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. <sup>21</sup> In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." <sup>22</sup> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. <sup>23</sup> If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? <sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, <sup>25</sup> the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

We are challenged to be mature in our thinking (v.20). In a little bit of wordplay, we are to be infants in the practice of sin, but mature in the processes of our heart. Simple in sin, sophisticated in righteousness. As we have seen already, there is a high value in growing up Biblically. This growing up begins in the way we think, the flow of our inner words that make up our beliefs and wants, our affections and attitudes.

Then we are given an illustration of mature thinking (v.21-25). The call to mature thinking involves three key abilities.

Mature thinking means a growing ability to interpret and understand the Word (v.21). Paul points them to a text of Scripture that has immediate bearing on their behavior. He certainly expects that they understand this text. Understanding it is the first step to mature thinking. Therefore, we make progress in maturity when we grow in our ability to identify texts and understand what they are saying.

Mature thinking means a growing ability to see implications from the Word (v.22). Paul cites the text then sees a clear implication from the words of the text. The use of foreign languages is an authenticating sign to those who do not believe, not to those who do. So we need to understand what the text says. And we need connect it to principles.

Mature thinking means a growing ability to make application of the Word (v.23-25). Since this is what the text says, and what it means, then this is how it affects them. He is applying the interpretation. He is challenging their practice in corporate services and calling for a change. Maturing in our thinking means that we will have a growing ability to connect the Bible to our life.

*Bringing your home to maturity means helping others to grow in being able to understand and apply truth, particularly the truth of the Word of God.*

**Means to Maturity****Hebrews 5:14-6:1**

God has designed in the very nature of His world the process or the means to maturity. This is reflected in the familiar text from Hebrews 5.

<sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. <sup>1</sup> Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Watch how this text is structured:

Solid food is for the mature.

Those who are able to distinguish right from wrong are the mature.

They become mature, able to distinguish right from wrong, by putting into practice what they learn.

This practice of what they know sharpens their discernment.

The core means to maturity is putting into practice what you learn so that you are ever more able to discern what is right and wrong, doctrinally, personally and practically. In other words, you grow in wisdom. You are able to join truth and life. You are able to examine life in the light of the Word, see what the Word says and put it into practice.

This means at least three important things:

Just knowing a lot of Biblical data is not maturity. This may come as a surprise, but there are many people who know the Bible very well, but have little practical discernment. Their Bible knowledge is academic, theoretical and deadly. They are then, by definition, immature.

In order to grow in maturity, you must put into practice what you know. God will bring about situations in your life giving you the opportunity to exercise with the Word you have so that you may grow in wisdom and thus, become mature as a person and as a Christian.

Maturity is a qualification for teaching. Do you notice that here? Time and therefore, situations in which discernment ought to be exercised, have passed. But, they are not qualified to be teachers. They are unable or unwilling to apply the Bible to life. Therefore, while they ought to be teachers, they need to mature through the means available and will go back and start with milk.

*Bringing your home to maturity means helping others to put into practice what they have been taught, implementing the Scriptures into their lives.*

## Perspective on Maturity

## Colossians 4:12-13

Finally, we are given perspective on maturity.

<sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

Ah, what a wonderful servant of God Epaphras is! He struggles in the hard work of praying for the people he loves. He works hard in prayer that they may “stand mature”. He is commended to his home church at Colossae and to us. He has worked hard for their maturity and assurance in God’s will.

Now this example does not create a command for us. But it sure does commend his attitude and action to us. We would be so helpful to others if adopt his perspective:

He is willing to work hard, to struggle for the sake of others.

He values prayer as a great means to the ends God has ordained.

He prizes maturity for the people he loves and serves.

*Bringing your home to maturity means working hard in prayer for the ones we love and are serving.*

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## Reflect and Respond

- Bringing your home to maturity means helping everyone in our households to grow into personal and spiritual maturity in accordance with God's design and agenda.
- Bringing your home to maturity means understanding and applying the flow of the Bible centered on Christ and living in the New Covenant.
- Bringing your home to maturity means that you will teach everyone in your home the peril of self-righteousness and the greatness of our righteousness in Christ so that those who believe, live in the light of that reality.
- Bringing your home to maturity means helping each one grow to maturity by depending on the Spirit to enable us to teach them what they need to know, to equip them to usefulness and engagement in ministry.
- Bringing your home to maturity means helping others to grow in being able to understand and apply truth, particularly the truth of the Word of God.
- Bringing your home to maturity means helping others to put into practice what they have been taught, implementing the Scriptures into their lives.
- Bringing your home to maturity means working hard in prayer for the ones we love and are serving.

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## Notes