

Going on to Maturity 3

A study about Christian maturity and what it looks like.

The first study delved into Ephesians 4 and saw Paul's cry to Christians to grow up in their faith. The second study was about reiterating that Christian maturity is a spiritual maturity generated in God and flowing through the believer. This third study takes it further by looking at a key tenet involved in developing a mature outlook.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian life is about bringing every area of our life under the Lordship of Christ. It's about laying it all on the altar and getting his perspective on the deal. And this key to our Christian growth is one we must keep using to unlock our stubborn hearts as new issues arise in our lives that both question and challenge the faith we hold, the virtue we express and even our love for God (2 Peter 1:5-7). What this study is about is that "how to grow up in God" requires a change in thinking and practice.

Read Romans 11:33 - 12:21

Look at the concluding verses of Romans 11. It is important to start here before looking at chapter 12, because as the word *Therefore*...implies, we are called to a certain activity because something else has already been put in place. In this instance laying ourselves on the altar before God is because of what He has already done for us.

Take a moment to write down and discuss together the nature and characteristics of God as contained in these verses

1. What do these verses tell us about the God we serve?
2. What do these verses tell us about our relationship with God?

Read Romans 12:1-2

Now we get to the action step "in view of God's mercy". Note how these verses tie in worshipping the Lord with mind body and spirit (see also Matthew 22:37)

3. What does it mean to offer your body as a living sacrifice? Why is this an essential part of Christian maturity?
4. The idea of denying self is a recurring theme in the scriptures (see Mark 8:34ff, Gal 2:20, James 4:7-10). Why is that?
5. How practically can you go about denying self in your daily life? Give examples from your experience and also ponder areas where it still needs to happen for you.

This passage is expressly written to address the issue of Christians who were coming under the errant teaching of gnosticism which said that as long as your heart was good, it didn't matter what you did with your body. Paul however ties it together and says that spiritual worship involves the God-honouring use of your body.

6. Do you think this is an issue for us? Consider the question against the background attitudes in our culture to things like self-fulfillment and self-denial.

Finally this short passage says that there is another part to our spiritual worship, if we are to live in the body of Christ as He wants. We must win the battle in our minds. (Actually this is what is meant by what is translated as repentance. The Greek word is μετανοεω (metanoeo) which means literally "transform your mind" or change your thinking.)

7. What is so important about our minds?
8. What must we change our thinking about?
9. How do you think we can go about renewing our minds?

Read Romans 12:3-21

The last part of the chapter highlights various things that may need some renewing in our minds. Notice how these are again played out in the context of the Church community (including the fact that each of us has a gift and task to fulfill) and decide which one of these do you find most challenging? Share it with the group and make it your personal task to work through it.