

Christian Maturity – A Summary

My level of spiritual maturity is the degree to which God's perspective of life has become my perspective.

1. What does Growth in Spiritual Maturity refer to?

Growing in Spiritual Maturity refers to the process in which the Holy Spirit transforms my spiritual **understanding** (values, priorities) in order to **increase** the flow of His life (His Living Water) through me. As more of His life is free to flow through me, there will be an ever-increasing measure of **His** spiritual fruit in my life.



ABIDING FELLOWSHIP with the Holy Spirit has to do with **whether or not** His life is able to flow through me at any given moment.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY has to do with **how much** of His life is able to flow through me at any given moment (in the context of abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit).

2. Spiritual Maturity does not necessarily speak of how much Biblical knowledge I possess, but rather of how willing I have been to allow the Holy Spirit to transform my understanding of Him, and of life.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ... But the one who boasts should boast in this, **that he understands and knows Me**....

This is the LORD's declaration.

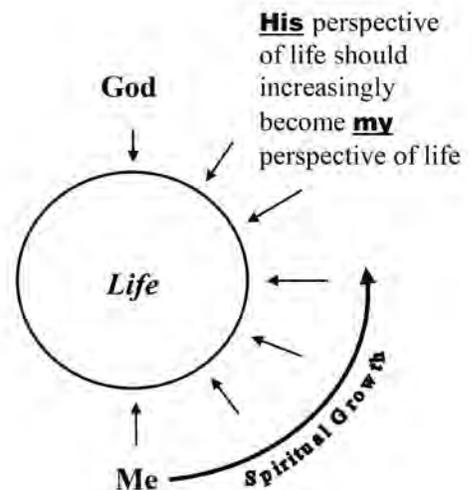
John 17:3 **This** is eternal life: that they may **know You**,...

Rom. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but **be transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

2 Peter 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are **increasing**, they will **keep you from being useless or unfruitful** in the **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 1:10 ... that you may walk ... **bearing fruit** in every good work and **growing** in the knowledge of God.

2 Peter 3:17-18 Therefore, dear friends, ... be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. But **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....



3. I can limit the flow of His life through me by focusing on my perceived personal capabilities or limitations.

My natural tendency is to limit God according to my personal understanding of Him and how He acts. As He trains me, He will speak to me about different areas of my understanding that are restricting the free flow of His life in and through me. I need to continually maintain the attitude of a disciple (an apprentice learner), a child (eager to listen and believe), so as to minimize the time that the Holy Spirit has to expend teaching me in any given area of understanding. I need to consciously allow Him access to any area of my life, aware that He will never make any changes except what is in my eternal best interest.

Look at how we limit the Lord by only remembering what we have allowed Him to do for us in the past. We say, "I always failed there, and I always will." Consequently, we don't ask for what we want. Instead, we think, "It is ridiculous to ask God to do this." If it is an impossibility, it is the very thing for which we have to ask. (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 29 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

As I grow spiritually, my focus will shift from my capabilities to His capabilities.

CAUTION: It is an unyielding “strength to resist” that hinders God, not weakness.

2 Cor. 12:9-10 (*Jesus told Paul*) “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me.... For when I am weak, then I am strong.

To honestly recognize my own capabilities is okay, but to limit God’s power to my perceived personal capabilities is an insult to Him.

4. Spiritual growth (learning process) should continue until I move on to heaven.



A trap that awaits me as I grow is the illusion that I will somehow arrive at a spiritual plateau after which spiritual growth will continue with minimal discomfort. God wants to exercise my faith and increase my understanding of how He thinks and acts, in order for me to increasingly think like Him, and to bear more eternal fruit. Even though every step of faith involves a “perceived” risk, I can rest in the assurance that I am never out of God’s sovereign oversight and care, and He will never allow me to suffer beyond His sufficient provision of grace to sustain me. The process will continue until I leave this earth and step into God’s presence. Growing believers find that their life is a constant warfare. There are no plateaus, just “rest stops.” Be aware of a tendency to be complacent and satisfied with your level of spiritual growth. We resist change.

Romans 5:3-5 ... but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

5. Biblical illustrations of the maturing process:

- a. Rivers of Living Water: A **trickle** becomes a **stream**, which becomes a **river**.

John 7:38-39 (*Jesus said*) “The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have **streams** of living water flow from deep within him.” He said this about **the Spirit**... (See also John 4:14)

As I live in abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit His “Living Water” is **free to flow** through my life. The **volume** of His Living Water that is able to flow depends on my spiritual maturity.

- b. A Branch on a Vine: A **twig** becomes a **branch**. Obviously, as the **branch grows (matures), more fruit can be produced through it**.



John 15:1-2, 8, 16 (*Jesus said*) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. ... and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce **more** fruit. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce **much** fruit and prove to be My disciples. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and **produce fruit** and that your fruit should remain...”

Romans 7:4 (*Paul wrote*) ... you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—**that we may bear fruit for God**.

- c. The Growth / Maturing Process: An **infant (baby, child)** becomes an **adolescent**, who becomes an **adult**.

Characteristics of an infant / baby: (1) **hungry**, (2) **dependent on others**, (3) **self-centered**.

Stages of growth: The immature Christian tends to focus on **self** needs, then as they grow, the needs of **others** become the focus, and as they mature, **God Himself** becomes the main focus.

Psalm 73:25 *Whom have I in heaven but **You**? And besides You, I desire **nothing** on earth.*

- Infants / Babies / Children:

1 Cor. 13:11 (*Paul writes*) When I was a **child**, I **spoke** like a child, I **thought** like a child, I **reasoned** like a child...

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn **infants**, desire the pure spiritual **milk**, so that you may **grow** by it for your salvation,...

1 John 2:12-14 I am writing to you, little **children**, because your **sins have been forgiven** because of Jesus’ name.... I have written to you, **children**, because you have come to know the Father.

1 Thess. 2:7 Although we could have been a burden as Christ’s apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother nurtures her own **children**.

1 Cor. 3:1-3 Brothers, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as **people of the flesh**, as **babies** in Christ. I gave you **milk** to drink, not solid food, because you were **not yet ready** for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still **fleshly**....

Heb. 5:12-13 Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God’s revelation again. You need **milk**, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on **milk** is **inexperienced** with the message about righteousness, because he is an **infant**.

1 Cor. 14:20 Brothers, **don’t be childish** in your thinking, but **be infants** in regard to evil and adult in your thinking.

➤ Young Adults:

1 John 2:14 (*John writes*) ... I have written to you, **young men**, because you are **strong**, God's word **remains in you**, and you have had **victory** over the evil one.



➤ Adults:

1 Cor. 13:11 (*Paul writes*) ... When I became a **man**, **I put aside childish things**.
1 Cor. 14:20 Brothers, don't be childish in your thinking, but be infants in regard to evil and **adult** in your thinking.
Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the **mature**—for those whose senses have been **trained** to distinguish between good and evil.
1 John 2:13-14 (*John writes*) I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to **know the One** who is from the beginning....

➤ All Believers (the Church):

Col. 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, warning and teaching **everyone** with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone mature** in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.
Eph. 4:11-15 And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, **to build up** the body of Christ, until we all **reach** unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into **a mature man** with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will **no longer be little children**, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us **grow** in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.
Rom. 8:29 For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to **the image of His Son**.

➤ The Spiritual Growth of Jesus: (**Note: His spiritual growth had nothing to do with sin. He was never disobedient or less than perfect.**)

Luke 2:40 The boy **grew up** and became strong, **filled with wisdom**, and God's grace was on Him.
Luke 2:42, 46-52 When He was **12 years old**, they (*Joseph and Mary*) found Him in the temple complex sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all those who heard Him were astounded at **His understanding** and His answers.... And Jesus **increased** in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.
Heb. 2:10 It was entirely appropriate that God, ... should make the source of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**.
Heb. 5:8-9 Though He was God's Son, He **learned obedience** through what He suffered. After He **was perfected**, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

Congratulations on your continuing choice to grow in the Lord! However, Phase 1 is not the end of your spiritual growth but only a stepping stone to even more.

Prayerfully consider who the Lord would have you mentor / disciple and go through Phase I with that believer. To assist you, review the guidelines found in lesson 2-5.