

## A Verse to Live by

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

2 Timothy 2:22 ESV

### September Prayer Focus

We are certainly feeling the pressures of the times. Do we get the vaccine or not? Whom do we believe? Wars and rumors of wars... It is a tough time and without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the risks of being misled are pretty high. We need to cover ourselves and our church with prayer. Let us join together praying for wisdom and discernment for not only ourselves but for every believer.

### Recommended Scripture Reading

Ephesians 4 - This is a great chapter explaining what maturity in Christ looks like.

James 1 - James is a book written to help Christians take their faith to a higher level. Based on the text, it's written to people who already have a faith in Christ.

Hebrews 5 & 6 - These chapters encourage us to pursue maturity.

### Life Application Challenge

Make a purposeful intention to grow in your spiritual life this month. Attend a conference, research a topic in the Bible you need to understand better, read a good book... etc. Also, think about someone you could disciple. Mature Christians should be teaching and helping other believers. Consider taking the step to disciple someone.

# Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | September 2021 Prayer Newsletter

## Maturity Matters

What a blessed and busy summer I have had. I hope yours has been blessed too. In July, we took the youth group to the Love is Red conference and then, just a week later, off to camp meeting. This was my first time attending; I had no idea what a blessed and anointed time it was. I was blown away at how powerfully the spirit moved. Several people accepted or rededicated their lives to Christ. God used that week to change lives and help believers grow. I think almost everyone who attended there grew a little closer to God. I encourage you to attend next summer!

Opportunities like the camp meeting are great ways for us to grow and mature in our faith. Though there are plenty of these opportunities in our country, there seems to be a real issue in many American churches of being stuck in spiritual infancy. Spiritual growth has been marginalized and church growth has been glorified. We hear regularly about the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) being the primary goal of the church, but equally important is facilitating maturation in believers. Being spiritually mature matters, a lot. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:28-29, "He is the one we proclaim, admonish and teach everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." Paul took the maturity of believers seriously, and as the body of Christ, we must as well.

Due to the current times, I feel compelled to write about spiritual maturity. Very soon, we each may be faced with making some tough decisions. We are being forced to face some uncomfortable choices and situations. The world is bombarding us with various facts, propaganda, and lies. If you are not able to stand firm in your faith, if you are not mature, then you risk being crushed or led astray in the months to come, "Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ." (Col. 2:8 NLT) I am sure we all have been exposed to some of that "high-sounding nonsense". This is not a time to be immature or unprepared. We better be studied up, prayed up, and "...keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25b ESV).

In Hebrews 5 we read that a sign of maturity is being able to tell the difference between good and evil, "But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." (vs. 14 ESV) And we gain this kind of insight "...by constant practice..." A mature Christian has learned the elemental truths and **applies** what they learned in their everyday life. We call that righteousness. That is the

difference between a spiritual infant and a mature believer. When we are first saved, we are still learning what thinking and living like Jesus looks like; but a mature believer takes the truths they have learned and practices those daily.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul admonished the believers for still being too immature to be taught deeper things, "Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready." (vs. 1-2, NIV) Understand, Paul wrote this just 5 years after he visited Corinth. He visited Corinth in approximately 50 AD and wrote this letter around 55 AD. In 5 years he expected them to move from spiritual infancy to maturity. In verse 3 he goes on to write, "You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?" Pretty convicting, isn't it? An immature believer is still more concerned with self. They are seeking the by-products of faith more than Christ. They want to go to Heaven, they want the healings, the financial blessings, the promises of prosperity, but they aren't sure about the "... rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ,..." (1 Pet. 4:13 NIV) When we are concerned with self, it tends to lead to bickering and being offended. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (Jam. 4:1 NIV) An immature believer is often caught up in bickering over opinions and offenses that are petty.

Now, before you get mad at me, let me say, we all are in the process of maturation. None of us will be fully mature until we are in Heaven. Yet, here and now, we should be growing closer to Christ, and thus becoming more Christ-like. The fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control should be increasingly influencing our thoughts and attitudes the longer we are saved.

Why does maturity matter so much? Paul answers that for us in Ephesians 4:14: "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."

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel