

“The Marks of a Mature Person”

Text: James 1:2-4

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Looking at our world today, the number one cause of problems is immaturity.

- We get ourselves in all kinds of problems by saying immature things, making immature decisions, acting in immature ways.
- Talk shows & entertainers (Tom Cruise, Michael Jackson)
- We just need to grow up.

God’s will for every person is that they grow. Hebrews 6:1, *“Let us go on to maturity.”*

- God tells us to grow up.
- That’s why one of the purposes of our church is to help everybody grow in every way and have balanced Christian living.

God says maturity is attitude. It’s your character.

- D.L. Moody said, “Character is what you are in the dark.”
- Recognition is what people say about you. Character is what God says about you.
- God says it’s your attitude that determines whether you’re mature or not. God wants you to grow up and have Christ-like attitudes.

How do you measure spiritual maturity? Not by comparing yourself to other people but by comparing yourself to the word of God.

- The Book of James is a manual on maturity. He defines what maturity means.
- James gives us five marks of maturity.

I. A MATURE PERSON IS POSITIVE UNDER PRESSURE.

A. James 1:2-4, *“Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance and perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.”*

1. How do you handle trials? The first test of maturity is how you react to problems? Do they blow you away? Do you get negative? Do you grumble or gripe? How do you handle problems?

B. Christianity is a life, not a religion. Jesus said, *“I have come that you might have life.”* Life means problems and part of life means solving problems and facing them with the right attitude.

1. You know people who look at life as a glass that is half-empty or half-full. What is your attitude, your natural bent when things don't go right and you're irritated?
 - a. Farmers illustration
- C. James says, *"Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."*
 1. You can know the Bible and be cantankerous.
- D. Are you positive under pressure?
 1. Some of you need to pray, "God, will You help me handle the problems in life and not be negative about them, not let them get me down? Teach me to be positive under pressure."

II. A MATURE PERSON IS SENSITIVE TO PEOPLE.

- A. James 2:8, *"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself' you are doing right."*
 1. A mature person is sensitive to people. They don't just see their own needs. They see other people's needs. They understand other's hurts.
 - a. Children, when they are immature, only see themselves, "What did you bring me? I want this & I want that."
 2. God says that love, being interested in others, is a mark of maturity.
- B. James gets very specific. James 2:1-6: *"Don't show favoritism, don't be a snob, don't look down on people, don't judge by appearance, don't insult people, don't exploit people."*
 1. The second test of maturity is love: how do you treat other people?
- C. In Matthew 25, in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus teaches that the one thing we will be judged for is how we treat other people.
- D. Are you sensitive to others?
 1. Some of you need to pray, "Lord, please forgive me. I've been insensitive to me wife. She talks, I tune her out. I read the paper, watch TV. I don't even listen because I don't think she has anything to say. I'm too caught up in my own world to care about her world."
 2. Some of you need to say, "Lord, please forgive me for being insensitive to my kids. Help me to realize that they are just kids. Help me to quit expecting them to act mature when I don't even act mature all the time. Help me to be sensitive to their hurts and needs and problems."

3. Some of you wives need to say, “Lord, help me to be sensitive to my husband and the pressures that he’s undergoing right now at work the difficulties he’s handling. I don’t experience them so I take it for granted. Help me not to load more on him when he comes home, but to find the right time and right way to share.”

III. A MATURE PERSON HAS MASTERED THEIR MOUTH.

- A. James 3:2, *“We all stumble in many ways. (What an understatement. Nobody’s perfect.) Those who are never at fault in what they say, they are perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.”*
 1. The first thing a doctor will say when you go for a check up is “Stick out your tongue.” He uses your tongue to check your health. God does that spiritually, too.
 2. In World War II there was a saying, “Loose lips, sink ships.” Loose lips destroy lives. They hurt.
 - a. Definition of gossip: hearing something you like about somebody you don’t. It’s mouth-to-mouth recitation.
 - b. Last conversation
- B. Self-control comes from tongue control. We get ourselves in trouble at what we think and what we speak. James 3 gives several illustrations. He says our tongue is like:
 1. a rudder on a boat that can control the direction of the boat.
 2. a bit in a horse’s mouth that can control the direction of the horse.
- C. Your tongue controls your life.
 1. What you say directs your life.
 2. What you say can destroy your life.
 3. It can delight people’s lives, it can discourage people’s lives.
 4. Your tongue is a powerful force for good or for evil.
- D. Have you ever heard anyone say, “I just say what’s on my mind.” They’re kind of proud of it. Being frank, up front, they say what’s on their mind. Maybe what’s on their mind shouldn’t be said. The Bible says, that’s not frankness, that’s immaturity. A lot of people just need a large dose of tactfulness.
- E. Ephesians 4:29, *“Do not let any negative talk come out of your mouth but only what is helpful for building up others according to their needs...”*
 1. Watch what you say. When you talk say things to build other people up. If it doesn’t build somebody else up, don’t say it, even if it’s the truth. If it doesn’t build up, don’t say it. That’s a mark of maturity.

- F. Have you mastered your mouth?
1. Some of you need to say, “God, I’m sorry. I’ve been a gossip. I’ve spread rumors. I’ve talked behind backs. I’ve shared things that were not positive, were not for the building up but for the tearing down. God, help me to not be so impulsive with my mouth. Help me to watch my speech and only speak that which builds up.”

IV. A MATURE PERSON IS A PEACEMAKER NOT A TROUBLEMAKER.

- A. James 4:1, *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”*
1. James is talking about conflict.
 - a. He says that inner quarrels and fights come from our own inner desires.
 - b. You want something and you don’t get it. You kill and covet but you cannot get what you want.
 - c. You do not have because you do not ask God.
- B. Are you a peacemaker? Am I a troublemaker? Do I like to argue? Am I a contentious person? Do I get my feelings hurt? Do I get defensive easily? Do I hurt other people’s feelings? Am I a peacemaker? Or am I a troublemaker?
- C. The mark of a mature person is the lack of conflict in their own life.
1. Paul told the Corinthian church, “You guys are a bunch of babies”. They argued about everything. They argued about the Lord’s Supper, gifts, leadership, everything. That’s a mark of immaturity.
 2. Nanny 911 illustration: two common causes of conflict – selfishness or pride and judgmentalism where you are always finding fault with others.
- D. Are you a peacemaker or a troublemaker?
1. Some of you need to say, “God, you know I’ve got a temper and I ask You to help me with it. You know I’ve got pride in my life, help me with it. Lord, You know how easy it is for me to judge other people. Help me to realize that all that’s going to do is to cause conflict and stir up strife. Help me to realize that You are God and I’m not to play God. I don’t have all the facts and know all the motives. Help me to leave that judgment to You.”

V. A MATURE PERSON IS PATIENT AND PRAYERFUL

- A. James 5:7, 11, *“Be patient the, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming... As you know, we consider blessed those who persevere.”* Vs. 16, *“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”*

1. God says the mark of a mature person is that they are patient and prayerful. They go together. They express an attitude of dependence upon God.
- B. James 5:7, *“Be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, how patient he is for the fall and spring rain. You too be patient. Stand firm because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged.”*
1. He’s saying be patient. Just as a farmer has to wait, sometimes we have to wait.
 - a. We have to wait on God in answer to prayer.
 - b. We have to wait on God for a miracle.
 - c. We have to wait on God to work in our lives.
 - d. We have to wait. Patience is a mark of maturity. The only way we learn patience is by waiting.
- C. Vs. 16, *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it wouldn’t rain and it didn’t rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crop.”*
1. If anyone was patient it was Elijah. Elijah was patient and prayerful. That’s a mark of maturity.
- D. Are you patient and prayerful about life?
1. Some of you have been waiting a long time for an answer, for a change, for a healing. Say, “God, help me to grow in patience. Help me to develop my prayer life, to talk to You more, to show my dependence on You by talking to You about every area of my life. Make me a patient and prayerful person.”

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your word, for this Book of James that is such a practical manual on Christian living. Thank You that it deals not with theory, but with areas that all of us need to work on – our attitudes, our actions, our words, our thoughts, our relationships. Help us to mature, to grow up, to be more like You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.