

Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection

Chapter 2

The Goal of Maturity

**Maturity is not reached by a single bound,
But we climb the ladder round by round.**

from a poem by wilbur johnson - 2/23/01

Paul speaks of the goal of *maturity* in Philippians 3:12

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made (mature), but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

For the most part maturing is a matter of making proper response to the challenges and opportunities of life.

In my poem "**Round by Round**" I suggest"
How shall I climb this ladder to reach the top?
By religion, good works and busy stuff?
All such striving is never enough.
"Neglect my neighbor and serve God."
Is this the way to mature my piece of sod?
Look in books and search, and search.
Will only leave me in a lurch.

Here is the Master builder's plan:

The rungs of servicing lead me up;
Well used, they mature me to sup.
People are the side rails which hold the rungs;
A blessed privilege to be among;
I'll seek and serve them in life's strife.
For they are a part of the ladder of life.

So, I climb the ladder round by round.
Still climbing, at last, let me be found.
by wilbur johnson - 2/23/01

Rungs and side rails -- serving people -- are held together by the glue of truth. Let us seek the GOAL of maturity, which is to follow in His steps.

"To this you were called, because **Christ** suffered for you, **leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.**" I Peter 2:21

In the old hymn, "I would Be Like Jesus" Bentley Aceley speaks of the goal of maturity.

I WOULD BE LIKE JESUS

Earthly pleasures vainly call me; I would be like Jesus,
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me; I would be like Jesus.
He has broken ev'ry fetter, I would be like Jesus;
That my soul may serve Him better, I would be like Jesus.

All the way from earth to Glory, I would be like Jesus;
Telling o'er and o'er the story, I would be like Jesus.

That in Heaven He may meet me, I would be like Jesus;
That His words "Well done" may greet me, I would be like Jesus.

The goal of Jesu's ministry was LOVE and PEOPLE even as John 3:16,17 assert:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16,17 (NKJ)

Opportunities to mature are all about us and most often occurs as we wait for something special, big or religious to happen.

Many seek maturity in the religious matters of hymn singing, giving, studying the Bible, sacrament of communion, and listening to preachers. Religious matters, like all acts, offer an opportunity for maturing; yet, the "pure **religion***" named in the Scripture, is often given second place. Please know that the Greek record shows this word for "religion" ("threskia") is one of seven Greek words for "worship". So, when translated James 3:16,17 reads:

"If anyone considers himself *worshipping and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his *worship is worthless. *Worship that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:26,27 (NIV)

People are important as Jon Moore relates: "During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a Pop quiz.

I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the

questions, until I read the last one: 'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?' Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. Absolutely, said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. Learn their first name. They deserve your attention and care, at least smile and say hello". I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy."

The Bible is replete with examples illustrating the importance of **taking time to notice and love people.**

Jesus was on his way to teach an expectant crowd when a man named Jairus stopped him asking that He take a detour and come to his house for his twelve year old daughter was dying. Always interested in individuals, Jesus accepts the invitation; but, in the jostling crowd somebody touched Him. His disciples were perplexed that Jesus even mentions such a matter because the crowd is jostling him, a little girl is dying and **Jesus takes time** to find out who touched him, so a woman with an "issue of blood" is made whole. Meanwhile the little girl has died, so what's the use of proceeding to Jarius' house?

"Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject

to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened." Luke 8:40-56

So, Jesus takes time to *touch* individuals, and let us take note that people are *touching* each of us all the time.

BE A VIP* SOMEBODY

We are more than just a Anybody!

We can be a VIP Somebody!

If we speak as we go-- kind words--
 We can be a useful Somebody!
Listen to people as we pass along
 And be a wanted Somebody!
Smile to those we meet-- no reason-- just smile.
 And be a cheering Somebody!
Pray for those we converse with in the day.
 And be a maturing Somebody on the Way!
Share Jesus when God bids us speak,
 And you'll be a VIP Somebody!
Weep with a weak, fallen anybody,
 And we'll be a maturing Somebody!
Have faith in others when many don't,
 And, be a Somebody rare!
Stop being just anybody!
 Mature into a special Somebody!

("VIP") Very important Person

by wilbur johnson - 2/18/01

Many times interruptions on our *road of life* are God's opportunity for ministering to people. In Mark 19:10-17 Jesus is preaching and a man interrupts the service as he is let down through the roof on a stretcher by four friends. He is ministered to as his sins are forgiven. The crippled man takes up his mat and goes home.

While I was sharing a revival message in the Salina (Kansas) Christian Church on the subject of "Practicing the Presence of Jesus." A man in a black over coat raised his hand. I recognized him, and he said "I used to be a Preacher but not anymore." He sat down. I continued. After a few minutes his hand went up again. Then he said. "I grew up in a Christian home but nobody loved me."

He sat down. I assured him of God's love and mine and continued speaking. A third time his hand went up requesting to speak. "I used to come to church all the time but nobody cared about me as I wore poor clothing." He sat down. At this point one of the deacons came and took the man by the arm and ushered him to the back.

After the service was over, I inquired about the man. "Did you get to counsel and pray with him?" The deacon gave me a look of blank stare and amazement, and said, "Counsel - Pray? That man was disturbing the service, and I ushered him to the door."

Who was the stranger in the black coat? Possibly an angel, or perhaps God's person to be ministered to that night.

Many of Jesus' miracles and dissertations came about as the result of interruptions,. Consider---*

* Mark 10:10-17 - Jesus is very busy and His disciples are sure he cannot be bothered with some Little Children; but, Jesus rebukes His disciples and blesses the Children.

We need to allow people opportunities to be an occasion for maturing.

The "Jesus Movement" of the late sixties and seventies brought opportunities to minister to *strange* individuals such as John. He had wild hair, wore a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans and no shoes. This was literally his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He is brilliant. Kinda eccentric and very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college.

Across the street from the campus was a well-dressed, very conservative church. They want to develop a ministry to the students, but are not sure how to go about it. One day John decides to go there. He walks in with jeans, his T-shirt, no shoes and wild hair. The service has already started and so John starts down the aisle

looking for a seat. The church is completely packed and he can't find a seat. By now people are looking a bit uncomfortable, but no one says anything. John gets closer and closer and closer to the pulpit and when he realizes there are no seats, he just squats down right on the carpet. (Although perfectly acceptable behavior at a college fellowship, trust me, this had never happened in this church before!) By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. About this time, the minister realizes that at the back of the church, a deacon is slowly making his way toward John. Now the deacon is in his eighties, has silver-gray hair, a three-piece suit, and a pocket watch. A godly man, very elegant, very dignified, very courtly. He walks with a cane and as he starts walking toward this boy, everyone is saying to themselves, "You can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and of his background to understand some college kid on the floor?" It takes a long time for the man to reach the boy. The church is utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes are focused on him. You can't even hear anyone breathing. The people are thinking, "The minister can't even preach the sermon until the deacon does what he has to do."

And now they see this elderly man drop his cane on the floor. and with great difficulty he lowers himself and sits down next to John and worships with him so he won't be alone. Everyone chokes up with emotion. When the minister gains control he says, **"What I'm about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget."** Author unknown - Shared by Rocky Woolery

The old man was demonstrating maturity. The congregation was learning.

* Jesus is teaching in the Temple and a woman caught in the act of adultery is brought before him for judgment so she can be stoned. (John 8:2-12) The accusers suppose that the center stage of action (ministry) will be the woman. The stage changes and her accusers become the ones who are ministered to, and the Woman is told "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

* A teaching service is interrupted as the people are hungry. Jesus feeds 5000. Now, which had the greater lesson? What he was teaching, or the miracle of loaves and fishes?

Monetary value should not be our chief concern; but, in not taking time for **persons** we not only forfeit an opportunity which will help us to mature, but often give up hidden blessings such as this true story illustrates.

The President of Harvard made a mistake by prejudging people and it cost him dearly.

A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, and walked timidly without an appointment into the President's outer office. The secretary could tell in a moment that such backwoods, country hicks had no business at Harvard and probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge. She frowned. "We want to see the president," the man said softly.

"He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped. "We'll wait," the lady replied.

For hours, the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away. They didn't. And the secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the president, even though it was a chore she always regretted to do. "Maybe if they just see you for a few minutes, they'll leave," she told

him. And he sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with them, but her detested gingham dresses and homespun suits cluttering up his outer office. The president, stern-faced with dignity strutted toward the couple.

The lady told him "We had a son that attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he was accidentally killed. And my husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on the campus." The president wasn't touched; he was shocked. "Madam," he said gruffly, "We can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did this the place would look like a cemetery." "Oh, no, " the lady explained quickly, "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard. The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress And homespun suit, then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical plant at Harvard."

For a moment the lady was silent. The president was pleased. He could get rid of them now. And the lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it costs to start a University? Why don't we just start our own?"

Her husband nodded. The president 's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment. And Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford walked away, traveled to Palo Alto, California, where they established the University that bears their name, a memorial to a son that Harvard was not important enough to care about.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a man of much learning, stated a main ingredient in our maturing in life when he wrote:

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve others."

*** Other Bible incidents which became the focal point of greater lessons** include...demons cast out, a man's withered hand healed, the blind man of Jericho, raising of Lazarus, woman healed on the Sabbath, healing of man born blind, demoniac boy healed, etc. Will we learn a life lesson from these? The lessons being opportunities for ministry are about us, and will assist us greatly in maturing if we take time to love people, and give heed to their needs.

Perhaps the greatest enemy of maturity is to settle back on our laurels, and fail to *soar where the eagles fly*. **Paul was ever mindful of the ongoing need to move on from the past, seize the present and press for the goal.**

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it (maturity). But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things." Philipians 3:13,14 (NIV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma

Chapter 2 - "THE GOAL OF MATURITY"

- 1. In Philippians 3:12 what does Paul say is the goal of maturity?**
- 2. What is maturing a matter of?**
- 3. In the old hymn, "I Would Be Like Jesus" what does Bentley Aceley say is the goal of maturity?**
- 4. When do opportunities to mature most often occur?**
- 5. What did Jesus tell those who were mourning the death of Jairus' daughter when they said, "Don't bother the teacher any more.?"**
- 6. What are many times interruptions on our road of life?**
- 7. In Mark 10:10-17 the disciples are sure Jesus cannot be bothered with some little children. What did Jesus say?**
- 8. In the story by Rocky Woolery, what was the old man demonstrating?**
- 9. In John 8:2-12, who become the center of the stage and become the ones who are ministered to?**
- 10. What did the President of Harvard do that cost him dearly?**

11. What did Dr. Albert Schweitzer state as a main in our maturing in life?

12. What is the greatest enemy of maturity?

Notes