

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: October 3, 2010

## Becoming Mature

by Dan Trygg

“...His divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> For by means of these things He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. <sup>5</sup> Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup> and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup> For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
2 Peter 1:3-8

**How do you become mature?** If you ponder what was written above, it becomes clear that God has given to us all that we need. **However, the maturity or “full-grown-ness” (Gk., *telos*) of us as individuals comes only as we develop our relationship with God, who indwells us by His Spirit, learn and apply His promises, and as we turn away from the ruin caused by worldly desires in order to obediently respond to the inner leadings of the Spirit.**

**(1.) Develop a deep, personal experiential knowledge of God.** The phrase Peter uses is “true knowledge”. He says that “everything pertaining to life and godliness has been granted to us”, but it comes “through the true knowledge of Him.” The word translated as “true knowledge” is *epignōsis*, a word that is a more intensive form of the word for experiential knowledge. It refers to a flash of insight, a discovery, a personal revelation or recognition of some truth. It is more thorough, and more personal, than the typical word for experiential knowledge. It is truth that is *apprehended*, or “perceived-and-made-one’s-own”. This is more than an academic understanding. It refers to an “Aha!” kind of experience. (Cf. Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Col. 1:10; 2:2; II Tim. 2:4,25; 3:7; II Pet. 1:2,8; also related verbal form, *epiginōskō* – Matt. 11:27; Mk. 2:8; 5:30; Lk. 5:22; 24:16,31; I Cor. 13:12.) How do we gain such a personal knowledge of God? The words of Proverbs 2:1-4 would provide good guidance: Accept, value and obey the understanding you *already* have; incline your heart for more insight and be watchful and attentive for it; cry out in prayer for it; and seek for it through study and counsel with others. God’s promise is that if we seek after Him, He will reveal more of Himself to us (II Chron. 15:2).

**(2.) Get to know the clear teachings and promises of God’s Word.** The other avenue specifically mentioned in Peter’s letter is the promises of God. The Greek word translated as “promise” is somewhat broader. It is a “declaration of intention, an announcement or offer to do something”. Thus, the word implies that we need to understand what God’s intention toward us is, and what He is offering to do for us, as we follow Him. We can’t trust God for something that we don’t even know about. Many are living very immature, fleshly lives because they have no idea what God’s intended plan in salvation is, nor what He has made available to us. They continue to live on a purely human level, because they have no conception of the power of the Holy Spirit within them, nor do they understand what the Bible declares the entire purpose, scope or calling of God upon their lives really is. Furthermore, they are ignorant of the practical teachings of scripture regarding learning to walk in the Spirit. There is a reason why Jesus called His followers “disciples”. Disciples are, above all else, learners. Jesus expects us to learn and live by His word (Jn. 8:31,32). Paul clearly taught that the scriptures were given to build up the believers, lead them into their inheritance, train them in righteousness and equip them to do God’s will (Acts 20:32; II Tim. 3:16,17).

**(3.) Remain steadfast in the times of temptation and difficulty.** If we continue our word study about maturity (Gk., *telos*, or *teleios*, and related words), we find that **one key ingredient in the maturation process is learning to deal with trials, temptations and difficulties.** Did you know that Jesus Himself had to mature? He was perfect, without any sin, but He was not ready for His life work until He had been matured through trials (Heb. 2:10). In a little glimpse into Jesus’ process of development, Hebrews 5:7-9 says, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplication with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, he learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect (lit. ‘having been matured’, ‘having been fully-grown’), He became to all who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” Jesus came to the place where He learned to “trust Himself to Him who judges righteously”. We need to develop that same kind of trust and obedience (I Pet. 2:21-23). If Jesus had to “learn obedience (‘heeding under’) through the things that He suffered, we ought not to be surprised that we have to go through a similar process in order to “grow up” in our faith. James 1:2-4 speaks to this, “Consider every joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials (tests), knowing that **the testing of your faith produces endurance.** And let endurance have its fully-grown (complete, brought-to-the-end-fulfillment) work, in order that you might be perfect (*teleion*, i.e., ‘fully-grown; mature’), complete (a whole portion,

with all its component parts present and operational), lacking in nothing.” Notice **four important points**. **First, trials will come**. Expect them. **Second, they can have a very beneficial impact on our lives**. They have a purpose – to help us grow up and become strong. **Third, the positive impact of the trial can be aborted if we do not respond to it correctly**. James specifically mentions this because this is our tendency, to *not* watch and wait for God’s answer, but to take matters into our own hands. We often give in, and go along with the temptation; or we compromise ourselves and our principles; or we try to retreat from the test; or we attempt to devise our own solution, based upon our limited understanding and resources. God wants us to trust *Him*, ...to remain faithful to *Him*. In the passage above, Peter had written that we become sharers in the divine nature, escaping the ruinous corruption of this world. The two are not compatible. Godliness and corruption do not mix. If we continue to compromise, we will not experience the freedom and fulfillment of God’s nature filling and flowing through us. God’s Spirit will be grieved and quenched, and we will only experience the emptiness of life lived on human terms, along with the consequences of our sin. **Fourth, it helps to understand that part of why God allows trials or tests is to develop perseverance**. That implies that sometimes a test *will* be difficult, and occasionally a test *can* last for an extended time. If it were easy, where would be the need for endurance? If it did not last long, where would be the need for perseverance? **Don’t be surprised, then, if tests come. In fact, rejoice, because God is “growing you up”. He is building spiritual will and muscle.**

**(4.) Discipline yourself to grow.** I Tim. 4:7 tells us to “discipline (the Greek word is *gumnazo*, from which we derive the word ‘gymnasium. It describes a workout program, ‘exercise’, ‘train’) yourselves toward godliness”. Spiritual maturity does not happen by itself. If you want to mature in Christ, you need to make those goal-oriented choices to tailor your life toward spiritual growth. There is a reason why the word “disciple” is related to the word “discipline”. To be an effective disciple, one who becomes an effective follower of Jesus, one who learns to walk as He walked, you need to be devoted to Him, and you cannot live like everybody else. That is what the word “holy” means: separated from common use and dedicated to God. This is real, and it extends to the most practical things in life.

**(5.) Pray for growth.** Since God is the One who gives us growth (I Cor. 3:5-7), who reveals Himself and spiritual truths to us, we need to be asking Him to develop and mature us. He alone really knows what we have been designed for, so apart from His direction and inworking we will not ever be able to truly be fulfilled (“come to completion”). He is our spiritual Father, ready and willing to discipline and train us (Heb. 12:5-11; I Pet. 1:14-19). If we are eager to learn, and understand spiritual principles, He can bring more and deeper growth experiences into our lives. If we are really teachable and hungry, God will respond to our requests for more growth by “stepping up” the growth process. We have many examples in the scriptures of people praying for opportunities to minister, for boldness, for clarity, for deliverance from temptations. All of these examples are given to encourage us to pray in a similar fashion.

**(6.) Get involved in a functioning group of believers, people working to build each other up.** The Body of Christ was designed to be a learning laboratory for spiritual development, as well as a support and accountability group to keep us on track. There are over 21 “one another” responsibilities we are to exercise toward each other when we gather together. The Body of Christ is supposed to be a *very* interactive fellowship, ...one where we “get real” with one another, ...one where we share our “business” with one another, and we get support, counsel, and/or accountability (Jas. 5:16; Heb. 3:12,13; Gal. 6:1-5). No one is “better than” anyone else. We are all sinners saved by grace, ...on the road toward healing, stability, training and usefulness in serving God. He has given us the assignment of building one another up when we gather (I Cor. 12:7; 14:26; Eph. 4:11-16). We do this by exercising our spiritual gifts and by “trusting in love” one to another (Eph. 4:11-16).

**(7.) Make use of mentors to help you grow.** The use of mentors or “disciplers” goes way back into OT times (e.g., Moses-Joshua; Elijah-Elishah). Jesus modeled it with His 12. Paul continued this with his apostolic team, and recommended it to us (II Tim. 2:2). A personal relationship with someone who can more intimately follow your progress and keep you on track is a great asset. If the person is more mature, you can benefit from their years of experience. **Become a mentor to someone else.** That responsibility will help you be more organized and diligent in your own life.

**The key to “growing up” is to take responsibility for yourself and your actions. God made us “response-able”** (able-to-respond) to His grace, and the opportunities He brings to us. ***We are given the responsibility***, and He expects us to produce something with our lives. In the passage from II Peter above, it is clear that **God expects us to invest in our spiritual development**. We are to add to our faith a positive attitude to grow, followed by knowledge, self-control, perseverance, good-devotedness to God, brotherly-affection and ultimately the *agapē*-love from God. If these qualities are increasing in us, we will be fruitful in our spiritual lives. God set things up so that our will can determine the level of our growth and the extent of our ministry in Christ. ***We are accountable to Him*** for what we do with our lives (Matt. 25). **If only we knew the extent of what He could accomplish in and with us! Go after God!**