



# Lecture 1

## Developing Maturity for Life

*God's heart for us is to grow into the full stature of Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 4:13 (Wuest Translation)

“... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the experiential, full and precise knowledge of the Son of God, to a spiritually mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, in order that we no longer may be immature ones...”

This is an impossible goal for us to reach. We see in the Bible, however, examples of man and women like us who displayed the character of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Stephen; Paul; Peter; John, etc. This is the reason why God has given us His Holy Spirit; He is the sanctifying force in operation in our lives as we depend on Him. He (the Holy Spirit) is eager to make us more into the image of Jesus every day of our lives.

***As we just read in Ephesians 4:13, it is “the unity of the faith and of the experiential, full and precise knowledge of the Son of God” that makes us spiritually mature.***

*The only way to experience this kind of experiential knowledge is to act on the Word of God by faith. No man-made psychology or religiosity will work; on the contrary, it will affect our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is the source of faith, wisdom and power to imitate Jesus.*

Galatians 5:22-26 (Wuest translation)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfullness, meekness, self-control. Against such things as these there is no law. And they who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the evil nature with its dispositions and cravings once for all. In view of the fact that we are being sustained in spiritual life by the Spirit, by means of the Spirit let us go on ordering our conduct. Let us stop becoming vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Some major characteristics of maturity developed in us by the Holy Spirit:

- Responsibility (*acting in obedience to God, righteousness*)
- Integrity of character (*representing Jesus; yes means yes, Matthew 5:37*)
- Ability to forgive (*Divine sacrificial love, putting God and others first*)
- Humility (*leaving pride, the ego behind*)
- Accepting God’s sovereign will in life’s circumstances (*contentment, gratefulness*)
- Not ruled by the flesh, but by the Spirit (*depending on the Holy Spirit & the Word*)

### **Responsibility**

God has created us as free agents of our will and has given us the responsibility for our lives and the world we live in. We have the power to choose. The Word of God makes it clear that we are responsible for our actions, life style, conduct and belief system. While God has given us this responsibility, He also has given us the instruction, wisdom and even the means for us to apply His principles. When we rely on Him, His Holy Spirit will guide us, comfort us, and make sure we stay on track. The only thing He requires is our trust and our surrender to Him. ***Jesus IS the WAY, He IS the TRUTH, He Is the LIFE.*** We are seeing today how this world and our society are spiralling out of control because of their refusal to acknowledge God.

More and more we are seeing our society become more irresponsible in many ways. The aim of mankind to gain self-fulfilment by becoming “independent” and “free”, and claiming their “rights” (**self-centredness**) is leading to conflicts with self and others and most of all robbing people of the peace and blessings God wants so much to provide to His children.

The extremes seen today in our society are alarming. Wrong attitudes have been adopted as “normal.” While this is not new in society, we are progressively seeing family breakdowns due to loss of responsibility,

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God-given boundaries and also immaturity of character. Children then develop rebellion towards the parents, teachers and any God-given authority. The Bible calls this lawlessness.

**Case Study:** **2 Samuel 13:1-39**

**2 Samuel 15:1-37**

**2 Samuel 18:1-18**

Throughout the Bible God gives us a picture of ourselves and how much harm the roots of irresponsibility and rebellion can cause. Let us look at one example, King David and his family:

**When God gives us authority, He also gives us responsibility as well as grace to accomplish His will.**

King David is a great inspiration to all of us, because we can identify – despite his faith in God – with his weaknesses and also his mistakes as king and family member:

Lack of responsibility and protection towards his family when Tamar was defiled. He refused to deal with the situation, when this crime of rape was committed in his own family and Absalom reacted in anger and frustration. Absalom acted in an ungodly way as he rebelled and fought against his father and king and even tried to usurp King David's throne. His end was quite dramatic, fatal.

**The roots are:**

*Sin not dealt with by the authority. (David did not deal with Amnon)*

*Lack of protection and justice shown by the authority figure*

*Lack of godly appeal by the son (Absalom). Felt rejection/anger due to David's lack of justice*

*Rejection will lead to rebellion*

*Rebellion will create a barrier of division*

*Lack of proper communication will lead into further harmful steps*

The lack of responsibility shown by David led to family and kingdom tragedies. Absalom was killed and David's kingdom was shaken. So today in different ways, we can find ourselves in situations where our lack of responsibility leads to suffering and pain, affecting us and the people around us.

David had shown a pattern of "covering up", see his affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), then with this family scandal he did the same and his family and Israel suffered due to lack of protection. Authority has been established by God primarily for protection. **Authority is to be exercised in righteousness.**

Favouritism towards a family member (especially children) can bring jealousy and injustice, these being seeds for pain and family conflicts, favouritism provokes rejection, anger, envy and low self-worth to the ones who feel disadvantaged.

## **Immaturity and its Roots**

Due to all – in some way – having been affected by life circumstances, there are a lot of "adult children". We grow intellectually and physically, even spiritually to some extent, but have emotional deficits. Sometimes these deficits cause immaturity which causes us to struggle in life, especially in relationships, jobs, school, family, etc.

People who have gone through severe traumas as children find their emotional development affected, sometimes even stopped. Drugs can also cause the emotional development to collapse and are a hindrance towards maturity. Lack of nurturing, abuse, violence, drugs and other traumas will stop the maturing process. Today we also find many cases where children experience the divorce of their parents, this causing a major shock and affects the child with repercussions of poor performance at school, work, etc. They might experience preoccupation, guilt, shame and a sense of abandonment and rejection, probably anger towards at least one of the parents.

The repercussions of these symptoms can be depression, grief, confusion. Pain and hurt are natural repercussions, but if we do not know God's ways, this pain in our souls will direct us into ungodly ways, such as anger, resentment, bitterness, rebellion, addictions and the enemy will take advantage of us.

**It is important to act on God's Word to overcome the past, pain, guilt, shame, bitterness, rejection, etc.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 (Wuest translation)

**"So that, assuming that anyone is in Christ, he is a creation new in quality. The antiquated, out-of-date things [which do not belong to the new life in Christ Jesus] have passed away. Behold, all things have become new in quality."**