

## Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit

### Maturity

*Unlike many of the Crap of Life lessons, this one is unique and takes a slightly different approach. There is no three points like usual, but a more indepth examination of some of the scripture associated with Maturity.*

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#### **Life Questions:**

Are you mature? Do you think you know everything there is to know? Are you open to suggestion and opportunities to the possibility that someone might know how to do what you are doing better? Would you listen to someone who is trying to help you or do you assume everyone is after you?

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You are preparing for the biggest meeting of your life. The deal is worth almost a million dollars. It will feed you, your family and your business for the next five years. And it won't be feed off baloney, it will be steak. Everything is ready. All you have to do is show them something that tells them you know what you are doing. But there is a problem, the guy you put to work on the project because he was playing on Facebook. He had other things to do. And so now, all that time and energy to get to this point is lost because of the immaturity of someone else.

Maturity is probably the most underrated process in a Christian's life. Why? Because being mature means that you are able to take criticism, deal with a lot of different people and be able to stand up for yourself by being able to have a legitimate argument when challenged. An you don't go nah nah nee boo boo to someone or storm out of the room. But it is more than that, it is the ability to grow spiritually.

When you are born, there is a nurse there usually that takes the baby to a doctor who does a boatload of tests, shots and other sundry things to the newborn all meant to ensure that child has the best chance of growing up and being healthy. During the coming months and years you will make periodic checks to the physicians' office to have what are commonly called well child visits during which you will hold your child down while a nurse gets the ominous job of stabbing your child with vaccine after vaccine. The nurse is then hated by the child and you because you had to deal with a screaming child for the next few days. But it isnt because the doctor or nurse is evil or mean, but because there is a need for those shots, tests and other things to ensure your child is healthy and growing.

One of the first signs of trouble for your child is when he or she isn't getting bigger, literally growing. That is a major sign of something wrong and doctors tend to take it pretty seriously when there is limited or no growth or weight gain. But in the life of a Christian, we don't have a regular checkup that would tell us if we are growing except for the circumstances of life. Each day we are checked for what is going on, how we respond to it tells us, if we are listening and others if we are maturing as believers or not. And if we are not, are we looking to see it and try to rectify it?

*Not personally being a fan of paraphrased bibles, it was something of an unusual notion that I had to read two verses of scripture. While I do not endorse a paraphrased bible, I really liked the way the modern version sounds in relationship to how the believer should be as a truly mature person. Note, the real mark of maturity is realizing you are always striving for it.*

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### Hebrews 6:1 (TLB)

Let us stop going over the same old ground again and again, always teaching those first lessons about Christ. Let us go on instead to other things and become mature in our understanding, as strong Christians ought to be. Surely we don't need to speak further about the foolishness of trying to be saved by being good, or about the necessity of faith in God.

Ever been talking to someone over and over about a subject to the point of wanting to pull your own hair out because you are so tired of talking about it? Especially when that person should know better? This is common of children, you tell them but in all reality they don't really listen. While they hear you talking, see your lips moving and feel the air being moved by your voice, they don't really put that information into a format for use. It just passes them by. Here Paul is telling us the same thing how people keep talking about something that has already been settled, stop talking about it and move on. Grow yourself. This is why the lessons of first grade aren't taught in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, because those lessons were covered and finished and you should have that as your foundation. Education is taught as a layering affect, as you finish one grade it should be preparing you for the next. Such is the case with Christianity; you should be constantly growing upon the lessons of the past and moving forward with maturity.

### Corinthians 3:1-4 (TLB)

Dear brothers, I have been talking to you as through you were still just babies in the Christian Life, who are not following the Lord, but your own desires; I cannot talk to you as healthy Christians, who are filled with the Spirit. I have had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't digest anything stronger. And even now you still have to be fed on milk. For you are jealous of one another and divide up into quarreling groups, doesn't that prove you are still babies, wanting your own way? In fact, you are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord at all. There you are, quarreling about whether I am greater than Apollos and dividing the church. Doesn't this show how little you have grown in the Lord?

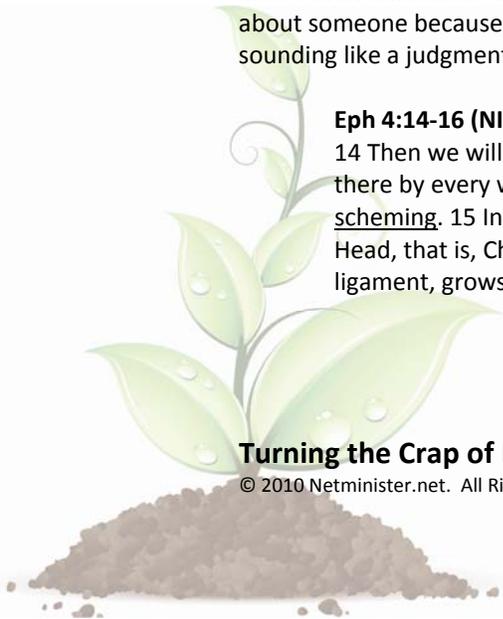
Babies need milk. They might love a steak but they don't have teeth and their bodies cannot handle it. They need milk, as a believer, we need milk at first. We need to be nourished and only a proper amount will do. We cannot handle the more difficult subjects. Such is the case in school you do not teach brain surgery to first graders – they don't have the background and study to know what you are talking about. As we mature we can know that we are moving in maturity because we seek God's desires over our own. Notice we still have those desires – I still want to lie, cuss and steal – but I know that is not God's desire for me or my life. So I cannot do it. Even Paul is complaining that after so long the Corinthians should have been growing spiritually but he is still telling them simple things, and because they haven't grown they are jealous and breaking up into divisive groups to argue, so much so that they are acting like they aren't even Christians! What a statement! To be called on not being a Christian, have you ever wondered about someone because of the way they act? Here Paul is seeing it and points it out even at the risk of sounding like a judgmental person, he is judging their behavior.

### Eph 4:14-16 (NIV)

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

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True maturity allows us to speak and be heard with the correct doctrine of God's truth as our guide. We do not have to be cunning or cagy, just honest. Even if it is rejected, we have a call on our lives to speak the truth in love and abandon deceitful scheming. In the end, that maturity is built out of love and supports and works together in the church as the body of Christ in this world.

Maturity is important because it keeps us from being turned by the error of other people. When you are mature you know enough about a subject, namely God's word to recognize when someone is snowing you. Ever had someone talk to you because of what you do for a living and try to impress you with their knowledge yet they sound like a moron because what they are talking about isn't even right?

**2 Peter 3:17-18 (NIV)**

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Maturity is important because it allows us to know when we are being used for something evil rather than something good. If you are like most people you hate being manipulated, so learning all you can especially before an election, all you can so that you know what is being told to you is true or false. In statistics in college we had a professor that told us the first day from this day forward you will never believe another poll, and he was right. Once we learned how to manipulate data, we learned how to get people to agree with you. Knowing that is going on and not letting is influence you is a sign of great maturity.

**Heb 5:11-14 (NIV)**

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

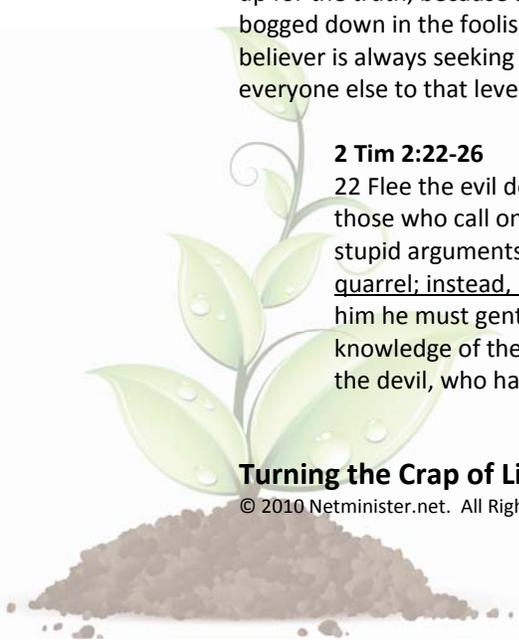
Maturity is shown mostly in that we no longer pursue things that are evil at their heart; instead, we choose to pursue things that are right, faithful, loving and peaceful. Which isn't to say not willing to stand up for the truth, because a mature believer stands up for the truth but at the same time doesn't get bogged down in the foolish or stupid arguments that create such problems. But most of all a mature believer is always seeking to bring the person who is immature, up to maturity. Rather than lower everyone else to that level, a mature believer should seek to elevate everyone.

**2 Tim 2:22-26**

22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. NIV

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Trials come but to the mature believer they are a sign to seek the wisdom of God and hold to it. Otherwise we are tossed back and forth. This is true when you make a decision about something then allow others to influence you even when you know the truth. Our inability to stand our ground when we have the truth of God's word is a sign of great immaturity. We can know instantly that God is not the God of confusion but of order. Our stability is found in His word and upon His promises, not our own which fail every time.

**James 1:2-8**

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

NIV

Maturity is also seen when we let go of the past realizing that others that have hurt us did it for their own causes. As stated before we should be seeking to bring people to a greater understanding of God's love and return them to His care, it isn't personal against us as the one standing on the truth but against God and His word to which you cannot prevail. Focusing on Him and His word takes us through whatever situation by changing our view of the situation, not the circumstances but how we view them.

**Phil 3:12-16**

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

NIV

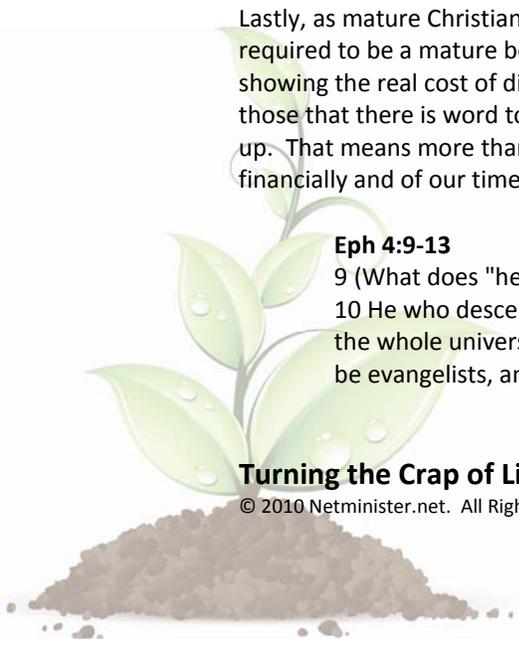
Lastly, as mature Christians, we should be seeking to teach those that follow something about what it is required to be a mature believer. Far too often we are satisfied with just getting our numbers up without showing the real cost of discipleship – which is the word for moving into maturity. Our job is to show those that there is work to be done, works of service so that the body of Christ, the church can be built up. That means more than just showing up on Sunday. It means being able to work, to serve, to give financially and of our time. We are the mentors for behavior that is pleasing to His word.

**Eph 4:9-13**

9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of

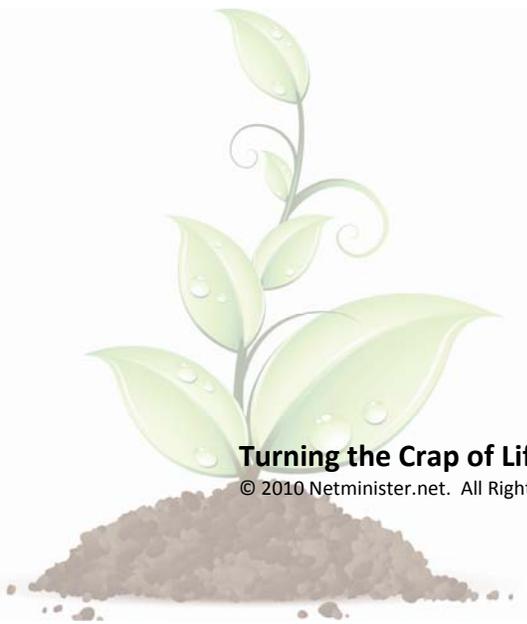
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service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

**Final Analysis:** Are you mature? Are you willing to access the costs of discipleship? Do you daily put off the old man and surrender your life to Christ? Maturity isn't something you get and hold onto, instead it is a place in your walk that is constantly ahead. You have to be willing to put in the time and effort needed and know that to be a mature believer you will be challenged to confront those that are acting in ways that are not scriptural, are you ready for that?



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