
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Growing in Maturity

Growing in maturity is a natural aspect of life. Each of us, especially leaders, are to demonstrate an increasing maturation throughout our lives.

Our primary example on how to grow in maturity is Jesus. Scripture records in Luke 2:40-52 that he grew normally in five areas.

Jesus grew physically. Speaking of Jesus, Luke says that “The Child continued to grow and become strong.” And, he increased in “stature.”

Jesus grew mentally. He was “increasing in wisdom.”

Jesus grew socially. He kept increasing in “favor with God and man.”

Jesus grew spiritually. The “grace of God was upon Him,” and he was found “in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.”

Jesus grew volitionally. He made a personal choice to stay “behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it.” Later “He went with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them.”

Jesus’ maturation did not involve sin. Several passages of Scripture speak clearly on this aspect of his life. For example, Hebrews 54:15 states the he was “tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.” So, how did Jesus mature?

Jesus matured through the learning of three things: submission, obedience, and suffering.

First, He learned submission through a loving relationship with his parents. After his parents found him in the temple conversing with the teachers, “He went down with them and . . . continued in subjection to them.” Later, he subjected himself to the heavenly father, saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet, not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

Second, He learned obedience. The writer of Hebrews notes, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and

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He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Third, He learned through suffering. “For it was fitting of Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

What can we learn about growing in maturity from the life of Jesus? Here are a few thoughts to ponder.

We must go through a normal process of growth and maturation. Even though Jesus was perfect humanity, he had to grow through the process of normal life development. Each of us, must also live through the regular stages of life, growing in maturity as we gain life experience.

We must learn submission and obedience to authority. Even though he was perfect humanity, Jesus had to grow through the process of learning submission and obedience. Someone once said, “You must learn to follow before you can lead.” Excellent leaders have learned to submit to others.

We must go to the Lord for guidance in attaining maturity. “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5)

Musings and Questions

The mature leader is a reflective person. Reflection on life, work, and ministry helps a leader become acquainted with the will and ways of God.

While some people forget God (Psalm 50:22; 106:21), the mature, godly person remembers Him. “O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, and keep Your law (Psalm 119:55).

As we begin 2021, it is a time for deep reflection on the challenges of the last year. This is perhaps the most difficult year of ministry that most pastors and church leaders have experienced. The abrupt changes, challenges, and corrections forced upon our churches, has created turmoil. However, it hopefully has caused us to grow and mature, too.

Psalm 77:12 states, “I will meditate on all Your work and muse on Your deeds.” Here are a few questions to begin your reflection.

- What lessons has God taught you this last year?
 - What ways has God increased your maturity this last year?
 - How will your life be different this next year because of what you’ve learned?
- What other questions might you add?

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