

Spiritual growth and the Maturity of the Believer

God's Word is fuel for the refiner's sanctifying fire, water for the planted tree's growth, and a rock-solid foundation for the builder. The truth sanctifies the sinner (John 17:17), bringing growth resulting in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25).

1. *Spiritual maturity doesn't happen automatically.* It takes time, effort. Did you know that you can be a Christian and you can never grow up spiritually? **Hebrews 5:12-14** - *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*
2. *Spiritual maturity doesn't happen quickly.* It takes time. It's not instantaneous. There are some Christians that have known Christ for years. By now they should be mature. But they have stalled out, causing a traffic jam behind them. **2 Peter 3:17-18** – *“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.”*
3. *Spiritual maturity won't happen without discipline.* There is no shortcut to spiritual growth. It's a continual process. You have to learn to be mature. 1 Timothy 4:7 - *“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness.”* To be physically fit you've got to exercise, develop some basic habits. That's true in the Christian life.

Specific verses describing Christian maturity. All of the following verses are in the English Standard Version.

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

Ephesians 4:13-15

until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Ephesians 4:20-24

But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 2:6-7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 3:9-10

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Hebrews 6:1-2

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

1 Peter 2:1-3

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.