

Showing Up in Our Maturity

1 Corinthians 14:12b-20

Introduction

“Just grow up!” At least, that seems to be what Paul is telling the Corinthians, judging by what he said to them earlier (read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4). The Corinthians were immature. That’s why there were divisions in the church. Other results of this immaturity were sexual misconduct in the church that wasn’t being dealt with (ch. 5), believers taking each other to court (ch. 6), confusion over food sacrificed to idols (ch. 6), marriage (ch. 7), worship (ch. 11), the Lord’s Supper (ch. 10 & 11), and spiritual gifts (ch. 12). What they need is wisdom, not the wisdom of the world, but the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Maturity

Why is maturity so important? To understand that, we must understand what Paul’s talking about when he talks about maturity. Tilemann Hesshus, a Lutheran pastor of the Reformation, said: “The word ‘mature’ here does not mean perfect in every detail, but that which is genuine, pure, and trustworthy. ... The Spirit’s wisdom is perfect, although it continues to grow in the lives of God’s people.” If maturity is being “genuine, pure, and trustworthy”, being immature is being phony, contaminated, and unreliable. These characteristics harm the church in many ways, the most important is that the church isn’t showing Christ to the world. Then, when the world looks at the church, all they see is a group of people acting like everyone else.

Immaturity = No Growth

Paul is concerned about two types of people here—believers and unbelievers. He wants to see the church built up in the unity of the faith, to attain spiritual growth. And he wants to see new members added to the church, numerical growth. When people are immature, they become self-indulgent. Everything is about me and what makes me look and feel good. That was why they preferred the gift of tongues. But everything that’s said and done in worship should have two goals in mind—to edify Christians and bring unbelievers to faith.

The Path to Maturity—Applying Your Mind

Two things that must be involved for Christian growth—the spirit and mind. When you’re Baptized as an infant, the Lord works faith in your spirit, so you believe in Jesus for salvation. But the mind isn’t formed enough to comprehend what’s going on yet. But as you grow and your mind develops, it must become involved in the process so that what you believe in your heart affects how you think, which determines how you live. God is concerned about the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. Paul shares with us five ways that we apply our minds in order to mature as Christians.

Prayer (v. 15)

Since prayer is basically talking to God, how can we pray without applying our minds? Paul discourages the use of tongues in church for the sake of order and edification. He approves them being used in private, as a “prayer language.” Paul also says in Romans 8:26, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” But our mind is engaged when we consciously lift our requests to the Lord. Then we receive blessings as a whole person.

Singing (v. 15)

In many contemporary churches songs are chosen or avoided because of their tune. Remember *American Bandstand*? They would play a new song and have the teenagers rate it, based on its listenability and danceability. They never rated the words. Our hymns have scripturally based, theologically sound words. The tunes may not always be the easiest to sing, but we sing them for what they say. Some people, for their devotions will pray the hymns.

Thanksgiving (v. 16-17)

We give thanks with our minds when we count our blessings. Have you ever used a pencil and paper and just listed all the ways God has blessed you? Here's a challenge. For the rest of this month, when you pray each day, think of three different things you can thank God for. While you're at it, thank God for a different person each day. Be specific as to why you're thankful for them.

Instruction (v. 19)

This shows how important education is in the church. One of my pet peeves has to do with Confirmation. I've met too many people who think that once you're confirmed, that's it. They don't realize that Confirmation is a foundation on which to build your life. What we learn in the Catechism are the Christian basics. Even at that, Luther said that we should all read the Catechism every day. He said that he did that, and "I'm a doctor more than all of you." The truth is, we never stop learning.

Thinking (v. 20)

"In your thinking be mature." Remember, "mature" means to be genuine, pure, and trustworthy." To be "infants in evil" means to not even be aware of it. In other words, we want nothing to do with evil.

Means of Grace

But while we are engaging our mind, we mustn't neglect our spirit. Our spirits are refreshed and grow when we hear the Word and receive the Sacraments. Even at that, think about what's happening when you receive the body and blood of Christ. Experience your sins forgiven, be refreshed in the strengthening of your faith, and remember the awful price He paid for that forgiveness. And as we mature in the faith, Christ will show through to the rest of the world as the Son of God.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*