

COMING OF AGE

Ephesians 4:15 (Amplified) tells us to, ***“Rather let our lives lovingly express truth in all things - speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things, into Him who is Head, even Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One.”*** The NKJ says, ***“Speaking the truth in love, may we grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ.”*** The original Greek states, ***“Holding on to the truth in love, may we grow into Him in all things.”***

This verse is telling us to **grow up!** But the Greek word can also be translated “to increase.” Therefore, it implies that we should *increase* (be extended) into Christ in all matters of life! Note, growing up or enlarging is always Christ centred. Christ is the aim and object of your growth, or increase, and the sphere of growth is **in all things**. In every area of life you should be *extending* yourself into Him!

God want’s us to **come of age**. He wants sons and daughters who can take hold of their inheritance, and He has provided a sound process for achieving this. As the gifts that God has placed in the church equip the saints (that’s you), and as you *enlarge* through active and energetic service, you grow up and increase in **all matters of life**. Resulting in you being transformed into the image of Christ and becoming a true *joint-heir* with Him - ruling and reigning here on earth! However, growing up into maturity is a definite process (a journey), and it requires thought and determination.

In Ephesians 4:1 the apostle Paul said, ***“I appeal to and beg you to walk worthy of the divine calling to which you have been called.”*** In the New Testament “walking” refers to travelling from immaturity to spiritual manhood. This may take some time, but each step should be taken deliberately and intentionally. ***“Precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28:10).*** Maturity is gradual and it requires you to be steadfast, obedient and most of all patient. You need real stamina to go along with God at His pace! Most believers run ahead of God and get themselves onto all kinds of trouble.

Here are the seven steps that will lead you to maturity:

(1) **The first step is to walk in the revelation of the word you have received.** God will only hold you accountable for what you know. That is, the word that’s been sown in your heart and has in turn illuminated your mind. Just like David, who was not able to fight Goliath with King Saul’s armour, you cannot take on the battles of life by carrying someone else’s sword of revelation. Get your own armour and ammunition!

1 Peter 2:2 says, ***“Like new-born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”*** From the moment you get saved, you must have a quenchless craving or thirst for the pure spiritual milk of God’s word. It is the word that nourishes your spiritual growth. Whether young or old in the faith, you should thirst for the word just as an infant cries for milk. Study the word, meditate on the word and then act on the revelation of the word you have received.

(2) **The second step is to walk in faith.** Faith comes by hearing the word of God (*Romans 10:17*), and as mentioned, the “hearing” is the truth you’ve received in your heart. This is not an intellectual exercise! Faith comes from the word that God has revealed to your heart. That’s why your next step is to walk in faith. **2 Corinthians 5:7** says, **“Walk by faith - not by sight.”** **Romans 1:17** says, **“The just shall live by faith.”** After you have heard the word and received it with gladness (taken your first step), hope will rise up in you and you can then step out in faith. **“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”** (*Heb. 11:1*). Maturity is becoming accustomed to living by faith and not being influenced by your circumstances or by what you see.

(3) **The third step is to walk in the Holy Spirit.** **Galatians 5:16** tells us to **“walk in the Spirit.”** Every believer should walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. To walk in (or by) the Holy Spirit is to allow God’s Spirit to have His way in your life. It is to remain connected with Him in all situations and circumstances. It is to make every decision in the light of His holiness. It is to be preoccupied with Christ, because the Spirit’s ministry is to engage you into the Lord Jesus Christ, and then to keep you fully engaged.

When you walk in the Spirit you overcome your carnal desires. The flesh, or self, is treated as being dead. You have died in Christ and are resurrected into newness of life *in Him*. The old-you shouldn’t have any say in your life. But the problem is this, as a believer you have two trees growing along side each other. The old tree of the flesh [the sinful nature], and the new tree of the divine nature that was implanted at the new birth.

Your greatest challenge is to learn how to keep barren the old tree and to make the new tree fruitful. Notice, the old tree still has the capacity to produce fruit, but this fruit will be carnal (and leads to sin). But walking in the Spirit means, “problem solved!”

(4) **The fourth step is to walk in love.** *Ephesians 5:2* tells us simply to *walk in love*. **1 Corinthians 16:14** says we should **“Do everything in love.”** That means, in all you do, you are to manifest love. This requires total devotion to God, and to serving others. And it demands an unconditional giving of yourself. The foundation from which everything must grow and work from is love. You cannot mature without God’s love effectively working in and through you. Remember, where His love is, that’s where His ability will manifest. Be moved by compassion and God’s awesome power will accompany you! **1 Thessalonians 3:12** says, **“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.”**

(5) **The fifth step is to walk in the light.** *1 John 1:7* tells us to *walk in the light as He is in the light*. According to this passage of scripture, you are either in the light or in darkness. If you choose to walk in the light, then you can have fellowship with the Lord Jesus and be in unity with one another. As you walk in the light you, you acknowledge that the blood of Jesus continually cleanses you from all sin. And the only way to secure this blessed state is to be quick to repent and confess your sin before God (*1 John 1:9*). Light represents purity and transparency - without hypocrisy. But remember, whatever you try to hide in the darkness, God will eventually shine light on.

(6) **The sixth step is to walk in integrity toward everyone.** Integrity opens more doors than gifting. It reflects character and maturity, and it will get you far in life. Christians should be the most dependable and reliable people on the planet. **Romans 13:13** tells us to **“walk honestly (decently) before all.”** Not just Christians but unbelievers as well! **Colossians 4:5** confirms this, **“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.”** **1 Peter 3:15** says, **“Answer everyone with gentleness and respect.”**

When talking about fruitful growth in the faith, Peter says that we should add *brotherly kindness* to godliness (**2 Peter 1:7**). Brotherly kindness is a kindness that makes it very difficult for the other party not to respond to! It is, shining something into a person's life that they can in turn shine back (reciprocate). Integrity places much value on how you treat other people! People are God's business. He is not impressed by your successes but He is impressed with your loving-kindness and gentleness.

(7) **The seventh and final step is to be fruitful and productive.** As you become more mature, growing into the fullness of Christ, you will become more fruitful. You will walk in abundance. In fact, your maturity will be made known by your fruits. And these fruits should be the very same fruits that Jesus produced. **1 John 2:6** declares, **“Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself.”** Can you walk in the Lord's footsteps without producing the same fruits?

Can you conduct yourself the same way Jesus conducted Himself without producing the same fruits? After all, He is the vine and we are the branches! True maturity means walking as Jesus walked, talking as Jesus talked, and being filled with the Holy Spirit as He was filled with the Spirit. This is the end of the road! It is doing the works that Jesus did and even greater works than these - **John 14:12**. Therefore, completed maturity is walking in the miraculous - exercising God's power! Yes, the miraculous accomplishments and deeds or power that Jesus Himself did. This should be your calling card!

Finally, remember that these seven steps to maturity run in chronological order.

- [1] Walk in the word.
- [2] Walk in faith.
- [3] Walk in the Spirit.
- [4] Walk in love.
- [5] Walk in the light.
- [6] Walk in integrity.
- [7] Walk in the miraculous.