



Let's Mature & Minister

Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol.
1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996)



1 Corinthians 3:1–4 (NKJV)

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

4 For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?



- Paul already explained that there are two kinds of people in the world—natural (unsaved) and spiritual (saved).
- But now he explained that there are two kinds of saved people: mature and immature (carnal).
- A Christian matures by allowing the Spirit to teach him and direct him by feeding on the Word. The immature Christian lives for the things of the flesh (*carnal means “flesh”*) and has little interest in the things of the Spirit.
- *Some believers are immature because they have been saved only a short time, but that is not what Paul is discussing here.*



Paul Was A Spiritual Father

- Paul was the “spiritual father” who brought this local church family into being.
- During the eighteen months he ministered in Corinth, Paul had tried to feed his spiritual children and help them mature in the faith. Just as in a human family, everybody helps the new baby grow and mature, so in the family of God we must encourage spiritual maturity through discipleship.



Paul Was A Spiritual Father

1 Corinthians 4:15 (NKJV)

For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.



Maturity Is The Goal Of Any Parent For The Child

- What are the marks of maturity? For one thing, you can tell the mature person by *his diet*.
- *As children grow, they learn to eat different food. They graduate (to use Paul's words) from milk to meat.*



Milk & Meat

- “Milk” represents what Jesus Christ did on earth, while “Meat” concerns what He is doing now in heaven.

Hebrews 5:12–14 (NKJV)

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.



Milk & Meat

- “The writer of Hebrews wanted to teach his readers about the present heavenly priesthood of Jesus Christ, but his readers were so immature, he could not do it.”



LET'S GROW UP!



Milk & Meat

Hebrews 6:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.



What Is Your Spiritual Diet?

- The Word of God is our spiritual food:

Milk - 1 Peter 2:2 (NKJV) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

Milk is designed to help you grow! It is nutritional but not fulfilling as you age, and you need something to chew with more nutrition.

Bread - Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”



What Is Your Spiritual Diet?

Meat - Hebrews 5:11–14 (NKJV)

11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and **not solid food.**

13 For everyone who partakes only of **milk is unskilled** in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

14 But **solid food** belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have **their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**



What Is Your Spiritual Diet?

Honey - Psalm 119:103 (NKJV) How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

- Just as the physical man needs a balanced diet if his body is to be healthy, so the inner man needs a balanced diet of spiritual food.
- The baby begins with milk, but as he grows and his teeth develop, he needs solid food.



It's Not Difficult To Determine...

- It is not difficult to determine a believer's spiritual maturity, or immaturity, if you discover what kind of "diet" he enjoys. The immature believer knows little about the present ministry of Christ in heaven.
- He knows the facts about our Lord's life and ministry on earth, but not the truths about His present ministry in heaven. He lives on "Bible stories" and not Bible doctrines.



It's Not Difficult To Determine...

1 Corinthians 2:6–7 (NKJV)

6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,



- It is important that we preach the Gospel to the lost; but it is also important that we interpret the Gospel to the saved.
- The entire New Testament is an interpretation and application of the Gospel.
- Paul did not write Romans, for example, to tell the Romans how to be saved—for they were already saints.



Romans 5:1–5 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.



- He wrote to explain to them what was really involved in their salvation.
- It was an explanation of the “deep things of God” and how they applied to daily life.

1 Corinthians 3:4–6 (NKJV)

4 For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.



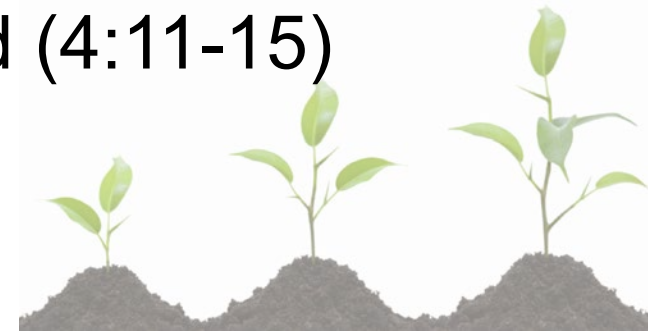
Unity Is Another Sign Of Maturity!

- There is another way to determine maturity: the mature Christian practices love and seeks to get along with others. Children like to disagree and fuss.
- And children like to identify with heroes, whether sports heroes or Hollywood heroes.
- The “babes” in Corinth were fighting over which preacher was the greatest—Paul, Apollos, or Peter.
- It sounded like children on the playground: “My dad is better than your dad or my mom is better than your mom.”



We Have Mature People Using Their Gifts To Help The Body Grow.

- When immature Christians, without spiritual discernment, get into places of leadership in the church, the results will be disastrous.
- The work of the pastor is to help the church grow spiritually and mature in the Lord.
- This is done by the steady, balanced ministry of the Word. Ephesians 4:1–16 explains how this is done: Read (4:11-15)



Ephesians 4:11–15 (NKJV)

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets,
some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the
edifying of the body of Christ,
13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of
the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of
the fullness of Christ;
14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and
carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men,
in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,
15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into
Him who is the head—Christ—



- It is necessary for each member of the body to make his own contribution.
- God gives spiritual gifts to His people, and then He gives these gifted people to the church to build up the saints.
- As the believers grow, they build the church.



- Paul will have more to say about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12–14, but this should be said now:
- A mature Christian uses his gifts as tools to build with, while an immature believer uses gifts as toys to play with or trophies to boast about.
- Many of the members of the Corinthian church enjoyed “showing off” their gifts, but they were not interested in serving one another and edifying the church.
- What is the ministry all about? It involves loving, feeding, and disciplining God’s family so that His children mature in the faith and become more like Jesus Christ.



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