

THE MARKS OF A MATURE CHURCH

Ephesians 4:13-16

What does it mean to be a mature Christian and a mature healthy church?

1. MATURITY MEANS A GROWING CHRISTLIKENESS – Ephesians 4:13

- Any real health or maturity has to be centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing Him is where life begins – John 17:3; Philippians 3:8-10. Christian unity is based on real knowledge and a real relationship of trust in the Son of God – 2 Peter 3:18. Any ministry that is not exalting Jesus is not glorifying God – John 5:23.
- A growing knowledge of Christ is based on a growing knowledge of God’s Word. Christ is the Grand Theme of the Bible. “Mature manhood” means becoming more and more like Christ in our daily lives – Romans 8:29; 1 John 2:6. We desire to be loving, truthful, and obedient like Jesus.

2. MATURITY MEANS DISCERNING SOUND DOCTRINE – Ephesians 4:14

- Right doctrine or teaching does matter – 2 Timothy 1:13,14; Titus 2:1. There can be no real unity without unity in Truth. *“Disunity in the church comes from doctrinal ignorance and spiritual immaturity...Oneness in fellowship is impossible unless it is built on the foundation of commonly believed truth.” – John MacArthur.* A Shepherd is to protect and warn his flock – verse 12. A healthy church means a church growing in sound doctrine. There are a lot of different “winds of doctrine” blowing. While some seems to be from human deceit and pride, ultimately false teaching originates in the pit of hell – 1 Timothy 4:1-3. *“Error can never be harmless, nor false teachers innocent.” – Charles Hodge.* Just being a little off on the gospel can lead to eternal destruction – Galatians 1:6-8. Immature Christians are easily led astray by every new fad in theology or practice. They are not able to discern false doctrine – 2 Corinthians 11:3,4.
- Examples of corrupt winds of teaching include: Open Theism, denying Adam, denying Hell, denying Jesus is the only Way to God, denying Jesus bore the wrath of God at the cross, saying the Bible contains errors in history and science, reinterpreting passages on LGBTQ+ issues, even saying that doctrine itself does not matter. On the denial of hell a pastor recently said *“I believe the tradition of ETERNAL conscious punishment is a slander of God, and preach and teach against it with vigor.”*
- The cure is for each believer in Jesus Christ to know the basics and essentials of the faith. You will then be able to spot a counterfeit or a strange teaching. The basics begin with the Bible! – 2 Timothy 3:16,17. The essentials include the Holy Trinity, the Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ, Christ’s perfect life and His substitutionary death for our sins on the cross, His bodily resurrection, His coming again, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and eternal Heaven and Hell. Sound doctrine begins with these foundational truths and core beliefs.

3. MATURITY MEANS LOVING INVOLVEMENT FROM EVERY BELIEVER IN THE BODY – Ephesians 4:15,16

- We are to speak truth in love – verse 15. Some speak truth, but with harshness and condemnation. Let us speak it with love. It is all about attitude, tone, and awareness of our own sinfulness – Galatians 6:1. May God enable us like Jesus to weep over sinners in their

horrible rebellion – Luke 19:41,42. A mature church stands for truth, but loves people and Jesus Christ first – Ephesians 5:1,2; Revelation 2:2-4.

- Each member of Christ's Body is needed to build up the Body in love – verse 16. Real maturity in Christ is not just an individual thing, but involves being a contributing part of Christ's Body. We need and are dependent on each other. *"because you are a Body part you are important."* – Tony Merida.

Concluding applications:

- How are you growing more like Christ?
- Do you know the essentials of the faith?
- What plan do you have to keep growing in your grasp of the Bible?
- In what ways are you involved in building up the Body of Christ?