

Marks of Maturity

Titus 2:1-3

Titus 2:1-3; Every time I read this passage, I think of the godly men and women in my family tree who've gone before me; Like my grandfather on my mom's side
He was born in 1900, and lived to be a month or so shy of 102; Which made his age easy to remember, because it was the year

And my grandpa lived a life that was about as varied as you can imagine; From farming, semi-pro baseball, and riding trains as a farm hand . . .
To owning a gas station, a pool hall, and who knows what else – he did it all
He wasn't perfect, but he was a man of experience, integrity, and maturity; As in dignity, self-control, and moderation

Which is exactly what we see described and *pre*-scribed here in Titus 2:1-3
Prescribed, in that this is the way *we* should be; Especially as we grow older in Christ

[1] *But as for you* [in contrast that is, to those who are devious, divisive, and hypocritical], *teach what accords with sound doctrine* [right belief, healthy thinking, biblical principles].
[2] *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.* [3] *Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.*

In a nutshell, those are marks of maturity; Not that it's meant to be an *exhaustive* list, or exclusively gender specific . . .
But a *representative* list, of the characteristics and qualities that should mark both men *and* women who are in Christ
Especially as they bear the responsibility of teaching, leading, and being examples to those who come behind

And there are 4 implications of these marks that we can't afford to miss; #1 . . .

Maturity is learned over time – pay _____!

Just because it says *Older men* (2) and *older women* (3) – doesn't mean we shouldn't strive toward the same things; We should

B/c these are the standards that will be expected of *all* of us some day, and they don't happen overnight; Which means we need to be striving toward them *now*

Not only that, but maturity isn't something supernaturally deposited in one fell swoop
You don't wake up one morning and become *sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, and reverent in behavior* just like that
A serious focus on life, sober in mind, is learned; Respectable behavior, dignity, is learned; Controlling your words and actions, is learned
And honoring God in all you do, is learned
Maturity is learned over time; And we need to be striving toward it right now

Which requires that we **pay attention**; Especially to those who *precede* us in these respects; Like Joshua did with Moses
Chosen as a young boy to help him, he soaked up as much as he could; And became a great leader b/c of it
Or how about Samuel, who learned maturity as a temple attendant for the high priest
Or Timothy, who learned it from Paul; Or the 12 disciples, who learned it from Jesus

Or Apollos, who learned it from Priscilla and Aquila

How? By paying attention

But time isn't the only thing necessary for maturity . . .

Maturity grows with discipline – exercise often!

Do the right things; Get fit spiritually; **Exercise often**

1 Tim 4:8 – *Train yourself for godliness . . . it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

Training yourself for godliness is the only thing that will enable you to grow in maturity
Sound (healthy) *in faith* – knowing what you believe and not wavering in it
Sound in love – loving completely, with discernment – knowing how to best love a person without enabling them

I've *never* seen a mature believer sound in faith and love, who isn't also marked by discipline in the disciplines

Discipline to . . .

Study the Bible; Spend time with God in prayer; Worship with God's people

Share your faith at every opportunity; Serve; Cultivate community

It's almost impossible to cultivate the kind of community that leads to maturity, apart from a SG

That's where you'll find healthy Christian relationships to encourage your growth

That's why we make it easy for you to get in a SG

Register; Ask questions at the SG table in lobby; Pick up a brochure

Call the office; Talk to a leader/coach if you know one

There are no shortcuts to maturity

Just like your physical health requires constant attention and exercise

So does your spiritual health and maturity

Don't wait until you're 40 or 50 or 60 to start growing in maturity

Start *now*; *Now* is the time; And it's *never* too late

Don't be deterred – maturity grows through discipline, over time

One of the benefits of maturity is that it . . .

Maturity ensures a strong finish – never stop!

Christian retirement is a contradiction of terms; We should **never stop** serving the Lord
Sprinters are trained to look past the finish line as if running 110 meters instead of 100, to ensure they finish strong, with no let-up

One of the reasons so many people quit after running for the Lord after 95 meters is that they're not looking beyond the tape to the goal of eternal glory for which they've been pressing for so long

Maturity ensures that we run the entire race by looking beyond the tape

If you don't finish, it's a moot point that you started in the first place

Too many have dropped out of the race and are standing on the sidelines because they no longer want to expend the effort

That's not maturity; That's immaturity

Immaturity says, "I've done my thing in church, somebody else can do it"

Never forget a guy saying that to me – I couldn't believe it; Angered me; Saddened me

Like being in the middle of a relay race, dropping the baton, and walking off the track

Mature people won't do that because they are *sound in steadfastness* (2)

Marked by consistency, steadiness, persistence, perseverance

Steadfastness ensures that we break the tape in stride, maybe even accelerating and doing more for the kingdom than we thought possible in our later years

Frank Lloyd Wright was a famous architect, and was asked at age 83 which of his works he would select as his masterpiece – he replied very simply, “My next one.”

He wanted to break the tape of life improving, and go out accelerating

There are other examples of maturity and strong finishers that never stopped . . .

Albert Schweitzer – famous missionary doctor to Africa

Still performing surgery in his African hospital at 89, the year before he died in 1965

Grandma Moses – American Folk Artist

Didn't even start painting until she was 80 years old in 1941

She completed over 1500 paintings, almost 400 of which she finished in the last year and a half of her life after she turned 100

John Wesley – Preacher and pastor in the 1700's

Read excerpt (Titus Commentary, John MacArthur, 73)

Then there are people like Anna (Lk 2:36-38) who spent her last days at the age of 84, in the temple – praying, worshipping, fasting, and spreading the word about Jesus to anyone who would listen

It's men and women like her that I admire most

Who physically can't devote themselves to anything *but* prayer, and pray they do until their last breath – I want to be like them

Maturity ensure a strong finish – never stop

But a strong finish isn't the only benefit of maturity . . .

Maturity leaves a lasting legacy – consider the possibilities!

The legacy and potential impact of a mature believer is huge

But we miss it because we're so short-sighted and don't **consider the possibilities**

Need to think long-term about the *potential* we have to impact those who come behind us

Potential for . . .

Changed lives; Joy; Praise/Thanks; Commitment; Courage

Biblical convictions; Godly priorities; Kingdom perspective

Hope – looking to the possibilities of the future as opposed to the regrets of the past

Maturity leaves a lasting legacy – we need to consider the possibilities of that legacy

One of the best examples of a lasting legacy that I know of began in the 1930's with a preacher named Paul Rader at the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle (**Rader photos**)

Rader was a man whom God used to spread the word and influence thousands for Christ

One such man was Cliff Phillips – born in 1901, a young thirty something by the time he moved to Chicago with his wife Estelle, to find work during the depression

At that point, Cliff had been married 11 years, he was a heavy drinker, and in his words, “He was serving the devil and serving him well”

One weekend his mother was in town and wanted to go to church, so they went to the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle because they thought she'd like it

30 years later the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago heard his story and broadcast a

dramatization of it on their radio program called Unshackled

I want you to hear a couple of minutes of that broadcast describing the events of that Sunday morning (**Unshackled broadcast, 1966 - slide**) – that was 1932

2 Weeks later, Estelle knelt by the bathtub in their home in response to a Moody radio broadcast, and asked Jesus into her heart as well

Little they know that through their humble cry to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation, they were starting a long and fruitful journey toward maturity – (**photo of both**); **Read 1** (Women Who Changed the Heart of the City, 145-152)

That was just the beginning of their lasting legacy as they grew in maturity

Over the next 25 years, they started 22 gospel rescue missions touching countless lives for Christ and breaking the chains of darkness – **Read 2** (Women Who Changed the Heart of the City, 145-152)

They left a lasting legacy, but it doesn't stop there

Equally as significant, is the legacy of following Christ and the passion for kingdom things that they instilled in their family

They prayed openly that the next 3 generations that followed them would all be believers (**family photo**)

To this day, all 3 of children follow Christ

2 of them in full-time ministry as pastors; the third, married to a general contractor, helped build 3 churches, one of which they helped to plant

All 8 of their grandchildren follow Christ, with 4 of them in full-time ministry

1 married to a Christian college professor, 1 director of rescue mission, 2 pastors

21 of 23 great grandchildren are actively following Christ – age 4 to 40

With 3 in full-time ministry – one married to another Christian college professor, another living among Muslims in the Middle East, and the third is married to your pastor (**wedding photo and Cliff**)

Cliff and Estelle Philips are Becky's great grandparents

There's little doubt that I stand here as your pastor in *part*, due to the legacy they passed down to her

All because of the maturity and prayers of a humble man and woman, who considered the possibilities of a lasting legacy, and pursued it until the day they died, a few months after our wedding in 1988

Have you considered the possibilities of a lasting legacy in your family, your workplace, and your ministry (vocational or non-vocational)?

Are you growing in maturity so as to leave such a legacy? Are you praying for it?

Give some thought this week to your maturity and the legacy you want to leave

Consider the possibilities, exercise discipline, never stop working for the Lord, and pay attention to the godly examples of maturity around you

You never know – 75 years from now your great grandson-in-law with his wife, may plant a church and put *your* picture up as an example of maturity, and the start of a lasting legacy

Close

