



PREFACE

WHAT DOES A MATURE CHRISTIAN LOOK LIKE?

This question has been on my mind for years. When the elders of my congregation discussed visiting every household in the church, I was moved to pray, study, and try to answer this vital question all Christians should be asking – thus writing this booklet.

Our plan is to give this booklet to our members, allow them time to work through it, and then meet with them to learn what Christ is doing in their lives. We expect to hear many joyful testimonies!

I was encouraged to offer this booklet to the wider Church Body for similar use. Other uses might be for Sunday school classes, small group Bible studies and fellowship groups. It could be a valuable tool for family devotions as well.

It is my prayer that the Lord will use this question to spark your interest and the following material to bless you and glorify the name of Christ.

Douglas L. Aldrink

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WHY BOTHER ASKING?

WHAT DOES A MATURE CHRISTIAN LOOK LIKE?

Consider the importance of the question.

(1) There is so much confusion among those outside of the Church as to what it means to be a Christian. Thoughts range anywhere from, a Christian is someone who goes to church, to a Christian is someone who opposes the culture and lifestyle of our society.

(2) There are many Christians who lack a clear picture as to how they should be advancing in their walk with the Lord. They know they should become more like Jesus, but what does that mean specifically? Suppose a couple has clear goals for the advancement of their marriage. If they review those goals from time to time they will have a sense that they are moving forward in their relationship. But many believers lack a clear vision as to who they are to become in Christ. They are missing that sense of moving forward in their relationship with Jesus. The picture of a mature Christian is way too fuzzy!

(3) There are so many Christians who are growing rather lopsided and are not even aware of it. Some have heads that are out of proportion. They center on doctrinal knowledge at the expense of service. Others have hands and feet that are oversized. They are very active doing many things in service to the Lord but they lack scriptural

knowledge. Still others have a heart that is out of proportion. They excel in personal devotion time with the Lord and sharing the gospel with others but they tend to be detached from societal issues. Believers need a picture of a well balanced, mature Christian.

(4) Pastors and church leaders need a clear vision for their role in building up the Church. According to Ephesians 4:12-13, they have the responsibility “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all ... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Certainly, for pastors and church leaders to effectively carry out this responsibility, they need an understanding of what a mature Christian looks like.

THE THREE B’s

Sad to say, far too often congregations become measured by the three B’s: Bodies, Building and Budget. The successful church is thought to be one that has many people in attendance, nice facilities and plenty of money. Isn’t that why it is often assumed that a pastor of a large church would never consider serving in a smaller one?

But the Bible has a much different standard! A thriving congregation is all about becoming more and more like Christ.

That is why we bother asking the question!

REFLECT

1. In your experience, what have you found to be the unbeliever's perception of what it means to be a Christian?
2. Why do you think many Christians have difficulty in answering what it means to be a mature Christian?
3. Can you think of any other reasons why this question is so important?

EXERCISE

1. Do you think you may be growing spiritually lopsided? If so, in what way? Share your answer and get the input of a family member or a friend.
2. Read John 4:19-26; John 6:60-71 and Revelation 2:8-11. Make a case why the three B's cannot be a true measurement of a successful church.

FURTHER READING

Why We Love the Church by Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck

The Gospel as Center: Renewing Our Faith and Reforming Our Ministry Practices by D.A. Carson and Timothy Keller

LOOK AT YOUR NAME TAG!

Google this booklet's title and you will find many books and articles on this topic. Much of the material is very good and beneficial. I am in no way suggesting that this booklet is the only truth on this topic. However, what is offered here contributes to an easily grasped and cohesive answer to our question. This chapter centers on the believer's identity with the name of Christ, which is the key to unlocking the answer.

Take a careful look at your name tag. Believers in Jesus are called Christians. In Acts 11:26, we learn that the name started in Antioch. It is a name that our Savior has entrusted to his believers. Being entrusted with such a precious name tag means it deserves a special look.

THE ROOT OF OUR NAME

The root of our name is "Christ". Christ literally means the "Anointed One." When Jesus was baptized, John publically proclaimed the arrival of the promised Christ (Jn. 1:29-34). Jesus acknowledged this official title in a sermon. He read from Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has *anointed me....*" [Italics mine] and after reading this text, Jesus began his sermon with these words: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were consecrated by being anointed with holy oil. Prophets

received the word of God and were called to proclaim it to others. Priests received sacrifices and were called by God to offer the sacrifices for the sins of his people. Kings received God's authority to exercise rule over the people.

Christ the supreme "Anointed One" holds the threefold office of Chief Prophet, Only High Priest and Eternal King. As Prophet he is the Word. As Priest he is the Lamb of God. As King he rules from heaven's throne.

A GLORIOUS NAME

Christ, what a glorious name! **Christian**, what an honor to be entrusted with this name! Just look at your name tag and remember that since you carry the name of Christ you share in his anointing! The Heidelberg Catechism underscores this truth. Q. 32 states, "But why are you called a Christian? A. 32 says, "Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so share in his anointing."

PRAYER

Our name tag also signals the importance of prayer. This was one role that the prophets, priests, and kings held in common. The prophet Samuel assured Israel, "far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you." (I Sa. 12:23) Likewise, the ministry of prayer was central for priests (Ex. 30:7) as well as for kings (I Ki. 8).

Christ so excelled in prayer that his disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk.11:1). Certainly, we who bear his name will also want to excel in prayer.

REFLECT

1. Reflect on why you print your name as clearly as possible on a name tag. Why do you correct those who mispronounce your name? How does this apply to you “wearing” the name “Christian”?
2. Mark on this scale what your level of prayerfulness was five years ago and your level now.
1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__
3. How is your prayer life? What about Christ’s prayer life inspires you to pray?

EXERCISE

1. Consider the stories of Elijah in I Kings 17-19. In what ways did God use Elijah? What were his weaknesses? How is Christ the greater Prophet?
2. Take a close look at Aaron the high priest. Read Exodus 28:1-5; 30:22-33; 32:19-24; Leviticus 10. How is Christ the greater Priest?
3. Peruse the stories of David in I Samuel 16 - II Samuel 24. Why do you think he was called a “man after God’s own heart”? How is Christ a far greater King?

FURTHER READING

Institutes of the Christian Religion Book II, Ch. 15 by John Calvin

Our Only Comfort Vol. I, Ch. 12 by Fred H. Klooster

Prayer: Does It Make a Difference? by Philip Yancy

Too Busy Not to Pray by Bill Hybels

THE KEY WITNESS

To get at the idea of a prophet, think of a key witness in a court trial. The key witness is someone who knows the truth in a situation and is willing to testify concerning that truth. Both factors are absolutely essential. There are witnesses who enjoy being on the stand and are free in speaking out but are somewhat mixed-up on the facts of the case. Then there are those who without any doubt know the truth, but for one reason or another refuse to take the stand.

CHERISH THE TRUTH

A mature Christian cherishes truth. The Queen of Sheba admired the wisdom of King Solomon and exclaimed: “How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom” (I Kg. 10:8)! The prophet Elijah took that to another level when he identified himself as one who “stands before” the God of Israel (I Kg. 17:1). Even more, how blessed is the Christian who stands before the Word of Truth (Jn. 17:17)!

Believers are given God’s complete revelation in the scriptures. Mature Christians love that revelation, find it to be sweeter than honey, meditate on it day and night, and put their hope in the truth of the Bible (Ps. 119).

They correctly handle the word of truth (II Ti. 2:15). This means that they read the whole Bible and not just their favorite parts. They interpret passages within their context and compare it to other similar texts. They are careful not to

say more or less than what the Bible teaches. Above all, they read and study the Bible so as to know more of Jesus, who is central to the entire scriptures (Lk. 24:27).

ENRICH OTHERS

Mature Christians do this not just to enrich themselves but to enrich others. Certainly, parents will want to teach what they have learned to their children. Teachers at church and school have an important role but must never replace the central role of parents and family.

In our conversations with neighbors and acquaintances, we must be sure to lovingly listen to their thoughts on the big questions such as: How did this world come about? Who are we? What is our main problem? What is the solution? What does the future hold? Our love and compassion for them will also involve sharing God's answers to these questions.

I know a Christian who had an employee who swore a lot. One day she took the employee aside and said, "You need to understand that my boss does not appreciate your swearing." "What do you mean?" he replied, "You are the boss." "No, no", she said, "I am not the boss!" Well, who is the boss?" he asked. "His name is Immanuel," and she lovingly went on to explain.

Mature Christians are key witnesses for Christ. They cherish the truth and are willing to testify to the truth.

REFLECT

1. Mark on this scale what your level of cherishing the Bible was five years ago and your level now.

1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__

2. Mark on this scale what your level of witnessing to others was five years ago and your level now.

1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__

EXERCISE

1. For the next 21 days try this devotional exercise:
 - Pray for the Spirit to open your heart and mind.
 - Start with Ephesians and read through one heading a day. Continue with Philippians.
 - Meditate by asking, “What is God saying to me?” and “How is Jesus seen in this passage?”
 - Pray in response to what God has said to you.
2. Every Sunday have a Bible study with family.
3. Write down your testimony as to how Christ made himself known to you and the difference he has made in your life. Learn also to share the gospel using the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 60. Pray for opportunities.

FURTHER READING

Receiving God’s Word:

For adults – Seeking God’s Face by Philip Reinders

– How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens

by Michael Williams

For children– The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd Jones

Proclaiming God’s Word to others:

The Reason For God by Timothy Keller

Jesus Among Other Gods by Ravi Zacharias

THE GRATEFUL SLAVE

Imagine you were that tormented soul described in the gospels. For a long time you were naked, living in some tombs and completely out of your mind. You had often been chained hand and foot for your own protection and the protection of others. But that was not being done anymore. You kept breaking the chains and no one dared to get close to you. Your life consisted of screaming day and night and cutting yourself with stones.

Then one day there was a man who actually dared to approach you. In sovereign authority he instantly healed you. It got reported throughout the country side and people came by droves to see you sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in your right mind.

You are so grateful to Jesus. You beg to be his slave. You are willing to do anything that the master would ask. Jesus says, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you" (Lk. 8:39).

AMAZING GRACE

What do mature Christians look like? They are extremely grateful! They marvel about grace. They are overwhelmed by how they were rescued and who rescued them. Who rescued them? Christ. He is the one of pure holiness whose very presence demands perfection. How did Christ rescue them? Crucifixion. The High Priest sacrificed himself to pay for all our sins and to make us pure,

acceptable to God. What do we contribute to our salvation? Absolutely nothing! Salvation is all of God's doing.

All Christians sing "Amazing Grace", but mature Christians sing it with a greater knowledge of who Jesus is and what he accomplished on the cross. They are convinced that they could not have chosen Christ if he had not first chosen them (Ro. 3:11). Mature Christians know that they were not chosen because of anything in themselves, but only by God's unconditional love (Dt. 7:7-8). They are thankful that Christ died on the cross not merely to offer the possibility of salvation but to intentionally save all those God had chosen (Jn. 10:14-16). They confess that the Holy Spirit enabled them to believe in Jesus and nothing can resist or defeat that transforming power (Jn. 6:37). They are assured that they are held securely by the Lord for all eternity (Php. 1:6).

However, those well-versed in the doctrines of sovereign grace are not necessarily spiritually mature! The mature believer not only accepts Christ's sacrifice but gratefully offers oneself as a living sacrifice (Ro. 12:1). The mature Christian follows Jesus the High Priest and washes the feet of others (Jn. 13:1-17).

What does the mature Christian look like? The look is that of a grateful slave, rescued from a tomb of doom and willing to sacrifice everything for Jesus!

REFLECT

1. Suppose the demon possessed man in Luke 8 was somehow able to reduce his number of demons. Then Jesus came to set him free from the rest. How would this have changed his relationship to Jesus?
2. Mark on this scale what your level of appreciating God's grace was five years ago and your level now.
1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__
3. What is the Spirit convicting you to do to gain a greater understanding of his grace?

EXERCISE

1. Mark on this scale what your level of sacrificial giving was five years ago and your level now.
1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__
2. How has God used you to help others? Take time now to pray and give him praise.
3. Is the Lord convicting you to be more sacrificial in: Financial giving? Good deeds? Encouraging words? Intercessory prayer? Set in place a plan of action.

FURTHER READING

Receiving Christ's sacrifice in faith:

The Explicit Gospel by Matt Chandler

Faith Unfolded by Jim Osterhouse

Gospel Deeps by Jared Wilson

Living sacrificially out of gratitude:

Crazy Love by Francis Chan

Living The Cross Centered Life by C.J. Mahaney

THE GIFTED LEADER

Liz was asked what she thought it meant to be a Christian. Her answer was very typical for someone outside of the faith: “Well, Christians usually go to church on Sundays. They go there to sing, pray and listen to a preacher. It’s not for me, but I guess they get a lot out of it.”

We, as Christians, know this answer to be very simplistic, but we need to consider why Liz would respond in this way. Is this basically the only difference she sees between Christians and her? Why does she reduce us to only a Sunday activity, and why would she think that we go to church only to get something out of it?

WORSHIP

King David, as a man after God’s own heart, loved to worship the King of kings. “One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple” (Ps. 27:4).

Mature Christians long to join fellow believers to whole-heartedly worship the Lord. Why? Not to be entertained but to bow in submission before the Ruler over all and to offer him a sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15).

God has a purpose for our corporate worship. He uses true worship on Sundays to equip and strengthen us for worship throughout the week (Heb. 10:24).

LEADERSHIP

A gifted dentist was converted to Christ. Shortly after his conversion, he wondered whether he should change careers and become a missionary. He was grateful for his salvation and wanted to go into “full time service” for his Savior. But as he became more mature in Christ, he realized that there was no such thing as “part time service” for Jesus. The Lord had blessed him with dentistry skills and wanted him to use those skills for the Kingdom.

Maybe your view of the gospel is too small. Maybe without intending to do so, you are contributing to how Liz views Christians.

The gospel becomes immensely vast when we take seriously passages such as Colossians 1:17-20, “In him *all* things hold together...Christ is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in *everything* he might have the supremacy...God was pleased...through him to reconcile to himself *all* things...”[Italics mine]

Mature Christians desire to honor the King in every aspect of life. They understand and appreciate the gifts by which the King has blessed them, and they seek to be effective leaders in the use of those gifts. No gift is insignificant and all gifts are to be used in every area of life to combat evil and to promote good.

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (I Co. 10:31).

REFLECT

1. Mark on this scale what your level of fervent worship was five years ago and your level now.

1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__

2. Mark on this scale what your level of Christ-like leadership was five years ago and your level now.

1__2__3__4__5__6__7__8__9__10__

EXERCISE

1. Read Revelation 4. How should Christ's glory affect the way you worship? The way you pray? Commit to worshipping every Sunday.
2. Do you know your spiritual gifts? If not, take a spiritual gift questionnaire online or get one from your church. How are you applying these gifts in the church setting? Talk to your pastor, elder, or church administrator to find out about other possible avenues.
3. Are there Christians you know who have a similar career as yours? Discuss with them specific ways to make your work Christ glorifying.

FURTHER READING

Worshipping the King:

Worship In Spirit And Truth by John M. Frame

The Unquenchable Worshipper by Matt Redman

Worship Seeking Understanding by John D. Witvliet

Leading under Christ's authority:

Engaging God's World by Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

Bringing Heaven Down To Earth by Nathan L.K. Bierma

How Now Shall We Live? by Charles Colson/ Nancy Pearcey

THE MOTIVATION

What a high calling to be a Christian! Our name indicates that we share in Christ's anointing as prophets, priests and kings. Put in today's terms, we are key witnesses, grateful slaves, and gifted leaders.

Mature Christians are key witnesses who cherish God's Word and gladly proclaim the truth to others. They are grateful slaves who receive Christ's sacrifice on the cross and in deep gratitude offer themselves in sacrificial giving to God and others. They are gifted leaders who rejoice in whole-hearted worship before Christ the King and obediently use the King's gifts to oppose evil and lead in his Kingdom. Above all, they pray.

The previous paragraph is just a small introduction of what the Christian life entails. But what is it that will motivate us to become more of who we are in Christ? We tend to be much too comfortable with our present level of commitment. What will inspire us to advance?

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

People are motivated by what they really enjoy. One who lives for sports may put off doing chores, but enthusiastically gets ready for a ball game. A person who loves violin may find the day at work to be a drag, but an hour flies by when playing the beloved instrument. All of us worship something, and whatever you worship is that which motivates you.

Furthermore, people become what they worship. Psalm 135 says, “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.” People who worship money, sex, food, etc. become reduced to the confines of their particular idol. Their idol motivates them to strive for more and more of it, but they are left empty. The idol they worship is simply too small!

MORE LIKE CHRIST

Worshippers of Christ are never left empty! “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Ro. 11:36). Therefore, Jesus proclaimed, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (Jn. 10:10).

The more you come to know Christ, the more you will enjoy him, adore him, and worship him! When Christ’s Spirit fills your heart, you will be motivated to want more of him! And as you live solely for Christ, you will find yourself becoming more and more like him, a mature Christian!

If you skipped the Reflect, Exercise and Further Reading pages, please go back to them. Get the training in and pray that you may see more of Christ.

What will motivate you to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13)? The answer: gaining a bigger vision of Christ’s glory. The more you see, the more mature you will become!

The Author

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He and his wife, Laura, are blessed with a son, daughter-in-law, daughter and three grandchildren.

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