

This lesson series has been prepared for use in

Home Group Meetings

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Acts 2:42

Series 3: *Growing Up Into Christ*

Number of lessons: 4

Focus of series:

1. We all start out life with no awareness of what is ours and what is not ours. We must learn what our boundaries are in life. This series provides a basic review of God's view of life, differentiating between the wise who recognize God's boundaries and the foolish who do not.

These lessons may be freely copied and used within a local assembly or house church. They are not available for resale.

Theme: Growing Up Into Christ

Lesson 1. The Godhood View of Life

To the teacher: After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

Read Psalms 24:1

This is God's view of the world.....it is all His! He owns everything. He made it and He can do what He wants with it.

Everyone of us has come into the world with a similar view of things. We can call this the Godhood view of life. This is where all we can see is one big world around, all of which is ours. This is why you can take a toddler into a stranger's house and he will grab a candy dish off an end table and break it on the floor.

Toddlers Creed

If I want it, it is mine. If I give it to you and change my mind, it is mine. If I can take it away from you, it is mine. If I had it a little while ago, it is mine. If it is mine, it will never belong to anyone else no matter what. If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine. If it looks just like mine, it is mine.

Of course, everything can't be both God's and mine. Not only is that not possible, it is also not reality. Reality is that everything belongs to God's, and He allows each of us to have a small portion of it for our personal own use for a limited period of time. For us, reality is that everything in life has limitations. We are *not* the unlimited God!

Since we all start out with a Godhood view of the world, we must all be taught what is our's and what is not our's. What we are responsible for and what we are not. What we are free to do and what we are not. This is called *growing up.* ”

Read Ephesians 4:14-15

Our goal as believers should be to grow up into Jesus in ALL THINGS. This verse suggests that there are many aspects to our humanity, and each of them needs to grow up into Jesus. We must not rest until every part of us has matured and attained the stature of the fulness of Jesus Christ.

This growing up process is supposed to begin in childhood. Parents are God's agents for teaching children what is their's and what is not their's. What they are responsible for and what they are not. What they are free to do and when they are not. Parents are responsible for teaching their children the limits in life.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-7

The Word of God is God's revelation to man of reality. The Word is what shows us the true limits in our lives. It shows us what we are responsible for and what we are not...what we are free to do and what we are not.

Read Ephesians 6:4

training: education; disciplinary correction; chastisement; instruction, nurture.

admonition: to call attention to; mildly rebuke or warn.

We all start out with a Godhood view of things. We are self-centered, uncontrolled, and irresponsible, out of touch with reality. And...we are generally unhappy and lacking in peace (did you ever see a newborn baby's face?). This is because we are born disconnected from God.

Growing up means becoming Christ-centered, self-controlled, and responsible, with a clear view and cheerful acceptance of reality. This is the primary role of parents. They are expected by God to lead their children into all the things that make for a safe and strong connection with Jesus. When a person hasn't been taught their responsibilities in life, what is their's and what is not their's, this deficit always manifests in certain behaviors.

The book of Proverbs calls these immature, irresponsible people *fools*. It calls those who are mature and responsible *wise*. ”

Questions for discussion:

1. How would you define *reality* ?
 - * The way things really are as opposed to the way they may appear to be.
 - * The truth, as opposed to a deception or an error.
2. Why is it important that we come to terms with reality and cheerfully accept it?
 - * Because we can't change it.
 - * Because we will be unhappy and frustrated if we spend our entire lives in denial of reality and trying to change it.
3. What are some words that describe a person who is in denial of reality?
 - * Pretending, deceived, fake, hypocritical, in darkness, lacking in wisdom.
4. How does correction help us to accept reality? What's the connection?
 - * It helps us learn what reality is.
 - * It helps us learn the consequences of ignoring reality.
5. Tell about a time you experienced the painful consequences of ignoring or denying reality.

Theme: Growing Up Into Christ

Lesson 2. The Wise and the Foolish

To the teacher: After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

Growing up into Jesus Christ means becoming Christ-centered, self-controlled, and responsible, with a clear view and cheerful acceptance of reality. When a person hasn't been taught their responsibilities in life, what is their's and what is not their's, this deficit always manifests in certain behaviors. The book of Proverbs calls these immature, irresponsible people fools. It calls those who are mature and responsible wise. Let's look at some of the attributes of the immature man and the wise man.

Read Proverbs 10:18-19

When you have a bad attitude toward someone but you hide it with a smiley face, you are showing your immaturity. When you spread bad stuff about other people for no good reason, you are also showing your immaturity. These may be areas in your life where you need to grow up into Christ.

Read Proverbs 12:15-16

It is a mark of immaturity to think you are always right and be unwilling to listen to the counsel of others. It is also a mark of immaturity to be a loose cannon with your anger. Quick-tempered people definitely need to grow up into Christ in that area. They are lacking in self-control.

Read Proverbs 14:16

The immature person is not fearful of evil. He allows himself to get close to it, thinking it won't harm him. Other marks of immaturity are rage (harsh, hurtful anger) and self-confidence.

Read Romans 12:16 and Galatians 6:3

The Bible cautions us against thinking too highly of our own opinions. It warns that anyone who thinks he is something when he is really nothing risks falling into self-deception.

Read Proverbs 15:5

Refusing and rejecting the instruction of those with more experience is a true mark of immaturity. The mature man realizes his need for instruction and seeks it out.

Read Proverbs 15:12

Not only does the immature man not appreciate those who offer correction, but he won't seek out counsel from those who are more mature. He's like a little kid who doesn't want to be corrected. The real truth is, he doesn't want to be accountable to anyone.

Read Proverbs 18:1-2

The reason people isolate themselves is so they can do their own thing. Failing to communicate where necessary and stay in touch with others is a mark of immaturity. The Bible

tells us that if we don't get anything else, we ought to be sure to get understanding (Proverbs 4:7).

understand: In Old Testament, to separate mentally; to distinguish the various parts of something.

Understanding is the mental ability to separate a single thing into its parts. It is to look at an engine and see a carburetor, a block, an air filter, a distributor, a radiator, an alternator.... It is to look at a painting and see all the different shapes and colors.....It is to look at a community and see all the different pieces of property. It is to look at the candy dish on a stranger's end table and say, "That doesn't belong to me. I shouldn't touch it."

Understanding is knowing and accepting reality. It is accepting what is mine and what is not mine. What I am responsible for and what I am not responsible for. What I am free to do and what I am not free to do. But immature people have no delight in understanding. They don't appreciate the limits in their lives. They don't put a high value on the freedoms of others. They don't cheerfully accept their personal responsibilities. Instead, immature people take delight in expressing their own heart. "This is what I think...." "This is what I want...." There is an unrestrained quality to this type of conduct. These people need to grow up into Jesus in the area of self-control.

Read Proverbs 20:3

Immature people are prone to starting quarrels. They need to grow up into Jesus and become peacemakers. Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross. Immature people don't like to do painful things. It's much easier to start a fight than it is to end one.

Read Proverbs 20:5

Mature people go to great lengths to get the counsel they need. They aren't put off easily.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are some areas in your life that may be immature and need to grow up into Jesus?
 - * Don't control emotions very well.
 - * Tend to think well of my ideas.
 - * Expect others to treat me the way I want to be treated.
 - * Procrastinate on difficult tasks.
 - * Tend to be focused on my own needs or desires.
2. What are some practical ways you can grow up in these areas?
 - * Confess your immaturity when you have an emotional outburst.
 - * Make it a practice to run your ideas past someone else.
 - * Start treating others the way you want to be treated.
 - * Do difficult things first. Confess your struggles.
 - * Offer yourself to God a living sacrifice. Focus of Jesus.

Theme: Growing Up Into Christ

Lesson 3. The Wise and the Foolish (cont.)

To the teacher: After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

Read Proverbs 26:11-12

Immature people tend to keep making the same mistakes over and over again. One of the reasons is that they are wise in their own eyes. They don't ever seek counsel from someone who is more mature and who might be able to help them. They don't want to seem like they need help. They want people to think they are self-sufficient, they don't heed anyone. That's a picture of an isolated man!

Read Proverbs 28:26

Immature people think that whatever they are thinking or feeling must be right, simply because they think it or feel it. The mature man has learned that his heart is deceitful and he shouldn't trust his feelings. He walks by the Word of God, not by his own heart.

Read Proverbs 29:11

A person who is quick to vent all his passions and feelings is immature. Quickly uttered feelings can often cause great damage in a relationship. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be honest with what we are feeling or thinking. It only means we should do so in a controlled situation and for a beneficial purpose.

Read Proverbs 1:5

Mature people want to hear, they want to learn, their hearts are open to instruction. Immature people see instruction as an attack against them. If I say, "I think you could do that a little better by..." And you respond, "Well I did the best I could." You are displaying your immaturity. It is time to grow up in that area of your life.

Read Proverbs 9:8-9

A mature person so appreciates correction that he will love the one who corrects him.

Read Proverbs 13:20

One of the best ways to grow into Jesus in all things is by associating with mature people.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:33

We should look for mature people we can observe and learn from. This verse does not mean we imitate all the personal traits of a person; it simply means we model our walk with God after their example. We must never underestimate the power of the wrong kind of example to corrupt our walk with God.

Read Philippians 3:17-19

The immature man is the enemy of the cross because he is unrestrained and self-indulgent.

He is the enemy of self-denial. He prefers to operate on his own isolated rather than as a part of the larger whole. He stills has a strong Godhood view of things. He doesn't see himself as simply a small part of a large, great, eternal purpose established millennia ago by God.

Read Proverbs 15:31-32

The way a person grows up into Christ and gain the ability to see things in their proper place is by correction. Just like the parent must tell the toddler, "No, that candy dish doesn't belong to you. Don't touch it." We shouldn't be so arrogant as to think that we were somehow born with an innate knowledge of where all the boundaries of life are laid down. We all have to learn these things. We all have to be corrected when we don't get it right.

Read Proverbs 16:23-24

As the heart grows up into Christ, the words that come off our lips will reflect that increasing maturity. The benefits are sweetness in the inner man (as opposed to bitterness, which comes from refusing to accept reality). And health to the bones (the source of our immune system).

Read Proverbs 24:5-6

The mature man has come to see that he doesn't have all the answers. That's because, we see through glass darkly. Safety can only be found in a multitude of counselors. "

The picture of an immature person is that of a man who... 1) Thinks quite well of himself; 2) Is self-confident; 3) Is unrestrained in voicing his thoughts and ideas, regardless of how impulsive and un-thought-out they may be.

The picture of a wise, mature man is that of a person who is... 1) A little skeptical of his own thoughts and ideas; 2) Who doesn't quite trust his judgment and looks for guidance and instruction from others; 3) Who is not quick to speak, but exercises restraint and self-control over his tongue.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you tend to repeat the same mistakes over and over? What can you do about it?
 - * Admit you have a weakness and ask for help (this is confession).
2. Do you get offended when someone corrects you? Does it feel as though you are being personally attacked? Do you get angry or become defensive? What can you do about this?
 - * Admit you have a problem.
 - * Ask Jesus to heal you so that you are not so sensitive.
 - * Remind yourself that correction is necessary for growth. It's a good thing!
3. Do you have difficulty controlling your tongue? What can you do about it?
 - * Admit you have a problem.
 - * Ask Jesus to put a guard over your mouth (see Psalms 141:3).
 - * Purpose within yourself not to talk so much (see Psalms 17:3 and 39:1).
 - * Fill your mouth with praises to God (see Psalms 71:8).

Theme: Growing Up Into Christ

Lesson 4. Putting Away Childish Things

To the teacher: After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

Someone said that true wisdom is realizing how much you *don't* know. It is coming to the recognition that you are not God's gift, that you are not the center of the universe, that you don't have all the answers. It is the failure to accurately see the world broken down into its constituent parts that keeps a person immature. Immature people still have some degree of a Godhood view. They don't understand what is their's and what is not their's. They say things like, 'You're making me so angry.' Such a statement is a mark of immaturity. It is not owning what is yours. Your emotions belong to you. No one else controls them. If you don't control them, that is your failure, not someone else's.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:11

The words 'put away' mean 'to render entirely useless, to abolish, destroy, make of no effect. Some of us have some childish things that we need to put away. We need to stop allowing them to effect us. We need to accept ownership over them and stop blaming others. We need to honestly confess these things, first to Jesus and then to a safe part of Jesus' body.

Read James 5:16

To be healed means 'to be whole and mature with all things working properly. If you can't be honest with another human being, you aren't being honest with God. Confession is what brings bad things out into the light. This is why isolation is so destructive: It allows the immature parts of us to stay in darkness, unexposed. It is not good for man, or any part of man, to be alone.

We must bring our immature, undeveloped parts out into the healing light of God. This can only happen within the context of loving and honest relationships.

Read Ephesians 5:17

In the New Testament the word translated 'understand' is slightly different. Whereas in the Old Testament it means to separate things, in the New Testament it means 'to put together mentally.' The idea here is that you see the various parts of life and you are able to put them together the way they are supposed to be. In other words, it's not enough just to understand which parts of this world are your's and which are not... What you are responsible for and what you are not. What you are free to do and what you are not.

It is also important to see how your particular part of the whole fits into the larger scheme of things. How does your freedom mesh with the freedom of others? How does it all fit together?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:9 and Galatians 5:13-15

The immature fuss and squabble like little children. But those who have grown up into Jesus

understand that the whole purpose of love. We don't have responsibilities in life in a vacuum.

We have responsibilities so we can bless others. We don't have certain freedoms so we can indulge ourselves in the pleasures of life. We have freedom so we can through love serve one another.

What we're talking about here is growing up into Jesus in all things, every part of us. The immature parts of us are the enemies of the cross of Christ. We must put them away for good! The mature parts are those that have embraced the cross, have taken up the cross, and have determined that they will follow Jesus wherever he may lead.

Read 1 Peter 2:21

Jesus has called us to walk in the same steps He walked. He is our ultimate example.

Philippians 2:3 (The Amplified Version of the Bible)

Do nothing from factional motives through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves. 4 Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also the interests of others. 5 Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Let Him be your example in humility -6 Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fulness of the attributes which make God God], did not think equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained; 7 But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity] so as to assume the guise of a servant, in that He became like men and was born a human being. 8 And after He had appeared in human form He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! 9 Therefore [because He stooped so low], God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name.....

Questions for discussion:

1. Just as Jesus was the Son of God, we are sons of God. What privileges and rightful dignity are you willing to give up in order to be more like Jesus?
 - * The right to be treated well.
 - * The right to be listened to and respected.
 - * The right to be served.
2. What childish behaviors do you want to abolish from your life?
3. What must you do to put away once and for all these childish behaviors?
 - * Admit they are there and have power over you.
 - * Ask God for a better understanding of reality.
 - * Study the whole concept of boundaries. Learn what you are responsible for and what you are not, what you are free to do and what you are not.
 - * Submit yourself to God every day and become His servant in blessing other people.
 - * Learn how your life fits into the life of the body of Christ. Get involved.