

“Time to Grow Up” – 1 Cor. 3:1-3

Okay, today I have a question about something I really don't understand. Babies. Kids. Why do you people keep having these things? So, I'm in Walmart the other day, which is bad enough, but there is a kid on the next aisle have a full-blown meltdown. He's screaming and crying and I can hear his mother telling him to stop and be quiet and she might as well be saying it in Greek. I heard something about how he wanted her to put him on the top shelf or something and she wouldn't do it and so he came unglued.

Now, my first thought is, so obviously this woman has learned her lesson and this will be her only child – if the child survives this trip to Walmart. I mean surely no sane person would want to have more than one of these little monsters, right? But when I went around the corner to the aisle they were on she actually had one other kid in the basket and one in the oven! I don't get it. Why? How? I don't know. Parents are crazy.

But I was thinking as I was preparing this message that at least kids will someday grow up. They don't usually act like that for more than 20-30 years. At some point, you pretty much have to grow up physically and mentally. But what about spiritually? How many people do you know that just never seem to grow up in the Lord? They keep struggling with basic issues that everybody has but they just can't seem to break through. Do you know anybody like that? How about the person in the mirror? Let's all focus on that person today, huh?

In **1 Corinthians chapter 3**, Paul addresses this issue. Several years before this letter was written, Paul started this church in Corinth. That had to have been hard work but he finally got them to the point that he felt comfortable handing the pastorate over to another and he went on to start more churches like he was called to do. But as the father of this church, he was always concerned about them growing up and so I can imagine he was always trying to hear about their growth and how they were doing.

But this church in Corinth was messed up like a football bat. They had so many issues I can just picture Paul cringing every time somebody said they had news about the church in Corinth. And then he would get that news and just facepalm every time. *“Oh dear! What have they done now?”* Do you know of any little kids like that? Every time you hear about little Johnny, it's because he did something stupid. That's this church in Corinth.

But like a good father, Paul writes them a “sandwich letter.” You know what a sandwich letter is? When you have something bad to say, you start out with some soft bread of good news or encouragement, then you get to the meat in the middle which is tough. Then you end with more soft bread of encouragement. That's a sandwich letter and Paul has written the bread in chapters one and two. Now, it's time for the meat. And the meat is the problem. Let's let Paul explain in **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**.

Paul says, *“Brothers, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?”*

One of the main, overall themes of this book is Paul encouraging this church to not be like the world. He is talking to Christians but the world has infested and infected the church to the point that it was hard to tell one from the other. You expect the world to be immature spiritually. Paul just got through saying in chapter two that the deep spiritual things of God can't be understood by people in the world because they are not spiritual. But at some point, you expect Christians to mature.

You might remember the comedian Jeff Foxworthy saying, *“You might be a redneck if you walk your kid to school...because you are in the same grade.”* As a redneck, I think that's funny. But immature Christians aren't funny. If

you have been a Christian for more than a couple of years and you are still biblically illiterate and have a meltdown every time God doesn't do what you want Him to do, then it's time to grow up.

There are lots of churches out there that are immature and don't want the pastor to talk about sanctification or sacrifice or even the end times because that's scary or that's hard. Please talk more about how God loves us and wants us to prosper. That's milky goodness right there! And so many people are content to be shallow and immature Christians. They have their fire insurance. They know they are not going to Hell. But the problem with that comes when the problems come, and they will.

What happens when a child has a problem? I saw online some people posting about why their kids had a meltdown. One lady said her kid started screaming because the mom wouldn't let her call the fire department to get a bird out of the tree. One guy said his kid melted down because his soap wasn't soapy enough. Another kid freaked out because his shadow was following him. That's what kids do. And when it's somebody else's kid, it's kind of funny.

But what happens when a grown adult Christian melts down because God didn't do what they thought He ought to do? It's not funny then, is it? What about when it is you? Then it's tragic. So, let's see how we can know that we are maturing. Yes, it's easy to see it in other people. It's easy to see somebody else doing something and we think, "*Well that is immature.*" But what about that person in the mirror? Let's focus on him today.

There are three signs or issues that come into our lives we can look at to see if we are maturing spiritually. And, yes, you can use these on other people but remember, we are looking at ourselves this morning. Let's make sure we are growing in our relationship and if everybody does that, then you won't have to be doing it for somebody else. Okay?

The first way to tell if you are mature or not is by **your diet**. Bless Victoria's heart. She made some roast the other day and brought me some and I so appreciated that. I rarely ever cook anything like that – okay, I never cook like that – but she brought me a plate and it was wonderful...well, most of it. I have already told her this and she took it well. But along with the roast was...some cabbage! And when I saw it, I knew I I knew I couldn't eat it and I felt horrible about it but, like I told her, there is no cabbage recipe on the planet that is going to make me eat cabbage.

When I was a kid, I promised myself I would never again eat cabbage when I got to be grown. And it's good to be grown! I don't eat cabbage because I just don't care for it. But I ate that meat right up and literally licked the plate. Again, it's good to be grown. And a grown-up Christian ought to be eating meat and deciding for himself what is right to eat and what is not. And just because something is hard to chew on spiritually doesn't mean you stop trying to eat it. Or if something is at first distasteful, if it is from God, you eat it and chew on it and keep trying to digest it until you start to enjoy it.

Let me give you some samples; some appetizers, let's say, of some real meat in scripture. Don't answer out loud. Just take a sample and go on to the next thing. How do you feel about women preachers? Do you know what scripture says about it? What about speaking in tongues? How do you stand on predestination? Are you premillennial, postmillennial or amillennial? Do all dogs go to Heaven? What happened to the dinosaurs? Now, some of those questions are more important than others and some are deeper than others. And I'm not saying that if you don't have a firm opinion about all those then you are not a mature believer. I'm just saying there are meatier things to learn about God and scripture than just how to get to Heaven. Are you growing in your diet? That's the first way to tell if you are growing as a believer.

The next way to tell is how you **love and get along with others**. Kids can be mean, can't they? They can be selfish. They don't want to share. They want everything for themselves and if something in their lives isn't like they want then they tell everybody. They get mad and cause a scene. It's all about them.

Some of you have read the Purpose-Driven Life book and you know the very first sentence in the book is, "It's not about you." This life is not about you. I know that's hard to grasp and that is because it is a mature way of looking at life. Little kids don't get it. They can't understand it. And a big chunk of maturing as a Christian is putting others first, letting others

have what rightfully belongs to you, not getting even, not getting revenge, letting go of your rights and letting God judge others, not you. And I appreciate y'all being here today and listening politely as I preach to myself on this! Some of you know I've been struggling with this lately. It's hard.

But God said in **Ephesians 4** that He is preparing His people for works of service so we can become mature. That is a sign of maturity when you can do something for others that they don't deserve, that puts you out, that is not even fair to you but you do it without complaining. I'm not saying look at Pastor Todd for your model on this. I'm saying listen to what God says and be mature in how you love and treat people.

Lastly, you can tell if you are growing as a believer by looking at your gifts and what you do with them. What kind of gifts do you give little kids? You give them toys that keep them occupied and entertained. Most of them are loud and obnoxious gifts, aren't they, parents? If you give your grandkid a drum set, your kids are going to be mad. That's the gift that, unfortunately, keeps on giving.

But what kind of gift do you give a mature adult? You don't give toys. You give tools. It may be a tool that helps fix a car or it may be a tool that helps fix a meal. Maybe you give a tool that helps somebody mentally or physically or spiritually. As you mature in your relationship with God, He gives you different gifts and tools that are meant to be used to help others.

Later on in 1 Corinthians, Paul uses several chapters to talk about all the different gifts God might give us. And all Christians have gifts. You may not feel like it sometimes, but you do. And those gifts are given so you can edify or build up the body of believers around you. If you only use your gifts to keep yourself entertained or only for your glory then that is a sign of immaturity. That's what kids do. So, it's time to grow up.

Notice that Paul mentions jealousy and quarreling in verse three. Those are huge red flags of immaturity. I would add ingratitude in there as well. Have you ever met a grateful baby? Does any of that sound like you? I'm not concerned with the other guy. Think about yourself. Maybe it's time we all grew up and went a little deeper with God. We should be looking more and more like Jesus and less and less like the world.

But you can't look like Him or act like Him if you don't have a relationship with Him. Do you know Him today? I'm not asking if you go to church or if you have been baptized or give money or any of that stuff. Has there been a time in your life when you asked God to be Lord of your life and to forgive you of all your sins, trusting that Jesus paid the price for those sins? Did you repent – turn away from – those sins? Do it today. Right now as the music plays.