

Dear Wendy,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked how we evaluate and increase our level of Christian maturity.

The formula for attaining Christian maturity is given to us in 2 Peter 1:5-8 where the Apostle tells us to “make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We can see from the above description that these qualities are built upon one another, faith being the Christian’s firm foundation with love as the culminating point. But, each quality also has many stages of development so that a Christian’s growth is an on-going process simultaneously in each particular area. Essential to this growth is the study of God’s word through which His righteous character is learned. And, just as study is essential for knowledge, prayer is the vital component for communication with God. When study or prayer life is diminished, so is the Christian’s development. To remedy this situation, concentration must be placed on putting worldly and selfish desires aside. The Apostle Paul gives us a good illustration in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” Paul then goes on to explain in Hebrews 5:13-14; 6:1 that “anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.”

But, just being able to distinguish between right and wrong is not enough. Although we are admonished “to study to show thyself approved unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15), unless the lessons we have studied in the scriptures are applied in our lives through our words, our actions, and, most of all, our deepest thoughts and intentions, we will not be growing in grace and maturity. The Apostle Paul gives us good advice in Philippians 4:4-9. He tells us to always rejoice in the Lord, not to be anxious about anything, and to pray with thanksgiving. He then says to think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy and put these thoughts into practice. By following these scriptural guidelines as we ask for strength and help in time of need, we are on our way to becoming mature Christians. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16) The final benchmark of the mature Christian is love of the brethren. “We know we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers.” (1 John 3:14) Although this can be one of the most difficult lessons to apply, it is vital. Each true Christian is struggling in his or her own way. Our job is to support and uplift each other. “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 2:12-13)

Christian maturity is summed up in the fruits of the spirit, found in Galatians 5:22-23. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” We can evaluate our spiritual progress by the degree in which each of these fruits is being developed in us. To help us develop, God will often allow various experiences and trials to come our way, to be used for our benefit as we mature, growing in grace. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-3)

We hope we have helped you in your evaluation of Christian maturity. Please write us again with further questions.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio