“The Marks Of A Mature Person”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 1 of 15 – January 6, 2013 at SBC

Overview of James James 1:2-4

Without a doubt, probably the number one, cause of problems, in the world, . . is immaturity. I have counseled, a few couples, regarding marriage. The number one marriage problem, is people, just need, to grow up. They are acting, . . . immature. We get ourselves, into all kinds of problems, by saying immature things, . . . making immature decisions, . . . acting in immature ways. We just need, . . . to grow up.

God's will, for every person, is that, they grow. Hebrews 6:1 – *"Let us go on, . . . to maturity."* God says, . . . grow up. That's why, one of the purposes, of our church, . . . is to help everybody, . . . grow spiritually.

What is, . . . maturity? How do you know, . . . when, you have arrived?

\*\*\*\* WHAT MATURITY, . . . IS NOT:

Maturity is, not age. It has nothing to do, with how long, you've lived, or how long, . . . you've been a Christian. You can be a Christian, for fifty years, and not be mature. (Bumper sticker: "I may be getting older, but I refuse, to grow up.") I've seen, some 50, and 60 year old, kids. Maturity, has nothing to do, with your age. Granted, God's ideal is, that as we grow older, we get more mature, but, that's not always the case.

Maturity, is not, appearance. Some people, just look, mature. Some people, just look more spiritual, . . than the rest of us. They look, kind of dignified, they look like, they're holy. For the rest of us, it's just tough luck. The fact is, you can look real spiritual, and not be spiritual, at all. It has nothing to do, with your appearance.

Maturity, has nothing to do, with achievement, what you accomplish. You can accomplish a lot, . . . and, still be, very immature. You don't have to be mature, . . . to make millions.

Maturity, has nothing to do, with academics, how many degrees, you've gotten, how much education, you've gotten. When we all graduated from high school, we thought we knew it all, then, we went to college.

We thought, “I don't know so much, any more.” You can have, so many degrees, . . . they call you Dr. Fahrenheit, . . . but, that does not make you . . . mature.

God says maturity, . . . is attitude. Attitude, is what makes, the difference. It's your, . . character. D. L. Moody said, "Character, is what you are, in the dark." Recognition, is what people say about you, . . . character is what, God says about you. God says, it's your attitude, that determines, whether you're mature, or not. God wants you to grow up, . . . and, have Christlike attitudes.

How do you measure, . . . spiritual maturity? Not by comparing yourself, to other people, . . . but, by comparing yourself, to the Word of God. In the book of James, we have a manual, on maturity. The word "mature" in Greek, is the word, "teleaos" -- it's translated, mature, complete, perfect. James uses this word, five times, in five chapters. James is a manual, on how to be, mature. James gives us, five marks of maturity.

1. A MATURE PERSON, . . . IS POSITIVE, . . . UNDER PRESSURE

James 1:2-4 - *"Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials, of many kinds, because, you know, the testing of your faith, develops perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work, so that you may be mature, and complete, . . . not lacking anything."*

How do you, . . . handle trials? The first test of maturity, is how do you react, to problems? Do they, blow you away? Do you get nervous, uptight, negative? Do you grumble, and gripe? How do you, . . . handle problems?

Christianity, is a life. It's not, a religion, it's a life. Jesus said, *"I've come, that you might have life."* Life means problems, . . . and, part of life, means solving problems, . . . and, facing them, . . . with, the right attitude.

What is your, . . . natural attitude, your natural bent, . . when things don't go right, and you're irritated? Are you negative, or are you positive? Are you basically a supportive person, or, are you a skeptical person? Is your life, filled with gratitude, or grumbling? Are you affirmative, or are you angry, most of the time?

James 1:12 says, *"Blessed is the man, who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, that God has promised, to those who love Him."* You can be great, . . . in the knowledge, of the Bible, . . and, still be cantankerous, as all get out! Are you positive, . . under pressure?

2. A MATURE PERSON, . . . IS SENSITIVE, . . . TO PEOPLE

James 2:8 – *"If you really keep, the royal law, found in Scripture, `Love your neighbor, as yourself,' you are doing right."*

A mature person, . . is sensitive, to people. He doesn't, just see, his own needs, . . he sees, other people's needs. He understands, their hurts. He's not, just interested, . . in himself. Our children, . . when they're immature, . . . only, see themselves, "I want that, I want this, I don't care about, . . anybody else." God says, that love, . . . being interested, in others, . . . is a mark of maturity.

James, gets very specific. In James 2:1-6, he says, *“Don't show favoritism, don't be a snob, don't look down on people, don't judge by appearance, don't insult people, don't exploit people.”* The second test, . . . of maturity, . . . is love: How do you treat, . . . other people?

Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 13, “I may win, all kinds of people, to the Lord, I may build, great church buildings, I may be on television, I may give my money to the poor, but if I have not love, I'm as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal; it just doesn't, . . . amount to much”.

Matthew 25, Jesus says, "At that judgment, they will stand, before the Lord, and they'll say, `I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and, in prison, and you visited me.' We'll say, `When, Lord, when did, we do that? When were you sick, and we visited you? When were you in prison, and when were you thirsty, and we gave you drink?'

Jesus said, `Inasmuch, as you have done it, unto the least of these, my brethren, . . . you have done it, unto Me.'" It's interesting to me, that in the Matthew 25, judgment, . . . the one thing, we'll be judged for, . . . is how we treated, other people. Not, how many Bible verses we knew, . . how many times we were in church, . . . not, how great a reputation we had, . . . as Christian leaders, . . . but, how we treated, . . other people.

3. A MATURE PERSON, . . . HAS MASTERED, . . . HIS MOUTH

James 3:2 – *"We all stumble, in many ways.* (This is an understatement! Nobody's perfect.) *If anyone, is never at fault, in what he says, he is a perfect man, . . . able, to keep his whole body, in check."* The first thing, a doctor will say, when you go for a check up, is . . . "Stick out, . . . your tongue." He uses your tongue, to check, . . . your health. God does that, . . . spiritually, too.

In World War II, there was a saying, "Loose lips, . . . sink ships." Loose lips, . . destroy lives. They, . . . hurt! Definition of gossip: Hearing something you like, about somebody you don't. It is mouth-to-mouth recitation.

Self-control comes, . . . from tongue control. We get ourselves, into so much trouble, . . . by what we say, and what we think, and what we speak. James 3, gives several illustrations. He says our tongue, is like a rudder, a bit in a horse's mouth, . . . a spark, a snake, a spring.

He says, that you put a little bit, in a horse's mouth, and that little bit, can control, the direction, of the horse. A little rudder, on a boat, can control the direction, of the boat. Your tongue, which, by size, is very insignificant, . . controls, your life. What you say, directs your life, . . what you say, can destroy, your life. It can encourage, people's lives, it can discourage people's lives. Your tongue, is a powerful force, for good, . . or, for evil.

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I just say, what's on my mind." They're kind of, proud of it. Being frank, . . . up front, . . they say, what's on their mind. Maybe, there's not a whole lot, on their mind. Maybe, what's on their mind, . . . shouldn't be said. The Bible says, . . . that, that's not frankness, . . . that's, immaturity. A lot of people, just need, . . . a large dose, of tactfulness. (Just an excuse, . . . a cop-out!)

Ephesians 4:29 – *"Do not let* ***any*** *negative talk, come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful, for building up others, . . . according to their needs."* Circle the word, "any". Watch, . . . what you say.

When you talk, you don't, just say things, . . . to build yourself up. You say things, . . . to build, other people up. If it doesn't, build somebody else up, . . don't say it. Even if, it's the truth. If it doesn't build up, . . don't say it. That's a mark, . . . of maturity. A mature person, . . . manages, his mouth. It doesn't matter, how long, you've been a Christian, . . . if you can't, master your mouth, . . . you've, missed the point.

James 1:26 – *"If anyone, considers himself religious, . . . and, yet, does not keep a tight rein, on his tongue, he deceives himself, and his religion, is worthless."* If I've memorized a hundred thousand verses, and been through every Bible study, in the book, and go to church, and never miss a service, . . but if I'm a gossip, my religion, . . . is worthless. If I spread rumors, it's worthless. If I'm always saying things, that are not always accurate, or exaggerate, or speak impulsively, it's worthless. The test of maturity, is to manage, your mouth, . . . so that, no corrupt communication, no negative talk, . . . comes out of, your mouth.

*"Speak the truth, in love",* means the right attitude, the right timing, the right place, the right location, the right motive. The Bible, . . . is very practical. It doesn't matter, how much you know, about the Bible, if your attitude, . . . isn't like Christ's, . . . you're, missing the point.

4. A MATURE PERSON, . . . IS A PEACEMAKER, . . . NOT A TROUBLEMAKER

James 4:1 – *"What causes fights, and quarrels, among you? Don't they come, from your desires, that battle, within you?"* He's talking about, . . . conflict. He says, there are inner quarrels, and fights, . . . and, they come, . . . from our own, . . . inner desires.

You want something, . . . and, you don't get it. You kill and covet, but, you cannot have, what you want. You quarrel and fight, . . . and, you do not have, because you do not ask God. Ask yourself: “Am I, a peacemaker? Am I, a troublemaker? Do I like, to argue? Am I, a contentious person? Do I, get my feelings, hurt? Do I, get defensive, easily? Do I, hurt other people's, feelings? Am I, a peacemaker? Or, am I, a troublemaker?”

The mark of a mature person, . . . is the lack of conflict, in his own life. Paul told, the Corinthian church, “You guys, are a bunch of babies”. They argued, . . . about everything. They argued, about the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, leadership, . . . everything. That's a mark, . . . of immaturity.

Why is there, so much conflict, . . . in the world? Why is there conflict, in my marriage? Why is there conflict, where I work? Why is there conflict, between me, and a former friend? Why is there conflict, between me, and another Christian? Why is there conflict, . . . between me, and God? Why is there, . . . conflict?

(How long, do you have to not get along, with every other person, every business associate, every doctor, etc.,

. . . before, you begin to realize, . . . that, just maybe, it’s me, . . . and, not them.?)

James says, there are two reasons, . . . for conflict. James 4:3 – *"When you ask, you do not receive. But, you ask, with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get, on your pleasures."*

\*\*\* The first cause of conflict, . . . is selfishness. When I want, what I want, . . then, I'm going to have conflict, with somebody. The issue, . . . is **pride**.

How do you know, if a person, is immature? Look at, their prayers. If their prayers, are always self-centered -- bless me, prosper me, protect me, use me, help me, . . . if this is the only, kind of prayer you pray, that's immature. Do you pray, . . . for other people? Bless me -- all I see, is me. An "I" problem. Selfishness.

Proverbs 13:10 – *"Only by pride, comes contention."* All conflict, is ego, . . pride. When my wife and I, have a conflict, it's because I'm proud, and I don't want to admit, I was wrong, . . . or, she was proud, and she doesn't want to admit, she was wrong, . . or, we're both proud, and we both, don't want to admit it. Pride guarantees conflict, . . . at work, church, home, school, wherever. Selfishness -- we want things, for ourselves.

James 4:11-12 – *"Brothers, do not slander, . . . one another. Anyone, who speaks against his brother, or judges him, speaks against the law, and judges it, . . . There is only one lawgiver, and judge, one who is able, to save, and destroy. But, you, who are you, . . . to judge, your neighbor?"*

\*\*\* The other source of conflict, is judging others -- judgementalism. All of us, are guilty, of judgementalism. God says, “Don't judge, people”. If you do this, you're asking, for a fight. You're always, finding fault, . . . always stirring up strife, . . . always spreading rumors. Don't, . . . judge!

\*\*\*\*\*\* Why? Why should I, . . . not judge?

1. I'm not, God. When you judge somebody, . . . it's playing God. There is only one judge, only one lawgiver, -- God.

2. Only God, has all the facts, . . . you don't, and neither, do I. When I judge you, I don't have, . . . all the facts.

3. I don't know the motives, and, you don't either. You can't tell, what's in, somebody's heart. You don't know. Only, . . . God does.

So, only God, . . . has the right, to judge. He has, all the facts, He knows everything, He knows all the motives, He sees, . . . into our heart. He's got the truth, . . . so, He can judge. But, we are limited, in our insight. We don't have, . . . any right, . . . to judge. (Someone doesn’t, . . . like me. Deceived?)

God says selfishness, and judgementalism, . . . causes conflict. The fourth characteristic, of a mature person, is whether, that person is a peacemaker, or a troublemaker. God says, judgmental people, . . are immature.

5. A MATURE PERSON, . . . IS PATIENT, . . . AND PRAYERFUL

James 5:7,11 – *"Be patient then, brothers, until the Lord's coming, . . . As you know, we consider blessed, those who persevere."* v. 16 – *"The prayer of a righteous man, is powerful, and effective."* Circle "patient", and, "prayer". God says, the mark of a mature person is, he is patient, and prayerful. Those are the two keywords, in chapter five. "Patient", is used, four times. "Prayer" is used, seven times.

The mark of a mature person, . . . is they are patient, and, they are prayerful. Those two, . . . go together. They express, an attitude, . . . of dependence, upon God.

James 5:7 – *"Be patient then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits, for the land, to yield its valuable crop, how patient he is, for the fall, and spring rain. You too, be patient. Stand firm, because the Lord's coming, is near. Don't grumble, against each other, brothers, or you will be judged."*

He's saying, . . . “Be patient.” He gives the illustration, of the farmer. If anybody, has to have patience, . . . it's a farmer. He does, a lot, of waiting. He plants a seed, waits, prays, hopes, expects, . . . he waits. There are no, overnight crops. Just like a farmer has to wait, . . . sometimes, . . . we have to wait. We have to wait on God, in answer to prayer. We have to wait on God, for a miracle. We have to wait on God, to work in our lives. We have, to wait. Patience is a mark, of maturity. The only way, you learn patience, . . . is by waiting.

My children, have to learn the difference, between "No", and "Not yet". For a long time, they thought, that "not yet" meant, . . . "we're not going, to get to do it". They thought, it meant “No”-- it just meant, “Not yet”.

Many times, God will say to you, "Not yet." He doesn't mean, "No". He doesn't mean, He's not going to answer your prayer. He just saying, “You've got to wait, . . . I want you, to develop, . . . to grow”.

James 5:16 – *"Therefore, confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man, . . . is powerful, and effective. Elijah was a man, just like us. He prayed earnestly, that it wouldn't rain, . . . and, it didn't rain on the land, for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crop."* If anybody was patient, . . . it was Elijah. Elijah, was patient, . . . and prayerful. That's a mark, . . . of maturity.

\*\*\*\*\*\* The marks of a mature person. What are the tests?

1. How do you, handle problems? Do you get uptight, negative, grumble, gripe, complain, . . . or, are you positive, . . . under pressure?

2. Are you sensitive, to other people? Are you concerned, about their needs, desires, cares, hurts, . . . or, do you only, . . . see yourself? Do you only pray for yourself, . . . or, do you pray for others?

3. Can you manage, your mouth? Have you learned, to put a muzzle on it, sometimes, . . . and, just, not speak? When you have a juicy tidbit of gossip, and it's tempting, because knowledge is power, . . . do you, share it -- ". . . so, you can pray about it."

You can damage people, just by innuendo. Managing your mouth, is a mark of maturity. (“Have you learned, like Ephesians says, "Let no corrupt communication, no corrupt talk, come out of your mouth, . . . but, only that, which builds up, . . . for the edification of others, . . . according to their needs.")

4. Are you a troublemaker, . . . or, are you a peacemaker? Do you have a tendency, to stir things up? Do you have a, hair trigger temper, . . . where someone, can tick you off, quickly? Do you carry, . . . a grudge? Do you find yourself, . . . nursing, bitterness? Or, are you, . . . a peacemaker?

5. How long, can you wait, . . for an answer, to prayer, . . without giving up? Maybe, God has every intention, of giving it, . . . but, He's waiting, to teach you, maturity. How do, you rate?

This hasn't been, an easy message, . . . but, it's one we need. The Book of James, . . . the most practical book, of the New Testament. These next several weeks, will help us mature, . . . . . . . . It ought to, . . . be good!

“The Marks Of A Mature Person”, Developing a Faith That Works – Part 1 of 15

Overview of James James 1:2-4

God's will for every person is personal growth and maturity. The book of James defines what maturity means.

WHAT MATURITY ISN'T:

\* It's not:

\* It's not:

\* It's not:

\* It's not:

God says maturity is determined by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5 MARKS OF MATURITY

1. A MATURE PERSON IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

James 1:2-4 – “*Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance and perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.”*

James 1:12 – “*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.”*

2. A MATURE PERSON IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

James 2:8 – “*If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, `Love your neighbor as yourself' you are doing right.” (*See 2:1-6, 14-16)

3. A MATURE PERSON HAS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

James 3:2 – “*We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.” (*See vs. 3-11)

Ephesians 4:29 – “*Do not let any negative talk come out of your mouth but only what is helpful for building up others according to their needs.”*

James 1:26 – “*If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”*

4. A MATURE PERSON IS A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, NOT A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

James 4:1 – “*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?”*

2 Sources of Conflict:

\* (vs. 2-3)

\* (vs. 11-12)

5. A MATURE PERSON IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

James 5:7, 11 – “*Be patient then, brothers, until the Lord's coming . . . As you know, we consider blessed those who persevere.”*

James 5:16b – “*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

How do you rate your maturity?