

### Characteristics of Maturing Believers

Dr. David DeWitt (a synopsis of twenty principles of characteristics of maturing believers)

I asked myself, “Does the Bible recognize maturity as something distinct from, and different from, spiritual growth in general?” It seems (to me) that it does, even though the Bible does not give categories. I have given three stages of growth for the purpose of identifying the maturing process. It is my observation that as we grow, we go from something like chaos, to order, to maturity. It takes discipline to get to order and it takes creativity to get to maturity.



#### **Maturing believers avoid people who enjoy sin — Psalm 1:1-3**

*Chaotic people* hang around with other immature people who enjoy being chaotic.

*Orderly people* discourage fellowship with chaotic people because their tradition says not to do that. *Mature people* don't fellowship with chaotic people because they will keep them from what they want to accomplish.

#### **The more mature the more alone one will feel — Matthew 10:35-37**

*Chaotic people* often have lots of shallow, surface-level, chaotic friends with whom to do chaotic things together. *Orderly people* have institutional friends in their church, school, athletic team or social group. *Mature people* will have a few close friends, but it will be increasingly difficult, though important, to maintain significant friends.

#### **Mature people realize their sin and their need for repentance — Psalm 51**

*Chaotic people* either justify their sin or are in continual repentance presuming upon the grace of God. *Orderly people* may go to confession before attending mass, or confess their sins in a church. *Mature people* recognize that they are perpetual sinners and in constant need of repentance.

#### **Mature people love to study the Bible, God's written Word — Ps 119:97-105**

*Chaotic Christian people* think they should read the Bible, but rarely get around to it. *Orderly Christian people* read it according to some organized catechism or under the direction of some authority structure. *Mature Christian people* study the Bible because they love to do it, and they love to do it because that's how they learn more about God.

#### **Mature people pursue humility and avoid pride — Isaiah 66:1-2**

*Chaotic people* are often in conflict with those around them because they need to maintain a certain level of pride. *Orderly people* will express their humility organizationally but express pride individually. *Mature people* realize conflicts are about pride, and resolutions are about humility.

#### **Maturing people suffer for speaking the truth in love — Matthew 5:10-12**

*Chaotic people* suffer because they are reaping what they sowed. *Orderly people* suffer because the group they belong to is being targeted. *Mature people* suffer because they speak out for things like biblical values, godly morals, and the Gospel.

#### **Maturing people deal with persistent sin legalistically — Matthew 18:8-9**

*Chaotic people* live in persistent sin. *Orderly people* go to life's intervening institutions to deal with persistent sin. *Mature people* recognize persistent sin as chaos that must be treated with order, but the mature deal with that order personally rather than organizationally.

#### **Maturing people don't exercise authority over believers — Matthew 20:25-28**

*Chaotic people* see leadership in terms of authority. *Orderly people* view organization as having the authority. *Mature people* don't see themselves as authority figures, but only the truth itself.

#### **Maturing people know love is giving without reciprocity — Philippians 2:2-4**

*Chaotic people* see romantic love as something that serves their own “needs.” *Orderly people* try to regulate romantic love with rules like family values, traditions, or church practices. *Mature people* understand that romantic love must be turned into giving love if a relationship is to last.

## **Mature people are judgmental and intolerant of evil — Luke 12:57**

*Chaotic people* reject the idea of judging others and believe in tolerance. *Orderly people* are judgmental about everything that isn't part of their system of thinking. *Mature people* look to the Bible to define sin and not tolerate it, verbally condemn it, and figure out a way to distance themselves and their family from it.

## **Maturity loves the truth — Psalm 51:6**

*Chaotic people* don't tend to come to grips with their sin and repent of it. *Orderly people* justify certain sins while condemning others, because their system or organization does that. *Mature people* understand the freedom that follows the truth and progressively rid themselves of lies.

## **Mature people develop an eternal perspective about everything — John 6:27**

*Chaotic Christian people* think of heaven as an easy escape, not something to prepare for. *Orderly Christian people* have an eternal perspective but think of evaluation collectively not personally. *Mature Christian people* are not just focused on going to heaven, but on a time of extreme personal evaluation by Christ that determines their eternal situation after they get there.

## **The fruit of maturity is disciples for Christ — 2 Timothy 2:1-2**

*Chaotic people* may be your buddy, but they will never be your mentor. *Orderly people* do things for other people, but rarely involve those people in discipleship. *Mature people* realize the need for building the Word or God into individuals willing to study it.



## **Mature people do not try to identify with the world — John 18:36**

*Chaotic people* love the world. *Orderly people* are trying to fix the world. *Mature people* are interested in individuals, not the world.

## **Maturity is sin sensitive — 1 John 1:8-10**

*Chaotic people* are sin insensitive. *Orderly people* are sensitive to the sins dictated by their traditions and systems. *Mature people* see themselves as in a constant, continual, ongoing battle with their own sin nature.

## **Maturity endures personal provocation — Galatians 5:22-23**

*Chaotic people* are easily provoked, not generally patient, and quickly become jealous. *Orderly people* deal with provocation institutionally. *Mature people* learn to avoid provocation by being interested in what God thinks of them, not what others think.

## **Mature people try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord — Ephesians 5:10**

*Chaotic people* try to learn what is pleasing to themselves. *Orderly people* try to please others. *Mature people* are trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

## **Mature people have their senses trained to discern good and evil — Heb 5:14**

*Chaotic people* will perceive the world the way most everyone around them do. *Orderly people* have a sense of perception established by a system of thinking which trains them to discern good and evil. *Mature people* are in the process of training their mind to have discernment and be more sensitive to the good and evil things going on in the world around them.

## **Mature people are overcomers — Revelation 3:5**

*Chaotic people* do not overcome the world, instead they are overcome by the world. *Orderly people* sometimes overcome the world, if the tradition or system they adhere to allows that. *Mature people* understand that the things which need to be overcome are never completely defined by any orderly system but are overcome by having their senses trained to discern good and evil.

## **Mature Christians believe in the sufficiency of the Bible — Revelation 22:18-20**

*Chaotic people* take away from the Bible by ignoring it or denying it. *Orderly people* add to the Bible the traditions of their groups or organizations. *Mature people* follow every word of the Bible, not ignoring things they don't like or adding traditions they do.