

MARKS OF MATURITY



(Andrew Fast – University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Forester)

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the **mature**, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Ephesians 4:13 ...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

In the last half-dozen years before I retired, I often spent weeks away from home teaching at my agency's training academy. As an instructor, I generally was granted my own room, though sometimes I'd end up with a roommate for a few days. One day I arrived at the facility; checked in and found someone's gear on the other bunk in "my" room.

It's not that I didn't like having company, but sometimes I'd get hooked up with someone with much different habits—generally those habits accompanied those of the younger crowd—and it would cut into my routine, my sleep habits, and my effectiveness as a teacher. This particular day, I tossed my bag on the bunk, and when I went to put my shaving gear in the bathroom found my roomie's shaving gear, alongside a small stack of pill bottles. My reaction was immediate: "**YES! Someone my own age!**"

Pill bottles are often a sign of advancing years. They're either prescriptions to keep the maladies of age in check, or vitamins and health supplements to keep from ever needing the scripts. Whichever they are, the older we get the more bottles we seem to drag around with us. That's just one of those things that come with the territory. The positive part of the aging process is maturity. *Hopefully*, along the way we will become wiser, more disciplined, acquire better habits and skills, and generally become better people as we become more mature.

There are some things that should mark a more mature Christian and set him or her apart from the newer, or less mature among us. As I look back in my Christian life, I can pick out the men and women who had those marks.

One of those marks should be a hunger for God's Word; that's the solid food spoken of in the verses above. We should read it more, which should cause the desire to read it yet more. Along with reading it, our comprehension level should increase. As comprehension increases, we should be able to explain it in ways which will reach those around us, and our lives should be marked by visible obedience to its

principles. I recall folks who had well worn Bibles on their kitchen tables, often with a pair of reading glasses close by. Their lives generally mirrored that pattern of study.

There should be a visible pattern of Godliness in lives which should make mature Christians stand above the rest. My earliest memories include two older men in my church. In those memories I certainly see the pattern of life that was God-fearing and God-seeking. These men had the pattern of Godliness. They not only distinguished good from evil, but the fruit of the spirit was visible in their lives: they exhibited spiritual discipline. The difference between them and the others was obvious, even at my young age. More recently was a woman who handled many situations with grace and a wonderful spirit that was a mark of many years walking with the Lord.

Over many years and many moves I've seen and been influenced by other folks in the same class as these. They had achieved, or were in the process of achieving that "whole measure of the fullness of Christ." They clearly have shown me the maturity of years living Christian lives as opposed to others of all ages, who were still milk drinkers rather than mature Christians.

As we look at ourselves—and I hope we all do—we need to ask the question, am I mature, or at least *maturing*? All through the process, there is still room for more knowledge, more growth to become more like Christ. I'm hoping that each of us, whatever our level of maturity, looks to others who are yet more mature for role models, even as those we look up to look for even more mature role models for themselves.

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