



Week 2: Holy Discontent

Last week we looked at the gap (or DELTA) that exists between who we really are, who people think we are and who God is calling us to be, a gap which causes us to live secretly desperate and despondent lives. This week, we look at how we can start to close the gap between *'who we are'* and *'who God is calling us to be'*.

We do not begin to close the gap by trying to reign in the other version of ourselves, but instead we inch the *real us* forward, developing godliness one step at a time.

1. Maturity Is The Goal For All Followers of Christ

- Read Philippians 3:12-16, 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Hebrews 5:12-14, Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:11-16

We often forget that, as Christians, we are not supposed to stay 'babies' in the faith, and that we are supposed to be continually maturing. Paul reminds us that a sign of our Christian maturity is that we will desire to press on even deeper into Christ and that, as we do so, we will be even more amazed at his gift of salvation. We need to ask ourselves how well we are maturing as followers of Christ, both collectively and individually.

- Collectively – The statistics show that very few churches are actually making progress in their Christian growth because most church-goers do not pursue spiritual growth for themselves. They tend to rely purely on the teaching they receive from the pulpit and their spiritual leaders for any input.
- Individually – We are, each one of us, to be equipped for the work of the ministry, and we are to grow into mature disciples that are *'not tossed to and fro by the waves'* (Ephesians 4:14)

When we are immature, we are tossed to and fro by:

- False doctrine – We are only able to discern correct teaching if we know the Bible for ourselves.
 - Temptation – This is something that many of us 'play' with. When we feel an urge towards something, we just give in and follow our momentary desires. 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that we will not be tempted beyond our limit, yet we fail to heed that truth, which results in our being overrun by temptation again and again.
 - Suffering – Our pain has purpose. James 1:2-4 tells us that our suffering produces steadfastness.
 - Doubt - Mild doses of doubt come and go, but many of us stay immature in our faith because we are riddled with doubt about God's love, goodness, mercy and power. James 1:5-8 tells us that when we ask God for wisdom, we should not doubt. James calls those who approach God with doubt, 'double-minded' and 'unstable'.
 - Priorities – when we don't prioritise God for whatever reason, we will not become mature disciples.
- ❖ Q: Take a moment to assess your own personal growth. Have you grown spiritually in the last year?
 - ❖ Q: Are you personally studying the Bible and taking ownership of your spiritual life or are you completely reliant on Sunday messages and Gospel Community notes to get you through your week?
 - ❖ Q: How are you dealing with temptation this year? Are you prone to giving in and giving up?
 - ❖ Q: In your last season of suffering, were people able to see a steadfastness develop in you or were you tossed to and fro by it?
 - ❖ Q: How often do you doubt God's love, goodness, mercy or power? Are you riddled with doubt or are you confident in who God is?
 - ❖ Q: Look back at the past year and assess how much of a priority you gave to God in your life? Has that changed at all in the first few weeks of this year? If not, what are you going to do to ensure that God does not fall to the bottom of your priority list for 2015?

2. Maturity Is Contagious In Christian Community

- Read Philippians 3:17

Mature Christians need one another. Immature Christians remain in isolation. One of the ways that we know we are maturing believers is when we are willing to learn from other believers, instead of trying to compete with them. Paul urges us to watch how mature believers live, so that we can imitate them. We should openly share our lives with other believers and as we mature, we should allow them to imitate us, as we imitate Christ. Allowing people to watch and imitate us should only be done from a place of total humility, knowing that we too are imperfect, but that we have confidence that Christ is at work in us, just as he was in Paul's life.

Closing the gap between who we are, who we pretend to be, and who God designed us to be



- ❖ Q: Why is transparent and authentic Christian Community important for those of us who are maturing as disciples of Christ? How well do you think this GC group is doing in terms of transparency and authenticity?
- ❖ Q: What does Paul mean when he says *"imitate me as I imitate Christ"*?
- ❖ Q: Which mature believer do you look to in your life, to watch and learn from? If you do not have someone in mind, why not?
- ❖ Q: Are any younger believers watching your life, and imitating you as you imitate Christ? If not, why not?
- ❖ Q: Why is it absolutely crucial to be completely humble when allowing others to follow you, as you follow Christ?

3. Maturity In This Life Comes From Living For The Next

- Read Philippians 3:18-21 & 1 Peter 2:11-12

Most of us live as though this life is all there is; Paul calls this type of living 'immature'. We may not consciously believe that this is all there is, but it is evident in the way we live. We maximize every opportunity to enjoy good experiences, we buy and hoard as much as we possibly can, and we want everyone else to serve our own interests.

The mature live for the next life, thinking to glorify God in everything they do. We are not supposed to be comfortable in this world, because we are living for the world to come, where Jesus reigns as king. Changing our focus and living for the next life will mature us.

- ❖ Q: What evidence in your own life indicates that you live more for this life than the one to come?
- ❖ Q: If your mind was focused on heaven as a coming reality, what changes would you make to your lifestyle, and the way in which you use your time and money?

4. Maturity Makes a Stand

- Read Philippians 4:1

As we wait for heaven, Paul tells us to continue to stand firm for the long haul, and to remain faithful to God throughout this life.

- Many of us have great dreams of doing something wonderful for God, but what he wants from us is maturity and faithfulness, which if we are honest, is a lot less glamorous.
 - We need to make plans to become mature and to remain faithful, to work for the Kingdom of God and to not waste our time on this earth. We have one shot to make our life count for eternity. Without making plans, nothing in our lives will change.
 - We need to persevere and to keep fighting for holiness so that we can remain faithful until the end.
- ❖ Q: What is it going to take in order for us to remain faithful to God for the rest of our lives?
 - ❖ Q: What plans could we put in place to make sure that we are continually growing in maturity?
 - ❖ Q: Are there any things in your life that is God asking you put behind you, in order to focus on building the kingdom of God, rather than pursuing foolish earthly pursuits that have no eternal value?

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