



## *Week Four: Mature Diversity*

Titus was given the task of helping the church in Crete to grow to maturity. The word maturity brings each of us different connotations. In order for us all to be clear about what Christian maturity looks like from God's point of view, we need to look closely at Paul's instructions to Titus. We need to guard ourselves against the typical desire of educated people, to agree theologically about what Paul is saying, without actually applying it to our own personal lives, in obedience to Christ.

Text - Titus 2:1-10

### 1. Maturity Requires Christ-like Conduct

- Read Titus 2:1
- Teach AND Receive What Accords with Sound Doctrine - Maturity is not linked to our intelligence or ability to understand theology. Maturity develops as we obey what scripture teaches us, so that our lives reflect the integrity and character of Christ. Paul is clear that sound doctrine ought to be taught, but it certainly is only the first step. Sound doctrine alone does not produce mature believers. We cannot assess whether or not our members are maturing based on what is taught on a Sunday. Maturity is developed in the rest of the week, where they get the choice every minute of every day to obey God's word or to reject it, in their behaviour. We cannot be content with just being part of a church that faithfully teaches sound doctrine. As part of the body, we all need to be living it out in our everyday lives. Our lack of obedience to the scriptures, regardless of our theological understanding, makes us immature believers.
- ❖ *Q: How would you rate yourself in terms of your doctrine being sound? (if 1 is poor & 5 is excellent).*
- ❖ *Q: If poor, why do you think that is and what do you think you should/could do about it?*
- ❖ *Q: If one's doctrine is shaky, what hope does one have of becoming a mature believer in Christ?*
- ❖ *Q: What do you think some of the dangers are for us regarding Christian maturity, in such an intellectual climate?*
- ❖ *Q: How often have you been guilty of assuming that the theologically astute are the real mature believers among us, and how does this passage dismantle that notion?*
- ❖ *Q: Why is our obedience to the scriptures a sign of Christian maturity?*
- ❖ *Q: Based on your obedience to what is being taught as sound doctrine, how would you rate yourself now in terms of spiritual maturity? (if 1 is completely immature & 5 is mature).*

### 2. Maturity Requires Diverse Expressions

- Read Titus 2: 2-6,9&10a
- Diverse Expressions of Conduct - Paul gives specific instructions for living out sound doctrine to different ages and genders, all of which centre around Christ-like character rather than knowledge or skill. Self-control, which is the common thread running throughout Paul's instructions, is the ability to reign in one's actions when one's heart is galloping in the opposite direction. At a deeper level, it is the ability of the Holy Spirit within to redirect the heart towards God's ways.



- Self-control is exercised every time we choose to put sin to death rather than indulge the temptation, and it is equally exercised when we choose to love God first, above anything else in this life. Neither are our natural inclination, but both are commands of God, and both are possible for those who have the Holy Spirit.
- Diverse Teachers and Contexts for Training – At BBC we have a number of ways in which we are pushed to grow into maturity. But none of them are sufficient. We need to be willing to have those tricky conversations with smaller groups, or in close and trusted relationships, where we push one another to maturity, by having intentional conversations and asking hard questions.
- ❖ *Q: What is self-control and do you think your life is marked by it (indicating a level of spiritual maturity)?*
- ❖ *Q: Why do you think it's important that we see the thread of self-control throughout the different age/gender categories to which Paul is giving particular instruction?*
- ❖ *Q: Is self-control something that marks your life? (E.g. think about how you react to things and people, and ask yourself if are you a “knee-jerk” reactor. This would indicate a lack of self-control in your emotions. What about food – are you able to control what you put in your mouth? How about spending – do you plan and stick to your budget or do you buy on a whim and regret it later in the month? What about how you speak about people – are you able to keep your thoughts to yourself or do you “need” to “get it off your chest” all the time? Etc.)*

### 3. Maturity Declares the Truth About God

- Read Titus 2:7-8 & Matthew 5:16
- Protecting the Truth about God – Paul insists that believers live out their faith with integrity. This command is not only for church leaders, but also for the members of the church. The reason for this is so that those outside of the faith will not be able to accuse the church of being hypocritical, saying one thing and living in the opposite way. How we live gives away the true nature of our spiritual condition. And so we need to take stock of the way that we live.
- Adorning the Truth about God – Our behavior never has a neutral effect on people’s view of God. It either detracts from it or it beautifully reflects it. This charge and privilege to reflect the beauty of God is given to all the members of the body of Christ.
- ❖ *Q: Why is our behavior such a witness to God’s beauty?*
- ❖ *Q: How often do you engage with someone who has a gripe with the church for being hypocritical, and what is your response to this assessment?*
- ❖ *Q: Why can we not just fly under the radar as Christians, and hope that no one will really notice or see how we behave?*

#### *Reflection Question to Take Home and Apply this week:*

*Think about your behaviour over the last 3 months, and consider which behaviour would have been a stumbling block to those who do not yet know Christ in your world, and which, if any, would have attracted them to Christ. Either share these with the group, so that they can pray for you, or tell someone to whom you are accountable, so that you can repent and step up in spiritual maturity.*