

STEPS TO MATURITY

2 Corinthians 6:17 Philippians 2:12 Luke 5:4

Introduction: More than one person has told that he/she learned to swim by being thrown into the water. It was either "sink or swim." However in less severe methods of learning to swim one starts in the shallow water, learning the basics and then advancing into deeper water as one's skills become better and the learner becomes more adapted to the water. It is not so strange that in the Christian life the steps in maturing are not so different from that of learning to swim. There are basic steps, then more advanced steps until one is matured in the Christian life.

I. THE FIRST STEP TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY IS TO COME OUT (2 Cor. 6:17)

1. Christians must separate themselves from the ways of the world.
2. We must get away from all uncleanness of language, thoughts, actions and sinful habits.
3. We must understand that as a Christian we are now different from our non Christian friends and family and to abstain from even marrying a non Christian.
4. We are to do our best to leave all sin, including our little pet and private sins. All sin.
5. We must completely separate our lifestyles from the worldly lifestyles we have know.
6. We must not allow ourselves to become entangled in the attractions of the world.
7. This is something we must voluntarily do ourselves. No one can do it for us, remember, God made us free to choose and becoming a Christian does not take away that ability.
8. We cannot be very good witnesses to someone if we are as guilty as they are of the same sin.
- A young man rang his pastor's doorbell very late one night and when the pastor opened the door, there stood one of his church members, smelling of alcohol. The young man told the pastor in a slurred speech, "I have been atbar witnessing...." The pastor told the young man that he hoped that in witnessing he didn't mention which church he was a member of...."

II. ANOTHER STEP TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY IS TO WORK OUT (Philippians 2:12)

1. God begins our salvation and with the help of His Holy Spirit, we are to continue to work it out, to complete it, to carry it on until He calls us home.
2. The Christian life is not one of happy-go-lucky leisure. Contrary to how most Christians act, it is a life of effort, struggle and activity for the Lord.

3. We must "work out" our own salvation. That does not mean we are to "save" ourselves, but to do our own repenting, our own rededicating of our life. No one can live our lives for us, we alone are responsible to God for how we live.
4. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God when we have "courted" with His displeasure and even His wrath. We need to be eager to please our Lord and try to stay busy building on the Christian life He started for us.
5. All of us know that we cannot swim without effort nor learn to ride a bicycle without trying and we cannot mature in the Christian life if we don't work at it.

III. A THIRD STEP TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY IS TO LAUNCH OUT (*Luke 5:4*)

1. No Christian knows very much of anything when first starting the Christian life.
2. Becoming mature in the Christian life can be compared to wading in shallow water at first, then gradually wading out a bit farther into deeper water and then a bit farther as one learns more about the Christian life.
3. Then comes the great moment when one finally gets into deep water and begins to swim. Thus it is with the Christian life. Slowly we grow in the Lord, learning His Word, learning what pleases and displeases Him, learning to pray, learning to listen and obey His Holy Spirit. Then, we begin to share with someone, we begin to witness. We are maturing in the Christian life.
4. There is no stopping place in the Christian life. We must continue on into deeper and deeper things of the Lord:
 - for new experiences
 - for greater tasks
 - for more faith
 - for more growth
 - for more maturity
5. Do you remember what is usually found in shallow water?
 - Baby fish
 - Trash, cans, papers, dead things
 - Brush and snags

CONCLUSION:

1. For us to mature in our Christian life as we mature in our physical life, we must separate ourselves from worldly habits and sinful ways of life.
2. We must continue to work to mature what the Lord has started in our lives.
3. Let us not be afraid to move on out into the deeper things of the Lord's work.