

What's Gotten Into You...Grow Up!

Ephesians 4:11-15

April 7, 2019

It happens when you look through old family photo albums.

What's a photo album?

Okay maybe it happens when you watch some of the old family super 8mm films.

What's super 8mm film?

Okay maybe it is when you watch some vintage VCR home movies?

What's a VCR?

Okay it happens when you scroll through the pictures on your phone or those saved on your desktop computer!

What is it that happens when you look through old photos of you and your family and friends?

Some of the common comments made are: "My, the children have grown up!" "Where did the time go?" "The kids have gotten older but we look and have stayed the same!"

Right!

My wife is amazing at putting together power point presentations using the pics on her computer. She has put together a power presentation of our granddaughter's life as a high school graduation gift. She created one for her parents' 50th wedding anniversary. She copied pics from 30 plus years ago and put together great family presentations of memories for each of our children. She graciously put together a presentation of each of my parent's lives to help me celebrate their resurrection days. She is currently working on a project of celebrating the upcoming 20th wedding anniversary of one of our sons and his wife.

I look at these presentations and then the reflections back on the years flood my mind.

As I sit and look at the pics I reflect back and I marvel at the growth of our kids and now their kids. The physical changes and growth are obvious. What I marvel at is the emotional, mental and life in general maturity I have witnessed in each of them in their own way. This maturity didn't happen overnight. It was gradual. It was also intentional on their part to want to grow and mature in life. It is amazing to watch them begin to instill this desire for maturity in their own children.

I want to invite you to take a look at another powerpoint presentation. This one is not on a computer screen. This one is displayed in our hearts, minds and spirit. Others can see it. God is amazing at putting together this power presentation. This power presentation is about our maturing in life...not so much our physical but our spiritual maturity.

What reflections or comments would you or others make as they take a look at this power life presentation? Would they see growth or would they see you like you were however long ago it was when you gave your life to Jesus? Have you matured any? Are others in your family seeking to be like you? Or are you still immature in your faith?

Today, as we continue our series on "What's Gotten Into You...", we are taking a look at spiritual maturity. Have you grown up any spiritually?

Immaturity is easy to detect in others. A person will act out in a certain, self-centered, childish way towards you or a situation in life and you just want to say to them, "Grow up!" Or maybe you disgustingly shake your head and mumble, "So childish and immature!"

Immaturity stunts growth. Immaturity doesn't have the desire to grow and learn. Immaturity is a "whatever" attitude. Immaturity is childish in one's actions and attitude. Immaturity is self-seeking and centered.

We discovered in our bible reading that God is calling us to no longer be like children who are gullible and vulnerable.

(Ephesians 4:14)

Children are so gullible. They are so trusting of adults that they will believe just about whatever you tell them.

Gullibility can also cause them to be easily fooled.

Have you ever teased a toddler by pretending to pull their nose off their face by sticking your thumb between your two fingers? What do they do? They feel for their nose and grab it to make sure it is still there.

Children are also so vulnerable to peer pressure. Toddlers don't care as much as teenagers do about caving into peer pressure. If their friends wear it, have it, say it, listen to it, they want to wear it, have it, say it and listen to it.

Immaturity is gullible and vulnerable. How sad it is when as adults we have not matured. Spiritually God desires us to not be gullible or vulnerable to the world around us. He desires us to grow up in Christ and in the knowledge of his love and grace. We are not to be so easily swayed to the latest and greatest fad or thinking. We are not to be vulnerable to popular beliefs or morals or lack of when they are not in alignment with God's word.

We are called to Grow Up!

We are called to become mature followers of Jesus Christ.

We are called to eat meat and not drink milk! (Hebrews 5:11-14)

Our 6 grandchildren range in ages from 4 months old to 18 years old. Our 4 month old grandson knows nothing but mommy's milk and formula. Our two grandchildren who are teenagers know steak and they love it! They have matured in their dietary needs and digestion abilities. If asked to choose between a glass of milk or a nice piece of meat...meat wins out!

Spiritually where are you? Got milk? Only? Or have you matured and are chewing on the solid truths of Christ? In order for us to go from milk to meat...spiritually we have to grow up! We must learn discernment. We need to learn to distinguish between good and evil. We are to trust Jesus totally. We are to recognize the temptations in our lives that will cause us to choke and avoid them.

Our spiritual capacity to feast on the deeper mature experience and knowledge of Jesus is determined by our spiritual growth... our spiritual maturing. Too often we want the whole banquet before we are spiritually prepared to digest it.

Maturity or growing in Christ is not instant or automatic. There are no shortcuts when it comes to spiritual growth. We know God desires us to mature and grow in the likeness of Jesus. (Ephesians 4:14-15) We are called to go on to maturity and not stay immature. (Hebrews 6:1)

In this "society of instant" we often want to skip the growing process. We forget that what we buy in the produce section didn't just appear. Way back where on a farm a seed was planted. A small tomato plant pushed hard through the soil and grew. Then yellow blooms formed. Then a tiny green ball formed and the petals fell off. The tiny green ball grew and grew as it was intentionally watered and fertilized. The big green ball started turning red. Once it was mature it was harvested and shipped to the produce section where we simply pick it up and purchase it. That vine ripe tomato was not instant. It was intentional and continual!

It is wrong of us to expect to be instant saints! One of the biggest mistakes people make about the church is that once you accept Christ you are instantly transformed into Super Saint!

The church is not a gathering of the perfectly mature. It is more a gathering of the growing dysfunctional seeking to mature and be more like Christ.

Spiritual maturity is not instantaneous. (Mark 4:26-29)

Spiritual maturity is GRADUAL AND INTENTIONAL!

How intentional are you in growing up in Christ?

If you were to take a look at your power presentation of your spiritual growth would you look any different? Or would you still look like your "infant in Christ" pics?

Are you still a plant pushing through the soil of life or have you started to blossom some evidence of fruit?

There is not to be a prolonged immaturity in us who are followers of Jesus. How many of us would be thrilled if our kids never matured? Would you want to take care of an adult kid who never grew up and launched out into life on their own?

God, our Heavenly Father, expects us to grow and fully develop within and without in our love for Jesus. (Ephesians 4:13-15)

The last thing He wants is for us to stay in preschool and never graduate or move on to the next level of growth.

We are to grow up in Christ in EVERYTHING!

This maturing in Christ is holistic and not just a few specifics of our lives.

It is an entirely new life in Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. (John 14:6)

We are to grow up in Christ in everything and not just somethings in our lives.

We are to grow up and take our lead from Jesus.

The older I get the more I see my dad's physical appearance and mannerisms coming out in my life. I'm okay with that. My dad gave me a great example of growing and maturing in life. I have also noticed some of my own unique desires and maturing in life.

The older I get the more and more I want to see my Savior's appearance and truths being lived out in and through me. He is patient with me and I need to be patient with my own growing and maturing in Him.

I want to see this maturing in Jesus to be deep within me.

I want to look back and see how He has more and more taken over my life.

I want others to see Jesus in me.

I would like to challenge you to take time this week and watch the power point presentation of your relationship with Jesus. Look back at your life before Jesus. Don't rush through it. Reflect on who and where and what you were like before you asked Jesus to take over and be your Savior.

As you continue the presentation notice what you looked like as you allowed his seed of love to be planted in your heart. Were you intentional in wanting to grow in Jesus? Have you seen moments of his love blossoming? Have you seen His fruit grow on the vine? Are you active and intentional in your spiritual disciplines?

As you look back I hope you have grown up in Jesus. If you are still the same then take the challenge to grow up in Jesus.

No matter where you are in your maturing in Christ...don't stop growing! Be continual and intentional. Grow up!

Keep growing more and more into the likeness of your Savior!

Today we are invited to His table for a meal. It is not milk! It is bread and juice. It is a meal of unconditional and forgiving love. It is a meal of remembering. It is a meal for all who believe in Jesus, no matter how mature you are or are not in Him. He invites us to come and eat and drink as a reminder of who we were and are no more. We come and celebrate the surrender of our heart and mind to him and how we are intentionally and continually growing in His likeness.

Come and celebrate what has gotten into you...a growing and maturing love of Jesus.