

JAMES Lesson 1: James' Credentials to Teach Spiritual Maturity 10.19.08

Re: MATURITY We often think of 1) Coming of Age, 2) Being on One's Own, 3) Developing in Wisdom and 4) Growing in Understanding
But, "coming of age" doesn't always bring wisdom, nor does "being on one's own" always bring understanding

From polling my friends this week, 2 of the BEST WORDS describing MATURITY are
1) Responsibility and 2) Selflessness

James grew up in the home of JOSEPH and MARY, as their son
His oldest brother was JESUS – a perfect example of RESPONSIBILITY and SELFLESSNESS. He helped teach James MATURITY.

When we think specifically of SPIRITUAL MATURITY, I think one of the best definitions is **"seeing things from God's perspective rather than from our own"**
THIS WAS JESUS ALSO – perfect in SPIRITUAL MATURITY. This was a lesson that James and his other siblings were slow in learning.

Mark 6:3 speaks of Jesus thus: *"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and John, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"* These are Jesus' half-brothers and sisters, they all shared the same mother, but Jesus' real "father" was God the Father.

In John 7, Jesus has turned 30 and is ready to leave the household. It was traditionally the oldest son's responsibility to stay in the household until age 30. This was especially important for Jesus, since Joseph had probably died before this time. That the other siblings were also still at home is also indication that they were younger than Jesus. (Catholic tradition, wanting Mary to have been ever a virgin, claims that Jesus' siblings were the children of a former marriage of Joseph, though there is no evidence to support this claim.)

In John 7, we read that the Fall "feast of booths" (or tabernacles) was about to take place in Jerusalem. It was appropriate that the oldest son go to represent their family. Plus, his siblings thought it made perfect sense for a rising young rabbi to make himself known to the world and his disciples. (Note v. 2-4).

7:5 betrays the SPIRITUAL MATURITY of James and Jesus' other siblings: "For not even His brothers were believing in Him." James and his brothers saw things from HUMAN PERSPECTIVE only. It made perfect sense to go to the feast and show himself off.

JESUS, however, being SPIRITUALLY MATURE saw things from GOD'S
PERSPECTIVE. Thus, he said to his brothers in 7:6 - *"my time is not yet at hand; but your time is always opportune. The world cannot hate you, but it hates ME, because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."*

The account goes on to say that the brothers went up, leaving Jesus at home. Jesus, under God's leading, followed later.

THE POINT: Jesus and James saw the same circumstance, or issue, from different perspectives.

It wasn't until after the resurrection of Jesus that James' discovered faith in Jesus when his resurrected Half-brother, now his Lord, met him in a private meeting, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:7

Only then, did James begin his road to SPIRITUAL MATURITY, which became his theme of the book of James, based on his life experiences from watching and eventually following Jesus!

James only mentions the name of Jesus 2x in his letter

1:1 "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"

2:1 "... our glorious Lord Jesus Christ"

HOWEVER, BOTH MENTIONS SHOW the RESPECT of understanding who Jesus is

MANY PHRASES IN JAMES INDICATE "MATURITY"

1:4 "perfect and complete"

1:25 "effectual doer"

1:27 "pure and undefiled religion"

2:8 "you are doing well"

2:22 "faith was perfected"

3:2 "perfect man"

3:13 "show by his good behavior"

4:17 "knows the right thing to do"

5:16 "righteous man"

4 Steps to Maturity (from James, chapter 1)

1. **EXODUS – your salvation** - 1:18 *"In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth"*

2. **EXAMINE – your self** - 1:23-25 *“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.”*
3. **EXERCISE the truth** 1:22 *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”*
4. **ENDURANCE through trials** 1: 2-4

James 1: 2-4 (My Paraphrase)

Take a different perspective at the many trials you face, seeing the positive in them, rather than the negative. One, your faith is being proven and strengthened. And two, you are developing endurance for the long haul of life. Don't balk at being tested, but hang in there, letting the tests accomplish their Godly purpose: your maturity, that you may be spiritually “buff” without flabbiness or weakness of character.

THE MATURE CHRISTIAN:

Chapter 1: <u>Confidence</u> in Turmoil.	(TRIALS)
Chapter 2: <u>Conviction</u> in Action	(WORKS)
Chapter 3: <u>Control</u> of Word & Behavior	(TONGUE)
Chapter 4: <u>Cleansing</u> of Self	(LUST)
Chapter 5: <u>Connection</u> with God	(RICH)

The 5 Principles of the mature Christian are all found in “miniature” in chapter 1

Re: TRIALS (Confidence in Turmoil) in v. 2 - 8 and v. 12 - 13

Re: WORKS (Conviction in Action) in v. 22 – 25

Re: TONGUE (Control of Word & Behavior) in v. 26

Re: LUST (Cleansing of Self) in v. 14 – 16

Re: RICH (Connection with God) in 9 – 11

Next week we begin our verse by verse, principle by principle journey through this NT “book of wisdom” – with over 50 commands of behavior, and virtually no doctrine, except the doctrine of Christian mature behavior. Let's GROW together!