

Are We There Yet?

Ready:

“I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don’t get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward — to Jesus. I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back.”
– Philippians 3:12-14 (MSG)

Set

A Christian athlete speaks throughout the community about his faith and then gets arrested for drug use. A Christian coach prays with his team before every game and then it is discovered that he has been illegally recruiting players for years. A pastor builds a church from 200 to 2,000 members and then leaves his wife and children to run off with the church secretary.

Welcome to the Sin of Maturity. This sin is so extremely subtle that people don’t realize they are entangled in it until they fall. That is how it is revealed in veteran Christians – followers of Christ have great testimonies of faith that others admire; then, all of a sudden, they do the unthinkable. They commit the unmentionable sin and even amaze themselves with their lack of judgment. These are Christians who think they are mature in their faith. Others look to them as spiritual leaders, but they somehow get tricked into thinking they have arrived in their faith. Somewhere on their journey, they just stop growing spiritually.

Maturity implies a finish line, ending point or destination. In actuality, maturity is a process, not a destination. When it comes to spiritual maturity, it is so greatly desired and, yet, so mistakenly defined by us. Because of the Bible’s positive references to “maturity,” Christians over the centuries have been too quick to quantify and qualify spiritual maturity as an objective and measurable attainment. The goal is not to be a professional Christian, but an authentic Christian. As a result, well-intentioned disciples have pursued spiritual maturity as a medal of honor or Boy Scout merit badge, hoping to pin it to their inflated chests.

What begins as a pure desire to grow in Christ can subtly change into self-reliance and destructive arrogance. Fresh spiritual insight through fervent prayer and Bible study disappears. It turns into a chore or routine. There is no fresh manna for the day. We rely on what God did in our lives years ago, not days ago or even today. The Bible has no shortage of characters that have fallen prey to the Sin of Maturity. Let there be no mistake, spiritual maturity is indeed a Biblical term and, therefore, an intended part of one’s faith journey. But the Sin of Maturity manifests when someone drives the maturity stake in the ground and screams, “I have arrived!” That is when we become a target for this subtle sin.

I have never met an athlete who feels that they have arrived in their sport, from the best to the worst. There is always something to improve, something to change, something to learn. Even the most elite athletes are constantly pursuing improvement. As competitors, we should know better than anyone that our faith is a path instead of a place. It is not a plateau on which to relax and take a break. It is not a pinnacle of achievement that allows oneself an admiring glance in the spiritual mirror. The Sin of Maturity will take us down when we think we have arrived. There needs to be a desire to press into God, to discover more of Him and to realize that our capacity to know Him is unlimited. The joy is in the journey. The victory is in the process. The lessons happen as we go, not in when we get there. The constant, humble, pure pursuit of God gives us victory over the Sin of Maturity. As followers of Christ, I am reminded of Oswald Chambers when he says that our reach needs to be beyond our grasp.

If the journey is right, then the destination is a guarantee. As a kid, I asked my parents hundreds of times on those long car rides, "Are we there yet?" No, we have not arrived yet. But let's enjoy the journey!

Go

1. Has there ever been a time in your Christian walk that you felt like you had arrived? When? Why did you feel that way? How did it impact others?
2. Why does God want us to realize that our faith is a path instead of a place? Why is this such a valuable insight?
3. How do you keep your faith fresh and real? What are practical ways to keep your spiritual drive alive?

Workout

Extra Reading: Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 12:1-2

Overtime

"Lord Jesus Christ, I ask for a heart that is fully devoted to You. Show me how I can stay fresh before You on a daily basis. The journey is where You want me to focus. Let my walk be right. The destination, where You want to take me, will be right if I walk right. I desire to please You instead of others or myself. I recognize that I have not arrived. Forgive me for the times I have committed the Sin of Maturity. Cleanse me, Jesus. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Bible Reference:

Hebrews 12



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