

Series: Made to Mature

**Title: From Manger to Manhood**

Text: Luke 2:52

Time: 11/27/2011 (a.m.)

## **Introduction**

1. The miracle of Christ's birth is something worth celebrating, the scene of Christ in a manger surrounded by Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men, and animals is pretty well known to most of us.

2. The virgin birth is essential to our faith and should receive our attention and adoration but the reality is that Jesus didn't stay in the manger, he grew; better yet, he matured.

3. We would be in a terrible condition if Christ would have never made it out of that stable or never traveled beyond the city of Bethlehem. For Christ to achieve the work of God He had to move beyond the manger.

4. For us to achieve the work that Christ has called us to we must move beyond the baptistery.

5. It must be understood that every Christian is in a continuing education program - it is a journey, a process. The more we know of Christ and His work, the more we can choose to "walk in the Spirit," the more we will become like Him. This process is a lifelong journey - we must never stop learning and obeying. There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in Him.

**Colossians 3:10** *...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—*

6. What does it mean to "put on the new self"? It means that our conduct should match our faith. Simply put, if you are a Christian, you should act like it. To be a Christian means more than just making good resolutions and having good intentions; it means taking the right actions. This is a straightforward step that is as simple as putting on your clothes.

**Romans 12:2** *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

7. As Christians, we are called to "not conform any longer to the pattern of this world," with its behavior and customs that are selfish and corrupting. We must go beyond the superficial level of external behavior modification. To be truly "renewed" we must "be transformed by the renewing of our minds." It is possible to be a Christian for a lifetime, avoid most worldly customs and still be angry, proud, covetous, selfish stubborn, and arrogant. It is only when we willingly surrender our will to the control of the Holy Spirit that He then can renew, reeducate, and redirect our minds. It is then that we can be truly transformed.

**Romans 8:5** *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

8. Moment-by-moment we must consciously choose to center our lives on God. To continuously move forward through the various levels of spiritual maturity we must ask ourselves, "What would Jesus have me do?" It is precisely at that moment, when the Holy Spirit points out what is right, that we do it eagerly.

**Galatians 5:16** *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

9. As believers, we are to be led by the Holy Spirit. Being Holy Spirit-led involves our desire to hear, the readiness to obey God's Word, and the sensitivity to discern between our subjective feelings and the Holy Spirit's promptings. We are to live each moment controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit. It is then, through the disciplines of our faith, growing in Christ-likeness, that the words of Christ can be in our minds, the love of Christ behind our actions, and the power of Christ available to help curb and control our very selfish natures.

**10. The maturing process includes these basic steps:**

- a. Learning to stand (childhood stage where we learn our position in Christ);
- b. Learning to walk (adulthood stage where we learn to practice what we've learned in Christ);
- c. Learning to engage in battle (fatherhood where we teach others what we've learned in Christ - the process begins again with another believer).

11. True spiritual power comes only as we obey God's Word, His Holy Spirit, and as we maintain right relationship with both God and man. What we do - our conduct - is the single most evidence of a transformed life.

12. Godly character is essential for growth. When we are born again, we are spiritual newborn babies. If we are healthy, we will desire to grow to become spiritual "fathers" or "mothers" in the faith. Once we see our need for God's Word and begin to find nourishment in Christ, our spiritual appetite will increase, and we will begin to mature.

**13. True Spiritual Power & Authority Comes Only As We Maintain Right Relationships:**

- Godliness is living the way God wants us to (Ephesians 4:1; 5:1, 2; 5:18-20; 6:18-20).
- Our behavior - how we act especially when no one else is around - should be just like Jesus.
- A healthy, balanced life is both vertical (with God) and horizontal (with man).

**14. "Where am I in my spiritual growth?"**

A passage we will use that will help evaluate where you are spiritually is found in **1 John 2:12-14** *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

15. The apostle John divided spiritual growth into three stages: children, young men, and fathers. We also learn from the writer of Hebrews 5:11-14 that knowledge of God's Word, our experiences, or time does not guarantee spiritual maturity. From the apostle John's writings, we can identify where we are in our spiritual growth.

**Four Key Concepts:**

**1. The Christian life (spiritual) parallels the physical life (natural):**

- a. There are definite stages in life;
- b. Each stage of life in the Christian journey builds upon the other;
- c. Just as there are natural parents, there must be spiritual parents;
- d. Only through "growth" does a person pass from one stage to the next;
- e. When growth does not occur, it is a sign of a serious problem.

**2. There is a major difference between physical growth and spiritual growth:**

- a. Physical growth usually takes place with little to no effort on our part;
- b. Spiritual growth must be nurtured and overseen by more spiritually mature "fathers" or "mothers" who understand the process as being intentional, relational and that the process is 100 percent spiritual.

**3. From the mature writings of the apostle John we discover several truths (1 John 2:12-14):**

*"I write to you dear children...young men...fathers"*

- a. There are different stages in the Christian life not necessarily dependent upon chronological age. The apostle John provided three stages of spiritual maturity:
  - Children (boys and girls in the faith - "childhood" those just entering the journey of faith).
  - Young Men (young sons and daughters in the faith - "adulthood" those growing in the faith).
  - Fathers (fathers and mothers in the faith - "parenthood" those who are spiritually mature).
- b. In each stage there are blessings to be enjoyed and instruction/virtues to be realized and learned.
- c. Children need to become young men or young women, and young men or young women need to become fathers or mothers.

**4. Spiritual Transformation:**

- a. Simply getting people to go to church regularly is not the answer to becoming a spiritually mature Christian.
- b. Spiritual transformation requires a more extensive investment in one's ability to interpret all life situations in spiritual terms.