

I. The Mature Man

- a) The “one new man” that Paul revealed in Ephesians 2:15 is meant to become the “mature man” of Ephesians 4:13, which is “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”
- b) To get the full impact of Ephesians 4:13, read it like this: “A mature man . . . the measure of . . . the fullness of Christ.”
- c) Here’s the point: Maturity is determined by the amount of Christ’s life that we possess. If we have Christ’s life in seed form in our spirits, we will remain immature. However, if Christ’s life has grown from seed form to fullness, we will be a mature and complete representation of Him from the inside out.
- d) The indwelling life of Christ is meant to flow from our spirits into our hearts, until Christ dwells fully in every part of our hearts. Furthermore, He desires to flow from our hearts into our souls, until He permeates every area of our minds, will, and emotions. Ultimately, His life is meant to give life to our mortal and sinful bodies.
- e) Individually, the measure of Christ’s indwelling life that fills and possesses us determines our level of maturity.
- f) Corporately, the measure of Christ’s indwelling life that fills and possesses the individual members of the body determines the level of corporate maturity.
- g) In Ephesians 4:16, Paul reveals how the maturity of the individual parts of the body affect the maturity of the whole. The “growth of the body” he mentions is not referring to numeric growth but to growing up to spiritual maturity. Namely, being formed into Christ’s image and likeness as a corporate representation of Him.
- h) In summary, the measure of Christ’s life that fills and possesses the individual parts of the body determines the growth of the corporate body into a mature man, bearing fully the image of the heavenly Man, Christ Jesus. If the individual parts of the body are immature, the whole body will be immature. Conversely, if the individual parts of the body reflect the image of the Man, the body will reflect the image of the Man.
- i) With this insight in mind, Paul challenges us to grow up! He states, “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14-15).
- j) Paul urges us to “no longer . . . be children.” This word refers to infants, little children, or to those who are childish. It’s associated with carnal Christians who live by the cravings of their five senses and feast upon milk rather than strong meat (1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13).
- k) How do we grow up? By hearing the “truth [spoken] in love” (Eph. 4:15, emphasis mine). The truth without love produces condemnation, guilt, shame, and death. Love without truth produces compromise, lawlessness, defilement, and immaturity. To become a mature representation of Him, where we are conformed into the image of the Man Christ Jesus, we need truth spoken with love. That’s how we grow up!
- l) In this message, we continue looking at what keeps us immature. These are like rocks and weeds in our garden that prevent the seed of Christ in us from growing to full maturity.

II. #2. Offense

- a) Describing the end times, Jesus said, "Then many will be offended" (Matt. 24:10, NKJV). If offense is a sign that we are living in the end times, Jesus must be returning soon!
- b) With traditional media and social media, offense has skyrocketed around the world. People are offended about everything, especially in the church.
- c) The Greek word for *offended* is *skandalizō* and it is derived from the word *skandalon*. Originally, *skandalon* was "the name of the part of a trap to which the bait is attached."¹ In other words, it is "the movable stick or trigger of a trap, [a] trap-stick."² This is why *skandalon* can also mean "the trap or snare itself."³ Building upon this definition, *skandalon* is "any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall."⁴
- d) With this root word in mind, *skandalizō*, the word Jesus used in Matthew 24:10 to describe the end times, means "to put a stumbling-block or impediment in the way, upon which another may trip and fall; to be a stumbling-block . . . to offend."⁵
- e) John Bevere rightly called offense the bait of Satan.
- f) We get offended whenever we perceive that someone is insulting, disregarding, or rejecting us or the principles we live by. Offense causes annoyance, anger, resentment, and rejection. Offense has derailed numerous people from the high calling of God.
- g) Sadly, many in the church have become incredibly thin-skinned. We are so sensitive to criticism, insults, and rejection. Because we care so much about what people say about us, the fear of man has ensnared us.
- h) The causes of offense are virtually endless. We get offended because someone didn't talk to us. We get offended because someone looked at us the wrong way. We get offended because someone didn't phrase a statement in the most articulate way. We get offended at leaders because they didn't meet our expectations. We get offended because someone offered loving but firm correction. We get offended because someone offered suggestions to make our work better. We get offended because the truth was spoken and we preferred it to be more sugarcoated and palatable. We get offended at God because He didn't answer our prayers like we thought He should or because He didn't bring a breakthrough in our timing.
- i) If we get easily offended, it's because our pride has been poked. That means self is still living rather than Christ and that we love ourselves more than we love the Lord. Paul said that love is not easily provoked or angered (1 Cor. 13:5). If we have a tendency to be easily offended, it reveals how much self love is operating within us rather than the unconditional love of Christ.
- j) Often, offense is the result of unmet expectations. Digging deeper, expectations are a mechanism of self defense that we erect to protect us from rejection. For example, we place expectations on people, such as how they must act, what they must say or not say, and how they must look at us or not look at us. If people don't live up to these standards, we mistakenly interpret that to mean they are rejecting our ideas or rejecting us as a person.
- k) Being an elder for over 20 years, here are some common examples of how people get offended in the church. Note: It's so much easier to learn from other people's failures rather than having to experience them on your own.

A gift not recognized

A person comes into a church or organization and they have a particular gift, talent, or ministry calling. Because of this, they want to be doing ministry that people can see, praise, and honor. They want to be doing something exciting in ministry—something more than the boring and mundane work of serving. So, they approach the leadership, wanting to go to certain places or do certain

things because of their calling or position. Given the budget constraints, the leadership says no. This person gets offended because their gift or calling is not recognized and they leave. Unfortunately, this offense keeps them in a state of immaturity. Little did they realize that serving would have matured them and opened future doors for ministry.

Leadership correcting an issue

A person has the gift of prophecy. Every week, they prophesy. Without fail, they prophesy. Thus saith the Lord, Sunday after Sunday. The problem is they are deeply wounded and rejected. Without fail, their words repeatedly give the impression that God is always mad at the church for not doing enough. The leadership is forced to correct this person and to restrict their gift from operating until they experience healing and deliverance. Like a father instructing their child, the leadership speaks to this person with gentleness and love, informing them that they need to be healed and delivered from the root of rejection. Because their words are damaging the body, leadership informs them that they need to be made whole before they can prophesy again. However, having such deep wounds of rejection, this person perceives correction as rejection. Consequently, they get offended and leave the church. They then let everyone know how much they love Jesus but don't like the controlling, institutional church. They are totally blind to their own wounds of rejection, which are keeping them immature and constantly offended. Sadly, they never grow up to maturity.

Leadership not receiving a prophecy

A person believes they are hearing from God. They think God has given them words for the church and for people in the church. While some words might be true, the leadership perceives mixture. They see the person's profound need to be mentored and trained. When the leaders gently suggest this, the person gets offended at even the suggestion. How dare the leadership question whether or not I am truly hearing from God! They storm out of the meeting, never to be heard from again. This person could have been groomed and nurtured in how to steward revelation from the Lord. Instead, their pride blinded them to their need and they remain immature, never progressing beyond infancy in the Lord.

Associating leaders with God

A person struggles in their own relationship with the Lord. They feel insecure and lack confidence that God loves them. They battle condemnation, guilt, and shame. Because of this, they don't connect with the Lord often and rarely recognize His voice. Feeling unworthy, they associate their spiritual leader with the Lord and place expectations upon them. Imperceptibly, they establish expectations of what the leader must do and must not do if they are to know that God loves them. Without fail, the leader never meets the unrealistic expectations that have been established. The person takes offense at the leader, stops listening to them, and eventually leaves the church. Consequently, they never grow up, remaining an immature child for the rest of their lives.

God not meeting my expectations

A person struggles with God's love. So, they establish expectations of how God must express His love for them. If God truly loves them, *they think*, then He would bring a breakthrough in their circumstances, heal a particular ailment, or bless them with an opportunity that they really desire. When God doesn't answer them like they expect, they get offended at God. They misinterpret His delay and His mysterious work as God rejecting them. They believe the lie that God doesn't love, value, or care about them. Then they get offended at God because their expectations are not met and they falsely believe that God doesn't care. Eventually, this offense causes them to walk away from the Lord and abandon the faith.

The truth

A person has a true revelation of God's love, mercy, and grace. They have experienced His kindness and have tasted of His goodness. They are forever ruined by God's overwhelming love. But here's the problem. There's another side of the Lord that they don't know. Like Paul said, "Behold then the kindness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22). They know the Lord's kindness but not His severity. They know the Lord's grace but not His discipline and correction. They know the Lord's love but they don't fear Him. They know His grace but reject truth because it comes across to harsh and doesn't feel

good. They are driven by emotions. They're immature and don't even realize it. When the truth is spoken, something in them cringes. They dislike it. They constantly get offended at this version of God with whom they are unfamiliar. And as a result, they don't receive the truth that would lead them into a deeper relationship with the Lord. They remain an immature child rather than becoming a mature representation of Jesus Christ.

III. #3. Familiarity

- a) When Jesus began to speak with authority and work miracles, the people of Nazareth said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3).
- b) The people in Nazareth knew Jesus growing up. They knew His family and perhaps even had some of His handcrafted furniture in their house. Nevertheless, their familiarity hindered their ability to see who He really was. They were unable to perceive that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah because familiarity blinded them from this revelation.
- c) As the old saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt." When we know someone well, seeing their faults and shortcomings, we have a tendency to lose respect and honor for them. Dishonor creeps in to our hearts and we stop receiving from them because of familiarity.
- d) The eternal Son of God was walking in the flesh yet the people of Nazareth could only perceive Jesus the carpenter, Jesus the son of Mary, and Jesus the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. This familiarity prevented them from receiving Jesus' life-changing, eternally-transforming words. After the people expressed their complaints, rooted in familiarity, Mark said, "And they took offense at Him" (Mark 6:3). Oh, how dangerous and deadly is familiarity!
- e) This brings me to a very important point: The way we perceive determines the depth to which we receive. Perception determines reception.
- f) When dad was the fulltime pastor, my brothers and I perceived him as dad. Our wives perceived him as father-in-law. Our children perceived him as G-daddy. Others perceived him as a friend or the man who taught every Sunday. Because of our familiarity, we each had to work hard to see him as our pastor—one whom the Lord had called, appointed, and anointed to train and equip us with revelation and insight.
- g) The point is that we all have a perception of our spiritual leader that determines the depth to which we receive from them. They can have a word directly from heaven and we may only receive it to a small degree because we, like the people of Nazareth, say, "Is this not Ken, my dad? Is this not Ken, my father-in-law? Is this not Ken, my friend?"
- h) It is like those people who knew you in college, when you were an irresponsible, party-animal. No matter how mature, responsible, and successful you are today—no matter how different you are—they cannot get past their perception of who you used to be. In their eyes, you are still the old person from twenty years ago.

¹ *Vines*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4625&t=NASB>, referenced on 8/22/2019.

² *Thayers*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4625&t=NASB>, referenced on 8/22/2019.

³ *Thayers*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4625&t=NASB>, referenced on 8/22/2019.

⁴ *Thayers*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4625&t=NASB>, referenced on 8/22/2019.

⁵ *Thayers*. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4624&t=NASB>, referenced on 8/22/2019.