

I. The Mature Man

- a) 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.
- b) 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).
- c) 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).
- d) 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!

II. Press on to Maturity

- a) The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to "press on to maturity" (Heb. 6:1).
- b) The word for *press on to* is *pherō*. This word means "to carry some burden; to move by bearing; bring forward; bring forth, produce."¹
- c) Here's the idea. Each of us carry burdens, various types of weights on our shoulders. For some, it's a demanding job, a challenging home environment, a physical ailment, wayward children, or intense spiritual warfare. In addition, we might have experienced great pain and rejection from those whom we loved and respected, which created great turmoil in our soul. Another burden we all carry is the busy and fast-paced American culture that eats away at our time.
- d) Whatever the weights or burdens that we carry, we are exhorted to move forward while carrying these burdens, refusing to use these trials as an excuse. As we move forward despite our tribulations, pressing onward with resolute focus, we will eventually become more like Christ, reflecting His image and likeness.
- e) A few verses earlier, the writer of Hebrews exhorted us to no longer be infants who could only drink milk. They were infants because they had become dull of hearing.
- f) With these exhortations in mind, we will 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.
- g) So far, we have looked at: 1) Embracing another Jesus; 2) offense; and 3) familiarity. This week we will look at how negligence and pursuing our destiny keeps us immature.

III. # 4. Negligence

- a) Negligence is failing to take proper care in doing something. It's failing to exercise the care that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in like circumstances.

- b) Scripture highlights three areas where we can be negligent. These are: 1) Neglecting our salvation; 2) neglecting the Word of God; and 3) neglecting the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

IV. Neglecting Our Salvation

- a) Writing to Christians, the author of Hebrews asks: "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). Keep in mind that the writer didn't say "reject so great a salvation." He said "neglect so great a salvation." Unbelievers reject salvation. Believers neglect salvation.
- b) Another word for *neglect* is to be *careless*. When we are *careless*, it means that we *care less*. It's to regard our salvation as something minor and trivial.
- c) How do we neglect our salvation? Think about it. We have the Creator of the Universe dwelling within us and never talk to Him. We have the indwelling Spirit and never acknowledge Him or lean upon Him for help. We have a new spirit created in the image and likeness of Christ but we continue to live from the old man, the Adamic nature. Namely, the five senses of the unredeemed body coupled together with the mind, will, and emotions of the unrenewed soul.
- d) Paul told the carnal Corinthians, "For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). Here's the idea. You have Christ dwelling within you but you are living from the old nature. You are a new creation in Christ, having a new spirit that is joined to the Holy Spirit. But you are filled with carnality, including jealousy and strife. You are acting like the average Corinthian off the street rather than living as a new creation.
- e) If we continue to neglect "so great a salvation" by living from the impulses of our body or the fallen desires of our soul, the writer of Hebrews asks: "How will we escape?" Escape what? Escape a judgment seat experience that results in salvation but all our works being incinerated because we never grew up! In the words of Paul, we will be saved "yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). In other words, we will make it to heaven, barely. But all of our works will be incinerated at the judgment seat of Christ.
- f) A careful study of Hebrews reveals the following progression: Negligence leads to drifting (Heb. 2:1); drifting leads to dullness of hearing and sluggishness (Heb. 5:11; 6:12); dullness and sluggishness leads to unbelief (Heb. 3-4); and unbelief leads to falling away (Heb. 3:12).

V. Neglecting the Word

- a) When the pressure of ministry increased, the apostles stood their ground and declared, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God" (Acts 6:2). If only *all* of God's people had this same type of attitude. If only each of us had a hunger for the Word of God that inspired us to place a high regard on the Spirit-inspired Scriptures.
- b) In America, we have leather-bound Bibles, Bibles on our iPads and phones, and access to on-line Bibles from our computers. We have audio Bibles and every translation of the Bible known to man. We have commentaries galore. Yet we rarely even read it. The Chinese Christians, on the other hand, can be imprisoned for having a Bible, but nevertheless, they memorize it because the government can't take away the Scriptures from their hearts.
- c) What an indictment of the American church! To be honest, one of my greatest burdens for Christians in the Western world is how biblically illiterate we have become. The number of Christians who immerse themselves in the Scriptures on a regular basis seems to be decreasing by the day.

VI. Neglecting the Wedding Invitation

- a) Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son" (Matt. 22:2). How did some respond to this invitation? "They paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business" (Matt. 22:5).

- b) The word for “paid no attention” means “to be careless of, to neglect.”² It is to regard the Lord’s invitation into an eternal, intimate love relationship with Him as meaningless. It’s to give very little attention or respect to His offer. It’s failing to pursue Him in order to know Him.
- c) Neglecting the wedding invitation is demonstrated, not by what we desire, but by what we do. Neglect is illustrated by how we spend our time.
- d) Let me be clear. I’m not talking about skipping a quiet time. Nor am I talking about failing to spend time alone with the Lord in the secret place during a busy season. We all have busy seasons. For some, our busy season might last for a few months or a few years. If we have several young children, we might think our busy season will last forever.
- e) Here’s what I think the Lord means by neglecting the wedding invitation. Rather than receiving the glorious and majestic offer to marry the Lamb as our driving life-destiny, we pursue our own destiny. We live for having a successful business, an influential ministry, a blessed family, or our best life now. Our personal destiny to be great trumps the breathtaking destiny of marrying the Lamb.
- f) The five foolish virgins—or better stated, the five foolish Christians—is a great example of neglecting the wedding invitation (Matt. 25:1-13). Building upon what we saw from Hebrews, the Greek word for *foolish* “primarily denotes dull, sluggish . . . hence, stupid, foolish.”³ The idea is that spiritual sluggishness, rooted in negligence, causes us to make unwise decisions regarding the marriage supper of the Lamb. Negligence leads to dullness and sluggishness, ultimately resulting in our lamps burning out because we didn’t pay the price to purchase oil in the secret place.

VII. # 5. Pursuing Our Destiny

- a) Notice from Matthew 22:5 that “they paid no attention.” In other words, they didn’t regard the invitation to the wedding feast with serious care and concern. As a result, they pursued their own destiny—one went to his farm while another went to his business. The issue here is not spending four hours every day in the secret place with Jesus. The issue is: Whose destiny is pulsating in our hearts? The Lamb’s or ours?
- b) Do you want a great, blessed life? Do you want a successful, thriving business? Do you want a world-changing ministry? Are these the driving pursuits of your life? Or have you been captured by a vision, by a destiny, that is far greater than your best life now? Has the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb wrecked your life? Has it captured your heart?
- c) A quick search of the internet reveals what some of today’s most popular Christian influencers are teaching. Here’s a sample of titles of their books, messages, and television programs: *Your Best Life*, *Your Best Life Now*, *Exceptional You*, *How to Be Happier, Every Day a Friday*, *Your Best is Yet to Come*, and *Powerful Thoughts for a Successful and Abundant Life*.
- d) The modern prophetic movement has devolved from declaring the revelation of Jesus Christ to telling people how great their earthly destiny will be. For example, “I see the Lord opening doors of influence for you in business and ministry; I see the Lord giving you financial prosperity; I see the Lord anointing you as an apostle to the nations.” That doesn’t mean the Lord never gives words like this. He does. My point is that this is not the heartbeat of true prophetic ministry. Revelation 19:10 states that the “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
- e) Here’s a big issue in the modern-day church, which is keeping us immature: We have exchanged the Lamb’s destiny to have a passionate and pure bride for our destiny to enjoy our best life now. Namely, to have a blessed family, a blessed home, a successful business, or an influential ministry. Ask yourself this pointed question: What am I living for?
- f) Just to clarify. The Lord does bless us, enjoys blessing us, and we should enjoy His blessings without condemnation. He blesses our finances, families, homes, businesses, and ministries. The point I’m

making is that we should follow Matthew 6:33—to seek His kingdom first and let all the other blessings be added to us.

- g) When we exchange our personal destiny for the Lamb's destiny, to be His eternal wife, we will find time to seek Him, pursue Him, and to know Him intimately. We will find time to prepare ourselves and to purchase oil in the secret place. We will pay the price to forfeit lesser, earthly pleasures for the eternal treasure of knowing Jesus Christ intimately.
- h) When we truly have received the invitation to marry the Lamb as the driving vision of our lives, it will naturally transform us. It will drastically affect how we spend our time, our money, and how we live. It will radically shape our character and how we posture our heart.
- i) After the Shulamite maiden received a vision of the king on His wedding day, "on the day of his gladness of heart," it led her to pray for the north and south winds to blow upon her garden (Song. 3:11; 4:16). Before receiving this vision, she was selfish in her love for the King. But after revelation shined into her heart and she saw the King on His wedding day, she willingly laid her life down to become His inheritance. She paid the price. Because she didn't neglect the invitation to the wedding, but received it with divine seriousness, the bride paid the price to know Him deeply and to become fully His.
- j) Jesus told a similar parable in Luke 14:16-27, warning us about pursuing another destiny above the marriage supper of the Lamb. When the invitation to attend the banquet went out, the busy people "began to make excuses" why they could not attend (Luke 14:18). Though their reasons were all different, their response was the same—"please consider me excused" (Luke 14:17, 19).
- k) For one, it was a piece of land that needed maintenance (Luke 14:18). For another, it was tending to five recently purchased oxen (Luke 14:19). For another, it was a newlywed couple likely in their first few days or weeks of marriage (Luke 14:20). All of the invitees had valid reasons why they couldn't attend and all of their excuses revolved around good and innocent activities.
- l) Most of us would think that Jesus would gently come to us, pat us on the shoulder with the kindness of a caring father, and say, "I totally understand. That's no problem. Have fun taking care of your land, oxen, and wife." But that was not His response at all. Jesus said that their indifference to His invitation angered the Master and He declared, "None of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner" (Luke 14:21, 24).
- m) Here's the point: When any other destiny—whether it's having a blessed family, a beautiful home, being successful in business, or influential in ministry—eclipses the destiny that God the Father offers us to marry His Son, it will keep us from the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- n) One of the reasons why we are so busy and make so many excuses is because we are living for another destiny. Not the ultimate destiny of being married to the Lord Jesus. When marrying the Lamb is the true destiny of our hearts, we will make time to be with Him. We will make time for whatever we desire most. Don't neglect the ultimate destiny that God the Father is offering you to marry His Son.
- o) Isaiah 65:11 is the word of the Lord to the modern-day church. We have forsaken an intimate, love relationship with the Lord. We have lost sight of our eternal destiny on the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 14:1-5). Why? Because we are pursuing fortune and destiny. Granted, we're not bowing down to physical idols, like the people of Isaiah's day, but we are running hard after fortune and destiny in our hearts. We are chasing after money and our best life now at the expense of our eternal destiny to be the Lamb's wife.

¹ *Thayers*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G5342&t=NASB>, referenced on 9/7/2019.

² *Strong's*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G272&t=NASB>, referenced on 9/5/2019.

³ *Vines*. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G3474&t=NASB>, referenced on 9/5/2019.