

THE FOLSOM
VIEW

“...HAVING THE EYES OF YOUR HEART ENLIGHTENED...” EPHESIANS 1:18

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Maturity and Marriage

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When we talk about “maturity” there are different ways in which people can be mature and different ways in which they can be immature. It is possible for a physical giant to be an emotional dwarf. It is possible for a grown man to be as immature as a 13-year-old boy. It is possible for a beautiful woman to be an emotional child. The connection this has with marriage is simply this: (1) marriage requires maturity, and (2) immaturity in marriage is the reason many marriages fail.

Immaturity In Children

I want you to ponder some examples of immaturity in children. Children show their immaturity by:

- Selfish attitudes and behavior
- Ingratitude
- Demanding to have their own way
- No sense of responsibility and obligation
- Wrong reactions to conflicts and problems
- Poor judgment
- Thinking that happiness comes without giving

Immaturity In Marriage

Some adults never outgrow childhood immaturity, and they demonstrate it in their marriage.

It is possible for a husband to be so self-centered that he doesn't care about the feelings of his wife (and that can be true of wives as well). It's sad that many young women (when they're dating) don't realize that a young man who doesn't care about anyone's feelings but his own probably won't care about her feelings either once they're married.

It is possible for married adults to be as ungrateful as a small child. Many husbands and wives hardly know what it is to say, “Thank you.” Often the words are absent because the feeling is absent.

It is possible for husbands and wives to be locked in a constant battle to see who gets his way. Such marriages usually have a constant cycle: manipulative tricks, dramatic actions and reactions, sulking, shouting, as each one maneuvers to get his way.

It is possible for married adults to have no sense of responsibility or obligation. A wife may be financially irresponsible. A husband may act like his only responsibility is to “make a living.”

It is possible for married adults to react immaturely and irrationally to problems and conflicts that arise. It is possible for husbands and wives to be characterized by childish standards of judgment. Husbands may be infatuated by what the world calls “glamour.” Wives may be obsessed with the desire for their husbands to make more money. It is possible for married adults to think that real happiness is found in getting more and more things.

It doesn't take much insight to see that when one or both of the marriage partners behave with such immaturity, problems in the marriage are inevitable. The problems that are inevitably brought on by such immaturity will eventually come, no matter how handsome, beautiful, or sexy the man and/or woman may be.

Biblical Marks of Maturity

Independence

The Bible teaches that when a man marries he is to leave his parents and cleave to his wife (**Gen 2:24, Matt 19:4-5, Eph 5:31**). Rebekah is a good example of independence from parents for women: “And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go” (**Gen 24:58**).

Some young married men and women are still psychologically dependent upon their parents — husbands who are still “Mama's boys” who can't cut the apron strings, and wives who are still “Daddy's girls” who won't build their own homes with their husbands. Some parents encourage this kind of dependence instead of preparing their children for independence and insisting that they be mature and independent. Some parents interfere in their children's marriages, and young married couples sometimes allow their parents to interfere. This doesn't mean that it's wrong for young couples to respect their parents, or seek advice from their parents or from others. Grown children ought to love and respect their parents, and parents ought to live in such a way so they can be respected. It is wise to seek advice from those who are more experienced. But people shouldn't enter into marriage when they can't be independent, and they shouldn't enter into marriage with the idea that their parents are still going to make their decisions for them. If a man is not mature enough to make decisions and assume

responsibility and leadership, he is not emotionally mature enough for marriage. If a woman is not mature enough to “cut the apron strings” and build a new life with her husband wherever he leads, she is not emotionally ready for marriage.

Mature attitude toward sex

The Bible teaches that God intends sex to be an enjoyable, satisfying part of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2-5; Pr. 5:15-19). Instead of having mature, Bible-based attitudes toward sex in marriage, some have very immature attitudes.

Some think of sex merely as something to “get,” instead of shared affection, mutual enjoyment and satisfaction. Some use sex in the marriage as a weapon to coerce the marriage partner, or as a manipulative tool to get their way about something. Some think that sex, even in marriage, is dirty and sordid.

In contrast to such immature attitudes, people with mature, Bible-based attitudes realize that sex in marriage is a part of expressing, building, and maintaining love (Heb. 13:4); the desire to seek your companion’s happiness as diligently as you seek your own.

I’m not just talking about the infatuation that typically exists before marriage but often doesn’t survive marriage. Some immature people can be considerate for a short time in order to get what they want, but they have never developed the capacity for real, sustained consideration that is a part of real love and real maturity. Marriage ought to be a relationship in which the husband is concerned for his wife’s happiness as much as his own happiness, and vice-versa. An old story is told about a young man who sold his pocket-watch to buy an expensive brush for his girl friend who had beautiful hair, not knowing that she had cut her hair and sold it in order to buy him a gold chain for his pocket-watch. That story illustrates the kind of attitude the Bible teaches husbands and wives should have in marriage. Eph. 5:25, 28-29, and 33 teaches husbands to love like that. Titus 2:4 and 1 Cor. 13:5 teaches wives to love like that. One reason this kind of love is not demonstrated in many marriages is because many of the young men and women who enter into marriage have never developed the maturity that makes lasting love possible.

Capacity to live up to commitments:

We are living in a society that makes it difficult to develop this kind of maturity. The popular concept is: “If you make a commitment but you find out that something is not the way you thought it was, or something is not to your liking, or it’s too hard to fulfill your commitment, then get out of it.” We

frequently see famous athletes who renegotiate their contracts, refusing to live up to the contract they already have. Many children are seldom required to honor their commitments when fulfilling the commitment is found to be unexpectedly difficult.

In contrast to this modern attitude, God teaches us to keep our word even when keeping our word is causing us to hurt (Psa. 15:4). Marriage is a covenant that involves vows and requires a commitment between the husband, the wife, and God (Malachi 2:14, Mt. 19:6). The fact that a marriage often encounters unexpected difficulties and requires unforeseen sacrifices doesn’t nullify the commitment. What is needed for marriage is the kind of maturity that enables a person to fulfill his commitments until the hardship is over, or even if it is never over (Psa. 15:4).

Ability to understand and accept authority

There is a special need for authority in marriage today because there is growing stress in many marriages over authority in the husband/wife relationship. Instead of having a mature attitude toward authority, some husbands think authority is a weapon to use on their wives. Instead of having a mature attitude toward authority, some wives think accepting authority and living under authority makes them inferior. Some young women are even omitting the bride’s traditional promise to “obey” from their wedding vows. What is needed is a maturity that is capable of understanding and accepting the true nature of authority. That means husbands who are mature enough to understand that having God-given responsibility is a solemn responsibility, not an ego trip. That means wives who are secure enough about their own worth to realize that accepting authority doesn’t make one inferior. So if someone is not emotionally mature enough to understand and accept authority, they really are not mature enough for marriage.

Conclusion

Marriage is a relationship for the mature, and maturity means more than the desire to get married, and more than the ability to conceive children, and more than the ability to earn enough money to live on. The best time to develop the maturity needed for marriage is before marriage, not after marriage and the best guide for developing the kind of maturity needed for marriage is God’s word. If you are unmarried, and you want to be mature when you marry, make the Bible your guidebook. If you are already married, and you realize you still need to develop maturity, make the Bible the guide for your life.

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