

## Mature and Humble The character of a Christian Tim Challies

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God's calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to *exemplify* these traits, all Christians are to *exhibit* them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will consider why elders—and all Christians—must strive to live mature and humble lives.

Paul tells Timothy, “[An elder] must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). This is a call to spiritual maturity and we learn that elders must be mature for at least two reasons: Because maturity is accompanied by the virtue of humility and because immaturity is accompanied with the vices of pride and condemnation. Thus we must give positions of responsibility only to those who are spiritually mature. John Piper writes, “the new believer, given too much responsibility too soon, may easily swell with pride. The implication is that part of Christian seasoning is a humbling process and a growing protection against pride. We should see evidences in his life that humility is a fixed virtue and not easily overturned.”

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Alexander Strauch says, “Maturity requires time and experience for which there is no substitute, so a new convert is simply not ready for the arduous task of shepherding God's flock. There is nothing wrong with being ‘a new convert.’ All Christians begin life in Christ as babies and grow to maturity. An elder, however, must be mature and know his own heart. A new Christian does not know his own heart or understand the craftiness of the enemy, so he is vulnerable to pride—the most subtle of all temptations and most destructive of all sins.” Again, he states, “If the elders are humble, the people will be humble, avoiding much contention. If the elders are servant leaders, the church will be marked by Christlike, humble servanthood.” God calls all Christians to maturity and humility—and such growth best takes place in the context of mature, humble leadership.

This call to maturity is given throughout God's Word, not only for leaders but for all Christians. What elders are to model, all Christians are to possess. The author of the letter to the Hebrews says, “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:14) and calls on this congregation to “leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity...” (Hebrews 6:1). Paul says that God gives the church pastors and teachers “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:12-13). He commends Epaphras for “always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:2). God expects that his children will grow in maturity and that this will in turn lead to humility.

Therefore, in a sense, this topic of maturity and humility gets to the heart of this entire series: “the character of the Christian.” Christian leaders—and all Christians—are to strive to become more like Christ—they are to grow in spiritual maturity. As they grow in maturity, they will necessarily grow in humility.

### **Self-Evaluation**

So, how about you? In what ways do you need to pursue greater measures of maturity and humility? I encourage you to consider these questions:

- Are there evidences in your life that you are growing both “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)?
- Are you more spiritually mature now than you were one year ago? Two years ago? How would you know?
- Do you seek the credit and the glory of man, or are you happy to be unknown and unappreciated? Many Christians want to be thought of as servants, but not treated as servants. Is that you?
- In what ways would your parents, children, spouse, boss, and pastors say you need to grow?

### **Prayer Points**

The faithfulness of God will hold us fast, even when our growth feels slow. Take heart as you pray in these ways:

- I pray, Father, that you would make me more like your Son in every area of my life.
- I pray that you would not let there be blind spots in my life and, if there have been, that you would give me the grace to see them and turn from my sin.
- I pray that I would take full advantage of your means of grace so through them I can become more like Christ.
- I pray that you would help me be the servant of all and thus pursue true greatness.

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