

Sermon: And The Greatest Of These Is Love

Text: 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Discussion Questions:

I want us to think today about **maturity**—and the process of maturing. Maturity doesn't happen overnight. It's a long—indeed, LIFELONG—process. To help guide our thinking about the maturing process, let's first discuss the four basic phases of human development (from conception to maturity).

1. Prenatal Development (from conception to birth):

- The 2 weeks after conception is called the Germinal Stage. A sperm cell combines with an egg cell to form a “Zygote.” The Zygote's genome (the complete set of genes) is a combination of the DNA in each gamete (male or female germ cell), and **contains all of the genetic information necessary to form a new individual**.
 - Discuss the fact that at the very moment of conception—every single aspect of a fully grown human being is contained in that Zygote?
- The **Embryonic Stage** lasts from the end of the germinal stage to two months after conception. The developing ball of cells is now called an **Embryo**. In this stage, all the major organs form, and the embryo becomes very fragile. At the end of the embryonic period, the embryo is only about an inch long.
 - What thoughts come to your mind when you consider that by the eighth week of human development, a person is about an inch-long—and all of the major organs have already formed?
- The last stage of prenatal development is the **Fetal Stage**, which lasts from two months after conception until birth. About one month into this stage, the sex organs of the fetus begin to form. The fetus quickly grows as bones and muscles form, and it begins to move inside the uterus. Organ systems develop further and start to function. During the last three months, the brain increases rapidly in size, an insulating layer of fat forms under the skin, and the respiratory and digestive systems start to work independently.
 - Have someone look up and read aloud Psalm 139:13-14, and discuss how these verses apply to this phase of prenatal development.

2. Infancy (birth to 2-years of age):

- What are some words that describe us in this phase of our lives?
- What are the greatest needs of a person in these first two years?
- How important is proper nourishment in our development?

3. Childhood & Adolescence (Ages 3-17):

- One of the descriptions I read regarding this stage is: “Children move from the ‘absorbent mind’ stage to the ‘reasoning mind’ stage—wanting to learn more about the reasons behind things. In the previous stage they wanted to know the ‘what,’ but now they want to know the ‘why.’ During this stage, children also begin to think about their role in the grander scheme of life.”
 - What role does discipline play in this phase of development?
 - How important is it to have mature people answering these “why” questions?
 - Talk about what it means to learn to live within a family.

4. Adulthood (18+):

- What are the key or essential aspects of maturity?
- How important are the first three phases of development in becoming a fully mature person?
- Is there any way to become fully mature if the first three phases were destructive?

Examination:

- Read **Hebrews 5:7-6:3**
 - In Hebrews 5:7-10, Jesus is being described as an eternal priest (one who ministers God the Father's love to us—and goes before God the Father on our behalf). He modelled this priestly role in the way He lived His life while on earth through praying often and with great passion. He secured (and fully deserves) this priestly role through His suffering and obedience. He lives out this priestly role every moment of every day through His perfection. And He fulfills the dual role of priest and king through the example of a man named Melchizedek.
 - How difficult is all of this to understand?
 - Does all of this make sense to you? Did it make sense to you when you were a child—or first became a Christian?
 - What does it require to fully understand these deep truths?
 - What frustration does the writer of Hebrews express in verse 11?
 - What expectation does the writer of Hebrews express in verse 12?
 - What issue does the writer of Hebrews express in verse 13?
 - How do you know if someone is mature in their faith (v. 14)?
 - What does it take to become a mature Christian (6:1-3)?

- Read **1 Peter 1:22-2:3**
 - What does Peter describe in 1:3 that he mentions once again in 1:23?
 - Is this the same thing Jesus was referring to in John 3:3?
 - The writer of Hebrews seems frustrated that his readers WEREN'T growing out of the infancy stage in their spiritual development. In 1 Peter 2:2, Peter is actually ENCOURAGING his readers to be “newborn babies.” Why do think that is?
 - What do you think it means to “crave pure spiritual milk”? Why do you think Peter uses the word “crave”? What, exactly, is “pure spiritual milk”? OK—now for the deeper question—does this convict you? Can you honestly say that you crave pure spiritual milk? How would a person observing your life be able to tell?
 - What's the connection between “craving spiritual milk” (v. 2) and “tasting that the Lord is good” (v. 3)? Can you crave something you haven't actually tasted?
 - How does a person taste that the Lord is good? Have you? Give an example.
 - Peter is giving a description of a spiritually mature person in 1:22. What are the key elements of this maturity?
 - On the flip side, Peter is giving a description of a spiritually immature person in 2:1. What are those five elements—and why do they indicate immaturity?
 - The other metaphor Peter uses in this passage is that of a fertilized seed (1:23). How interesting that this is precisely the FIRST THING that happens in human development. What role does the Word of God have in CREATING new life in the birth (conception) of every believer (1:23-25). In what way does the Word of God contain all of the genetic information necessary to form a new individual?

Application:

Think about the ways that you have “tasted” that the Lord is good. Ask yourself how often you “crave” pure spiritual milk. In what ways do you need to “grow up in your salvation”? How do you display your spiritual maturity in the way you “love one another deeply from the heart”?