

Spiritual Maturity

Does it Exist?

A colleague of mine sent a message on "Spiritual Maturity" to me recently. She wanted to encourage me as I was going through the throes of work stress and praying for better work-life balance. I am appreciative and encouraged by her actions.

This is the message, "What is Spiritual Maturity?"

1. It is when you stop trying to change others, instead focus on changing yourself.
2. It is when you accept people as they are.
3. It is when you understand everyone is right in their own perspective.
4. It is when you learn to "let go".
5. It is when you are able to drop "expectations" from a relationship and give for the sake of giving.
6. It is when you understand whatever you do you do for your own peace.
7. It is when you stop proving to the world, how intelligent you are.
8. It is when you don't seek approval from others.
9. It is when you stop comparing with others.
10. It is when you are at peace with yourself.
11. It is when you are able to differentiate between "need" and "want" and are able to let go of your wants.
12. Lastly, you gain Spiritual Maturity when you stop attaching "happiness" to material things!

These are practical tips and thoughts! As usual, I asked myself if I should be looking for work-life balance by understanding work in a larger spiritual context where work should be a part of the Spiritual Life.

Do you know that the trend in the market nowadays is to have work-life integration i.e. the synergies of work to include family, health, well-being, friends and social activities unlike work-life balance which creates a struggle between work and life? Does it sound ridiculous? Not really. It is a matter of perspective.

For Christians, is “Spiritual Maturity” attained by living our lives to move on from where we are to continue the walk with God through learning and not just reading His word; praying to God at all times and not just talking to Him when we need Him; serving as much as we can and not just whenever we can and not be burdened by service as a routine work for God?

How about loving our neighbours as ourselves even when we do not really love them through our own thinking and remember to grow to know God more through the stages of life in happiness, pain and sorrow?

When I received the message above, my first impression was to refer to the Bible for answers. I cannot find anything literally on “Spiritual Maturity”, but realised that it is an understanding of how much we know and have God in all aspects of our lives. It is also how much our lives have been rooted in Christ Jesus and how much we have grown in Him. Hmmm

It is a journey with God. We should not stop trying even when we fail and we should try even harder when life is stable and smooth with blessings from God. The latter is easier for us to take God for granted and forget many others who are going through the suffering in their lives. Ironical, isn't it?

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him...” (James 1:2-5)

I almost hit a deadlock in writing this article, wondering, “Would we ever have spiritual maturity in any stage of our lives?” This is too abstract for me to expound and maybe even to understand.

Maybe we will only know the answer when we meet Jesus at the end of our lives. Hmmm

An article “What does It Mean to Be Spiritually Mature” by Gordon MacDonald (www.christianitytoday.com) sums up to indicate that Christians must go deeper in every area of their lives to have maturity in Christ. This is what he wrote (quoting from the article):

“...Of course, we can't attempt to answer these questions until we explore what deep people look like. Here's my working description: Deep people are those whose lives are organized around

Jesus, his character, his call to serve, and his death on the cross for their sins. Their abilities or giftedness may be quite diverse, but each has the power to influence others to follow Jesus, grow in Christ-likeness and live a life full of service. They love the world, mix well with people and are wary of spiritual entrapments. They are known for their wisdom, their compassion for others, and their perseverance in hard times..."

So, when do we have "Spiritual Maturity"? Is it when we stop drinking milk and start eating solid food?

"In fact, though by this time, you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, it is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is only for the matured, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguished good from evil.

"Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptism, the laying of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement. And God permitting, we will do so." – Hebrews 6:1-4

Never give up! The Bible illustrates "Spiritual Maturity" in several versus and in different ways. It is about the depth of faith and meaning of God's work in our lives. The Bible has the answers. Read on.

"...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:12-16)

Spiritual Life is the core to balance work, family, health, well-being, friends and social activities. God is our umbrella of strength that should be used not only when it rains or shines. It is there for us anytime.

So, Spiritual Maturity does exist, but when do we know it?

Let God tell you by allowing Him to show you the journey of His Word through His Life! Let our hearts and minds walk and grow in Him through His Love for us!

Pray with me for wisdom from God and courage to go through life with Him!

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