

# The 5 Stages of Maturity

## Session 6: The Elder Stage

### 1. Review

- Maturity can be defined as: *Reaching my God-given potential in every age and stage.*
- Remember! Maturity is valuable, but it does not give us more value.
  - o “Our value is inherent, unchangeable, everlasting, and complete” – Amy Brown

### 2. Core Principles

- A person’s physical age or stage does not determine his/her maturity.
- Most people want to be mature. However, few know how to attain it or how to teach it to others.
- Maturity can be blocked due to a lack of healthy relationships, and unresolved traumas.
- Maturity is developed in relationship with mature people.
- People with high maturity need to be in relationship with people of low maturity (and vice versa).
- Each stage of maturity has both needs and tasks.
- We can ask God to provide the needs we missed.
- We can grow our maturity by learning the tasks we missed.

### 3. Maturity Model Overview

| STAGE        | AGE   | PRIMARY TASK   |
|--------------|---|--|
| Infant       | 0-3   | Receiving;<br>Learn to Live in Joy & Peace                 |
| Child        | 4-12  | Taking care of self (1);<br>Develop Individual Identity    |
| Adult        | 13 +  | Taking care of two people (2);<br>Develop Group Identity   |
| Parent       | Birth of 1 <sup>st</sup> child to<br>launch of last | Taking care of children sacrificially with<br>joy.         |
| <b>Elder</b> | <b>Launch of last child<br/>into adulthood</b>      | <b>Caring for the community<br/>sacrificially with joy</b> |

### 4. Elders Grow the Community

- An elder is someone who has raised their children, and now can raise up a community.
- Elders carry the most weight in the community because they have the most life experience and capacity.
- When we lack maturity and training yet attempt elder tasks and roles, we find ourselves frustrated, disillusioned, and hidden addictions may surface.

**5. Elder Level Needs**

- A community to call their own.
- Recognition by their community.
- A proper place in the community structure.
- Have others place trust in him/her.

**6. Elder Level Tasks**

- Hospitality.
- Giving life to those without family.
- Being a 'parent' for the community itself.
- Maintain their community's identity.
- Act like him/herself in the midst of difficulty.
- Enjoy what God placed in each and every person.
- Build the trust of others through their own transparency and spontaneity.

**7. Elder Too Soon**

- Damage to his/her children by neglect.
- Damage to his/her marriage.
- Damage to his/her church &/or community
- Damage to his/her family by introducing dangerous people into the home.
- Damage to wounded and lonely people who need help.
- Damage to missions (the purpose) by sending the immature.
- Damage to churches when immature people are put on elder boards.
- Damage to the potential elder's development.
- Damage to 'the big picture' for all involved.
- Damage to the trust-building task true elders with earned maturity face.

**8. Elder Maturity Stage Assessment<sup>1</sup>**

| No | Sometime | Usually | Yes |  |
|----|----------|---------|-----|--|
|    |          |         |     | I give sacrificially to my community—even when it is hard and exhausting—without needing to receive praise or recognition. I don't abandon during difficult times. |
|    |          |         |     | I am recognized in my community as a positive, life-giving influence, & I model maturity to others by how I live.  |
|    |          |         |     | I demonstrate hospitality & generosity with my resources.  |
|    |          |         |     | I help my community establish and maintain their identity so their mission does not drift.   |
|    |          |         |     | I prize all community members—delighting in their unique identities and committing to their growth—seeing them as God sees them.                                   |
|    |          |         |     | I give life to the "familyless" as God leads.  |
|    |          |         |     | I continue to be the same person when provoked or tempted.   |
|    |          |         |     | I can suffer well under hardships and endure under misunderstandings, accusations, rage, and differing opinions.   |
|    |          |         |     | I see some of what God sees in every situation.  |
|    |          |         |     | I am able to remain a 'non-anxious presence' under all kinds of circumstances, sharing others' feelings but still knowing who I am and who they are.               |

<sup>1</sup> Modified from 'My Personal Maturity Map' handout, by Anne Bierling with contributions from Nik Harrang.

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|  |  |  |  | I build and rebuild trust.  |
|  |  |  |  | I live transparently and spontaneously (from the heart Jesus gave me).                |
|  |  |  |  | I live a life of gratitude (instead of regret) and embrace the life God has given me. |

**9. What To Do With My Maturity Holes**

- Ask God to show me the relationships He has for me to grow in maturity
- Identify 1 or 2 tasks to prayerfully begin to work on (and ask God for opportunities)
- Find others who have that skill or ability and ask them to tell you stories.
- Talk to Immanuel about maturity: yours and others.

**10. Additional Resources on Maturity**

- The Maturity Model was first written about in, *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, James G. Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne M. Bierling, Rick Koepcke, & Maribeth Poole.
- A free maturity assessment and other free resources are available at: [www.lifemodelworks.org](http://www.lifemodelworks.org) (go to 'Resources' tab, then 'Bonus Materials').
- Chris and Jen Coursey's blog at [www.thrivetoday.org](http://www.thrivetoday.org) is a great source for seeing parenting and relational skills modeled and lived out.
- RARE Leadership: 4 Uncommon Habits For Increasing Trust, Joy, and Engagement in the People You Lead*, Marcus Warner & Jim Wilder, is very helpful for understanding maturity.
- The Complete Guide to Living With Men*, Jim Wilder, is out of print, but is the most in-depth resource on the 5 stages of maturity out there.
- The Stages of a Man's Life*, by Jim Wilder is in print and covers the 5 stages of maturity for men without most of the neuroscience behind it.
- Just Between Father & Son: A Weekend Adventure Prepares a Boy for Adolescence*, E. James Wilder, models a rite of passage from childhood to young adulthood.
- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to be Spiritually Mature While Remaining Emotionally Immature*, Peter Scazzero.
- The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*, Peter Scazzero.
- Emotionally Healthy Relationships Course*, Peter & Geri Scazzero ([www.emotionallyhealthy.org](http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org))

**11. Immanuel Interaction**

Begin by asking God to bring to mind a time you felt joyful, peaceful, and/or connected.

Write a prayer of thanksgiving: *Dear Lord, I am thankful for*

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Write a response from God's perspective: Dear child of mine

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Sharing my heart with Jesus: “Jesus, what’s going on in my mind and heart right now is ...

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*Write down the thoughts, words, impressions that come to mind without filtering (you can test it later).*

Jesus’ tender response toward me: “My dear child...

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