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The Healthy Congregation - Part 1
Titus 2:1–5 (ESV)
May 31st, 2015, Jeff Germs

I can remember as a child being asked, “What do you want to **be** when you grow up?”

And usually, I would say, “A cowboy.” That’s seriously what I dreamed of as a child. I was drawn to horses, and cattle, and ranches, and farm smells. And still to this day, if we drive by a farm or a ranch I am drawn to that lifestyle, and as sick as it sounds, to the smell.

As a child, I had no idea, of course, what it meant to be grown up.

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I simply thought that grown ups were bigger, and they weren’t accountable to anybody. Nobody told them when to go to bed, or to brush their teeth, or wash behind their ears. Nobody hauled them out of bed in the morning and told them to go to school. Grown ups could do whatever they want whenever they want. To my little mind, that was the difference between childhood and adulthood. It was age and the freedom to do whatever you want. And I longed to do whatever I wanted.

Over the years though, I’ve thought a lot about that question and tried hard to understand what the process of maturity really is.

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Another way of saying that is, **what does it mean to grow up?** What does it mean to go from boyhood to manhood, or from girlhood to womanhood?

Many cultures have rites of passage from various stages of their lives, passing from infancy to childhood, to adolescence, and to adulthood. Some of them are very bizarre, to say the least, but they do serve a great purpose, and that is to bring the child into the different stages of life. After passing through a certain rite, they would know, “Ok, now, I am an adolescent. And then an adult.” In our North American culture we have no such thing. And I can remember struggling very much with this when I was a young man, wondering when am I considered a man because there was no clear line of demarkation between boyhood and manhood.

Actually, I do know of some dads who will take their boys who have reached drinking age and get them drunk, as if that somehow catapults them into manhood. It doesn’t, of course. And neither do these other rites. They simply mark the different stages of a person’s life. They have nothing to do with maturity.

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The sad thing about maturity is that it does not necessarily follow the processes of aging. You can have a very elderly man or woman who are, emotionally, very immature. For whatever reason, they experienced pain as a child and had no one to help them process it, so their growth was stunted. And usually those whose maturity has been stunted have no idea they are immature. Try telling someone who is acting immature that they are immature. What will result? A very explosive outburst. A childish rant. “How dare you call me immature. I am not immature. You are — Mr. Poopy Pants.”

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1 Corinthians 13:11 (ESV)

11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

What's the context of this verse? It comes right after the famous passage on love. So, what does it mean to grow up, or to be mature? It means that we grow in our capacity to love. Maturity has a lot to do with our ability to love and our ability to be self-controlled, and you will notice as you read this next section in Titus that self-control is one of the themes.

The more mature a person is the more they are able to control their behaviour. They are responsible for their actions. It doesn't mean they are perfect, but they don't point the blame somewhere else when they obviously blew it.

There are **two extremes** here. On one end there is the immature person who believes that everything is about them. On the other end of the spectrum, the immature person says it's all about other people, I don't matter at all. "Everything is about you." Neither extreme is healthy. **Maturity says, "We are in this together.** I can learn from you and you can learn from me. I don't have to have all the answers. We grow as we stumble along together."

The more mature a person is the more they will think outside their own world. Think about the development of a person from infancy on. A baby is one hundred percent dependant on its parents. A baby thinks only about its own needs. Babies will cry in the middle of the night without any thought that their parents would like to have a good night's sleep for once. The well being of other people doesn't even cross their little minds. That is the nature of a baby.

As babies grow up into toddlers the parents teach them how to share. In essence they are being taught that life is not all about them. They are being taught to look outside themselves at the needs of others. That is a very important part of the maturation process. We've all seen kids fighting over a toy, right? If a kid does not learn to share at that time in their life they grow up as older kids and bring that selfish me-centered thinking on to the other stages of their life, and even into adulthood.

Healthy parents will teach their kids, not only how to share, but how to talk about their feelings as these seemingly huge crises are happening. As a person goes through the various stages of emotional development they should be learning all along that life is not all about them. They are not the main character in everyone else's story. And on the other end of the spectrum they will also learn that it is not all about other people and will learn to take care of their own needs, and have their own opinions, so they are able to love others.

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As Paul said in Ephesians 4:15-16, ***then we will no longer be like immature children...Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ.***

And as they grow up, unless this is not modelled well in the home, they will learn there are better ways to deal with disagreements than throwing a temper tantrum or giving the silent treatment or giving up in despair. If they don't learn healthy ways of dealing with disappointments they will bring their childish behaviour into adulthood.

That's what we are looking at in Titus.

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Titus 2:1-5 (ESV)

1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

In the passage we looked at last week, Paul told Titus the kinds of qualities he was supposed to look for in a pastor. He said, in essence, that the pastor must be living on the growing edge of maturity. He must be leading the way in growth. And now, in the passage we are looking at today we see that Paul widens his target group to the rest of the congregation. As the congregation follows the pastor as he follows Christ, they too will grow in maturity, and this is what that looks like. The congregation is made up of a whole bunch of individuals. As the individuals grow, so grows the church.

Paul has something for everyone here. And as we look at this you can see that there is sort of a mentorship thread that weaves its way through the passage. Everyone should have a mentor and everyone should be mentoring someone. We all need to be involved in each other's lives so our faith intersects with one another's, and then growth happens as we submit to each other in love.

I want to touch on the word "doctrine" for a couple minutes. There is some confusion about what this means. In the Baptist church when we hear the word "doctrine" we typically think about some pretty heady topics, such as the doctrine of justification by faith, or election, or predestination, or all of the "ologies": soteriology; eschatology; angelology; ecclesiology; hamartiology. The way we have come up with all of these "ologies" is we have, basically, taken a concordance and systematized the Bible into categories. For instance, if we want to know everything the Bible has to say about angels we look up every instance in the Bible that says anything about angels and we put it in in a box and create a doctrine, or a "theology of"....

There is a place for that kind of study, but doing that can tend to make the Bible into a textbook. It's not. It is God's story. It is his meta-narrative where the story of Jesus is woven through every page. It is the greatest love story every written where God, the Great Rescuer sets out to rescue all of his creation by giving his life for her.

When we think of doctrine in the kind of way I described it becomes narrow and wooden and it loses the spirit of what God is trying to say to us.

1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

When Paul wrote that he wasn't telling Titus to teach the "ologies", or the "isms" such as Calvinism, or Arminianism. They had none of those artificial categories. After he wrote this he went on to tell Titus to teach people in every sphere of life how they should grow in their love for each other. This is the meat of the Gospel. The "ologies" and "isms" are not the meat. And when we teach those things as if they are so important they actually become distractions from what is really important and that is growing in our capacity to love.

Many of us have probably been to "Bible studies" that lead to arguments about theology, or doctrine, or our pet interpretation or misinterpretation of a certain Bible passage. If we define "doctrine" in a wooden kind of way, like it is knowing all the "ologies" and "isms" that is what will happen. It will turn into a fight that causes disunity, which is the exact opposite to what God has called us to.

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In Titus 1:9, Paul said elders “**must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.**” He wasn’t saying that you should rebuke people who disagree with your pet “ologies” or “isms”. That’s ridiculous. He was saying rebuke those in the church sharply if they are acting in ways that don’t exemplify the love of Christ.

As soon as Paul told Titus to teach what accords with sound doctrine he went on to describe how he is to teach people to love each other in their own sphere of influence. This is the meat. This is the good stuff. All that other stuff can be a distraction if we are not careful.

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² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

If someone faithfully cooperates with Jesus he will become mature. And this is what maturity looks like for a mature man, Paul says.

First of all, Paul says he’s to be sober-minded. A synonym for this is the word temperate. Paul is not just talking about sober in regards to drinking alcohol, although that is definitely one way that maturity manifests itself. A grown up is not as subject to extremes as much as when he was a young man or boy. As boys grow into maturity they focus on things that are more age appropriate. Some have said, “men don’t grow up they just get more expensive toys.” Sometimes that’s true.

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Paul then says mature men are **dignified**. Now, that has got to be the most boring way to describe a man. When I hear the word “dignified” I think of a man in a black suit with a white starched shirt and wearing a bowler hat. It sounds like someone with no sense of humour or personality.

That’s not what Paul meant. What he meant by that is that mature men will be worthy of respect. What kind of qualities does someone have if they are worthy of respect? The word ‘integrity’ comes to mind.

What does integrity mean? Integrity literally means ‘whole’, or complete. A person who is integrated will not act against their values because that would compromise the integrity of their being. They will ‘dis-integrate’ or crumble. A person of integrity is consistent in how he behaves from one group of people to another. In other words, he doesn’t live one way in the church, and one way in the home, and another way at work. He is completely consistent in his behaviour.

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Paul also says, the mature man is **Self-controlled**. This is related to the word **sober-minded**, but I think it carries a broader meaning.

One of the traits of a person who has grown in maturity is that he will have, hopefully, learned some self-control in every area of life. You could call this self-management, or self-leadership. Someone who is mature knows he doesn’t have to say something just because he thinks it.

How many of us haven’t said something in anger and as the word is spewing out of our mouths we are simultaneously thinking, “I probably shouldn’t say this.” And then it’s out. We can’t take it back. We lost control of our tongue. It took on a life of its own and said some things we knew wouldn’t be cool, but we did it any way.

The more mature someone is the more self-discipline he is in every area of his life. A mature person will discipline themselves physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. He will seek health and moderation in all four of these pillars. It's called self-leadership. He will lead himself to growth in all four areas of life.

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Paul then says that he will be **sound in faith**. As Christian men and women mature their faith becomes more real. When young people grow up in a Christian home they are told what they believe. Their parents read them the Bible stories and tell them they are true and they should believe them. They tell their kids if they want to go to heaven and not the bad place they need to trust in Jesus, and so they do. I mean who wouldn't, right? When you have a choice between heaven and hell, the obvious answer is heaven. They are told what to believe, but have not yet wrestled with the truth of those beliefs.

As we grow older we start to question some of those beliefs. This is a very important wrestling match to have with God. We should never try to short circuit that struggle by telling anyone that they aren't allowed to doubt. That will either breed atheists or hypocrites.

A mature person will have wrestled through these things and come out the other side with a very strong faith. We search out the Scriptures for ourselves and come out with a sound knowledge of the God of the Bible.

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Then Paul adds that he will also be **sound in love**. Love becomes the engine that drives everything he does. Real men are not afraid to talk about love. Real men are not afraid to express love. Real men continually train themselves to love even when it's hard. It's the coward and immature "man" who is afraid to love.

Sometimes men are afraid of the "love" word because they think it's a soft emotion. When actually, it's much more than an emotion. There may be emotion attached to love, but love is much more than that. Love is ferocious. It takes a huge amount of courage to put someone ahead of yourself. That's what love does. It takes tremendous courage to be kind to someone when everything inside of you wants to lash out. Love is the foundation of a true mature man.

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Lastly, Paul says that real men are **sound in steadfastness** – or perseverance. Real men don't give up when the going gets tough. They stick at it because that's what love does. And when older mature men live in the way Paul described, the young men will follow.

Let me speak directly to you men who are married right now. Your families need you. Your children need you. Do you know what they need the most? You might think, "Well, they need me to earn a good living so I can provide for them the good things of life." Perhaps. But, more than that, they need you to model what it means to be a real man. They need you to take spiritual leadership in the home. That doesn't mean to teach them theology or the isms. It means to teach them how to love. Don't abdicate your responsibility for this to someone else. Your family needs you to lead the way in godliness. They need you to be real men who know how to love. The thing kids need the most is to see that their father knows how to love their mother.

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Like I said, we have something for everyone this morning.

³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Now, when Paul talks about older men and women here, he is not speaking of just the elderly. He is speaking to those who should be mature by now. That would be middle-age-ish. Paul is speaking here to women who have had life experience they can pass on to younger women who are just entering into womanhood. Life is so complex that younger women need more mature women to guide them. And likewise with men, but Paul speaks directly to women here.

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The first thing Paul says is that women should be **reverent in behavior**. “Reverent” is an interesting word because this is the only time that it is used in the New Testament. Women are special. Paul chose a word just for you. Now, I don’t want you to get a big head, but what that word literally means is sacred, holy, or venerable.

Unlike what some people think, Paul had a very high view of women. Mature Christian women are to behave as ones who are dedicated or set apart for God. You are one who belongs to a divine sphere. You are especially set apart for God, and Paul says that women should live like it is true. Now, that, of course, should be true of all Christ-followers. That’s what Paul said in Romans 12:1-2. But, Paul picked a word especially for older Christian women here because, I think he had a very high view of women.

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Paul carries on saying that mature women are not to be **slanderers**. It’s interesting because the Greek word translated slanderer here is the word, *diabolos*. Devil. When we gossip, and slander others what are we doing? We are doing the work of the Devil. Don’t do it. Stop it! It’s not healthy. It undermines your integrity and it undermines the work of God. And it’s not just women who are prone to gossip. Men can be equally as bad, but once a woman is mature she has learned to control her tongue.

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...**[not] slaves to much wine**. Now, I have no idea why Paul chose to speak to women on this one and not to men, but either way, when anyone allows themselves to be controlled by anything other than God they have chosen to worship an idol.

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They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,

There is a huge opportunity for ministry from older mature women who have experienced life with God to train younger women. And remember that Paul was speaking into a normal situation here where singleness was not very common. That is not the case in our society. If you are a single older mature woman, God has given you the responsibility to speak into the lives of younger women as well. The fact is that we all need each other. In our Canadian society we are so independent. We think we don’t need each other – but we do. We need to learn to speak life into each other’s worlds.

Why do you think Paul took the time to write that older women should teach younger women how to love their husbands? Wouldn’t that be natural for them? Well, it would be if the men acted like men, but the truth is too often men act like boys. It’s ok for boys to act like boys, but for men to act

like boys is pathetic. Sometimes men are hard to love and they need older women to support them.

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⁵ to be self-controlled,

I won't spend time on this one because we've already covered with the men. Self-control is one of the fruit of the Spirit and mature women should be practiced in the art of self-control.

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pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands,

Mature women are to be ***pure***. God calls husbands and wives to remain faithful to each other. Just because someone is married doesn't mean that temptations cease. There can be just as much temptation for a married person as there is for a single person, and especially if things are not going well at home. Make sure you do not put yourself in a situation where you can be tempted to compromise your marriage. Do everything you can to protect it.

...working at home. Again, Paul was speaking into the norm of his day. Husband working, and wife at home as the homemaker. In our day in Canada it's pretty tough to do that unless you have a very good salary. So, don't feel bad if you both have to work to meet the needs of your family. Just make sure that your kids come before work. Moms and dads, don't cheat your kids of your time. They need you.

...kind, and submissive to their own husbands.

Now we get to the hard stuff – headship and submission in the home. Please understand that when the Bible talks of wives submitting to husbands it in no way implies any superiority on the husband's part, or that he is the boss. This is one of the most misunderstood biblical concepts and it has destroyed so many marriages and crushed the spirits of so many women it's scary.

It's simply a matter of role distinction. Being the head of the home actually means that you sacrifice your own life for your wife. That takes a tremendous amount of courage and humility.

When the husband shows good leadership in the home by loving, protecting, and nurturing his wife and kids there usually isn't a problem with the idea of submission. Why wouldn't a wife want to submit to a husband who puts her interests above his own? Why wouldn't a wife want to submit to her husband if he did what Paul said he should do and love her to the extent that Christ loved the church and laid down his life for her?

The problem comes when the husband abdicates his responsibility. That should never happen. But, unfortunately it does. If you are in that situation, get a mature woman who can encourage you and teach you how to love your husband even when things are hard. And then pray a lot, and hang on to God. And if there is abuse get out and call the police. Paul never once said that a wife should put up with an abusive husband.

When the mature Christ-following woman lives like this and helps other younger women to do the same, Paul says they do it so...

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..that the word of God may not be reviled.

When we live the way God intended us to live, his Word, his name, and his Gospel will be honoured. We will reflect the character of Jesus. His name will be made famous and more people will come to faith in him because of our obedience.

God has called us as a congregation to grow in maturity so our relationships will be good and so his kingdom will grow and ultimately he will receive glory. God never told us that the road would be easy, but he did say it would be good and that if we persevere we will receive his blessing.



*From the Head to the Heart to the Hands:
The Healthy Congregation - Part 1*

Titus 2:1-5

Week of May 31st, 2015

Objective of this study: To understand what maturity looks like and to see what it would mean to live it out.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Colossians 1:3-14 meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Word/Work (60-90 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Titus 2:1-5
3. Pull out all the points Paul brings out in regards to the maturity of men and women.
 1. What do each of the words or phrases he uses mean? Flesh each one out. Don't hurry this.
4. Which ones jumped out at you the most and why?
5. As we grow in maturity in each of these areas, how do they help us to love better? Pick some specific ones and flesh them out.
6. What are the two extremes of immaturity mentioned in the sermon. Which do you tend towards?
 1. Read Ephesians 4:14-16. How does this relate?
7. Paul talks about the importance of mentoring relationships. Have you experienced this either as a mentor, or a "mentee?" How did it help you mature or grow in love?
8. Why is all this so important? (See the end of verse 5)
9. Spend some time prayer for each other about specific ways you need to grow. Ask God to use you as a light to point to Jesus.