



## **bloodline** **network newsletter**

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### **The Progression of Spiritual Maturity**

The progression of spiritual maturity mimics that of human maturity and follows a pattern of dependency, to co-dependency, to independence and finally interdependence. The Apostle Paul spoke of the immaturity of in many places. To the Corinthians he admonishes a supposedly mature church and its leadership. They had truly powerful signs and noted preachers appearing in their pulpit but were divided by contentions and squabbles. The Apostle John likewise writes to a series of churches in Asia Minor about undesirable situations within established churches. They should have known better but were not “acting their age” and their spiritual immaturity was limiting many of them.

In the book of Hebrews we find the following words, *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the scriptures of God and have come to need milk and not solid food... solid food belongs to those who are of full age.*

Their spiritual age should have made them examples and teachers but they were still immature “not acting their age” and therefore in need of someone to train them again. They were older and should have been responsible but instead acted like infants needing milk, unable to digest that which can only come with full age – maturity.

When we first receive enlightenment we are often dependent on others for instruction, support, and counsel. This is the dependency stage of spiritual maturity and can be likened unto infancy. The purpose of our spiritual support structure is to help us toward growth and maturity. Unfortunately, as the Apostle Paul noted, many who think they are mature are really boy-leaders. That is many churches and leaders do not possess “full age maturity”.

As people grow in faith and understanding they enter the co-dependent stage similar to childhood. The church is dependent on them for support and they on the church and others for many things but they can function in many of the basics, (prayer, bible study, witnessing etc.) on their own. As you look around at various churches it is easy to

see those that are stuck in the co-dependent stage. Churches fearful of losing members, members agitated with the church as being too authoritative and controlling. All feeding on similar doctrine and teachings or on each other, week after week, month after month, year after year.

The third stage of spiritual maturity is what I would call independence. This stage is similar to adolescence. People are growing and learning, enthusiastic for new experiences. In many ways some adolescents may be superior to their adult counterparts. They may be physically stronger or have learned languages or acquired abilities that many adults have not achieved. Likewise in the independent stage of spiritual maturity many may have understanding or spiritual gifting beyond that of those who have reached full spiritual maturity. They may be able to sing better, remember more scripture, witness more powerfully perform more miracles and excite those around them with a desire for God but all these things are not substitutes for spiritual maturity. Though they may be spiritually mature for their age if they are in godly submission under divine authority, there is no substitute for becoming “full aged”.

The fourth level of spiritual maturity is likened to adulthood and characterized by what I call interdependence. This stage is marked by exercising calling, authority, gifting, ministry and vision under divine order. Interdependence is the only condition under which true body ministry can operate. I am not talking about what many today call body ministry or the mutual direction and use of the church, its people, their gifting and resources to benefit the church, its membership and to reach the community. Though this may be fine, true body ministry can only come from interdependence and interdependence can only come from full maturity.

Every church ought to have people in every stage of maturity development. The church is not a place where everyone needs to be at full maturity NOW! Nor does the growth of maturity end when a person or a church reaches “full age”. That is not how families or the Kingdom operate. Though I have known a few individuals who have reached the stage of interdependence I have yet to see a church operate in this level of maturity.

Most of what I see is co-dependent or independent (not to be confused with non-denominational) people and churches. We as the hopeful church of God desire to lead a restoration and bring forth a Kingdom that we, for the most part, neither understand nor are equipped to govern.

Normal spiritual growth is from dependency to co-dependency to independency to interdependency. This growth has been short-circuited. At best most are stuck in the third stage of maturity. For their age they should be fully mature but we have suffered under the curse of immaturity that says because God uses me, because I understand more than many, because I have great gifting, because God speaks to me, because God has called me, because God has given me confirmations or uttered over me prophetic words – I have the right to ministry and have obtained the order of God.

Now let's view a window on how a mature church and its saints operate. Jesus ends his parable on ministry in Mathew chapter 20 with the words *many are called but few are chosen*. It is a surprise to many that the disciples were called before they were chosen. It is also surprising to many that the Apostle Paul being called by God did not choose when to enter his ministry but waited until he was chosen. He witnessed and prayed and demonstrated the power of the Spirit and the great anointing on his life but it was not until he was chosen that he entered the ministry of his calling. If we are honest most of us enter ministry by our own choosing or through some organized church formula or bible school or seminary leading to the acceptance of a church position.

The Kingdom will only come in its fullness when the Church enters into a relationship of interdependence. This is not a communal relationship nor is it a relationship marked by needy and wanting members having their needs supplied by the church or every one in church working together to reach the lost and increase church growth.

Spiritual maturity that is interdependent causes a mixing and matching of the gifts, ministries, callings, offices, visions and purpose of the entire church body. It is a true ministry of the saints that is not confined to church walls or doctrinal limitations. It is the coming forth of the Body of Christ where each person is truly a functional, integrated member of the Body with Jesus as the head. When this church manifests in its fullness so will the Kingdom of God.

Every vision must be a portion of a wider vision and every ministry must be part of a greater ministry and every complete anointing must have its genesis in a higher order. When the world sees the true manifested Body of Christ it will once again see Jesus. This ought to become the great focus of the Church in our day.

*Mark 4:28; For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the (mature) full corn in the ear.*

*Luke 8:14; And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to (maturity) perfection.*

*1 Corinthians 2:6; Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are (mature) perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught:*

*Philippians 3:15; Let us therefore, as many as be(mature) perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

*Colossians 1:28; Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man (mature) perfect in Christ Jesus:*

*Colossians 4:12; Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand (mature) perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

**James 1:4; But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be (mature) perfect and entire, wanting nothing.**

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Roger and Karen Roth are the set ministry of a local church in Northeastern Wisconsin. They are a ministry son of Dr. Hanby, and along with writing the Bloodline articles each month, they are directors of a portion of Dr. Hanby's ministry called THE FATHER'S HEART.

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