

KEEP GROWING IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Note to the speaker:

We have the possibility of growing in our relationship with God forever. To do that we must (1) understand and respond to our conscience and (2) grow to Christian maturity

IT IS REASONABLE FOR US TO DESIRE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (6 min.)

How easy it is to have loving relationship with someone kind, generous, interested in us!

We can see from what we have learned that a good relationship with God is desirable

By studying God's Word, we have come to know many of his lofty qualities

His material and spiritual gifts to the first humans laid a basis for this good relationship

Jehovah placed man in perfect surroundings, with prospect of endless life (Ge 2:9, 15-18)

Made our original parents in his image (Read Genesis 1:27) (*w82 8/1 12*)

Endowed them with such qualities as love and justice, in reflection of himself

As they enlarged and extended God's qualities in their lives, would grow in relationship with him

A key to their—and our—relationship with Jehovah is God-given conscience (*w72 557*)

Though we have not lived in the Paradise Adam had, we can see its desirability and how fine it would be to have a warm, close relationship with our Creator

We have learned that Paradise soon will be restored; we have the prospect of being sons of God

Even now there is much we can do to appreciate and develop our relationship with God

Will consider two essential factors: operation of our conscience and our growth to Christian maturity

CONSCIENCE SHOULD AID US IN HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (12 min.)

We have inherited the faculty of conscience from Adam (Read Romans 2:14, 15) (*it-1 501 ¶1*)

Can see evidence of this today; many “naturally” avoid murder, adultery, rape, and other badness

There is both Biblical and non-Biblical evidence (*w75 209-10; it-2 966 ¶1, 2*)

God deals with Christians in a way that appeals to and urges our use of conscience (1Pe 3:16)

Bible specifically identifies some things as wrong, giving us laws against these

Adultery, murder, and eating blood are condemned (Ac 15:29; 1Co 6:9, 10)

Even with such specific laws, conscience is called into play

What will one do when unobserved by other humans?

We must obey these laws to have a good relationship with God, but more is needed

By leaving most matters to be decided by Christians on basis of principles, God calls for larger use of conscience and lets person reveal what is in his heart (*w76 528-9*)

Examples of principles that might bear on matter: not loving world, not stumbling others, respecting headship, pursuing peace, avoiding competition, showing respect for sanctity of life

Applying Bible principles involves more than following a memorized law

We must use knowledge, understanding, discernment, and wisdom

There are a number of factors to consider when facing matter of conscience (*w82 7/15 22-7*)

What do the Scriptures say? (May have to do research)

How will my decision affect others? (1Co 10:32)

How will it affect me? (Ro 14:22, 23)

Meditate on proddings of conscience, seeking what will leave you with clean conscience

We can be helped by all we know about God—his personality, ways, standards, and past dealings

We thus come to reflect more extensively God's “image” (Col 3:10)

Living by principles and conscience also displays motives of your heart

Do you want to respond to conscience and Bible principles? In your heart, do you desire to reflect God's image in dealing with others?

Obviously, a person's relationship with God grows as he develops good heart motives, responding to trained conscience and knowledge of Bible principles

Another aid to a growing relationship with God is Christian maturity; how so?

CHRISTIAN MATURITY IS IMPORTANT TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (17 min.)

In ordinary sense, a “mature” person is one who is adult, physically grown up

One can still make progress and gain knowledge, experience, appreciation

Christian growth from spiritual childhood to adulthood affects your relationship with God

How can we identify spiritual immaturity? (1Co 3:1-4; Eph 4:11-16; *w74 109-10*)

Spiritual “babes” are unstable, “fleshly” in their thinking (*w85 5/1 9-10*)

Mature Christian is one who accepts the full range of Christian truth, endeavoring to live accordingly (*w74* 110-12; *w85* 5/1 10-12)

The need for this is evident from comments in Hebrews 5:11-6:2 (Read) (*w81* 10/1 9)

Some Hebrew Christians were yet babes spiritually

They needed to see how Bible truths involved their entire life—influencing thinking, desires, decisions

Needed by “use” to train their perceptive powers to distinguish right from wrong, get experience

Advancing to Christian maturity still involves accepting and applying full range of truth

The mature Christian applies Bible truth in daily life, striving to reflect God’s image fully

He knows that principles should govern even when it is hard; he acts accordingly

A mature Christian is responsive to proddings of his conscience; strives to align his thinking and actions with Bible principles and all he knows about God

He finds satisfaction in this, knowing that his relationship with God is improving

Many here today do this, evidencing that they are mature Christians; for example:

Wife reflects agreement with principle of headship by seeking her husband’s guidance

That she seeks husband’s guidance does not show immaturity but is a further evidence that she maturely accepts the full range of Bible truth

A Christian brother or sister’s seeking suggestions from an elder may also indicate maturity

Easy to distinguish this from “babe” who does not want to reflect God’s image, tends to ignore or deaden conscience, or wants others to decide for him (*w78* 4/1 19 ¶20)

Even among mature Christians we find variety (*w71* 664-5; *it-2* 355)

Not all physically mature persons are the same; differ in size, personality, and traits

The fact that one is shorter than another is no proof of immaturity; both may be adults, mature

Mature Christians do not all manifest qualities in the same ways or to same extent (Eph 4:15, 16)

One may display more generosity or hospitality than another, who may be very patient and mild

Avoid labeling person as immature just because that one differs in the way he or she contributes as a mature Christian to the building up of the Christian congregation

A mature Christian may on occasion use poor judgment; does not mean he is now immature

True, a person new in truth who has not yet become mature—does not yet evidence full acceptance of Bible truth—may manifest that by using poor judgment often

On occasion even a mature Christian may also display poor judgment or weakened devotion

Because of showing poor judgment, Peter needed reproof (Ga 2:11-14; *g82* 9/8 27)

Peter then evidenced a good heart, sharpened conscience, and acceptance of full range of truth by applying the counsel and continuing as a mature Christian, an apostle (*w76* 12/1 725)

Maturity helps your relationship with God, for you try to reflect his “image” fully

You do not turn your back on any part of Christian truth and its application

CONTINUE TO GROW IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (10 min.)

Reaching Christian maturity and having a keen conscience does not end one’s growth

Timothy was urged to continue to progress, or advance (Read 1 Timothy 4:15)

Without a doubt, Timothy was already a mature Christian; represented Christian governing body in making appointments (Php 2:19, 20; 1Ti 3:1-13; 5:22)

He could continue to grow in his relationship with God by reflecting more fully God’s image in his conduct, speech, and attitude (1Ti 4:12)

We can grow in our relationship with God, making our advancement manifest (*w74* 114-19)

Strive to grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (*w85* 5/1 13-17)

Continue to make improvement in producing the fruitage of God’s spirit

Make improvement in discharging responsibilities as a family member

Strive to progress in manifestations of Christian conscience and maturity

Constantly add to your knowledge of God and your appreciation of his ways (Ps 25:4, 5)

The more you progress in these regards, the stronger and closer will be your relationship with God

Growth in one’s relationship can continue endlessly

Endless growth is possible because everlasting life is available to those having a relationship with God

Also possible because there is no end to what we can learn about God (Ro 11:33)

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need to be read)