

# Spiritual Maturity

by David Ravenhill

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*David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of spiritual maturity through surrender, character development, and community involvement in the Christian faith.*

**Duration:** 32:45

**Scripture:** Hebrews 5:12

**Topics:** "Maturity", "Surrender to God", "Spiritual Maturity"

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## Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the journey towards spiritual maturity, reflecting on his own struggles with surrendering to God's will and the importance of moving beyond spiritual infancy. He shares his experiences of growing up in a family dedicated to God, the challenges he faced in fully committing his life to Christ, and the necessity of character development over mere spiritual gifts. Ravenhill calls for the church to recognize its role in God's kingdom, urging believers to grow up and take responsibility in their faith rather than remaining passive. He highlights the need for a deeper relationship with God, which is cultivated through obedience and intimacy, ultimately leading to a life of purpose and service.

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## Transcript

Observing my father's zeal and dedication in the area of prayer, revival, and growing up, of course, knowing the ways of God, being taught those since I was a child. I was not saved until I was 18 years of age, and the reason for that was basically over the issue of lordship. I struggled with that for many, many years.

I knew that I was hellbound, knew that I was a sinner, a good, righteous sinner, but nevertheless a sinner. And yet the real issue that confronted me was whether I was willing to surrender my life to Christ totally, which meant basically giving up something that I'd always wanted to do, always had a desire to do, and that was to go into the field of graphics and commercial art. I had an ability in that particular area, had two brothers that were bright scholastically, one that actually just passed away a couple of months ago, but had a Ph.D. and was world-renowned in his particular field, one of the main leaders of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. My older brother was a missionary in South America for 30 years.

They were both extremely bright. I was the one that was always struggling in school, but I had one ability they didn't have, and that was in the field of graphics and art. So that was my identity, basically, and it was that that I wanted to pursue, and that was the issue, really, that God dealt with me over.

And so from the age of about, oh, I'd say about 13 to 18, during those years, I literally shook under conviction of sin on dozens and dozens of occasions. In fact, almost any service where there was an altar call that was given, I could hardly hold the hymnbook, just shaking, trembling, knowing that God was wanting to draw me to himself, and yet refusing to surrender my life. So finally, at the age of 18, I surrendered my life to God.

It wasn't just a matter of dumping my sins at the altar. It was literally surrendering my life and saying, God, from now on, I'm yours. Whatever you want to do with my life, I'm making myself available to you.

And so following that, I went into Bible college in 1961, Bethany Fellowship in Minneapolis, Bethany that does the book publishing. Met my wife there, my soon-to-be wife. We were married in 1964 and spent the first few years with David Wilkerson in New York City, ministering there at the Teen Challenge program.

Following that, we got involved with Youth of the Mission and ended up eventually down in New Guinea, heading up the Youth of the Mission base there. In 1973, we left New Guinea and moved to New Zealand, and I was on the pastoral team of one of the largest churches in New Zealand for 15 years. Then God brought us back to the States in 1988.

I traveled for a year, then moved to Kansas City. I was part of the Kansas City group there, Kansas City Fellowship. Then moved from there to the Seattle area, a little place called Gig Harbor.

For the last five years, I've been pastoring a church there, which we gave up at the end of last year, and I'm now based in Pensacola and traveling. So you're now with the School of Revival in Pensacola. Wonderful.

So I do some teaching there. My main call, I believe, is to travel to the body, but when I'm at home, I do some of the teaching at the school. Wonderful.

So among those travels, you will be coming on August 17th and 18th to State College, Pennsylvania for the School of Revival concert. Wonderful. Well, share with us a little bit about how you came to write the book.

It seems like a continuation of your father's works, even. Well, the reason I wrote it was I had a number of words from different men and women of God over a period of a number of years. Eventually, I just couldn't deny any longer that God was trying to get through to me that I was supposed to do some writing.

Writing was not one of my fortes. It certainly was my father's, but it wasn't mine. And so it took quite a bit of convincing.

Eventually, when I resigned the church in New Zealand, which was in 1988, I took some time then and drafted the first draft of the book and then worked on it for a couple of years after that. And then it was just released last year. Yes.

There was a period of time there when it literally just sat on the shelf. It was completely finished and ready to go to the publishers. And in fact, I had submitted it to the publishing company, Destiny Image, that has published it now.

And yet there was a timing, I believe, that God had. I knew with the release of the book somehow, just one of those, I knew that I knew senses of God's presence that with the release of the book, God would

release me into full-time traveling ministry. And so I believe for that reason it sat for a number of years, and then I got a call from Destiny last year asking if they could go ahead and publish it.

And following that, there were a number of things that fell into place, and God had us resign the church and move down here to Pensacola. My, my, my. Well, it's certainly an impassioned plea in your title, For God's Sake, Grow Up.

I sense an intensity from you as you share with us where we've been and where we need to go. Well, I pastored, you know, for most of my ministry now, which is over 32 years, and I've seen just the tremendous lack of spiritual maturity. And I think, you know, the cry of my heart is for the body to come to the place of usefulness.

I think we're still, generally speaking, many of us in that spiritual infancy where, you know, God exists basically to meet our needs, and it's daddy do this and daddy do that, rather than I must be about my father's business. My wife and I have three daughters. Our oldest daughter is in China serving Lord there.

We have a married daughter with three grandchildren and then a 22-year-old that has just graduated from college. And when they were younger, you know, I basically existed for their sake. It was daddy, you know, take me to the park, daddy buy me an ice cream, daddy read me a book, daddy push me on the swing, and daddy, daddy, daddy.

And I was longing for the day when they would come to me and say, Daddy, I notice you're doing something. Could I help you? Oh, wonderful. I think God longs for that, too, you know.

Not that he ever tires of supplying our needs. Don't misunderstand me. He is a father, and he enjoys meeting the needs of his people.

But I think the great grief, if I can put it that way, on the heart of God is that, you know, we've never really matured. And, of course, in the natural, if a baby doesn't grow and develop, there's tremendous concern and a tremendous amount of time and money spent trying to get to the root of why this child is not developing. You know, why it's not speaking, why it's not crawling, why it's not eating, why it's not growing and putting on weight and so on.

You know, we show tremendous concern. But in the spiritual realm, I'm convinced we're contentious to sort of lie in the crib and expect God to sort of amuse us. Talk to us a little bit about the disappointment of the charismatic movement.

Because that seemed like, and many could remember that, there was such a thrust and such a move of the spirit. But what happened? Well, I don't know if I've got the wisdom on what happened exactly. Again, I think, you know, we tend to just use God for our own ends.

And God does bless us, but he blesses us so we might be a blessing. And I think we fail to understand that the reason for the anointing is not just so that we'll get goosebumps and feel good and get over a few of our problems, but so that we can accomplish the task that God has called us to do. And so many times we stop short.

You know, there was a song popular many years ago, I'm at the Seat of Abraham, and these blessings flow to me, or something like that. And yet that song, as far as I know, never had the responsibility that God put on Abraham. And I think that typifies, you know, we want Abraham's blessing, but we don't want

the responsibility of Abraham to reach the nations.

And I think the church has, you know, just basically settled into this place of spiritual infancy, and they're really not that concerned about it as long as I'm going to heaven. As long as I know my sins are forgiven, that's all there is to it, you know, and it's tragic. I read a book a number of years ago, I think it was Alan Redpath, that wrote it, *Awake My Heart*.

It's actually a devotional book, and he has a little statement in one of his devotional readings. And the statement is, you can have a saved soul, but a lost life. And I think, boy, that is the tragedy of the church, not only in America, but in the Western world, I think, is that we know that we're saved, but we've got a life that is wasted.

We're basically just living for ourselves. Really, you give a quote in your book of three stages that are common to Christian experience. We come from condemnation to salvation to stagnation.

Right. That's a dreadful commentary, really. It really is, yeah.

Yeah, I think, you know, we're in the Laodicean realm, I think, where we're just, you know, very apathetic and rich in increased goods. We have need of nothing, and we're content somehow just to remain there. It's a tragedy, because the kingdom of God is suffering, and the purposes of God are suffering.

And everybody talks these days about the, you know, the fact that we're living in the end days, and the rapture or whatever you believe is, you know, just about honest. And, you know, I'm convinced that there's a job to be done before God is going to return. He's not willing that any should perish.

And the Bible says, looking for and hastening the coming of the Lord. And I believe the church can actually hasten the coming of the Lord. I don't believe it's a fixed point in time.

I believe it's a purpose. And when that purpose is done, then the Lord is going to return. And even that, again, we make it a very selfish thing.

We want God to return, because we want to get out of the mess we're in. And, you know, we're tired of having to work and, you know, strive and so on. We want God just to take us home.

And as long as I'm saved, then I look at it very selfishly. Then, Lord, why don't you come? Let you travel around the world, as I've had the privilege of doing. And you see the tremendous needs of the people, you know, nation after nation after nation that are just sitting in darkness and don't even know the name of Jesus.

Really. You identify that the church today has, the Livewire Church, forget about the dead part of the church, but the Livewire part of the church has been exalting natural abilities and spiritual gifts at the expense of character, godly character. Could you share a little bit about your feelings on that episode of where character comes from and God's role in helping us to form that? Well, you know, I believe the purpose of God is that we might be conformed to the image of his Son.

And that deals with, obviously, our character. We've emphasized gifts, and I'm sure there's a tremendous amount of self. My fear with the exaltation of gifts is that it goes to so many people's heads.

They get all the adulation, they get puffed up, and think that because they've got a gifting, that that's all that God is interested in is using it. And I'm convinced that there's something more than that. The way of

the cross, of course, is the way of humility, the way of integrity, God working in us, that Christlike nature that is willing to not only perform publicly if God calls us to do that, but also to perform privately and be content performing privately as much as we're content doing it publicly.

And so, you know, I believe there's a tremendous need just for character to be worked into our lives. And obviously it's not something we can do alone, but as we walk in obedience to the Word of God, as we read the Word, become aware of what God has called us to, and begin to appropriate by grace the blessings of God, and allow that to be worked out in our life, then we begin to grow and become mature men and women. And, you know, the word character basically is a modern equivalent would be the word photocopy.

I mean, it's basically the word image or engraving. Yes. And like taking, you know, one piece of paper that's got a picture on it and making an exact replica of that photocopy of it.

And that's what God is wanting to do. And the only measurement that we have in the Word of God for that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is our standard.

He's the one that we are to compare ourselves to. And I think many times we compare ourselves among ourselves, as the Bible says, and it says we're not wise in doing that. And yet many times we take our sort of bearings off somebody else.

We think, well, I pray as much as that person, and I attend church as much as that person, and I give as much as that person, so I must be pretty good, you know. And of course there's a danger in that. The only standard, again, that we are to measure ourselves by is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes. Talk to us about the way that you wrote the book. You've got it in three sections, but that conforms very well to the key issues that the church is confronting today.

Right. Well, the book really is a compilation of messages that I have given over a number of years, what somebody has referred to as life messages. I think any pastor would be able to identify with the fact that, you know, we are forced almost to produce something because it's Sunday or it's Wednesday or whatever the meeting may be.

And then there are other times when you have real insight and revelation and God has taken you through a series of events that, you know, the Word of God has just become so real to you in that particular area. And I believe that these are what I would call life messages that God has outworked, I hope, in my own life or is in the process of outworking in my own life that came more, if you like, by revelation, just more than a lot of study and research. And so the first phase of the book, of course, deals with laying a firm foundation, putting away childish things and the cross and serving the purpose of God in our generation, intimacy with God.

The second phase of it then is preparing for ministry, the birthing of a ministry and lessons on leadership. And then the final section is fulfilling the vision, dealing with intercession and growing up into the purpose of God, basically. So we see that there's a significant stage of growth almost as we see that God begins by calling us and then conforms us to the image of Jesus and only then are we sent forth.

So I think we've made a major mistake in assuming that the call of God is also the commission. And a lot of people say, you know, I'm called to be this or I'm called to be that and automatically are waiting then for God to thrust them out and wondering why he isn't. And the fact is that there's a vast difference between

the call and the commission.

Jesus called the disciples at the beginning of his ministry. Most of them were fishermen. They had to forsake their nets.

That was the call. Come after me, take up your cross and follow me. But it was three years later, three and a half years later, that the commission came, go into all the world and preach the gospel.

And between the call and the commission, there was preparation or conforming where they spent time with him. As it says in Mark there, he appointed 12 that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach. And of course, when he called them, he said, I will make you fishers of men.

He didn't say, listen, you are fishers of men now. Get out and do the job. And so I think we need to understand that there is a difference.

And that's not just true in the life of the disciples. I think you see it in all the men that God used. You have Moses who had a call of God at an early age.

And yet the commission really came 40 years later. In fact, the book of Acts is supposing his brethren understood that God had raised him up to be a deliverer. And so he thought, you know, as he went out and slayed a few Egyptians there, he thought that his brethren would have understood that God had called him.

And I believe he had a call. He had something stirring within him, a desire to see the nation of Israel released from its bondage and its captivity and so on. But as somebody said, if he'd have done it in his own strength, he'd have been killing two Egyptians a day and burying them in the sand.

He'd have been there for the rest of his life. Really? Doing it man's way. Yes.

And God had to strip him basically of his self-sufficiency. You know, the Bible says he was powerful in word and speech. That's right.

And yet by the time God calls him, he's stuttering and he's like the sheep that he's been looking after for the last 40 years. You know, he's totally dependent upon God. In fact, tries to back out of the call of God at that stage.

And God says, now I've got you in a place where, you know, where I want you. You're 100% dependent on me. Now I can use you.

Really? So there was, again, a definite time when at least something was stirring within him, which was a call. And the commission came later. It's interesting, though, as you talk of Moses, that while he was in Pharaoh's house, he worked under that authority.

In a sense, he spoke, when he spoke, it would be Pharaoh speaking almost as he had the authority of that household. Right. And when he became nothing and on the backside of the desert, that's when he became involved with God in that sense, that he also became the bearer of God's name.

Right, right. Yeah, you know, I'm convinced that that's the place that God wants to bring us. My father used to refer to it as the University of the Wilderness.

Yes. And that's the university that most people don't sign up for. We try and avoid that.

We don't want to be alone. You know, we want the limelight. We want the adulation of men and so on.

And we're not prepared to have those seasons where God just sets us aside and teaches us his ways and where we learn obedience and even learn to be faithful in the little things. You know, we immediately want, after the call, we want the biggest platform. And we want to be thrust out.

And it doesn't work that way. Same thing in the life of Joseph. You know, there was a definite call of God as a 17-year-old.

God made very real to him what his calling was going to be. I'm convinced that Joseph thought, when he went down to breakfast that morning, that his brethren, his brothers, and his father were all going to kneel down before him and begin to applaud him and so on. And you have that 13 years of conforming.

And then, again, the commission comes. Yes. Same thing in the life of Jesus.

You know, he returned and was subject to his parents as a 13-year-old and 30 years of age. And, you know, the father sends him forth. And I don't think we can escape that.

If we do escape it some way, then God certainly will bring us round to it some other way. But he won't let us get by. You know, every son that he receives, he trains, he scourges.

And it's not just one or two, but it's everyone, you know. I think that's an important concept, though, that growth occurs within the family setting. Right.

That a father scourges his son because he loves him and wants to shape him. While it's individual effort on the part of the son, it's that safety in the father's house. And I think as we look at your book, we're also seeing that we're not talking about individually to go out in the desert as a hermit, but we're talking about growing up in the church.

Right. No, that's good. And also finding the checks and balances of our brothers and sisters.

Right. Helping us to stay humble a little bit. Mm-hmm.

No, I think that's, you know, a good comment. It's so true. Jesus, obviously, you know, I believe it was Jack Hayford many, many years ago that talked about Jesus being under his earthly father in the carpenter's shop.

And he said the best preparation for the ministry was just that day-to-day putting in the eight hours or 12 hours, whatever they put in in those days, of faithfully serving. Yes. And learning to do the best job that you can, whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.

And I think it was Jack Hayford that said that when it refers to Jesus as the carpenter of Nazareth, the emphasis is under the deed. In other words, if you wanted the best job, you went to the best individual, and the best individual was Jesus. He was the carpenter.

He wasn't just a carpenter. Yes. And I think people need to, you know, embrace that, that, listen, it doesn't matter if I ever stand behind the pulpit.

Whatever I do in word or deed, I can do all to the glory of God. And I can be content in serving God as a housewife, you know, as a Sunday school teacher, whatever it is, and so on. And I'm doing it to the glory of God.

And Jesus, when he began his ministry, the father was able to smile his approval upon him and say, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. He'd never preached a sermon that we know of. Yes.

He'd never cast out a demon that we know of. He'd never done a miracle that we know of. But there was something that brought pleasure to the father in the way in which he behaved himself in just the day-to-day routine of life.

But the routine of life, that preparation time, is the most crucial time. It is. Because that's where our character is being formed.

Right, yeah. Well, it's time for us to take a break. You're listening to Everybody's Talking, your hosts Bill and Sandy Griffin of the Christian Counseling Center.

And we're talking to David Ravenhill, who's written the book For God's Sake, Grow Up, A Call to Spiritual Maturity, published by Destiny Image. Stay tuned. We'll be right back.

You are my light, O precious Christ. You are to me the pearl of greatest price. My love for you will never die.

Jesus, you are my life. You are my light, O precious Christ. You are to me the pearl of greatest price.

My love for you will never die. Jesus, you are my life. I come to you, O you.

Oh, purest love, you are my one delight. For you will never die. Everybody's Talking will return with more in a moment, so stay tuned.

You're listening to WCVO, Gahana, Columbus. Good afternoon and welcome back to Everybody's Talking. What an exciting program we have today.

We're talking to David Ravenhill, who's written the book For God's Sake, Grow Up, A Call to Spiritual Maturity. And another nice sidelight that you might be interested in, the School of Revival Conference is being held on August, Monday, August 17th and 18th in State College, Pennsylvania. And the Brownsville Assembly of God staff is going to be there.

Pastor John Kilpatrick, Stephen Hill, and David Ravenhill is going to be there also. If you'd like information on that, we do have a phone number. It's 1-800-578-1782.

And we'll give that number again. But it's a unique opportunity to sit at the feet of some of these men who are right in the forefront of the revival right now. Welcome back to our listening audience, David Ravenhill.

It's good to be with you today. David, could you pick up from right before our break, I wanted to ask you this question. You did such a good piece in the book about that we need to, you said that the church is growing fat, lazy, and indifferent to its real role in the earth.

And you said that we really need to understand the mind of God from the beginning and why he created mankind, what his intentions were. Could we start from there? Sure. Yeah, I believe that, you know,

there's a two-fold theme that runs throughout the Word of God, that of kings and priests.

And I think you find that from Genesis to Revelation. For instance, when God created man, he placed him in the Godhead. And then for those perhaps who have not even come into the family of God, that they may surrender and ask Jesus into their lives, could you pray for them? Sure.

Father, we thank you right now for the assurance, Lord, that we can know you in this way. Yes. We can know your presence.

And Father, I pray for those that have just no desire, that they would come first of all to that place of honesty and say, God, I don't have a desire for your presence. I'm more interested in television, more interested in sports, I'm more interested in this thing or that thing. But Lord, I acknowledge today my sin of neglecting you.

And I ask, Lord, that you would restore once again the presence of God to my life, that personal intimacy with God, that relationship with God, where I know that he's a friend that sticks closer than a brother, that walks with me and talks with me. Father, I pray that you would do that to this listening audience today, Lord. Awaken within them a fresh desire, a fresh hunger, Lord, for your presence.

Father, give them an understanding of your ways, Lord, through your word. Lord, give them a fresh new appetite for the place of prayer and for the study of the word of God. Father, we only know somebody by spending time with them, and I pray, Lord, that you would somehow establish a new priority in their life, Lord.

As David said, one thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, simply to behold the beauty of the Lord. Father, let it be one desire, not just a part of many, many desires, but narrow it down to that single focus, I pray. Lord, I pray for those that don't know you today.

Lord, they would not settle just for joining a church or some just mediocre relationship with you, but Lord, they would enter into the fullness of all that you have. Lord, awaken again within them a desire to know you. Father, let them know that you're a Father that stands willing to forgive, that you're not a God that is far off.

You're a God that runs towards us, even as you ran towards the prodigal, covered there with the filth of the pig pen and wrapped your arms around him. I thank you, Lord, your response to sinners is the same today. Lord, you love to embrace them, you love to kiss them, you love to welcome them, to put a new robe upon them and a finger on their finger and shoes on their feet and kill the fatty calf.

Lord, you rejoice over every sinner that comes back to you. Lord, let them know again the joy that you have for them. Lord, you said, He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

Lord, those that are sitting today listening to this, that feel they've been rejected and God is not interested in them, Lord, I ask that you would break that lie of the devil and let them have a fresh revelation, Lord, of your love towards them, that you so loved them that you gave your only son. Lord, bring them back into the fold today. In Jesus' name.

Thank you much. David Ravenhill has joined us today, and thank you, David, for sharing with us from your book, For God's Sake, Grow Up, published by Destiny Image. And we'll look forward to that great School

of Revival conference in State College, Pennsylvania, August 17th and 18th.

So we say goodbye to you now, David. Thank you very much. Thank you so much.

Thank you. God bless you. Bye-bye.

Bye-bye. A phone number for information on that School of Revival conference is 1-800-578-1782. And there's times for the Awake America Crusade each evening and a School of Revival conference during the day.

Bill, let me give that number again. That's an 800 number. It's 1-800-578-1782.

And that's to get information on the School of Revival conference. And that's sponsored by the Brownsville Assembly of God group. Pastor John Kilpatrick, Stephen Hill, and David Ravenhill will be there also.

You know, I encourage our listeners. We only touched just a few pieces that were in this book, and I really encourage you to pick this book up and begin to read it. It'll awaken that passion in you.

It'll bring conviction where all of us need it. And it'll get that slumbering, that lukewarmness out of our spirit to get us again on fire for God and for His purposes, reminding us again that it's not about us. It's about Him.

Amen. You've been listening to Everybody's Talking. Your hosts, Bill and Sandy Griffin of the Christian Counseling Center, letting you know how much God loves you.

And Bill and Sandy do, too. Tune in next time. ■■■■ Everybody's Talking is a daily public affairs program of WCVO.

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