

Qualities That Measure Spiritual Maturity - Part 1

by Phil Beach Jr.

Spiritual maturity is not measured by knowledge or length of time as a Christian, but by the likeness of God in Jesus Christ, demonstrated by loving and forgiving others.

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Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Christ-like Qualities"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the qualities that reflect spiritual maturity, asserting that true maturity is not determined by knowledge or time spent as a Christian, but by how much of Jesus is evident in our lives. He highlights the importance of demonstrating Christ-like qualities such as forgiveness, love, and selflessness, and warns against the dangers of complacency in our spiritual walk. The preacher calls for believers to engage in ministry and to support one another in their growth, urging them to make tough decisions that prioritize their relationship with God. Ultimately, he stresses that spiritual maturity involves a commitment to waiting on God and allowing His light to guide our lives.

Transcript

Now begin to look at some qualities that the Lord is looking for in our life. Jesus claims to be the great caretaker of a garden, and the garden consists of you and I, the body of Christ, the life of Christ in us. And as a great caretaker, He's looking to see precious fruit.

He's looking to see precious fruit. And I want to begin, certainly not going to complete this today, I want to begin to look into the qualities that will be ever increasingly expressed in our life as we are progressing on the road of maturity. Listen, these are qualities that evidence a maturing believer.

Qualities that evidence a maturing believer. The heart of the New Testament, once the gospel is brought to the lost, because Father has a heart to seek and to save that which is lost, we see that demonstrated in His Son, there's no doubt about it. But once the lost are saved and come into covenant relationship with the Father, the burden of the New Testament makes a transition from seeking a sinner to be saved to seeking the saved to mature and grow into full adulthood.

Ephesians chapter 4, we're going to begin there by simply reading, Alan read this last Sunday, Ephesians 4 verse 11, and he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. God's purpose for you and I is that we might be perfected, that we might come to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is not measured by how much you know.

Spiritual maturity is not measured by how long you've been a Christian. I know some Christians that have walked with the Lord for 30 years and they're still carrying milk bottles around with them. So it's not how much you know, it's not how long you've been saved, but spiritual maturity is evidenced by the measure that you demonstrate and express the likeness of God that's found in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's what spiritual maturity is. Spiritual maturity is not measured because you have a gift of prophecy or you're a teacher. Spiritual maturity is not measured because you might be a musician.

Spiritual maturity is not measured because you might have an outstanding ability to communicate to people. They're gifts, they're valid. God wants to sanctify them and then He wants to use them.

He wants to release all the gifts in the body of Christ, but they're not the means by which we measure spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is measured exclusively by one means, and that is how much of Jesus is coming out of your life when you bump and touch people? How much of Jesus is pouring out of your earthen vessel when no one sees you? How much of Jesus? How often can you bless those that curse you? How often can you forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive and keep forgiving and keep forgiving? How often can you turn the cheek? How often can you resist retaliating? Oh, we like to punish people, don't we? They do something bad to us and we're thinking how we can do something back to them. Husbands and wives, we're guilty of this.

Our wife says something and we don't like it and we get offended and we say something back to hurt them. There goes your spiritual maturity. If you thought you were spiritual, I hope to God you've reassessed your situation.

Because the night before, you might have read seven books by great men of God and thought you were spiritual. And so the burden of the New Testament, the burden of the heart of God, and let me tell you, the burden of the Spirit of God in bringing another move of God to the body of Christ is not simply so signs and wonders and miracles can happen. We've got to be careful that we don't jump on this bandwagon.

Yes, God is a God of miracles. Yes, God is a God of signs and wonders. But I'll tell you, brothers and sisters, it is not God's ultimate intention to impress the world with anointing people to go around healing the sick.

God's greatest desire is to impress the world by demonstrating the qualities of His Son in a crucified body who are able to go as Jesus did in love, beginning with each other. And so any move of God, any move of the Spirit of God that is moving in the area of the church today that doesn't result in a greater awakening of God's intention to bring the church to adulthood might have started out in the Spirit, but it's gone off on a tangent. It's gone off on a tangent.

So we have to be careful that we pray, Lord, keep me focused on You. Keep me focused on You. For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.

You see, the saints are to be engaged in the work of the ministry. We have the idea where the congregation comes to church and then the professional minister preaches and he's in the ministry. But

God wants us to realize that all the saints are to be involved in the work of the ministry, ministering life, ministering Christ one to another on a daily basis, ministering life and Christ on our workplace, ministering life and Christ in our homes and wherever you are.

God wants to equip the church to be ministers of the Gospel. Oh yes, there are specific gifts. Not everyone's called to preach.

Not everyone's called to teach. Are all apostles, Paul said? No, but everybody's a minister. Does everyone have a pulpit ministry? No, but everybody should be sharing Jesus.

You see, everyone should be sharing Jesus. And it's wrong when the ministry fails to equip the saints to become ministers. It's wrong.

It's not God's thought. God doesn't want a clergy and then a laity. God wants everybody growing into the adulthood of Christ and every joint supplying Jesus to wherever and whoever they come in contact with.

That's the heart of God. That's the heart of God for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. You are to edify one another.

You are to build each other up. This is the ministry. This is the real ministry.

It's the ministry of being broken and the ministry of having the work of the cross in our life so we're dying to self, so our lives don't revolve around our self, so that we're giving Christ to one another. You know what the ministry is? Well, that's 20 years ago when they had that kind of dialing. Now it's, Hello, brother? Praise God.

I just wanted to call to tell you I love you. How are you doing? You want to get together? Okay. That's ministry.

That's the ministry. The ministry is, sweetheart, let's pray. Let's ask God.

God to show us how we can excel in the ministry of hospitality. Somebody needs someone to love them. Someone needs someone to speak into their life.

The only way that we can grow together as a body is that we realize that there is a place to come together on Sundays and hear the Word of the Lord, but that is not what it's about. It's not just coming and hearing and then going back into your world. It's as a body we enter into ministry together.

God wants to bring us into fellowship with one another. He wants to bring other thirsty, hungry souls. But brothers and sisters, this preacher is not going to simply be the minister that's going to go about and do all the visiting and all the helping and all the praying.

I'll kill myself. No one man can do it. We've all got to share.

We all have a place to play in the body of Christ. And we all can't expect a pulpit ministry. But that's not the ministry.

We all can't expect to be in the front. Seen and known. Some of us are, some of us aren't.

But we all must pray, God, make me a ministering, profitable, life-giving member in the body of Christ so that I can touch my brother. I can touch my sister. I can give them something of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, the purpose of our gathering on Sunday ought always to be to further equip us so that we can go out into the world on Monday through Saturday and be ministering. One of the great burdens that I have as a brother, as one who's been called to preach, is always knowing the temptation to preach a word from the Lord, to get a response, to get people to say, God spoke to my heart. My God! The very thoughts of my heart were revealed.

I'm so glad I came to church. But it doesn't affect their life. This is something that's really been concerning me.

And I've been before God. Oh God! It's more than just hearing a word from the Lord, although that's good. We need to hear a word.

Frankly, if we gather together and there's no word from the Lord coming, I'd rather not gather. Because I'm not interested in having church. That's one of the reasons we gather together.

For a word from the Lord to come forth. That's part of God's heart for the body of Christ. But we've got to see that this word on waiting on the Lord, God wasn't simply saying to you and I, we need to wait on the Lord when we gather here.

He's saying, check out your lifestyle. You see, that word that we shared earlier about waiting on the Lord and my people are weary, that's not a Sunday morning word where we go home and say, boy, I hope next Sunday we remember to wait on God. Boy, I hope we remember.

No! That's a word tonight when you're at home. Are you waiting on God? That's a word Monday night when you're at home. Are you waiting on God? Do you consider the word of God to be food to your soul? We need to get to the place as the body of Christ where we like Jesus say, apart from you I could do nothing.

Man shall not live by every word. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. We need to come to the place where we recognize I've got to hear from God.

I've got to commune with God today. My life's falling apart. My mind's falling apart.

Lord, I need You. I'm going into my closet. I'm turning off the phone.

I'm telling the kids, this is my time, kids. You just play and entertain yourself. This is time when I'm getting on my knees and I'm calling out to my God.

God, help me. God, I need You. Touch my soul today.

That's why we're weary. That's why we're fainting. That's why we get on each other's nerves.

That's why we're sharp. That's why we're getting critical toward each other. We're not waiting on God.

We're not being energized by the Spirit of God that comes to those who wait. So we need to say, Lord, help me. Help me.

Help me to look at my life. Help me to look what I've prioritized. There are some things that are lawful that are unnecessary.

Lawful, but unnecessary that are cramping into the Christian life and choking the good Word of God from our lives. Oh, they're not inherently sinful. And we're not legalistic, you know.

I don't preach legalism. They're lawful things. Just this week, the Lord said to me, He said, it's time for my people to make some tough decisions.

Some tough decisions. And the decision has to be springing out of love. It can't be bondage.

It can't be compulsion. It can't be legalism. It can't be rules.

It can't be, well, I've got to do this so I can be holy in God's eyes. It's not that at all. If you loved your husband and wife, and you guys came together one night and said, listen, we're just not spending enough time together.

Is it legalism that you decide to cut some things off in order to spend time together? No, it's love. It's love. Sweetheart, I love you.

I love you. Hey, this is not bad and this is not bad, but don't you think if we took that out of our life and took that out of our life, that would give us more time to get to know one another? You know, some couples are married 20 years and they don't even know each other. They're like, I can't believe you said that.

I can't believe you feel that way. Well, why can't you? I mean, people spend more time in front of the television than they do with each other. Or in front of the computer now.

It's all about love. It's all about love. About loving Him.

Walking with Him. Some tough decisions. Tough decisions in our life.

Let me tell you, until the hearing of the Word of God, whether it's when you come here, or whether it's when you turn on the radio and you hear a preacher, or whether it's when you're driving in the car and all of a sudden the Lord brings a Scripture to your mind, wherever and whenever it is, until the Word of the Lord affects your life, you're only a hearer and not a doer. Because the doer is what? Blessed. You see, Jesus said, blessed are they that hear and do.

See, too often we thought we heard the good Word, we're blessed. Oh, I heard a word from the Lord today. You call up and say, you should have heard what I heard this morning.

It was God. Good, I'm glad God spoke to you. Because that's why we gather.

But if it goes as far as that, and it doesn't result in you getting down, sitting down and saying, oh God, I heard Your Word. Lord, I heard Your Word and I know that it means that I've got to do this, I've got to change this, I've got to rearrange this, until the Word gets into your bedroom, and into your kitchen, and into your living room, and into your car, and all in the workplace, then it's just a word that you're hearing. But when you hear the Word and it challenges you, and you have to go home and say, family, we're getting together.

God has showed me some things. We're going to do some rearranging of our priorities. We're out of control.

And when you take that posture, and you think you're going to please everybody, you're in for a lot of trouble. Let me tell you something, parents. I don't know what it is today.

God's got a lot to say, at least in my spirit, to parents. You're not called to make all your children happy 24-7. How many have found that to be true? Why not called to cater to everybody's desires, and to make everyone happy? That's not the way life is.

Husbands and wives, and even people who aren't married, hear what God is saying to you and do it. Now don't be arrogant, and don't be a lord, and don't rule like a tyrant, but don't be a wimp. Don't be a wimp.

Now this is what God wants us. Be humble about it. I feel this is what God is saying to our family.

And as soon as it means possibly cutting back on some things, the kids will get upset. What are you going to do? What are you going to do? Oh, okay, we won't do that. You can't please people all the time.

Now when you can, it's okay to do it. But if you're trying to please all your kids, and your wife, and your husband, and your aunt, and your uncle, and your nephew, and your mother-in-law, and your father-in-law, and you're just in a dither. Here's a word from the Lord to somebody.

You're in a dither because you're trying to please everybody, and in doing so, you can't hear what God's saying. You can't hear what God's saying. Now if you do hear from God, don't be arrogant about it, and go around yelling and screaming, but ask God, now Lord give me the wisdom to know how to obey You.

And if obeying God makes somebody unhappy, well pray for them. But if you're sure God's telling you to do it, there's nothing you can do about it. Jesus was stoned.

You know why? Because He did things that made people unhappy. It's time to set our eyes on the Lord Jesus, and to hear what He's saying to our lives, and to obey Him, that we might be blessed. Listen, it's time to take back.

Here's the other Scripture I want to read before we start going into these qualities that measure the maturity of a believer. Listen to this. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 8. For you were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable to the Lord. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light. For whatever doth make manifest is light.

Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest and arise. Awake thou that sleepest. It's time to awake, church of God.

It's time to wake up. You know, the worst thing to do in the darkness when you're sleeping is for someone to turn the light on, huh? Boy, does that hurt your eyes? It makes you feel terrible. You want to go under the covers.

But God is shining light from the countenance of Jesus Christ. And it's going to have an awakening effect on us. Initially, you know what we're going to do? We're going to do the same thing we do as human

beings.

We're going to get upset. We're going to find out who's turning that light on. We're going to say, Turn that light off! Or give me a blanket! Where's my pillow? That's the initial response of light to our physical body when we've been in a deep sleep.

And let me tell you something. The initial response in our spiritual life when Christ begins to shine light is we have that tendency to buck up against it. Because we like the comfort of our sleep.

We like the comfort of our lifestyle. We like the comfort of the perimeters that we're living in. And we get upset when light comes and demands that we wake up and realize there's things that we need to readjust.

There's things that we need to change. Beware of getting so comfortable in your life. God is a God that likes to change things.

He's moving, He's moving. He wants us to move with Him. So don't be surprised at this initial effect.

You might feel like upset. But listen to what the Bible says here. Awake, v. 14, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, listen, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. You know what it means to redeem the time? The word redeem means to buy back. Everyone's got the same amount of time.

And God is saying to us now, it's time to buy back the time. You know how time can slip from you? And before you know it, your time is gone, and then you wonder, what am I using it for? It's time to buy back the time. Redeem the time.

Buy it back and give it to God and say, God, You order my day. Intelligently. This is what the Spirit is saying.

Redeeming. Not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. God doesn't want us to just live our lives in a passive state.

We go here because we're being blown here. We go here. No, He wants us to discern what is God saying to you? What is God asking you to do? Then buy back the time and use your time for that.

Be smart about this thing. Many of us have heard from the Lord. And we've lost out with God.

You know why? Because we didn't make time for what God said. We didn't make time. It just happens where we lose it.

Why? Because we've got to do it. We've got to make time for it. I don't know anyone in here that's suffering from starvation because they haven't made time to feed their body.

Norman's shown me his roll. Hardly can see a roll on him, huh? But he does have a little one. He showed me a couple days ago.

How come no one's dying of starvation in here? Because when we're hungry, we make time. Right? It's very simple. This isn't profound.

This isn't PhD stuff. We make time for it. Even sometimes if we're running, we make time.

We eat and run. You know why we're weary and we're suffering in this late hour and the church is weak and the church doesn't have much of a revelation of God? We're not making time for Him. We're not making time.

Other things have taken our time. Some are unlawful. And if you prayed, God would show you it's wrong.

Other things are not unlawful. They're lawful, but they're not profitable. Are you prepared? Redeeming the time because the days are evil.

I think instead of going into these qualities, I'm going to stop now. I sense just to stop now my spirit. I think we've heard enough.

I don't want to overload the PC unless Norman would be taxed with work because only he and probably a few others, Alan and Jay, know how to fix these computers. So we don't want to overload. But let me ask a question as we're closing.

Okay? As we continue, as the Lord enables along these lines of discovering our spiritual maturity, looking at the qualities that should be growing in our life, I'll just mention a few of them to whet your appetite. Alright? Continual forgiveness toward all people. Number two.

Contentment. The absence of continual grasping for more. That's a sign of maturity.

Another one. Your personal liberty is governed by love. Nothing else.

These are some of the things that measure how mature we are and how well we're going along our journey. We'll go into detail into these things as we go on because as a body and as we're growing together, we're going to need to set our goals on maturity because only as we mature can we learn to grow and live with one another. You see? Only as we mature.

But we're not going to go into that now. Now we're just going to spend a few moments before the Lord and let Him speak to our hearts about this desire of His to bring maturity in our life. Let Him speak to us.

And are we prepared to say, Yes, Lord. I'm willing to let You evaluate my life, evaluate how I'm using my time, evaluate what I'm doing with what I hear when I hear the Word of the Lord. Lord, I want You to show me.

I want You to speak to me. The coming days and the coming months as we continue to grow together, here's what is going to be required of each and every one of us, and that is this. Some tough decisions are going to have to be made.

Tough decisions. Decisions regarding letting God evaluate your life and letting Him readjust, letting Him put into order, letting Him show you how to live, how to use your time. Listen.

There are some lifestyles that Christians are living that are going to have to, and this is prophetic, brothers and sisters, they're going to have to be totally uprooted if God is going to be able to secure His ultimate intention. Totally uprooted. Totally changed.

The key is, Lord, give me a listening ear. Lord, let me hear what You're saying. Let me hear what You're saying.

Tough decisions. And it's all going to start when we make the one decision. Lord, I'm going to begin to wait upon You and listen for You to speak.

I'm not telling You what to do, and I won't do that. It's not my job. I'm not going to tell You what to do.

And I can say before God, I have no agenda. I'm not trying to build a church. Praise God.

I don't want Your money. Isn't it good to hear a preacher say that? Can I get an amen from that? Isn't that worthy of an amen? I don't want Your money. I'm not interested in it.

I'm not trying to build a church. I've got one interest, one alone, and that's that Jesus might be Your all in all. Thank God! So let the starting point be this.

I'm going to give You that time every day to wait on You. It wouldn't be a bad idea to teach Your children. Take every external form of motivation from them a little bit every day and just have them sit and be still.

Now it's going to be tough at first, isn't it, parents? They're not going to like it. But you know what? Someday they'll come back and thank You for it. But you parents, do it.

Do it. Turn that TV off. Turn that radio off.

Women, I know. I know God has put it in your heart to have a clean house. And that's okay.

Thank God for us men, huh? That our wives pick up. But ladies, let me speak a word of love to you from your Savior. Don't get so obsessed with your home that you lose the victory because it's not a perfect home.

Because you're going to lose out with God. You're going to lose out with God. You need to be able to go to bed and know it's not all been done.

You need to be able to go to bed and know that the room is not perfect. As a matter of fact, you need to let your house get a little more imperfect so you can spend that extra hour that you spend making it perfect before God. Because when you make your home perfect, you smile and say it's good, but you haven't spent any time with God.

So let it be a little imperfect. And husbands, don't you give your wives a hard time. Don't you put pressure on her.

You shouldn't be doing that. Some men come home and think they should be the king. Everything stops.

I'm home. Everything stops. No.

What about coming home and saying, well, what can I do? Let's start there, alright? I want to stop now. Let's start there, Lord. I'm going to give You... At least start with one decision and this will escalate into many decisions.

Everyone here, before the Lord, Lord, I make this decision in Your presence today. I will give You time every day at night. If that means I've got to somehow cut something off, or somehow just reevaluate my

schedule, I'll do that one thing.

I'll give You time where I'll sit in Your presence and I'll learn. I'll be taught of You how to wait in Your presence. There to hear You, to be taught of You, and to find renewed strength.

If everyone in this auditorium would be before the Lord and make that promise to Him through grace, I promise you by the authority of God's Word, your life will take on a new course as you begin to hear the shepherd speak to you. Everybody agree that that's a reasonable request? Is that reasonable? Amen. Okay then, let's do it and believe God.

Okay. Praise the Lord.

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