

## **Moving Toward Maturity**

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:28 – 33, Ephesians 4:11 – 16,

and 2 Corinthians 5:14 – 21

9/25/22 Reconciliation Sunday

Our teenage years are sometimes among the most agonizing seasons in life. Think of your teenage years, do you have good memories or bad memories of your teenage years? Or maybe you have no memories of your teenage years because you have blocked off that part of your life? Let see: Raise your hand if you have good memories of your teenage years – Raise your hand if you have bad memories of your teenage years – Raise your hand if you have no memory of your teenage years.

For parent and child, teenage years can be a very trying time! The quest of individualism can be a very hard thing for a teenager and their parent. Often a teenager will reject parental values and guidance and they will rebel against parental rule. As a teenager, we think parental rules are merely there to make us miserable!

And as we become older and become parents ourselves we come to agree on some lessons our parents tried to teach us. Teenage years are full of relationships which are riddled with tension. Our parent undoubtedly lamented our refusal to heed the wisdom of their instruction, knowing they would spare us unnecessary emotional and physical pain.

Being a teenager is tough and being a parent of a teenager can often be tougher!

Often we are a teenager with an adolescent faith.

God has the same heart for his children as a parent has for a teenage son or daughter. God imparts his wisdom for living in what we know as the Ten Commandments. Though they could be viewed as a list of rules, God's intention is evident in his words to Moses.

In our scripture reading from Deuteronomy God gives things for his people to use so that they might do well and be his children forever. Moses recognizes God's desire and he tells the people to stay obedient to the decrees from God. If they do this, their enjoyment will be of God's ongoing presence with them in the Promised Land.

We all go through a season of adolescence with God. We all go through a season of not trusting in his guidelines for living which are truly meant for our good. Let us grow in our realization that God wants what is best for us. Let us learn to heed the wisdom God offers. God's guidance is meant to lead us into spiritual maturity as we become more like Jesus.

A recent survey asked respondents to identify the age at which they believed they became adults. Those who considered themselves adults pointed to specific behaviors as evidence of their status. Having a budget or buying a home topped the list as being markers of 'adulting'.

When did you become an adult? What event or situation marked your 'adulting'?

Other adult activities ranged from cooking dinner every weeknight and scheduling one's own medical appointments to the more humorous ability to choose to eat snacks for dinner or being excited to stay at home on a Saturday evening instead of going out.

The Bible says we should press on toward spiritual maturity as well. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, urging the people to become mature in faith so that they could attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

While we are young in our faith, we are vulnerable to every wild teaching which often results in division among us. Instead, as we mature in faith, our understanding of the truth becomes clearer. We then function as a unified body under Jesus Christ who is the head of the church.

God gave us his Holy Spirit to help us grow into a full and mature faith so that our understanding of who Jesus is will grow. God had equipped Pastors and teachers to instruct us and lead us toward maturity in our faith.

Just as certain characteristics are evident in a physical maturity, so our unity in faith as the church is evidence of our spiritual growth.

Let us unity in a mature faith in Jesus Christ power and authority.

Inside St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland, there is a door that tells a five century old tale. In 1492, two families, the Butlers and the Fitzgeralds, began fighting over a high level position in the region. The fight escalated and the Butlers took refuge in the cathedral. When the Fitzgeralds came to ask for a truce, the Butlers were afraid to open the door of the cathedral. So the Fitzgeralds cut a hole in the door of the cathedral and their leader offered his hand in peace. The two families then reconciled and adversaries became friends.

Is there a door that you need to cut a hole through to reconcile with someone? The Fitzgeralds cut a hole through the cathedral door to reconcile with the Butlers, what door do you have cut through? What thing or things are holding you back from reconciling with someone – it is time that you got busy and cut a hole through the door so that reconciliation can occur!

God has a door of reconciliation that the Apostle Paul wrote passionately about in his Second letter to the Corinthians. Christ has an infinite love for us and God wants us to exchange broken relationships with humans for a restored relationships through Christ's death on the cross.

We were far away from God, then God cut a hole for us in the form of a cross. In Christ's mercy and grace, Jesus did not leave us outside. In the cross, Jesus paid our debt in full and cut a hole through the door of our faith for us to reconcile ourselves to God. Christ offers us restoration with Himself. Christ does not count our sins against us because He brings us justice and Christ fulfills us because He was without sin so that He could take on our sins and grant us reconciliation. In Christ we can be at peace with God!

Once we accept God's hand in peace, we are given the important task of bringing that message to others. We represent the amazing loving God who offers complete forgiveness and restoration to everyone who believes!

Let us pray:

Loving God, help us to trust that you know what is best for us. Make us know that you are the author of our growth and maturity.

Please help us to see where our understanding of you is still immature and teach us more of your wisdom.

And God, thank you for not leaving us in a place of no hope, separate from you forever. Thank you that the sacrifice of your beloved Son, Jesus, has provided the way for us to come to you.

AMEN.