

That We May Present Everyone Mature in Christ

Sometimes it is easy to get sidetracked and miss the real point behind what we are supposed to be doing and teaching. Because we hear so much error in the religious world these days, we can easily get caught up in simply trying to correct common errors. Then it may readily seem the purpose for our teaching and action is to fix some particular error.

Paul explains a different goal for our teaching and toil in **Colossians 1:28**—“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

Please notice what it does not say: “Baptism we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone baptized into Christ.”

Because the mainstream religious world believes in Jesus but usually misuses, abuses, and misunderstands baptism, we have spent a great deal of our teaching trying to correct their error. Certainly, part of presenting everyone mature in Christ Jesus will include baptism. After all, we cannot present anyone in Christ Jesus except through baptism. **Galatians 3:27** says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Also, **Romans 6:3** says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

However, this is simply part of being mature in Christ. It is not equivalent to being fully mature in Christ. We are not done simply because someone has been baptized. Our job is not simply to present them in Christ, but present them mature in Christ. When someone is baptized, we must continue pursuing our purpose.

Further, because of the many errors we have fought over the years, we might think that maturity in Christ equals having the right take on the hot button issues over the past years, i.e. institutionalism, instrumental music, speaking in tongues, divorce and remarriage, etc. Certainly, Bible knowledge is part of maturity in Christ. Peter says we must add knowledge to our faith in **II Peter 1:5-8**. However, our goal is not to make sure young Christians grow to answer all the questions about hot topics to our satisfaction as if they are a catechumen who must memorize our special catechism in order to be mature. Sadly, I’ve met some who can answer these questions correctly but are far from mature in Jesus. They are hotheaded, quarrelsome, arrogant, self-centered, Diotropheses who would have the pre-eminence in a congregation. That is not maturity in Jesus, no matter how doctrinally correct they are.

Would you like a picture of maturity in Christ Jesus? Would you like to see the goal we are striving for everyone to reach? Take a look at **I Timothy 3:2-7** and **Titus 1:6-9**. Certainly, someone does not have to be a man to be mature in Christ. Nor do they have to have been married or raised children. However, in general, the picture of the shepherd is not some special qualification list. It is simply a picture of mature Christianity.

Mature Christians are above reproach, humble, peaceful, sober, content, hospitable, lovers of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined, respectable, able to teach, gentle, experienced, and well thought of even by non-Christians. Are we working to present everyone like this in Christ? Or are we simply satisfied with getting them baptized and letting them work out the rest on their own? Paul said he toiled to present folks not just in Christ, but mature in Christ. May we work on the same goal.

--Edwin L. Crozier