

Session #4: Five Movements Towards Spiritual Maturity (Part 2)

Watch!

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/8v9xPwEKSAM>

Study!

In this lesson we will continue our study on the five movements towards spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is learning to pursue the will of the Father, to yield our perceived rights and personal ambitions, and to surrender our all to Him. It's not about how committed we are to God but how surrendered we are to Him.

Spiritual maturity is about being **transformed** into who God wants us to be. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, it states:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Spiritual maturity is about being **conformed** into the image of His Son. Romans 8:29 says:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Lastly, in 1 John 3:2–3, it says we are to be **like Him**:

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

The aim of spiritual maturity is Christlikeness! It is the process of growing to become like Christ.

Lesson Framework: Five Movements towards Spiritual Maturity

1. Search: There must be something more—search for God.
2. Struggle: Wanting it all—conflict of two wills.
3. Surrender: Yielding it all—to “will” the will of the Father.
4. Service: Giving it all—serve God on His terms.
5. Significance: Jesus is all—Jesus is enough!

In the last lesson, we learnt there is a **deep search** in our walk. We search our lives and find ourselves thinking that there must be something more. This search for God gives rise to a **desperate struggle**, the conflict between God's will for our lives and our own. Our struggle then leads us to an **absolute surrender**, a place where we decide to yield our lives to God.

In this lesson, we discover that our surrender leads us to **upward service**. We begin to serve Him with joy. Our joy leads us to an **inner significance**. Finally, our sense of importance is no longer tied to what we do, but who we are.

Scripture Focus: John 12:26

If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

The fourth movement towards spiritual maturity is our upward service. There are two aspects to service. Firstly, it's about **wise stewardship**. Knowing that God owns everything, and we are His stewards. As managers of God's resources, we enquire of God's wisdom to invest them for Him.

Secondly, it's about the **joyful service**. We do not serve man, but we serve God. We tend to think of service as outward to others, but it is the upward dimension of service that is most important. Ultimately, it is the Lord whom we serve. In serving Him, His approval is of utmost importance. We do not serve for the applause of man but for the approval of God.

"To be a follower of Christ is to be on a journey where heart and life and possessions all get pulled along in the direction of the Kingdom." - Mark Powley

There is an upward dimension to servanthood we must never forget. It's not about our giftedness. Service is all about our gratitude. Our gratitude to God for all that He has done for us and our gratitude for the opportunities He grants us. It's a joy and a privilege to serve the Lord! We don't *have* to serve. We *get* to serve!

Returning to our Scripture focus, Jesus highlights two things:

1. Our **Faithful** devotion to Christ.

If anyone serves me, he must *follow me*; and where I am, there will my servant be also. (John 12:26a, emphasis mine)

Serving Jesus is a choice. He doesn't force us, but gives us the free will to choose to serve Him.

2. Our **Fruitful** life in Christ.

If anyone serves me, *the Father will honor him*.
(John 12:26b, emphasis mine)

We must remember that we serve God on His terms, not ours. It's only when we truly put aside our own self and surrender everything to Him, that we are truly free to serve Him and Him only.

Even in times of discouragement, know your labour is not in vain.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

The final movement towards spiritual maturity is our inner significance. We must learn that it is not the important things we do that make a significant life, rather it's our significant life in Christ that makes what we do important. It is not about the books we write, the conferences we speak in, or even the organisations we lead. These outward displays of success and status don't define us or make us important. The essence of our significance is not based on what we do, it is based on who we are. And as believers, *who* we are is found in *whose* we are.

John 14:3 states that Jesus has received us unto Himself. What then is a significant life? It is a life in relationship with Jesus! Why? Because our identity is in Him, our redemption is in Him, our glory is in Him—Christ in us, the hope of glory! That is the redemption. He in us and we in Him!

Two things we find in Christ

1. Our identity in Christ

Our identity is not in our doing, it is in our being. It is everything to do with who we are in God.

2. Our security in Christ

Our security is not about what we do for God, but what has been done by God.

That is why abiding in Christ is the secret to victory. Our coming to Jesus is the first step towards spiritual formation in our lives. It is also the last. It comes full circle. Our search ultimately leads us to the One in whom we find our significance—Christ!

"Thus, I have learnt that it is not the important things we do that make a significant life; rather, it's a significant life that makes what we do important." - Rev. Edmund Chan

"Putting our faith in Christ is not about trying harder; it means transferring our trust away from ourselves and resting in Him."
- Tim Keller

Reflect!

What are some key insights I can take away from today's session?

Where do you find your sense of identity? Is it tied to what you do, or who you are?

Where does your sense of security come from? Do you fear absolute surrender?

What are some false priorities you have in your life? How can you find your significance in Jesus?

In what ways is God challenging you to change the way you serve Him?

Discuss!

Q1: What makes serving without joy so common in the church today?

Q2: Read Psalm 100. What does it say is the secret to joy?

Q3: In 1 Corinthians 15:58, what does "steadfast" mean? In what ways could our service to God be superficial?

Q4: How do we serve God with a sense of joy and privilege?

Q5: According to Galatians 4:19, what is spiritual maturity?

Q6: If the first step towards Christlikeness is to recognise our own sin, what are some other steps towards spiritual maturity?

Q7: Over the next two weeks, what steps can you take to intentionally grow so that "Christ is formed" in you? What would you like your group to keep you accountable for?

Between Sessions

Challenge!

Spend time reflecting on today's lesson and record your reflections in your journal.

Read Psalm 19:7–14. Depth of character is essential to spiritual maturity. These verses highlight 11 aspects to this depth of character:

1. Restored/refreshed soul (v.7)
2. Wisdom (v.7b)
3. Joy (v.8)
4. Understanding/Enlightenment (v.8b)
5. Reverence for God (v.9)
6. Delight in God's Word (v.10)
7. Obedience (v.11)
8. Repentance (v.12)

9. Victorious Living (v.13)
10. Blamelessness in our walk (v.13)
11. Life that pleases God (v.14)

Take time to work through each aspect and ask God how you can grow in that area. Record your progress and any changes and personal commitments you've made. Be open to sharing with your Life Group your experiences for the benefit of all.

Memorise!

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always
abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your
labor is not in vain.
(1 Corinthians 15:58)

Before next session!

Read the article below on silence and solitude based on Psalm 62.

There is godly wisdom in practising the discipline of silence and solitude. Not silence nor solitude alone, but both together.

Read Psalm 62 as the scriptural anchor for this chapter. Pay attention to the tone, emphasis and repeated words. In the first eight verses, the word “silence” is used twice—the first time in verse 1 and again in verse 5.

The psalmist, David, wrote this psalm much like a private entry in his journal. He most likely wrote this psalm after one of the greatest heartbreaks of his life; the rebellion of his son, Absalom. Before he wrote it, we see that David deeply reflected upon what had taken place. The psalm was then passed on to the choirmaster for the nation of Israel to sing so that they, and we, could capture his heartache as he processed his emotions with God. We can learn and grow from reading this psalm by observing how David dealt with his pain.

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.
(Psalm 62:1–2)

In the first two verses, David referred to himself and how he felt. He used the phrase, “I shall not be greatly shaken.” We have an indication of David’s mood; he was clearly disturbed and churning inside.

Let’s look specifically at verses 3 and 4.

How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.
They take pleasure in falsehood.
They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.
(Psalm 62:3–4)

In verses 3 and 4, David wrote about the enemies he had to contend with. They were speaking falsehood against him, and while they had sweet words to utter, they were hypocrites—cursing him in their hearts.

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah
(Psalm 62:5–8)

In verses 5 to 8, he wrote about God; that he would always trust in God and pour out his heart before Him. He reiterated that God was his refuge.

Observe the movement. In the span of eight verses David's focus shifted from himself and his emotions (verses 1–2), to his enemies and their falsehoods (verses 3–4) and then finally to God himself (verses 5–8). And when he focused on God, David's internal churning abated. As he reminded himself to trust in God, he became calm and rested.

When reading the Bible, we must pay attention to words, themes and phrases that repeat. There are two verses here that are almost identical. They are almost the same but the subtle differences give an indication to the shift in David's heart.

Let's closely compare verses 2 and 6 again.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.
(Psalms 62:2)

He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
(Psalm 62:6)

Notice the missing word? These two verses are almost identical, but the word “greatly” does not appear in verse 6. Don’t miss the omission of this word, because when reading the text, what is said—or not said—is important.

In verse 2, David said he would not be greatly shaken. In verse 6, he clearly and categorically stated that he would not be shaken. Removing the word “greatly” makes an enormous difference: it indicates the shift in the way David felt. When David wrote that he would not be greatly shaken, it still left the potential for him to be a little shaken. However, by verse 6, he was able to declare with absolute conviction, “I will not be shaken!”

By dropping the word “greatly”, we see David’s change in focus. He was no longer hopeless as he placed his hope in the only One who could save him—this God whom he counted as his rock and salvation, his fortress and glory, and his mighty rock and refuge.

Now, let’s compare verses 1 and 5.

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
(Psalms 62:1)

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.
(Psalms 62:5)

Once again, take note of the subtle difference: “my soul waits in silence” (verse 1) and “my soul, wait in silence” (verse 5). The letter “s” is omitted.

In English grammar, there are “interrogatives” (questions), “indicatives” (statements) and “imperatives” (commands). These differences are significant and we need to pay attention to them when we read the Bible. Likewise, repetitions are not redundant. They actually have a lot to “say”.

“For God alone my soul waits in silence” (verse 1) is the indicative, the statement of fact. The imperative, or the command, is found in verse 5: “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence”. Here, David was not merely making a statement about his soul; he was commanding himself to wait in silence. His confidence in God had grown, and as such his language also changed. He realised that God was his greatest blessing. This turnaround in his situation, and in the way he felt, took place only when he entered silently into the presence of God and bared his soul before Him. We must learn to do the same. To take time alone and to be silent in the presence of God.

Let’s now look at the remaining verses.

Those of low estate are but a breath;
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.
(Psalm 62:9–10)

In verses 9 and 10, David decided to give no credence to his enemies' extortion, robbery or falsehood. If their riches increased, he wasn't going to worry about it. Instead, he decided to trust God. He knew that God would deliver judgement in His own time and in His own way. He decided to wait silently before the Lord.

Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man
according to his work.
(Psalm 62:11–12)

What did David mean when he wrote, "Once God has spoken" and "twice have I heard this"? It's a Middle Eastern idiom for, "I heard God very clearly." David asserted that God spoke to him in a plain and clear way.

God said to David that power belonged to Him alone. It didn't matter what David's enemies said or threatened to do. Power belonged to God. In His covenant love, He would bring judgement upon David's enemies.

David heard all this in his silence before God. In his silence, he was able to pour out his heart before God. He didn't need to speak a single word; he "spoke" in silence. He wasn't bothered when his enemies spoke evil about him. Certainly, in the beginning of the psalm, David said, "I shall not be greatly shaken". But then he moved to, "I shall not be shaken." How? By putting his trust in the Almighty.

Only when David entered silently into the presence of God and bared his soul to Him did the turnaround in his situation and emotions occur. We need to learn from David and do likewise: to take time alone and to be silent in the presence of God.