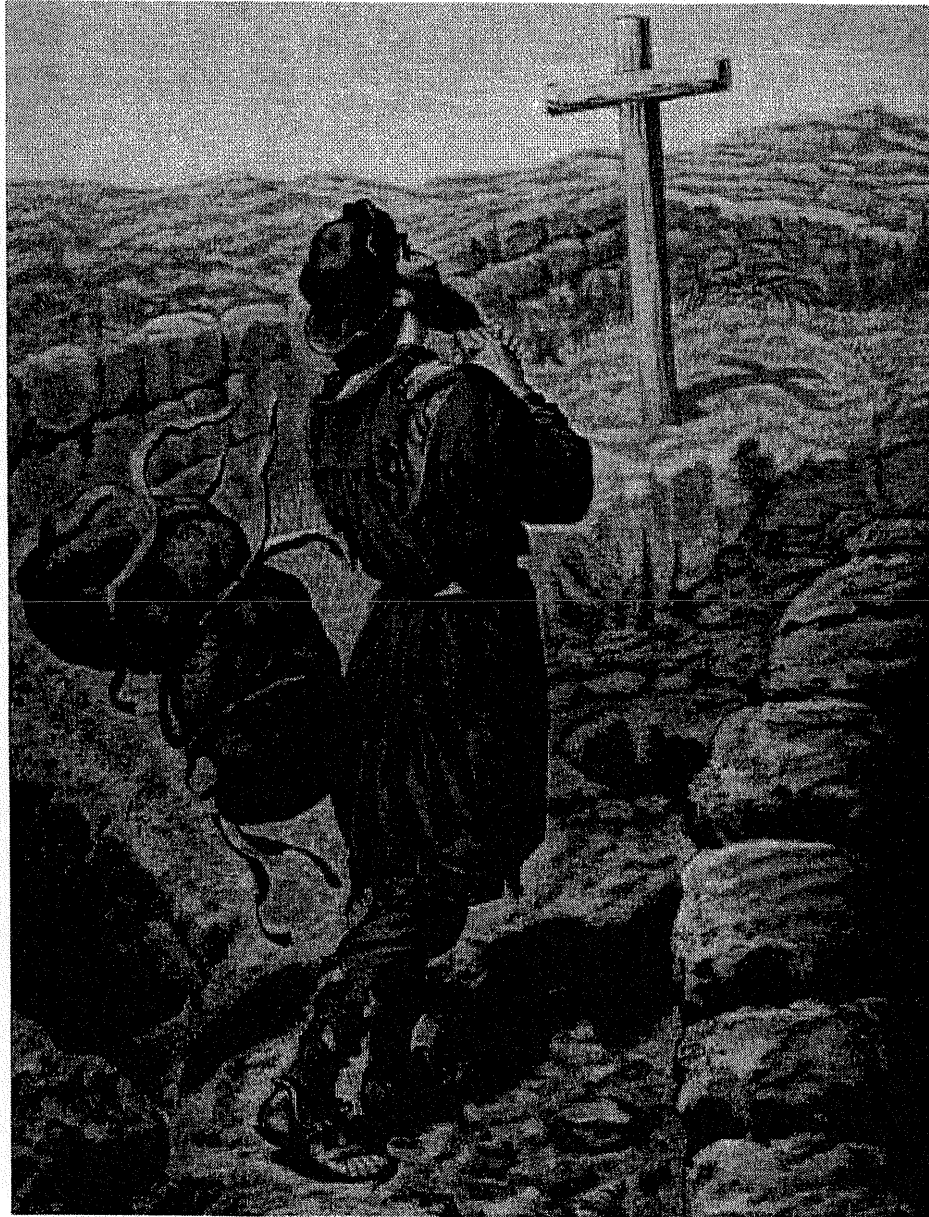


**The Infinite Journey of Christian Growth:
What Is Spiritual Maturity?**



A Descriptive Outline of Areas of Sanctification

Dr. Andrew M. Davis

Why Are We Here?

One Central Purpose: The Glory of God

***Isaiah 43:6-7 Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth--
7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I
formed and made."***

Two Infinite Journeys:

"Journey" = something on which we can make progress

Jesus is "the way" to the Father and we are traveling to Him:

***John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to
the Father except through me."***

Jesus spoke of a road that leads to life:

***Matthew 7:14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a
few find it.***

Christianity itself was originally called "The Way":

Acts 24:14 I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect.

1) The Internal Journey of Sanctification

***2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus
Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.***

2) The External Journey of Worldwide Disciplemaking

***Matthew 28:19-20 go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of
the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey
everything I have commanded you.***

BOTH Journeys are laid before us and they are perfectly intertwined

BUT: What is our goal in the internal journey of Christian Maturity? What are we to shoot for?

Simple answer: Christlikeness:

***Romans 8:29 conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn
among many brothers.***

I. Knowledge: Factual and experiential spiritual information.

A. Factual spiritual information

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation

1. A "City of Truth" is erected within our minds by careful, consistent study of the word of God
2. This "City of Truth" is erected fact by fact, gleaned from Bible reading, listening to faithful sermons, reading good Christian books, etc.
3. These facts are arranged more and more into a system of truth, so that the parts are consistent with the whole: systematic theology produces a consistent worldview from which we make wise judgments and live wise lives

B. Experiential spiritual information

Hebrews 5:8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

1. We grow by experiencing life in God's world
2. As we experience God's faithfulness to His promises, we grow in knowledge
3. As we experience God's discipline for our sins, we grow in personal holiness
4. As we experience the suffering caused by sin, we grow in compassion and conviction of the need for ministry

C. Factual and Experiential Knowledge Operate Together

1. In every life, experiential knowledge comes first (for years), then factual (biblical) knowledge comes along later
2. Experiential knowledge is constantly interpreted and filtered by factual (biblical) knowledge, but factual knowledge is unintelligible without experiential knowledge
3. Both factual and experiential knowledge produce growing faith in a Christian

II. Faith: Assurance of and Commitment to Spiritual Truth

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

A. Certainty that Invisible Spiritual Realities are True

1. Faith accepts two invisible realms:

- a. present spiritual realm constantly surrounding us
 - b. future world revealed only in the promises and warnings of God
2. Faith consists in certainty that what the Bible teaches about these two realms is true
 3. Growing faith consists in increasingly consistent vividness of these truths in moment-by-moment life

B. Assurance of Things Hoped For

1. "Things hoped for" consists in two realms
 - a. Things hoped for in this life
 - b. Things hoped for in the heavenly life
2. Faith consists in a sweet expectation that all of God's promises for good things will most certainly come to pass
3. Growing faith consists in increasingly sweet confidence of God's faithfulness to His promises in each of these realms
4. This confidence becomes the powerful ground of progress in the two infinite journeys: internally in sanctification, externally in ministry/mission

C. Conviction of Sin

1. Faith consists in a vivid sense of the evil of sin, and of its specific presence in our own lives
2. Faith also consists in a vivid sense of coming discipline for sin in this life, and a powerful concern for judgment day
3. Growing faith consists in an increasingly eager, humble readiness to have our sin exposed to us by the Holy Spirit so we can be rid of it through repentance

D. Reliance on Christ as All-Sufficient Savior and Provider

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

1. Faith consists in an active, moment-by-moment reliance on Christ for life, breath, and everything else
2. Conversely, faith consists in an active rejection of other means of support than Christ... especially of confidence in fleshly efforts

3. Faith results in confidence that God will supply all needs in Christ, thus banishing fear, murmuring, and anxiety

E. Reception of Spiritual Guidance

Romans 8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

1. Faith consists in a consistent sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, through whom God guides us practically in daily life
2. Growing faith comes in a greater and greater discernment of the leading of the Spirit from other spiritual influences
3. By faith, we step out boldly in definite directions based on this guidance

III. Character: Internal Nature Conformed to Christ

A. Affection: What you love and what you hate

Matthew 22:37-39 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

1. Spiritual maturity consists in a vivid love for God, the people of God, the plans of God
2. Spiritual maturity also consists in a vivid hatred of all forms of evil

B. Desire: What you seek

Psalms 63:1 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

1. Spiritual maturity consists in an ever-increasing desire for good things not yet present
2. Spiritual maturity also consists in an active fight against evil desires

C. Will: What you choose and what you reject

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

1. Spiritual maturity consists in choosing to obey God more and more consistently
2. The will is a servant of perception and affection: the more we perceive the goodness of God and His kingdom, and the evil of Satan and His kingdom, the more we will choose what God would have us choose
3. Thus the will is an indicator of how well we are perceiving and loving truth

D. Thought: What you think

Romans 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.

1. Five key areas of Christian thought-life: repentance, reckoning, attitude, meditation, wisdom
2. Spiritual maturity consists in a thought-life constrained by the word of God
3. Spiritual maturity consists also in attitudes conformed to Christ

E. Emotion: What you feel

Mark 1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

1. Spiritual maturity is a passionate life in conformity with the emotional life of our Lord
2. Therefore, we will feel these emotions and others as the Spirit moves us: Joy, sorrow, compassion, sorrow, fear, zeal
3. Spiritual maturity consists also in correcting faulty emotions through self-control and a renewing of the mind

F. Virtues: What you are

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

1. Virtues are merely descriptors of internal character states of being as governed by the previous five aspects: affection, desire, will, thought, emotion
2. Spiritual maturity consists positively in being what Christ would be in a given circumstance

Alert – Bold – Cheerful – Committed – Compassionate – Content – Courageous – Determined – Devoted – Devout – Diligent – Discerning – Disciplined – Faithful – Forgiving – Friendly – Generous – Gentle – Genuine – Giving – Glad – Godly – Good – Gracious – Holy – Honorable – Hopeful – Hospitable – Humble – Joyful – Just – Kind – Long-suffering – Loving – Meek – Merciful – Modest – Mournful – Obedient – Orderly – Patient – Peaceful – Poor in spirit – Praising – Prayerful – Prudent – Pure – Purposeful – Quiet – Reasonable – Relentless – Repentant – Respectful – Restful – Reverent – Sacrificial – Satisfied (in God) – Serious – Sincere – Single-minded – Sober-minded – Steadfast – Strong – Submissive – Sympathetic – Temperate – Thankful – Trusting – Truthful – Understanding – Vigilant – Watchful – Willing – Wise – Worshipful – Worthy – Yielded – Zealous

3. Spiritual maturity consists negatively in not being what Christ would not be in a given circumstance

Angry – Anxious – Complaining – Covetous – Deceitful – Deceived – Disobedient – Disorderly – Disputing – Double-minded – Doubting – Dull – Embittered – Envyng – Foolish – Greedy – Hypocritical – Ignorant – Immoral – Impenitent – Impure – Insolent – Insubordinate – Jealous – Lawless – Lazy – Lukewarm – Lustful – Mocking – Murmuring – Pleasure-loving – Prideful – Quarrelsome – Quick-tempered – Rebellious – Regretful – Restless – Scornful – Selfish – Self-willed – Sensual – Shameful – Slothful – Sorrowful – Spiteful – Stiff-necked – Stupid – Timid – Unbelieving – Uncharitable – Unclean – Unrepentant – Unruly – Unstable – Unthankful – Unwilling – Vain – Vengeful – Violent – Weary – Willful

IV. Action: Habitual Obedience

A. Central Action: Presentation of Body as a Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

B. Negative: What You MUST NOT Do (Holiness as Purification)

1. Sexual Purity

Ephesians 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

2. Speech Purity

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

3. Relational Purity

Ephesians 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

4. Lawful Pleasure Purity

1 Corinthians 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"-- but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-- but I will not be mastered by anything.

C. Dealing Properly with Sin

1. Confession

2. Repentance

3. Fruit in Keeping with Repentance

D. Positive: What You MUST Do (Holiness as Active Obedience)

1. Worship: Giving glory to God by active passionate worship

Philippians 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh

2. Relationships: Husband-wife, parent-child, employer-employee, church, citizen

3. Spiritual Disciplines: Bible intake, prayer, fasting, etc.

4. Ministry: Using spiritual gifts to build up the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 14:12 Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

5. Mission: Reaching out to lost, poor, needy people to bring them the gospel and alleviate their suffering

Matthew 28:19-20 *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

6. Stewardship: faithfully administering temporal resources (time, energy, money, gifts, opportunities) for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ

Matthew 25:20 *The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'*

7. Work: laboring faithfully at whatever tasks God entrusts to you, no matter how menial

Colossians 3:23-24 *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

Overwhelmed? Never forget three vital things:

- 1) It is in JUSTIFICATION RIGHTEOUSNESS (i.e. that imputed to us by faith in Christ) that we will stand before God holy and blameless on Judgment Day
- 2) All of these aspects of Christlike perfection God will give to us instantly as a gift at the moment of glorification... they will ALL be ours someday in the future world!!
- 3) God is glorified by our consistent humble efforts to make progress in all of these areas, no matter how difficult that progress may be

A Pathway to Christian Maturity

<h2><u>KNOWLEDGE</u></h2> <p>FACTUAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SPIRITUAL INFORMATION</p>		
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Factual</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gained from the Scripture</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Experiential</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gained from living in God's world</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Factual</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gained from the Scripture</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Experiential</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gained from living in God's world</p>
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Leads To

<h2><u>FAITH</u></h2> <p>ASSURANCE OF AND COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL TRUTH</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief that specific invisible spiritual realities are true • Conviction that specific sin is in me, and that God hates it and will judge people for such sins • Trust in Christ as all-sufficient savior, refuge, provider, shield • Assurance that hoped-for specific good things promised in scripture will certainly come true • Reception of spiritual guidance and knowledge

Leads To

<h2><u>ACTION</u></h2> <p>EXTERNAL LIFESTYLE OF HABITUAL OBEDIENCE</p>
<p>1. Presentation of self to God resulting in ...</p> <p>2. Seven-fold obedience to God's commands</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holiness 2. Worship 3. Relationships 4. Spiritual Disciplines 5. Mission 6. Stewardship 7. Work

Leads To

<h2><u>CHARACTER</u></h2> <p>INTERNAL NATURE CONFORMED TO CHRIST</p>
<div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Virtues What you are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Affection What you love/hate</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Will What you choose/reject</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thought What you think about</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Desire What you seek</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Emotions What you feel</p> </div>

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