

Defining Maturity

“My husband is so immature,” she says. “He needs to grow up.”

What do we mean when we judge another person pronouncing they are immature? If we mean that the other person is acting like a child, what is problematic about that? Children can be the most loving creatures on earth, so why is immaturity necessarily a problem?

I believe maturation is a process that is reflected in how we relate to others and that very few people actually reach full maturity. I think maturity is reflected in the value that “I am important AND you are important.” Immaturity is reflected in the de-value that says, “I am important and you ARE NOT important,” or “I am NOT important and you ARE important.”

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you think about it, this is incredibly difficult to accomplish in a family, much less a neighborhood, town, state, country, or world. If humanity ever reached that level of maturity, what would happen? I suppose this world would look a lot more like the Kingdom of God than it does right now.

Since global maturity seems a long way off, you and I are probably best served by striving to build on our own maturity, one step at a time, within our own families and communities.

I believe it is easier to be mature when there is harmony in our relationships. I have discovered that our level of immaturity is most exposed for measurement when we are arguing or disagreeing with each other. This is when we are most vulnerable to losing track of the importance of others or ourselves. For example, if you believe that arguing means winning or losing, then you probably have some maturing to do. If arguing results in someone feeling unimportant, then both people have some maturing to do. The degree of winning, losing and unimportance that is experienced in an argument is a good measure of the degree of maturity or immaturity of the participants. If you and I use this measure, how mature are we? Always remember that we should only measure our **own** level of maturity. If we measure and judge other people, we are only revealing our immaturity.

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