



excess **BAGGAGE**

Unpacking your hurts, habits & hang ups



PART 6

"Grow Into an Emotionally Mature Adult - pt1"

ICEBREAKER I

Where do you see yourself in five years from now?

INTRODUCTION I

How many of us would love to push the fast forward button on some part of our lives? Maybe it's a relationship or a job. It could be a physical goal or a financial pursuit. There is an overriding idea that we need to be further along than we are right now. But, there are parts of our lives that usually get left behind. One of those areas is emotional health. We may be growing in other areas of our lives – our mental, physical, and even social states – but are we growing in emotional and spiritual maturity? In this lesson, we will look over again the four stages of emotional health and start to look at one major roadblock to maturing as believers.

READ |

Do you ever think that you aren't as far along as you want to be? As believers, we sometimes think that salvation is like a magic wand, God waves it over our lives, and we're completely changed! In fact, there is one scripture in the Bible that seems to say just that:

Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is brand new.
2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV)

You might read that and think that becoming an emotionally mature adult just happens! It's part of the natural process of being saved. But this verse is actually about your position in Christ. Your old self – the life you lived in sin – is gone. You are now made right before God to live a new life free of that sin. You've been forgiven and accepted by God, but it's up to you to walk that out.

That doesn't mean you are automatically emotionally mature. We all still have some growing to do. We have to uncover and confront our false self. We need to examine the reason for our broken patterns in our families of origin. We will still encounter walls we need to journey through and suffer grief and loss the right way. This week let's look at the stages of emotional maturity to make sure we're taking the right path and we're on the right pace so we mature emotionally and spiritually.

Have you ever met someone who was not emotionally mature? What sort of characteristics clued you into that? What are some better ways they could have behaved or believed?

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We were briefly introduced to the **Four Stages of Emotional Maturity** in week 1. Read each one again as it explains a little bit more of what each of the four stages entail. Then, we'll take a look at one huge roadblock standing in the way.

Emotional Infants

At this stage, the believer is quite focused on themselves. They cannot control well their thoughts and emotions. It's also hard for them to empathize with other people because they are too wrapped up in themselves.

Emotional Children

They are starting to grow, but still not mature. They are only content and happy as long things are going their way. Their feelings get hurt easily and they complain, sulk, and may even manipulate others.

Emotional Adolescents

This believer is showing real signs of growth. However, they might get defensive and threatened by criticism. They don't like being told what to do or how to do it. And they especially don't like being told they are not fully mature.

Emotional Adults

A mature believer will take responsibility for their own thoughts and feelings. They know that their behavior is a direct result of their beliefs, so they are careful to examine how they think and act. They know what they need and what they want, and they can also disagree without becoming combative.

Unfortunately, too many of us are stuck in one of the first three phases while still thinking we are emotionally mature. This has happened throughout the history of the church, as this verse seems to say:

You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.

Hebrews 5:12 (NLT)

Have you been able to see growth from one of these stages to the next in your walk with God? Give an example of an area of emotional growth you have seen in your own life.

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None of us like to think of ourselves as children. But if we were all honest, we could find some area of life where we need to grow. It's up to us to make those changes. Read the next verse together:

When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am an adult, I have no more use for childish ways.

1 Corinthians 13:11 (GNT)

Would you agree that it's easier to see the faults in others than in ourselves? Growth never happens unintentionally, though. The first step is finding out what is holding us back. Then we need to take steps to improve.

One of the ways to find out where we need to grow emotionally is by asking those close to us. It's hard being vulnerable, though. But when you ask a trusted friend, "What do you see in me that needs to change?" you will find new areas to grow emotionally. Another way is to think about what others close to you have been complaining about when it comes to you. Their complaints often reveal some areas of opportunity for us to mature emotionally.

Do you find it difficult to receive criticism? Do you get defensive too easily? How can you develop trusted ways of opening up and receiving feedback from others?

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Emotionally healthy spirituality is your ability to be self-aware and love others well. We usually focus on the first and let the second part play itself out. However, many times working on the second part will help you in the first. Take, for instance, **resolving conflicts**. This may be the number one area of growth opportunity and also the biggest roadblock to healthy emotions and spirituality.

Resolving conflicts is a major skill you need to master if you want to become an emotionally mature adult. Romans 12:18 says that we must do all we can to live at peace with each other. That means that the responsibility for resolving conflicts rest on all of us.

Sometimes the peace we create is a false one. We don't want to rock the boat, so we pretend everything is okay. Or we're afraid of conflict so we act passive-aggressive hoping the other person gets the hint.

True peace never comes by pretending that what is wrong is actually right. Jesus knew this, and He warned us that conflicts would naturally happen in life:

Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!
Matthew 10:34-36 (NLT)

The peace Jesus mentions here is a false peace, one where we assume everything is fine. But true peace comes from knowing God through Jesus, first of all, and then speaking the truth in love to others.

What is one reason that you have struggles with conflict resolution? (Example, I avoid conflicts and confrontations, I get defensive, I can be passive aggressive or too aggressive. I blame instead of evaluating and owning my part in the problem)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Today, we looked at the stages of emotional maturity and one big roadblock to growth. Next week, we will look deeper into how to resolve conflict the right way. As we continue our journey in Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, will you commit to be:

- Honest with Yourself
- Vulnerable to Others
- Open for God's Change

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Do at least one (1) SOAP Devotions this week
- Share with your group one of your SOAP Devotions from this past week
- Invite a friend to your small group

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Father God, You are the One who has saved us and made us brand new. However, there is more we need to do to be grown. Show us the areas in our lives that need Your help. Give us the skills to make those changes. Help us to be more open to the areas we need to mature emotionally. Help us to fight our defensiveness when others are revealing areas we need to mature emotionally. May we also not just focus on our areas of growth but also those areas we have matured emotionally. And remind us that Your love is the goal to all emotional maturity. In Jesus' name, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

1 Corinthians 14:20 (ESV)

Day 2:

We will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church.

Ephesians 4:14-15 (NLT)

Day 3:

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

2 Timothy 2:22 (NLT)

Day 4:

My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying.

Proverbs 3:1-2 (NLT)

Day 5:

Jesus became wise, and He grew strong. God was pleased with Him and so were the people.

Luke 2:52 (CEV)