

LESSON 15:

You Ought To Be Teachers

MEN OF THE WORD

February 23, 2022

“You are only young once,
but you can stay immature indefinitely.”

—Ogden Nash

I. The Prevalence of Immaturity

“Manhood is not simply a matter of being male and reaching a certain age. These are acts of nature; manhood is a sustained act of character. It is no easier to become a man than it is to become virtuous. In fact, the two are the same. The root of our old-fashioned word ‘virtue’ is the Latin word *virtus*, a derivative of *vir*, or man. To be virtuous is to be ‘manly.’ . . .



“Too often among today’s young males, the extremes seem to predominate. One extreme suffers from an excess of manliness, or from misdirected and unrefined manly energies. The other suffers from a lack of manliness, a total want of manly spirit. Call them barbarians and wimps. So prevalent are these two errant types that the prescription for what ails our young males might be reduced to two simple injunctions: Don’t be a barbarian. Don’t be a wimp. . . .

“Today’s barbarians are not hard to find. Like the barbarians of old, the new ones wander about in great packs. You can recognize them by their dress, their speech, their amusements, their manners, and their treatment of women. . . . The ancient barbarians did little except fight and hunt. The modern barbarians do little besides play sports and pursue women. To be sure, they have other amusements. But these activities do not as a rule require sensibility or thought. . . .

“At the other extreme from true manliness is the wimp. Wimps are in many ways the opposite of barbarians. We would be mistaken, however, to classify wimps as simply young men without muscle. . . .

“My father used to tell me when I was growing up, ‘It is not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog’ that matters. Many of today’s young men seem to have no fight in them at all. Not for them to rescue damsels in distress from the barbarians. Furthermore, wimps vote. As Aristotle pointed out, to the cowardly, bravery will seem more like rashness and foolhardiness than what it really is. Hence political and social issues that require bravery for their solution elicit only hand-wringing and half-measures from the wimps. Wimps are always looking for the easy way out. . . .

“A close look at the culture in which boys are raised reveals not only that they are no longer encouraged to become vigorous and responsible men, but also that practically every factor affecting their development is profoundly hostile to the ideals and practices of traditional manhood and the painstaking steps necessary to attain it. The demanding regime of physical and moral instruction that used to turn boys into men and the larger cultural forces that supported that instruction have been systematically dismantled by a culture that ostensibly enables all individuals but in reality disables men.”

—Terrence O. Moore, “Wimps and Barbarians,”
Claremont Review of Books 4, no. 1 (Winter 2003/04)

II. The Denunciation of Immaturity

- While being *childlike* can be a virtue (Matt 18:1–5; 1 Pet 2:1–2), remaining *immature* is consistently condemned in the Bible.
- Immaturity is a major concern in the book of Proverbs:
 - **Proverbs 1:22** – “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?”
 - **Proverbs 9:6** – “Forsake *your* folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding.”

- It was at the heart of the Corinthian church's problems:
 - **1 Corinthians 3:1–4** – “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to **spiritual men**, but as to **men of flesh**, as to infants in Christ. I gave you **milk to drink** not **solid food**; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is **jealousy and strife** among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not *mere men*?”

- **1 Corinthians 13:10–12** – “For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”
- **1 Corinthians 14:20** – “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.”

- It was the central problem addressed in the letter to the Hebrews; it indicated the possibility of a *lack of salvation*:
 - **Hebrews 5:11–14** – “Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become **dull of hearing**. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”



“This happens partly through our dullness and partly through our sloth; for though we are very dull to understand the truth of God, yet there is to be added to this vice the depravity of our affections, for we apply our minds to vanity rather than to God’s truth. We are also continually impeded either by our perverseness, or by the cares of the world, or by the lusts of our flesh.”

—John Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews*

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“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

—**Colossians 3:16**

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How then shall we respond?

- How can we keep from remaining either a barbarian or a wimp—and instead become “teachers”?
- While always being mindful that “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure,” take responsibility to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12–13).
- Establish a *rule* or *pattern of discipline* for your life which recognizes that immaturity is your responsibility and not the fault of anyone else around you.

“We must lay claim to our life before other things lay claim to it for us. . . . This is the nature of a rule—a set of disciplines, decisions, and impositions we make on our life in order to prevent the tyranny of the urgent from stealing time away.”

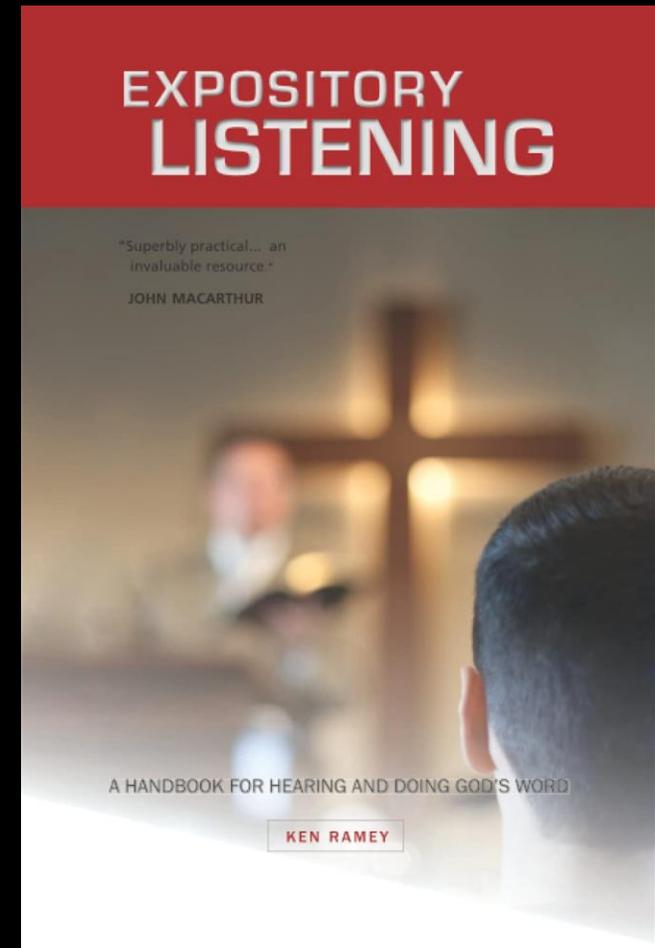
—James E. White, *A Mind for God*, 82

1. Listen.

- Immaturity is characterized by a casual, inattentive response to teaching, or by an “itching ear syndrome.”
- Therefore, the most repeated call in the book of Proverbs is *to listen*—not just *to hear*, but *to pay attention* to good instruction.
- **Hebrews 2:1** – “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*.”
- Paying attention is not a gift or personality trait, it is a *habit*.

“Merely hearing a sermon is easy; it requires a properly functioning auditory system, but it’s essentially a passive exercise. Actively listening to the preaching of God’s Word requires mental alertness, focused attention, and a spiritually receptive heart.”

—Foreword, *Expository Listening*,
by Ken Ramey





“When we come to the Word preached,
we come to a matter of the highest
importance; therefore we should stir up
ourselves and hear with the greatest
devotion.”

—Thomas Watson

- Prepare in advance for the hearing of God's word by getting appropriate rest so as not to be weary and sluggish during worship services.
- Get to worship services early to prepare your heart for listening. Put away distractions—especially your cell phone.
- Follow the teacher as he reads the text to be studied and references other texts of Scripture.
- Take notes and add your own observations, questions, and applications.



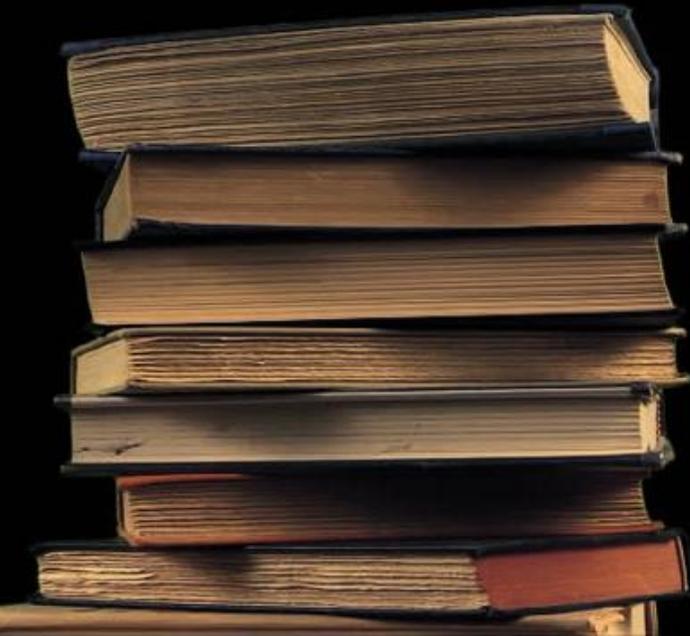
2. Read.

- Immaturity is characterized by a quest to put the mind at ease, to entertain it rather than to engage it.
- But *leaders are readers*.
- “Reading a book requires a degree of engagement, of active attention, that enlivens and expands the mind. Electronic media makes far fewer demands; it breeds passive participation, fosters shorter attention spans and creates the demand for immediate gratification” (White, *A Mind for God*, 37).

“The reader must come armed, in a serious state of intellectual readiness. This is not easy because he comes to the text alone. In reading, one’s responses are isolated, one’s intellect thrown back on its own resources. To be confronted by the cold abstractions of printed sentences is to look upon language bare, without the assistance of either beauty or community. Thus, reading is by its nature a serious business. It is also, of course, an essentially rational activity.”

— Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 50

- Read the Bible—for *breadth* (reading plans for major sections) and for *depth* (specialized study of a passage).
- Establish a reading project that will always keep you reading.
 - Alternate between theology, church history/biography, contemporary issues, personal growth, classics.



- Keep the books accessible and visible.
- Ask other mature men for recommendations.
- Write in your books—they are not meant to be heirlooms.

3. Learn.

- Immaturity is characterized by the illusion of mastery (“I already know that”) and the illusion of irrelevance (“I don’t really need that”).
- Ignorance feeds immaturity.
- **2 Peter 3:17–18a** – “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- Take advantage of the innumerable opportunities to learn—both in person (in a classroom environment) and online.



Institute of Church Leadership
(<https://institute.tms.edu>)



Grace Equip
(www.gracechurch.org/equip)

4. Integrate.

- Immaturity is characterized by the practice of keeping safely distant, irresponsible, and unaccountable.
- Immaturity thrives on the periphery.
- Pursue church membership in the church that will provide the best context for life transformation and investment.
- Life is too short, the world is too dangerous, and your soul is too valuable to play at church.

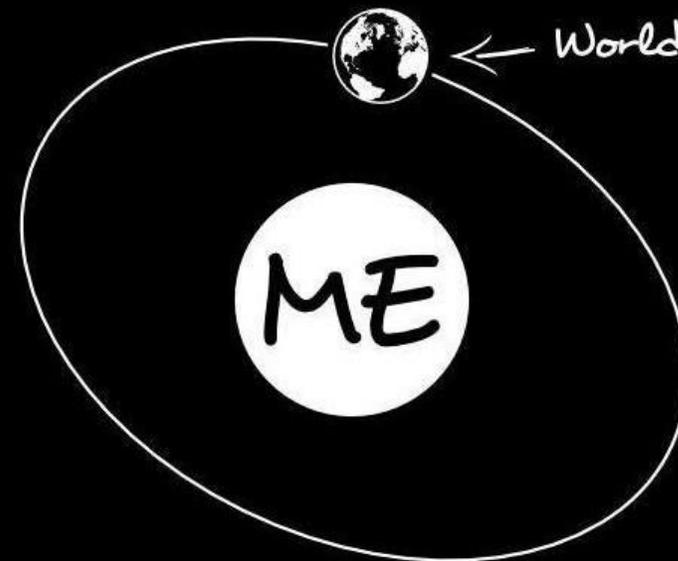
“Association promotes assimilation. A Christian who lives in isolation from other believers will fail to receive the blessings as well as the maturity resulting from godly interaction.”

—Joel Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, 407-08



5. Serve.

- Immaturity is characterized by an approach to life which views the world as revolving around self.
- Immaturity looks for what others will do to serve me.
- **1 Corinthians 3:1–3** – “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. . . . For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”



“Selfishness is one telltale sign of immaturity. Babies are completely self-centered. They scream if they don’t get what they want when they want it. All they are aware of are their own needs and desires. They never say thanks for anything. They can’t help others; they can’t give anything. They can only receive.”

—MacArthur, “The Marks of Immaturity” (blog)



- Proactively seek service opportunities.
- Embrace the small and the simple ministries.
- Be willing to do what no one else is doing.
- Follow instructions and receive correction humbly.
- Follow through what you promise and finish what you start.
- Do it to the glory of God, not your own.

6. Strain

- Immaturity is characterized by an aversion to all things difficult.



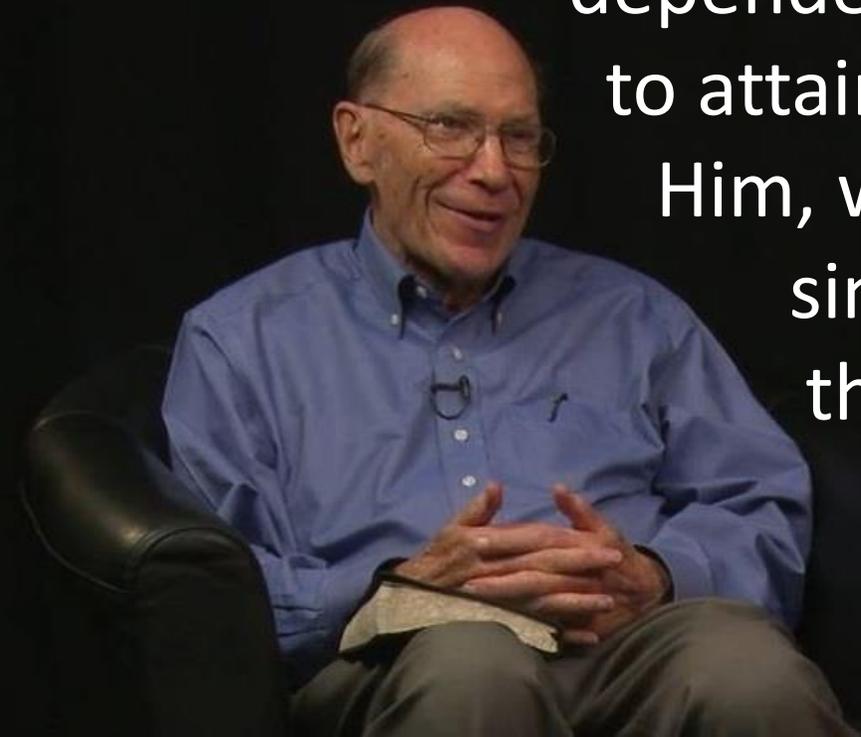
- **1 Corinthians 9:26–27** – “Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”
- Do increasingly hard things.

7. Depend

- Immaturity is characterized by independence and self-sufficiency.
- **Philippians 2:13** – “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.”
- Cultivate a conscious reliance on the Holy Spirit to grow you out of your immaturity.
 - Prayer for grace and wisdom.
 - Thanksgiving for growth and fruitfulness.

“As a young Christian I had the idea that all I had to do to live a holy life was to find out from the Bible what God wanted me to do and go do it. Christians with maturity will smile at this naïve assumption, but I see younger Christians starting off with the same air of self-confidence. We have to learn that we are dependent upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to attain any degree of holiness. Then, as we look to Him, we will see Him working in us – revealing our sin, creating a desire for holiness, and giving us the strength to respond to Him in obedience.”

—Jerry Bridges, Pursuit of Holiness, 76



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Wednesdays 7:00-9:00 PM

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