

Adulthood

A Vintage 6 Six Day Devotional

We are concluding a series on Adulthood. We've discussed the need to grow and mature as followers of Christ. We've discussed the need to surrender our desire for control, singleness and seasons of waiting; pursue healthy relationships, and become wise stewards of our finances. As followers of Christ, it is essential we live in pursuit of Christ's great commission; "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." The process of maturation requires us to mature individually and then compel others to do the same. The purpose of this devotional is to challenge us to live out this maturation process.

Spend time growing with God this week. Each day, spend time reading the suggested scriptures, and committing to complete at least one of the prompts. Christ promises strength in numbers, so share your journey with other believers.

God, you are the ultimate source of our growth. As our shepherd, you guide our paths and lead us into righteousness. Bless our pursuit of you and remind us that you are in constant pursuit of us.

We pray that through this devotional, you grow closer to God and that a desire for continuous maturation is cultivated in your heart.

Day 1: Growing up

Jesus, when asked what the greatest commandment is, replied “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). For the Christian, this commandment also sums up the entire meaning of our existence. To grow as children of God, in accordance with this simple yet all-encompassing doctrine, is the duty of our faith.

This commandment is a challenging one to fully apprehend, and a true believer should be overcome with reverential fear and awe of God upon realizing that no one – not us, not our neighbor, not even our pastor – no one besides Jesus Himself – can claim to have wholeheartedly and unwaveringly obeyed this sacred commandment. Though amidst this staggering realization, we can be encouraged that while all of us have room to grow, God makes it possible. As disciples we are blessed to have the Holy Spirit, who will teach us all things and bring to remembrance all that Jesus has said to us for our edification (John 14:26). Knowing He is with us, there is hope for limitless growth of our faith and understanding of God.

In Christianity, growth is an act of faith. It is a voluntary yearning to know Christ more and more. Unlike how our minds and bodies rapidly underwent involuntary transformations of size, strength, capacity, and efficiency throughout our adolescent years, spiritual growth can only occur when we actively seek God and our hearts cry out like the father of the tormented child in Mark 9:24: “Lord I believe; help my unbelief!”

Growth, in addition to strengthening our own walk with Christ, is part of a mutually beneficial relationship among God’s body of believers. It is neither an isolated endeavor nor a self-serving accomplishment. When our faith increases, God’s church grows, and this gives Him glory. We are able to encourage one another, disciple others, and share the gospel with the world more readily. Likewise, our interaction with the community of believers helps to further our faith. This symbiotic relationship among Christians took root in the days of the early church, where:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

If you are reading this, this means God isn’t done with you yet, and He wants you to know Him more and love Him more with the life He has given you. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Read the following passages:

1 Timothy 4:6-8
1 Corinthians 13:11
Hebrews 6:1
1 Peter 2:2
Hebrews 5:12

Live it out:

- In what aspect of life do you need to grow up? Spiritually? Emotionally? Mentally? Relationally? Write down three areas that you hope to grow in over the next three months. Spend time praying over these areas, and write an action plan that will help you to grow in these areas.
- To grow spiritually, it is essential to dedicate time to the Lord daily. Determine what time you will meet with God daily over this next week. Determine what you will do during this time (Pray? Read a devotional? Read through chapters of the Bible?). Ask a friend to hold you accountable in seeking God daily.
- The Holy Spirit teaches us all things - He is our counselor. His guidance in our lives facilitates our growth. How does this happen? Find bible verses that describe the Holy Spirit's role in your life, and that describe how He intercedes in your life.

Day 2: Control

Some sources suggest humans make approximately 35,000 conscious and subconscious decisions daily. Currently, there are over 7.5 billion humans on planet earth. Do you remember exponents from high school math? Ultimately, there are over 2.625^{14} decisions made daily. All of those decisions (with the exception of 35,000) are completely out of our control.

When growing up we often try to plan our next steps - working, going to college, pursuing financial stability, dating, getting married, or figuring out vocation, among many other endeavors. However, our own plans, executed by our own decisions, often go awry. Lack of control can be intimidating, fear provoking, and exhausting. In addition, the unpredictability of all other extraneous factors make the process of growing up seem almost impossible.

The need to surrender control is inevitable when growing up. We can try and maintain control, but ultimately, because we are imperfect humans, our plans often are incomplete and unfulfilling.

One of the most referenced bible stories is the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. God called Moses to do something much larger than Himself; He called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised land. However, when fleeing Egypt, the Israelites were trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh. Even though Moses followed God's command and attempted to lead the Israelites well, he continuously faced barriers which thwarted his plans. The Red Sea seemed like an impossible barrier. However, read what Moses wrote to the Israelites,

“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” Exodus 14:13-14

How humbling is that? The Lord our God is a fighter. All He asks is that we remain silent. When we attempt to maintain control, we eliminate the grace and sovereignty of God from illuminating in our lives. However, if we remain silent and surrender control to the Lord, he receives all the glory and works all things together for the good of His kingdom. **If we surrender control and trust our paths to his hand, we will find that His plan is the best plan.**

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Read the following passages:

Exodus 14:1-31

Colossians 1:15-17

Psalm 46:10
Proverbs 3:5-6
Proverbs 16:9
James 4:10

Live it out:

- Be still before the Lord today. Read Psalm 139:23-24. Ask that God searches your heart and through His Spirit shows you areas in your life in which you are attempting to maintain control. Write these things down. Choose one to surrender to God today. Share with a friend what you are surrendering control of and ask them to hold you accountable with this.
- Place a rubber band on your wrist. Every time you make a decision today, flip the rubber band around and pray that God blesses your decision. At the end of the day, reflect on decisions made and on your communion with God.
- Ask three friends to share ways or areas in which they have surrendered control. Ask them to share God's blessings in this surrender.

Day 3: Singleness/Season of Waiting

Do you remember waiting for your acceptance letter for college? Or waiting for a promotion at work that was supposed to come two years ago? Or waiting for that last professor to submit your final grade? Do you remember waiting for someone to love you enough to date or marry you? Or for your friend or family member to finally come to know and love Jesus? ***Are you still waiting?***

Waiting for God to provide can occur in one of two ways - passively or actively. It's likely that passively waiting for these desires or expectations to be met will result in complacency, resentment, or in time, bitterness. But actively waiting - God can do some mighty works in active waiting.

Actively waiting means praising God and pursuing God, despite our circumstances. In singleness, this means living a life of purity, despite sinful desires of the flesh and mind, or despite the longing for companionship and relationship with another human being. Actively waiting in singleness means being disciplined in pursuit of God, through scripture reading, living a prayer filled life, and by seeking to know His nature and goodness. To be single and actively wait means leveraging the season of singleness.

Paul. Jeremiah. John the Baptist. Jesus. All of these men had two things in common - they were single, and they leveraged their singleness. Singleness provides opportunity. Singleness fosters an undivided devotion to the Lord. Singleness promotes a season of living faithfully in the calling the Lord has placed on our lives, without divided attention to a spouse, children or other distractions associated with marriage.

Part of growing up means learning how to wait on the Lord in an active manner. It means growing in patience and trust of God. It means praising Him for his promises and trusting in his triumph. Actively waiting on God means seeking Jesus so fervently that His desires align with our desires. By doing so, we grow to live on mission with God to further His kingdom. In addition, through this process of actively waiting, we grow. We mature in faith, and we learn to anticipate God's blessings, rather than obsess over unmet expectations. And perhaps, through the process of spiritual maturation in a season of waiting, we discover that God is good, God is faithful, and that we - God's children - are more than conquerors when pursuing the Lord.

God's promises are worth waiting for. And in the season of waiting, we must worship.

“By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.” Hebrews 11:9-12

Read the following passages:

Psalm 27:13-14

Jeremiah 17:7

Hebrews 11:9-12:2

1 Timothy 4:7b-8

Philippians 4:11-13

Live It Out

- Actively waiting means pursuing God intentionally and persistently; it is essential to make space for this pursuit. What is distracting you from God? Technology? Work? Spend this week fasting from something that is keeping you from spending time with Him.
- During the season of singleness or during a season of waiting, you have an exciting opportunity to grow spiritually. You must use this season to better learn your gifts as a believer in the body of Christ. Discover spiritual gift. Use this tool as a reference: <http://thechapel.com/assets/pdf/SpiritualGiftTest.pdf>
- Use the season of waiting to better discover who you are as a child of God. Make a list of 5 words you would use to describe yourself. Then, read the following scriptures: Romans 8:16-17, Ephesians 5:8, Psalm 139:14, John 10:27-28, Romans 5:1-3. Does your list of 5 attributes align with these scriptures? If not, pray these scriptures over your life. Ask God to help you better understand who you are in Christ.

Day 4: Relationships:

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:18, 24).

God created man and woman to be in relationship. Those were also simpler times: one man, one woman; no dating games. Now, there is so much pressure involved with finding a suitable lifetime spouse that the practice of dating can seem overwhelming. So how are we to view the process in a healthy way? First, as Christians, we must bear in mind that the goal of dating is for marriage, and the eventual bond between a husband and his wife is to resemble a godly one – the relationship Jesus Christ has with His church. Secondly, throughout the course of dating, we should be evaluating if we as a couple demonstrate similar cause, have chemistry, and each have Godly character. Reflecting on these guiding principles is not only wise, but serves as an act of worship glorifying to God, since He initiated relationships and wills them to be established rightly.

Maintaining Christ as the center of any relationship honors the value God has placed on dating and marriage. While companionship and love are cherished blessings, a relationship has an even greater purpose when it is devoted to God to further His kingdom. As followers of Christ, we have a unique opportunity to steward the gift of our relationships for the sake of the gospel, rather than merely for personal satisfaction.

In dating, the responsibility of glorifying Him through purity of mind, body, and spirit may be daunting, but it is all the more rewarding. This purity is essential when striving to live out Christ’s Great Commission of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. Without the discipline and commitment to centralize Christ in a relationship, the season of dating and potential marriage may be fruitless when viewed in light of Christ’s commission. Ultimately, dating, with the intention of marriage, is for the sole purpose of developing an intimate partnership to pursue God and pursue others with.

Therefore, to date well, one must pursue God well. This means reading God’s word consistently, so as to know Him better. It means praying daily to Him - worshipping Him, thanking Him, and seeking his providence. Pursuing God means repenting daily, maintaining purity despite temptation, and serving others in His name. And this pursuit of God should be consistent. It should begin when single, should continue through dating, and should be sustained through marriage. Maturation individually and in relationships should be marked by a relentless, passionate pursuit of God.

“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” 1 John 4:12

Read the following passages:

1 Timothy 6:11-12

Ephesians 5:22-33

1 Thessalonians 4:1-5

Colossians 2:6-7

Ephesians 4:1-3

Live It Out

- Add one of these books to your reading list for the year:
 - *The Meaning of Marriage*: Tim Keller
 - *The Sacred Search: What If It's Not About Who You Marry, But Why*: Gary Thomas
 - *The Five Love Languages*: Gary Chapman
- If you are single or dating: evaluate the boundaries you have placed on your life. Are you taking all precautions necessary to maintain purity? If not, prayerfully determine necessary boundaries you must establish. Be vulnerable - ask a friend or mentor to hold you accountable in maintaining these boundaries.
- Women: Read Proverbs 31:10-31.
- Men: Read Proverbs 5
- If you are married: has Christ remained at the center of your relationship? Are you and your spouse still on mission for the Lord? Spend time in prayer with your spouse today, specifically asking Him to remind you of his mission and the ways in which you and your spouse can honor Him in pursuit of this mission.

Day 5: Finances

When we understand ourselves to be ambassadors of God's gospel and brokers of His wealth, we begin to recognize the responsibility of financial stewardship entrusted to us. However, the simple thought of loosening the grip we have on our monetary resources just may be enough to incite an attitude of defiance within us, especially as citizens of a country touting the "American Dream." Money has powerful associations: it is a catalyst for both good and evil deeds, a measurement of prosperity and poverty, and even an instigator of peace and war. Nevertheless, Jesus calls earthly wealth a small thing.

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:10-11). Jesus calls us to discern wise and honest uses of our earthly resources, seen through the lenses of His Spirit and Scriptural teachings, so we may be fit to handle what is priceless, being the fruits of His kingdom.

Facing the reality that God's sovereignty extends even to our funds, an ignorant response to God's proprietorship would be that He must not realize how tight of a budget we're running, and thus how small of a margin we really have to work with. Besides, today's cost of living far exceeds that of Biblical times. Outrageous college loans must be addressed, for instance. Rent, car, and phone bills relentlessly pursue our paychecks like ready bloodhounds. There are also the essentials like food, clothing, and toiletries...and, of course, those "essential" non-essentials. After all, how can we afford, once these expenses are satisfied, to be generous?

The answer is simple. Generosity is not an expense, but an act of love; a heart posture. "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with all the first-fruits of your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9). When we honor the Lord with our wealth (and to clarify, charity is not just a commandment given to the rich), we are showing deference to His will. How can we come before the Lord with open arms, or hands uplifted with praise, if we're busy clutching our wallets or squeezing a penny until it screams? Each generous undertaking helps loosen one more finger from the hold and demonstrates that we do not serve money, but God alone.

Read the following passages:

Proverbs 11:24-25, 28

Proverbs 19:17

Matthew 6:21, 24

Luke 11:39-41

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Live it out:

- Choose one day to not spend money this week. At the end of the day, evaluate the difficulties of this endeavor. After spending time reflecting on this activity, ask God to teach you to steward your finances well.
- Create a money log - for three days, write down everything you are spending your money on. Evaluate the list and determine unnecessary expenses.
- Prayerfully consider increasing your tithe this week or donating to a cause that is furthering God's kingdom. Reflect on your giving - are you giving joyfully?

Day 6: Anxiety:

“Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’” (Luke 10:41-42).

God’s mighty wisdom must be demonstrated in simplified terms if ever to be understood by His humble servants. In this way the account of Jesus visiting the home of Martha and her sister Mary reveals an integral lesson explained by few words and a powerful contrast. As far as hospitality goes, opening up a home for a guest of honor can be an anxious experience for a host. Concerns about food, aesthetics, presentation, order, and cleanliness all could very well consume the domestic entertainer until the final guest has departed. But when the gathering ends, which attendees remain the most grateful? Those who spent time worrying about making a good impression and a good name for themselves, or those who spent quality time with the guest of honor?

Likewise, many things will worry and upset us if we become distracted with the cares of this world and the matters of ourselves. Anxiety is an oppressor of the peace, freedom, trust, and joy Christ freely gives. Even among believers, worry runs wild until it is tamed at the feet of Jesus. No amount of our serving or work or volunteer commitments alone can quench our soul’s thirst for God. In fact, with divided intentions, as Martha demonstrates, distracted serving will only add to our vexation and remove us from earshot of God’s voice.

Our greatest service to Him is yielding our undivided attention, unwavering obedience, and undeserving heart. We give God honor simply by trusting Him and listening to Him. Take a moment to breathe a sigh of relief, for you were not put on this earth with the fretful task of impressing God, nor anyone for that matter. Furthermore, we don’t earn God’s peace. His peace has already been abundantly poured out. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). We must instead seek the Prince of Peace, as Mary did, in order to receive such a gift.

We are told to cast our anxiety on Jesus our Lord because he cares for us, and He will Himself restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast (1 Peter 5:10). Whatever holds our joy captive and distresses our heart and mind are not of God but of the enemy of our soul, whose intent it is to divert our gaze from Jesus and rather entice our focus on exhausting affliction. “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him” (John 3:14-15). Like the Israelites who looked upon the uplifted bronze snake amidst their suffering, when we fix our gaze upon Christ, who is our heart’s guest of highest honor, we will have peace, and the voice of the enemy will be silenced.

“I have told you these things that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble.

But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Read the following passages:

Matthew 11:28-29

1 Peter 5:6-10

Joshua 1:9

Romans 12:2

Proverbs 3:5-6

Matthew 6:25-26, 31-32

Live it out:

- "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Mark 1:35. There is value in establishing a place of refuge free of distractions. Designate a place of refuge, and commit to daily seeking God in this place and finding peace and comfort in his presence.
- Rather than spend time inwardly focused on your worry, commit to outwardly expressing your trust in God. For example:
 - Join a small group
 - Commit to discipleship - meet with a mentor and commit to mentoring another
 - Share the gospel with someone