Lessons in Maturity

Meet With God
Studies for Groups, Families and Individuals

by Woodrow Kroll
Meet With God Series

Lessons in Maturity

Woodrow Kroll
Welcome

Welcome to this issue of *Meet With God*. We hope the lessons this month will draw you closer to each other in honesty and openness and motivate you to become a more mature Christian. We are excited to help raise your awareness of the opportunities we each have to strengthen the Body of Christ.

The biblical insights you are about to consider have been selected from the radio teaching ministry of Woodrow Kroll. We trust these lessons will provide an ongoing and encouraging extension of the ministry of Back to the Bible in your walk with Christ. You don’t have to listen to *Back to the Bible* to use your study booklet. But if you can listen, the study will be even more powerful.

We hope this series will not only encourage you to read the Bible, but also to study it. On the following pages you’ll find devotional readings, questions to help you review and meditate on Scripture passages, and practical suggestions for applying the truth of the Bible to your everyday living.

Our prayer is that as you use the *Meet With God* series you will experience rich dividends of biblical knowledge and spiritual growth.
God designed the family to provide a safe place for us to mature. When we enter the family of God, we are expected to mature within the Body of Christ. God calls us to collectively long for the “solid food” of the Word as we grow in our Christian faith (1 Cor. 3:1–3; Heb. 5:12–13). The following devotionals challenge us to embrace that greater maturity, both individually and collectively as members of Christ’s Body.

Through this month we will be called to live by a higher standard. We will take greater responsibility for our fellow family members and seek to enter into a more honest relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. And finally, when we have been stretched and strengthened, we will end our study with a message of hope.

I am excited about the lessons we will learn together these next weeks. I believe that through our openness and willingness to grow, the whole Body will be strengthened. And so it is my prayer that we will each experience the kind of maturity that pleases God.
Week One

This week, choose to fulfill your responsibilities as a member of God’s family.

All in the Family

Key Passage: Read 1 Samuel 15

So Samuel said, “When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?” (1 Sam. 15:17).

Israel might have crowned its first king, but the new monarch, Saul, didn’t wholeheartedly accept the position. He even hid during his anointing ceremony (1 Sam. 10:22). Ultimately, Saul’s reluctance to assume his role as king could be traced back to the fact he misjudged his own worth in God’s eyes.

We might mistake such an attitude as godly humility. In reality, however, Saul’s attitude of “unworthiness” gave him an excuse to live below God’s standard. Throughout his reign, he continually disobeyed God (1 Sam. 15:11). His mindset hindered him from taking action. When he was faced with important decisions, he failed (1 Sam. 13:9). Because he refused to accept his unique standing in God’s kingdom, he skirted his earthly responsibility as head of Israel’s kingdom.

As Christians, we often fall into Saul’s mindset. When we put our faith in Christ, we become God’s children. Our amazing

Remember It

Answer the following questions on the passage you read this week. See answers below.

1. God told Saul to destroy
   a. the Amalekite men and women
   b. the Amalekite children
   c. the Amalekite animals
   d. all of the above

2. Saul and the people destroyed all of the sheep of the Amalekites.
   True/False

3. Saul said that the best of the animals were spared in order to ________ them to God.

4. Samuel said that it is better to ________ God than give Him sacrifices.

5. Samuel killed Agag, king of the Amalekites.
   True/False

Answers:

1. d (1 Sam. 15:3)
2. False (1 Sam. 15:9)
3. sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:21)
4. obey (1 Sam. 15:22)
5. True (1 Sam. 15:33)
position in God’s family requires us to live by a standard set by God. *It’s time we start living by that standard.* Saul really didn’t accept his kingly role, so he didn’t act like a king. Likewise, when we don’t accept our true role as God’s children, it becomes easier to neglect the responsibilities that go along with the position.

It’s not prideful to stand up and be counted as a completely redeemed child of God. In God’s eyes, you are His perfect child. Jesus’ sacrifice secured that position for you. Refusing this gift only causes you to miss out on your true mission in life. This kind of false humility is *not* acceptable to God.

Is there a discrepancy between the way you act and your true role as God’s child? When others gossip, lie or cheat, do you join in? Like Saul, you will experience tension as others ask you to settle for the lifestyle of the world’s family instead of the lifestyle of the redeemed. It’s your responsibility to rise above and live as God’s child. *That’s who you are.*

**Apply It**

What experiences have caused you to feel like you’re not accepted in God’s family? Write down several and ask God to give you greater peace and assurance as a redeemed child.

**Express It**

Lord God, how often I let the world make me think I’m less than what You made me to be. I know that I am Your child. I know You’ve given me an important commission in this world. Transform my attitude so that I am effective in all I say and do. Let me stand strong in Your love, Jesus, as I reach out to others.
Week Two

This week, we’ll see how to balance our public ministries with our private ministry to our family.

Our Greatest Ministry

Key Passage: Read 1 Samuel 2

But [Samuel’s] sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice (1 Sam. 8:3).

Even the best families suffer the heartache of “prodigal” children. The prodigal son in Jesus’ parable had an excellent father. A great number of modern and historic spiritual leaders have struggled with wayward kids. Old Testament patriarchs such as Eli, Samuel and David all raised children who turned out vastly different from themselves (1 Sam. 2:12; 8:1–5; 2 Sam. 12:11). Indeed, no parent can be blamed for all their children’s actions. However, the public success and private dysfunction in some of the Bible’s most prominent families should give us warning.

Men such as King David were called to lead the Israelites into a greater relationship with God. These leaders were dynamic. Their ministries were literally miraculous. Yet their lack of communication with their own children resulted in disastrous outcomes. For example, the unchecked sins of Eli’s sons caused God to condemn Eli’s entire family line. David’s son Absalom led a nationwide

Remember It

Answer the following questions on the passage you read this week. See answers below.

1. Each year Hannah would make Samuel a __________.
2. Samuel was Hannah’s only child. True/False
3. God asked Eli why he honored his __________ more than God.
4. Eli had a son named a. Hophni b. Samuel c. Phinehas d. both a and c
5. God told Eli that his sons would both die on the same day. True/False

Answers:
1. robe/coat (1 Sam. 2:19)
2. False (1 Sam. 2:21)
3. sons (1 Sam. 2:29)
4. d (1 Sam. 2:34)
5. True (1 Sam. 2:34)
rebellion against his father. Samuel’s sons’ perversion of justice caused Israel to forsake the priesthood and seek an earthly king. History reminds us that the strongest public ministries cannot substitute for the important ministry we have to our families.

In 1 Timothy 3:4–5, the apostle Paul repeatedly stressed to his young disciple Timothy that deacons could not hope to lead the Church if they lacked leadership over their own families. When our families fall second in priority to our public ministry or job, we actually succeed in weakening the Body of Christ in the place where we have the most influence—our homes.

As your children become adults, their failures and successes will be their own. They will no longer be under your control or responsibility. However, when they are still children, you have a unique time to minister to them as God ministers to you, that is, as an intimate friend and teacher who is willing to spend time with you one on one.

**As you read through 1 Samuel 2, reflect on the following questions:**

1. How did Eli’s sons pervert the expected roles and privileges of God’s priests?
2. What specific verses give evidence to Eli’s poor fathering skills?
3. What preventative measures could Eli have taken to save his sons?
4. How did Eli hold his sons in greater importance than God (v. 29)?

**Apply It**

What children (your own or others) do you have influence with? What lessons can they learn from your life?

**Express It**

Lord Jesus, I too often use busyness as my excuse. I end up sacrificing quality time with my family. Please help me change my perspective. I want to put more energy into my most important ministry—the one I have to my family.
Week Three

This week, be honest about your faults and allow Christ’s strength to lead you.

Gracious Honesty

Key Passage: Read Matthew 1

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor. 12:9).

The Bible has often been called the most honest book ever written. The ancestry of Jesus listed in Matthew chapter one offers some compelling evidence: Compared with a typical king’s lineage, Jesus’ line contains none of the victorious conquerors whose exaggerated exploits would bolster the royal bloodline. In fact, a mere glance down Jesus’ family tree reveals a significant shortage of heroes.

Instead, Matthew records a somewhat embarrassing list of ordinary people. Ancestral “giants” such as David and Abraham have their failures vividly depicted right alongside their successes. Villains such as Manasseh and Ahaz also make the list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Bible’s transparent honesty, especially related to its most central character, gives us incredible insight into our own

Remember It

Answer the following questions on the passage you read this week. See answers below.

1. Ruth is listed in the genealogy of Jesus. True/False

2. Which of the following people are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus?
   a. Bathsheba
   b. Obed
   c. Sarah
   d. both a and b

3. Rehoboam was the son of ________________.

4. The angel told Joseph what to name Jesus. True/False

5. Immanuel means “_________ with us.”

Answers:

1. True (Matt. 1:5)
2. d (Matt. 1:5–6)
3. Solomon (Matt. 1:7)
4. True (Matt. 1:21)
5. God (Matt. 1:23)
standing in the Body of Christ. Obviously, the Messiah was not hindered by the human traits and failures of His lineage. Nor is His truth lessened by our imperfections as His followers. The power of the Gospel is based on the righteousness of Christ.

While we may accept this fact initially, how easily we forget it! Especially when prominent Christians fall into scandal, we’re quick to hang our heads in embarrassment and hopelessness. But what is a true Christian response?

We should not be disheartened when Christians make huge blunders—God can still use their lives, just like He continues to use ours. Besides, the Truth can never be smothered by our sins—instead God’s mercy and strength proves greater when we recognize our faults. Failures ought to drive us toward prayer for one another.

How would the world be changed if Christians stopped hiding their weaknesses from the rest of the Body of Christ? Be open to Christ and other Christians about your failures and successes. Jesus is not looking for your perfection—He’s waiting for your brokenness.

As you read through Matthew 1, reflect on the following questions:

1. Who do you feel is the most surprising person in Christ’s family tree? Why?
2. What women does Matthew feature in Jesus’ family tree?
3. What is the significance of Jesus’ relation to both Abraham and King David?

Apply It

How often do you honestly share your weaknesses with other brothers and sisters? Join a Bible study or find a mentor with whom you can be completely honest.

When you come in contact with unbelievers, do not fake perfection or righteousness. This only makes Christians look like hypocrites when we inevitably fail. Instead, think about ways you can display honesty, perseverance, mercy and forgiveness throughout your daily tasks.

Express It

Lord Jesus, I am amazed how You can still use normal, sinful people like me for Your Kingdom! Teach me to boast, like Paul, in my weaknesses that I may be strengthened in Your power. May I be merciful with the faults of others as You are merciful with my own shortcomings.
This week, we will see the importance of living out our hope in Christ.

Living Your Hope

Key Passage: Read 1 Peter 1

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

Throughout the course of a year, our hopes can range from the critical to the mundane. I hope it doesn’t rain. I hope I get a raise. Yet, in the end, what’s the use of hoping in something we have little or no control over? With all of our hopes, what is the significance of having hope in Christ? Is the living hope that Peter mentions above different from all the other hopes we experience in our lives?

Unlike our everyday hopes, the hope we experience as Christians is living because it is based upon a life—the eternal and resurrected life of Christ. Even more, Paul describes Christ as our literal hope (1 Tim. 1:1). Thus, all hope placed in Him will never pass away. Along with faith and love, hope is one of the three things that will last forever (1 Cor. 13:13). Yet why is hope so important for Christians? Is it reasonable to expect that we can live each day with this kind of living hope?

Remember It

Answer the following questions on the passage you read this week. See answers below.

1. We have a ___________ hope through Christ’s Resurrection.

2. Our inheritance in Christ will never perish.
   True/False

3. God judges each person’s work without partiality.
   True/False

4. We are commanded to love each other with a ___________ heart.

5. Which of these will endure forever?
   a. grass
   b. flowers
   c. the word of the Lord
   d. man

   Answers:
   1. living/lively (1 Pet. 1:3)
   2. True (1 Pet. 1:4)
   3. True (1 Pet. 1:17)
   4. sincere/pure (1 Pet. 1:22)
   5. c (1 Pet. 1:24–25)
First, we must recognize how our hope in Christ is intricately woven into our faith. The book of Hebrews defines faith as the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (11:1, emphasis added). Hope, like faith, is only as strong as that which we place our hope in. Our hope is powerful because it is based on Jesus’ sacrifice.

Our hope is also a living hope because it is something that we are able to “live out” in our daily walk. Hope is the most transparent attitude we can have. It is looking forward to a promise fulfilled. It is our excited expectation in Christ’s return. Therefore, we should always be ready to explain our hope to anyone who asks (1 Pet. 3:15).

As you live out your hope, others will see its transforming power in your life. Your hope in Christ is different from the world’s hopes. It’s eternal. It is based on faith. It is living. Don’t be afraid to share it with others. If you’re living hopefully, they will probably ask!

As you read through 1 Peter 1, reflect on the following questions:

1. What inheritance do Christians hope to receive from God?
2. How did the Old Testament prophets place their hope in Christ?
3. According to this passage, our hope in Christ should result in what actions?
4. Why should we put our hope in the word of the Lord (v. 25)?

Apply It

Hebrews 10:23 reminds us that God can be trusted to keep His promise so our hope is not in vain. How do you personally show others your hope in Christ? What causes you to lose hope? Think about what you will say the next time someone asks you about the reason for your hope. Are you ready to share about Jesus?

Express It

Lord Jesus, I don’t want my life to be based on the fluctuations of circumstances or moods each day. I want my hope to be in You and Your never-ending love for me! Thank You for being worthy and strong enough for my hope. I look forward with excitement to the time when we will be together.
Remember to Pray for:

- Family
- Friends
- Pastor
- Missionaries
- Government Officials
- Salvation of Unbelievers
- Back to the Bible
- Christians Worldwide
- Revival
Additional Scriptures for Study

Luke 8:14–15
2 Corinthians 7:1
Ephesians 1:15–19
Ephesians 4:14–15
Philippians 3:12
Colossians 1:9–12
Colossians 3:8–10
Hebrews 6:1–2
Hebrews 12:12–16
James 1:2–4
1 Peter 2:2
2 Peter 3:8

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We all need to grow up sometime.

And that goes for our Christian life too. When we enter the family of God, we are expected to mature within the Body of Christ. God calls us to collectively long for the “solid food” of the Word as we grow in our Christian faith.

This study will challenge us to embrace that greater maturity. As a result we will not only be stretched and strengthened individually, but also collectively as members of Christ’s Body.
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