

## ☞ Making the Most of Church - Level Up

Review:

**Making the Most of Church – Look Ahead...** prepare; come expecting

**Making the Most of Church – Lean In...** press in and participate

There are basically three kinds of people in the church:

The Critic; The Consumer; The Contributor

☞ **The Critic** sits on the sidelines and basically does nothing but evaluate everyone else. This person is constantly looking for faults in others. They tend to be negative about everything. It's one thing to offer helpful suggestions when you're knee deep in the situation, but it's entirely another to never offer a hand while you just pick things apart.

Philippians 2:14-15

Do everything without complaining or arguing, **15** so that you may become blameless and pure...

☞ **The Consumer** is the one who focuses on themselves. "What do you have to offer me?" "What's in it for me?" "I'll come to church as long as it meets my needs."

--Charles Kingsley... *If you wish to be miserable, think much about yourself; about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you, and what people think of you.*

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. **4** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

☞ **The Contributor** is the one who is concerned for others. They want to serve and offer a helping hand.

*God didn't call you into the vineyard to eat grapes but to get busy and weed.*

Sometimes we think being a Christian is only about faith, but in reality, the Lord is also very concerned about the things we do.

*Ten ways to get rid of the blues: Go out and do something for someone else--then repeat nine times.*

To make the most of church, be a contributor rather than a consumer or a critic.

☞ **Ephesians 4:11-16**

## To Make the Most of Church we need to Level Up

Babies are cute and lovable, but they're supposed to grow. The Bible uses a variety of words to describe believers... newborn baby, infant, little child, child, and son. In the scriptures I see **5 levels of maturity...**

☞ **Level 1. Newborn Believer** - brephos is used 8 times in the NT = "an unborn child," or, a newborn child

1 Peter 2:2-3

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

☞ To newborn infants, mom and dad are just friendly voices. There's **new life**, but it has yet to come into its own. Spiritually, this is the very new believer. They are especially ☞ **dependent on others** and need the Scriptures like a newborn needs regular feedings.

If this is you, read your Bible often. I would also encourage you to connect with someone who is more mature in the faith and spend time with them. Don't be satisfied here, but continue to grow! God has a lot more for you.

*Sign in the church nursery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*

☞ **Level 2. Baby Believer** - nepios is used 14 times in the NT = "without the power of speech," denotes an infant or "a little child"

*Someone has described a baby as a digestive apparatus with a loud noise at one end and no responsibility at the other.*

☞ **Unstable** (*babies can't even hold their heads up straight*)

Ephesians 4:14

...infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

☞ **Worldly**

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 says that infant believers are still worldly and not ready for the deeper parts of the word.

☞ **Slow to learn**

Hebrews 5:11-14 says exactly that, and then suggests that some are infants who need the elementary truths of God's word all over again.

Babies don't do much, but eat and sleep. For this believer, God is not much more than someone to cry at. Baby believers have many needs, and require a lot of attention. They

☞ **need guidance.** This believer is still led primarily by worldly ways of thinking and behaving. Unfortunately, this describes a significant percentage of church goers today. Don't settle! Keep on growing.

☞ **Level 3. Toddler Believer** - paidion is used 51 times in the NT = "a little or young child"

Matthew 18:2

He called a little child and had him stand among them.

*---James C. Dobson... A child between eighteen and thirty-six months of age is a sheer delight, but he can also be utterly maddening. He is inquisitive, short-tempered, demanding, cuddly, innocent, and dangerous at the same time. I find it fascinating to watch him run through his day, seeking opportunities to crush things, flush things, kill things, spill things, fall off things, eat horrible things - and think up ways to rattle his mother.*

*Property Laws of a Toddler:*

- 1. If I like it, it's mine.*
- 2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.*
- 3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.*
- 4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.*
- 5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.*
- 6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.*
- 7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.*
- 8. If I saw it first, it's mine.*
- 9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.*
- 10. If it's broken, it's yours.*

☞ **Falls easily** (going back to old ways)

In John 21 Peter decided to go back to fishing and some of the other disciples joined him. In the morning the resurrected Jesus called from the shore and called them "children."

☞ **Self-focused**

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants (nepios), but in your thinking be adults.

Babies learn to say Momma and Dadda, but very often their next word is "mine." For toddlers there are many new things to explore. They are constantly learning new things – walking, talking... Mom and Dad frequently have to say "no" at this stage. This age requires a lot of attention, mostly to keep them out of trouble. Even though they are learning they make a lot of messes. This stage also includes basic learning... ABC's and 1,2,3's. You can see the parallels to the spiritual stage here. Believers at this stage are very

☞ self-focused and often fall backward, but can get back on track. They are **learning to walk steadily with the Lord**. Here's another stage with a high percentage of believers.

Toddlers are cute, but we expect them to grow up. If you're a Toddler Believer, and gaining understanding of the Scripture and spiritual gifts, be sure to listen to your mentors. Pay attention to their warnings and be careful not to fall away.

☞ **Level 4. Student Believer** - teknon is used 100 times in the NT

This is much like pre-teens and teenagers. Here, the child is becoming more and more adult-like. They are developing their own preferences and their skills and talents are becoming more and more clear. There is more freedom since this age is able to take care of themselves to a significant degree.

John 1:12

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

☞ **Becoming pure** (*pre-teens learn personal hygiene; also deal with hormonal changes*)

Ephesians 5:8-9

you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

☞ **Growing in obedience** (*not only when parents discipline them*)

1 Peter 1:14

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

At this age, expectations from parents and others are higher. Beliefs may be challenged at this level as they begin to think for themselves, not always relying on mom and dad's ☞ views. Here, the believer is **genuinely learning** to understand right from wrong, to be obedient to the Lord, and to live a life of love.

Rather than needing a list of "do's and don'ts," this believer just wants to please the Lord and can find answers in the Scriptures for themselves. This believer is much more stable and less likely to waver when troubles come. However, like many teenagers, the danger here is to think you have everything you'll ever need and that you know all there is to know. If this is you, keep on going! **It's easy to think you have "arrived" at this stage, ☞ but there is still more.**

1 John 3:2

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him...

Mr. Goldblatt," announced little Joey, "there's somethin' I can't figger out." "What's that Joey?" asked Goldblatt. "Well accordin' to the Bible, the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, right?" "Right." "An' the Children of Israel beat up the Phillistines, right?" "Er--right." "An' the Children of Israel built the Temple, right?" "Again, you're right." "An' the Children of Israel fought the 'gyptians, an' the Children of Israel fought the Romans, an' the Children of Israel wuz always doin' somethin' important, right?" "All that is right, too," agreed Goldblatt. "So, what's your question?" "What I wanna know is this," demanded Joey. "What wuz all the grown-ups doin'?"

☞ **Level 5. Graduate Believer** - huiois is used 386 times in the NT = "a son,"; one who is a disciple of someone, with the implication of being like the one whom he follows

Matthew 5:9

☞ **peacemakers**, ...will be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:44-45

☞ **Love your enemies** and **pray for those who persecute you**, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

Romans 8:14

☞ ... those who are **led by the Spirit** of God are sons of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-6

You are all sons of the light and sons of the day... let us not be like others, who are ☞ asleep, but let us be **alert and self-controlled**.

Hebrews 12:7

☞ **Endure hardship** as discipline; God is treating you as sons.

Revelation 21:7

☞ He who **overcomes** will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

In the early levels, the child is learning to distinguish between right and wrong. In the next couple of levels, the child learns to do right because of the discipline that reinforces positive behavior. But, the mature son does what is right because it is in his heart to be that way.

This is the stage when the child becomes an adult. It's when parents can release their kids because they are grown up and are ready to come into their own. There is a lot more freedom, along with a lot more responsibility. The child is becoming much more like the parents. They think for themselves. They are now using their talents and skills to make a living. At this stage, parents are more like advisors.

☞ The believer at this level of development is **walking in true maturity**. They are led by the Spirit, self-controlled, and filled with the nature of Christ. They know how to handle troubles and they are truly overcoming evil. This is what we all want to become!

### **Let's Level Up!**

*Anne Frank - Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.*

☞ **How to level up:** Contrary to the natural growth we all experience, spiritual growth only comes as we **read His word, listen to His spirit and obey Him**. The amount of time we have been a Christian, or our physical age doesn't necessarily have any bearing on what level we are at spiritually.

God deals with us differently at various stages just like a parent does with their children. To become mature sons and have Him say as He did to Jesus, "this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased," we will have to go through the maturing and refining process.

☞ **We must "walk as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6.**

*Leonard Ravenhill tells about a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village who walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked, "Were any great men born in this village?" The old man replied, "Nope, only babies." A frothy question brought a profound answer. There are no instant heroes--whether in this world or in the kingdom of God. Growth takes time, and even spiritual leadership must be earned.*

### **Let's Level Up!**

☞ **Video: Fat Baby**