

Expectational Education, Part 2 | The Importance of Maturity

I. Physical Maturity

- Physical Maturity is a biological measure of the individual's age.
- There's a widespread misunderstanding that a person becomes more overall mature as they become more physically mature. This is due to the fact that—for the longest time—the only factor that was considered in regard to maturity was how old the person was.
- Biblically speaking, Physical Maturity carries with it one Inherent Expectation. The Scriptures are clear that older people should be respected. Proverbs 23:22; Lamentations 5:12; I Timothy 5:1-2
- But what do we do with Job 12:12? This is a proverbial truth. Obviously that's the way it's supposed to work. The Bible is clear that we are to be conformed into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another, and as that happens over time, as our bodies age, we should be maturing in other ways as well. But just because it's supposed to work that way, and just because there are examples that it does work that way, it doesn't mean that it will always work that way or that it has to work that way.
- We shouldn't pretend that Physical Maturity has *absolutely no effect* on a person's ability to learn. But we need to dispossess ourselves of the notion that physical age is a significant variable when it comes to learning most things in this world. The vast majority of daily truth need not be compartmentalized into grades.

II. Cognitive Maturity

- Whereas Physical Maturity is a biological measure of the individual's age, Cognitive Maturity is a biological measure of the individual's brainpower.
- According to the Oxford Dictionary, cognition is “the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.” Cognitive Maturity deals with our brains and how we acquire knowledge.
 - Storage Capacity - We're not sure if everyone's brains have the same storage capacity as everyone else's. Even if it can be proven that we all have the same capacity, that doesn't change the fact that some people clearly have access to more of it.
 - Computing Speed - Let's say that two people possess the same information, but one person can access that information much quicker than the other. That is going to be a benefit to the one who processes their stored knowledge faster. When it comes to measuring a person's Cognitive Maturity there are any number of methods to utilize, the most common of which involves testing retention, recall, and systematization.
- Cognitive Maturity is not the end all to end all. We can't stop here and say, “Well, we figured it out. We need to focus on Cognitive Maturity if we want our kids to learn the best they can.” I will say that's part of the answer. Strengthening the brain is a very important and wise thing to do, but in the larger discussion of Expectational Education, it's not the most important form or maturity.

III. Spiritual Maturity

- Contrary to popular belief, the mind is not the brain. The mind is not merely a process of the physical organ called the brain. When God created Adam, He designed a body and breathed into that body a spirit. The Scriptures are abundantly clear that the totality of the human soul is the unity of the physical body and the immaterial spirit. It is of this spirit that the Bible is talking when it refers to the heart and the mind of a person. Romans 8:6; Ephesians 4:23
- Man is a dichotomy of body and spirit. The spirit is the immaterial part of man that secular scientists refer to as the mind. It is the very core of a man.

- Whereas Physical Maturity is a biological measure of the individual's age, and Cognitive Maturity is a biological measure of the individual's brainpower, Spiritual Maturity is a *biblical* measure of the individual's *wisdom*.
- There are no biological tests for a person's spiritual/mental maturity—none. And even though the World has created various secular, cognitive tests to measure Mental Maturity, most of them fail because of their foundational philosophies. They ignore what the Bible says constitutes maturity, and they often advocate that very unbiblical traits as the marks of maturity.
- Biblically speaking, the basic criteria of a person's maturity is how wise they are. Wisdom is defined as taking what one knows and understands and using it in his or her life in a Christ-honoring way. It's our Cognitive Maturity that relates to what we know and understand, but it's our Spiritual Maturity that will determine if we use that knowledge and understanding in the right ways. Therefore, we could say that since wisdom is identical to godliness, and we should say that wisdom is the measure of how godly someone is. The more an individual submits themselves to the general and specific revelation of God, the more mature they are.
- When it comes to education, the Spiritual Maturity is the part that does problem solving. Problem solving is inherently the application of knowledge to a problem. Therefore, it's not our Cognitive Maturity that helps us solve problems, it's our Spiritual Maturity. Therefore, an educational approach that believes that increased cognitive ability is the key to better living is completely wrong. Yes, cognitive ability will help us learn more and access that information faster, but it doesn't guarantee we'll use it correctly as we face problems in our lives.
- Romans 1:18-23 - These individuals had the cognitive knowledge and understanding, but they lacked the spiritual wisdom to use that knowledge to worship God instead to their own inventions.
- Our world has proven itself to be immature in the field of education because it has too broad and general an understanding of maturity. They believe that a child's physical age dictates what they're capable of learning. But we need to do better than that.
- We need to understand that we, our kids, and our friends should be maturing in our cognitive abilities. We should be regularly adding to our wealth of knowledge, and we should be learning to better access that knowledge. So, yes, your educational approach needs to have Appropriate High Expectations for your child or student's Cognitive Maturity.
- But ultimately, the ability for anyone to truly benefit from their education, they need to internalize the Appropriate High Expectations and use them wisely to God's honor and glory. They need to mature mentally, to mature spiritually.
- These core concepts of expectations and maturity are the foundation stones of Expectational Education. We need to understand the power (both destructive and constructive) of expectations as well as understand that expectations are powerless in the hands of immature people.