

Growing Towards Christian Maturity

Lessons learned from the book of James

Lesson Eleven: **Mature Christians Resemble Christ**

Today is our last lesson in our Growing Towards Christian Maturity series. It has been a good series and I pray that you have greatly benefited from it.

Let's turn to the book of James and read James 1:27 together:

***“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this,
To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep
himself unspotted from the world.”***

As women that desire to grow in our Christian faith, the Bible is reminding us in this verse that our desire should be to impress God, and not just others, with our behavior. This is something that many Christian folks often forget. This verse also tells us the two characteristics that most impress God in a Christian's behavior: mercy and holiness. This doesn't surprise me, for these are two of our Lord Jesus' most outstanding qualities.

What does it mean to have mercy? The Webster's Dictionary defines it as this: *To have compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power; compassionate treatment of those in distress (works of ~ among the poor).* James 1:27 specifically mentions the mercy shown to the fatherless and widows. What does this verse tell us that we should do as an act of Christian compassion to help them? It says to visit them. This means to spend time with them. Call them. Go see them. Help them financially with their needs. I immediately think of Dawn Smith and her family and how they have reached out and taken in Tabitha and Dale and the girls. That is a beautiful picture of the mercy that God wants developed in every Christian believer's life.

Let's look at some verses that talk about showing mercy:

- Psalm 106:1
- Proverbs 14:31
- Ephesians 2:4-7

God is a merciful God. He is always ready to help and forgive, and as we grow to become more like Christ, these are two things that we will desire to do more and more as well.

What does it mean to be holy? Webster's Dictionary defines to be: *“exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness.”* James 1:27 teaches us that the best way to become like this is to keep ourselves from being spotted by the world. How can we become “spotted” by the world? What can we do to keep ourselves from being spotted by it?

Let's look at some verses that talk about how to become holy:

- I Peter 1:13-16
- Deuteronomy 10:12-13
- Ecclesiastes 12:13
- Romans 12:1-2
- I John 2:15-16

Becoming a merciful and holy Christian is an act of the will, isn't it? It's something that each one of us can become if we will determine in our hearts and minds to become more like Christ and less like our natural selves. May God encourage each one of us to desire to grow in our Christian walk so that we may become Christian who resemble the Lord Jesus Christ.