



REFLECTION GUIDE

WHAT IS MATURITY?

Self Knowledge + Self Mastery = Maturity
→ **Becomes Self-Gift to Another**

Maturity is the solid foundation on which any relationship can be built, and yet it is the work of a lifetime. It can feel like there is always another goal to achieve in your work, relationships, health, hobbies, or appearance, but this work of maturity is different. **It's not about what you do, it's about who you are.**

There is no more joyful experience than to be exactly who you are called to be at this moment. It makes you incredibly FREE.

This reflection guide is meant to help you become more fully alive in Christ as the unique YOU whom God has loved and planned for all eternity. How exciting is that? Self-reflection is not easy, but think of it as the mountain climb that comes before standing at the peak. Don't we all want this perspective from the peak? We have to start with the foundation.

The only solid rock on which to build a life and a marriage is Jesus Christ. We make this rock our foundation by personally accepting and acknowledging ourselves as we are and surrendering this "self" to Him. When we do this, our lives are an intelligible whole, not disintegrated or haphazard, divided into categories, or unstable as if built on shifting sand. When you perceive this confusion or fragmentation, it's time to dig deep, and ask why, and then to return to the solid rock of your identity in Christ.

The mature human being is rooted in the truth and love (Eph. 4:10), and a "new creation" in Christ. Growth in maturity is difficult because of our sin and wounds, but is possible to attain through openness to grace. The Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts to make us more like Christ! Through Him, we are able to become fully alive and develop habits that free us to be more available to love.

This tool is meant to help you to reflect and feel grounded on this solid

foundation, as well as equip you to explore areas of growth. However, you are not alone on this journey. Be sure to find at least one other person whom you can be honest with about your personal growth. There is a small group tool available from the Marriage and Family Life Office to help you discuss these topics with some friends. If you would like the discussion guide, email us at familylife@columbuscatholic.org.

LEARNING MATURITY FROM OUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

"Psychologically speaking, maturity is inseparable from creative productiveness."

"Productive capacity is recognized by psychologists as important, but even more so the gift of productivity in being speaks to the wholeness of the individual."

-- Fr. Augustine Hennessy C.P.

The fullness of maturity is found in fatherhood and motherhood, whether that is in a physical or spiritual way. We are all called to this as adults! When we imagine our lives, we want to be a gift for others like this. Reflect on what you have received in this regard, and how you might be called to be a gift.

In what ways have you benefited from the experience of motherhood or fatherhood (physical or spiritual) in your life? You can also reflect on what you have observed about motherhood and fatherhood in others. Men, write some adjectives or phrases that describe your experience of fatherhood; women, write some adjectives or phrases that describe your experience of motherhood.

After that, here are some personal reflection questions on your answers:

1. Do you embody those adjectives or phrases you listed? Do you want to?
2. Why is maturity defined as the ability to authentically give yourself?
3. How has your experience of love in your family prepared you or not prepared you well for relationships as an adult?

4. In what ways has your family culture prepared you for mature ways of thinking and living? Where did this formation in maturity fall short? Use the list below for help:

- Financial skills
- Personal development
- Spiritual growth
- Intellectual development
- Practical life skills

5. To fill in these gaps, is there anyone in your family you can ask to help you grow financially, personally, spiritually, intellectually, or practically? Or is there someone else in your life from whom you can seek mentoring in this area?

6. How are you called to be a gift to those around you *right now*?

WHAT FOUNDATION ARE YOU BUILDING?

“So, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted in him and built upon him and established in the faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

-- Colossians 2:7

*“If you want to be holy, if you seek meaning in your life, start looking into your own life and attacking your pride in all of its many forms. God will give you extraordinary light and the ultimate reward of holiness. For your holiness relies not on what you do, but on what you allow God to do through you. **Have courage, God will perfect you.**”*

-- Mother Angelica

As we allow the truth of God’s love to give us roots, we recognize areas of our life that are not compatible with the true identity of a child of God. Discerning the areas of pride in our lives is difficult because we have to admit areas of weakness, but it ultimately leads to greater freedom and strength in Christ. We can realize with gratitude that God is doing extraordinary work in us!

Many times, these areas of pride stunt our growth and make it more

difficult to love. Some common ways pride shows up and stunts our maturity are listed in the chart below. These make it difficult to surrender to the demands of love, which is the mark of maturity. The truths of our faith which speak life into these disorders of wounded man are also shown in the chart below.

When reading through the chart, ask yourself:

1. Are there any areas of my heart I have left unattended? How is Christ calling me to step out of my comfort zone? It can be difficult to do this self-reflection, but it can lead us to a place where we receive the healing and relationship with God that we long for. He wants to be with us in these parts of our hearts where we don’t want to go!
2. Where does He want to mature and heal you with His love? The remedies in the right column should be studied in Scripture, sought in prayer, and discussed with a spiritually mature individual. Ultimately these truths are not just meant to be embraced in the mind, but integrated into the whole of life.

Delays Maturity	Spiritually Maturing in Christ*
Fear	Experiencing the Fatherhood of God, and His providence in our lives.
Rebellion	Surrender to the unique call of God in our lives.
Artificiality	Rooting identity in who we are as redeemed and beloved sinners.
Egocentricity	Christ’s love for us as individuals; his love for every person.

These four qualities are noted by Rudolf Allers, a Catholic psychologist and contemporary of Sigmund Freud and Edith Stein.

**Note: When we boil it down, any behavior or thought process of ours that is less than mature is used to defend or forward our own pride and selfishness. We can work on these areas, but we also need to be aware that sometimes it’s not as simple as making different choices, and sometimes places of immaturity in us are underdeveloped for a reason. If there is past hurt, trauma, depression, or anything else that makes good choices more difficult, that is a reason to go to counseling.*

MATURITY IN DATING

Orienting all of life around Christ is the one foundation that allows the fullness of human maturity to exist. All our desires, activities, emotions, etc. become oriented as a gift rather than a form of protection or extension of ourselves. That is freedom, because we are not trapped in ourselves trying to make sense of our lives. We are truly free to see and love someone else for who they are. What better way is there to become a great spouse?

A relationship will only be as solid as the foundations of the individuals within the relationship, so any of the attributes of a healthy relationship listed below are not evidence of “the perfect person” but healthy growth toward true love as individuals.

In a relationship, maturity looks like:

- The ability to receive the other as he or she is, without seeking to change the person
- The motivation to keep growing individually and as a couple; the desire and ability to make needed changes
- Communicating needs, desires, emotions, etc. honestly
- The ability to evaluate what is truly good for the self, the other, and the relationship
- Maintaining one’s own relationship with God, relationships with others, and priorities
- Freedom from motivations based in fear or low self-worth in the relationship
- The ability to have a hard conversation or conflict while still communicating love for the other, and the ability to forgive and resolve tension
- Maintaining a good relationship with one’s family of origin while also protecting the boundaries of the relationship with the significant other
- The freedom to avoid using the relationship for pleasure/happiness, escape, social status, or validation of self

- Matching the level of emotional intimacy and physical affection to the level of trust, which are based on the commitment level (and not vice versa)
 - Mutuality in decisions
 - Disciplining the expression of emotion to be appropriate in intensity, timing, and communication
 - Taking responsibility for actions and individual growth through aspects of life where development is needed...and not taking on responsibility for the actions and emotions of others except as appropriate
 - Always growing in one’s identity as child of God through prayer
- a) Do any of these aspects of a mature relationship surprise you?
 - b) Which of these aspects is a strength for you? Which of these is the most difficult to put into practice?
 - c) Do you know any couples that have a relationship like this? How did they develop such a mature relationship?
 - d) Do you have someone in your life with whom you could discuss these aspects of maturity?
 - e) How does potentially being a father or mother with someone impact whom you choose to date? What qualities would you look for in a future parent to your children? What do you want your family culture to be like?

“MAN CANNOT FULLY
FIND HIMSELF, EXCEPT
THROUGH A SINCERE
GIFT OF HIMSELF.”

-- ST. JOHN PAUL II



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