

Christian Maturity

by Rick C. Howard

AN INDEPENDENT-STUDY TEXTBOOK

*Developed in Cooperation With
the Global University Staff*

Illustrations by Staff Artists



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THE CHRISTIAN SERVICE PROGRAM



This independent-study textbook is one of 18 courses (subjects) that make up the Christian Service Program. The symbol at the left is a guide for sequenced study. The Christian Service Program is divided into three units of six courses each. *Christian Maturity* is Course One in Unit One.

You may study this course by itself or study the entire series in proper sequence.

Study materials in the Christian Service Program are designed in a self-teaching format for Christian workers. This program will provide a student with the necessary Bible knowledge and skills for practical Christian service. These courses have been especially prepared for Christian workers in all nations and cultures.

ATTENTION

Please read the preliminary instructions for this course very carefully. By following the instructions, you should be able to achieve your goals for the course, and you should not have difficulty preparing for your unit student reports.

Course Introduction

Christian maturity is an ever-present goal for believers in Christ. This goal is to reach “the very height of Christ’s full stature” (Ephesians 4:13). Although no believer can reach total Christlikeness during earthly life, the Bible places it as the goal for every Christian. It is better to reach for a goal that is too high and gain much than to actually reach a goal that is too low and gain little. The very nature of the subject demands that this course be solidly based on the Bible. Constant reference to Scripture is made throughout the course.

The first part of the course presents *illustrations* of growth, emphasizing the growth of Jesus. Included also are descriptions of natural growth to illustrate spiritual growth. There is comment on hindrances and helps to spiritual advancement. Then, the course centers on *progress* in spiritual growth. Since maturing in Christ is a lengthy process, an effort is made to separate present goals for the believer from the more difficult future goals. It is emphasized that our progress includes cooperating with the Holy Spirit and sharing faith with others. Finally, *proofs* of Christian maturity are stressed. Increasing Christlikeness of the believer’s character and ministry are presented as evidences of spiritual growth, and the course ends with an emphasis on the transformation of the believer by the Holy Spirit.

The main purpose of the course is to help the student become more like Christ and to be encouraged to help others do the same thing. May the Lord bless you and help you to make progress toward maturity in Christ through the study of this course.

Course Description

Christian Maturity is an introductory study to the subject of the Christian’s growth. The study gives attention to the role of Christian service in the believer’s growth.

A biblical approach to the subject makes this course acceptable for use in an international audience. The course leads the student to constantly interact with the Word of God, which is the foundation for the study.

This course is practical in nature, pointing out how the student may progress toward Christlikeness in daily Christian living and service. Biblical illustrations of Christian growth and the Bible-centered lessons provide the student with material for use in his or her own Christian service.

Course Objectives

When you finish this course, you should be able to:

1. Explain the tendency toward growth inherent in spiritual life, allowing it to help you grow in Christ.
2. Relate spiritual maturity to daily life in such matters as distinction between good and evil and application of biblical messages.
3. Explain why a Christian cannot mature without fellowship with God.
4. Explain spiritual maturity in terms of completion and finishing as opposed to flawless perfection.
5. Describe the Holy Spirit’s role in our Christian maturity.

6. Explain personal experiences to analyze progress in the use of your will to improve yourself spiritually.
7. Experience greater Christian maturity through increased usefulness in ministry in the church and in helping others.

Textbooks

You will use *Christian Maturity: An Independent-Study Textbook* by Rick Howard as both the textbook and study guide for the course. The Bible (*Today's English Version*) is the only other requirement.

Study Time

How much time you actually need to study each lesson depends in part on your knowledge of the subject and the strength of your study skills before you begin the course. The time you spend also depends on the extent to which you follow directions and develop skills necessary for independent study. Plan your study schedule so that you spend enough time to reach the objectives stated by the author of the course and your personal objectives as well.

Lesson Organization and Study Pattern

Each lesson includes: (1) lesson title, (2) opening statement, (3) lesson outline, (4) lesson objectives, (5) learning activities, (6) key words, (7) lesson development including study questions, (8) self-test (at the end of the lesson development), and (9) answers to the study questions.

The lesson outline and objectives will give you an overview of the subject, help you to focus your attention on the most important points as you study, and tell you what you should learn.

Most of the study questions in the lesson development can be answered in spaces provided in this independent-study textbook. Longer answers should be written in a notebook. As you write the answers in your notebook, be sure to record the number and title of the lesson. This will help you in your review for the unit student report.

Do not look ahead at the answers until you have written your answer. If you give your own answers, you will remember what you study much better. After you have answered the study questions, check your answers with those given at the end of the lesson. Then correct those you did not answer correctly. The answers are not given in the usual numerical order so that you will not accidentally see the answer to the next question.

These study questions are very important. They will help you to remember the main ideas presented in the lesson and to apply the principles you have learned.

How to Answer Questions

There are different kinds of study questions and self-test questions in this independent-study textbook. Below are samples of several types and how to answer them. Specific instructions will be given for other types of questions that may occur.

A *MULTIPLE-CHOICE* question or item asks you to choose an answer from the ones that are given.

Example

- 1** The Bible has a total of
- a) 100 books.
 - b) 66 books.
 - c) 27 books.

The correct answer is *b) 66 books*. In your study guide, make a circle around *b)* as shown here:

- 1** The Bible has a total of a
- a) 100 books.
 - b) 66 books.
 - c) 27 books.

(For some multiple-choice items, more than one answer will be correct. In that case, you would circle the letter in front of each correct answer.)

A *TRUE-FALSE* question or item asks you to choose which of several statements are TRUE.

Example

- 2** Which statements below are TRUE?
- a The Bible has a total of 120 books.
 - b The Bible is a message for believers today.
 - c All of the Bible authors wrote in the Hebrew language.
 - d The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible.

Statements **b** and **d** are true. You would make a circle around these two letters to show your choices, as you see above.

A *MATCHING* question or item asks you to match things that go together, such as names with descriptions or Bible books with their authors.

Example

3 Write the number for the leader's name (right) in front of each phrase that describes something he did (left).

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| . 1 . . a | Received the Law at Mt. Sinai | 1) Moses |
| . 2 . . b | Led the Israelites across Jordan | 2) Joshua |
| . 2 . . c | Marched around Jericho | |
| . 1 . . d | Lived in Pharaoh's court | |

Phrases **a** and **d** refer to *Moses*, and phrases **b** and **c** refer to *Joshua*. You would write **1** beside **a** and **d**, and **2** beside **b** and **c**, as you see above.

Ways to Study this Course

If you study this course by yourself, all of your work can be completed by mail. Although this course has been designed for you to study on your own, you may also study it in a group or class. If you do this, the instructor may give you additional instructions besides those in the course. If so, be sure to follow the instructions.

Possibly you are interested in using the course in a home Bible study group, in a class at church, or in a Bible school. You will find both the subject content and study methods excellent for these purposes.

Unit Student Reports

At the end of the book, you will find the Unit Student Reports and Answer Sheets. Follow the directions included in the course and in the unit student reports. You should complete and send your answer sheets to your instructor or ICI office for correction and suggestions regarding your work.

If you are not studying through an ICI office, you will still benefit by answering the questions in the student report.

Certificate

Upon the successful completion of the course and the final grading of the student reports by your ICI instructor, you will receive your Certificate of Award.

About the Author

Rick C. Howard is a staff pastor of the Peninsula Christian Center in Redwood City, California. He was ordained by the Assemblies of God in 1961. He has served on the faculty of Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts; Evangel College, Springfield, Missouri; and Bethany College of the Assemblies of God in Scotts Valley, California. He has also served as National College Youth Representative for the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

In addition to his teaching and preaching experience, Rev. Howard has authored several books, including *The Judgment Seat of Christ*, *Strategy for Triumph*, *The Lost Formula of the Early Church*, and *Songs from Life*.

Mr. Howard earned his B.A. degree at Grove City College in Pennsylvania and his M.A. degree in history at Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee.

Your ICI Instructor

Your ICI instructor will be happy to help you in any way possible. If you have any questions about the course or the unit student reports, please feel free to ask the instructor. If several people want to study this course together, ask about special arrangements for group study.

God bless you as you begin to study *Christian Maturity*. May it enrich your life and Christian service and help you fulfill more effectively your part in the body of Christ.