

“Marriage is for Adults”

Hebrews 5:12-14

1. The two paths of Hebrews 5:12-14

A. Immature child: Lacks experience in doing the right thing.

- The issue isn't always knowledge but inability to put knowledge to effective use.
- Spiritual inability is often directly linked to emotional inability.

B. Mature adult: Trained to do the right thing.

- The key to maturity is not the quality of our past or our present – but training.
- Mature people choose to work hard to grow up emotionally and spiritually.

2. Character traits of immaturity vs. maturity [see back]

3. Choosing to grow up

A. Recommit to covenant.

B. Take personal ownership of your stuff and your growth.

C. Turn your heart toward your Abba to meet your deepest needs.

D. Engage in a healthy community where spiritual and emotional maturity is nurtured.

“Pain is inevitable; misery is optional.”

“Something happened to us a long time ago. It happened more than once. It hurt us. We protected ourselves the only way we knew how. We are still protecting ourselves. It isn't working anymore. It's time to heal...and grow up.”

Some signs that we may be stuck in emotional childhood:

- 1. No clear identity.** We are not sure who we are. This lack of identity creates a vacuum inside that longs to be filled – and often tries to be filled by sucking the life out of our spouse.
- 2. Shame-based thinking.** We don't "make mistakes", we feel like we "are a mistake". We experience profound sadness and hopelessness around our personhood. Sometimes we overcompensate for our shame by arrogance and pride. We often need constant approval and attention or we don't feel loved.
- 3. Codependency.** Our happiness is constantly dependent on the happiness of someone else – like our children, spouse or other family – and on things external to us, instead of what is going on inside of us. This codependency makes it very difficult to love...and be loved.
- 4. Control and over-responsibility.** An out of control childhood leads us to think that we must say "yes" to everything at work, home, and for our spouse or children – or life won't work. We cannot let go. At the same time we neglect proper self-care – exhausting us and leading us to "play the victim."
- 5. All or nothing thinking.** We live in the extremes. Life – and thus our marriage – is either awesome or horrible. Our spouse is either incredible or a demon. There is little gray and no balance.
- 6. High tolerance for inappropriate behavior.** The way we were raised left us not knowing a definition of "normal" or "appropriate" – so we end up with poor boundaries and an inability to hold anyone accountable – including our spouse.
- 7. Fear of abandonment.** If we were raised with a lack of safety and especially if we felt abandoned emotionally or physically – we may live with the constant fear that we will be abandoned again. This fear can lead to perfectionism, a demanding spirit, clinging behavior and general anxiety.
- 8. Difficulty in handling conflict.** Because we rarely saw conflict handled well as children, we don't know how to handle conflict in marriage. We run. We shut down. We are overly aggressive. We manipulate. But we struggle to stay present to the moment and work through the conflict to peace.
- 9. Difficulty with feelings.** Feelings are powerful gifts to help us fully experience life! But some of us don't know what they are. Or we stuff them. Or we don't know how to share them. Or they control us. But we aren't sure how to experience and share our feelings in a way that helps us in life...or marriage.
- 10. Addictive behavior.** We try to fill the emptiness by behavior that controls us in one way or another and disrupts our ability to share meaningful life with other human beings – let alone our spouse. Sometimes these are the common addictions to drugs, pornography, alcohol, etc. Sometimes they are the more subtle addictions that society applauds – like work, money, exercise, religion and success.