

MATURE- ish

Your mission from God, should you choose to accept it...

The MATURE*ish study provides a framework to equip you to pilot and monitor your spiritual advancement while on God's mission for your life. Use this book and study tools to mark your progress as you navigate your mission's flight plan. Use a possible course correction when you get off track and a Captain's Log to document your progress and help others with their journey. Then, with God in mission control, you can use this book to map a path forward, set at your own pace, as you reflect on your journey and navigate your spiritual growth in stages.

MATURE*ish unpacks ten spiritual and life stages, one for each week of study. You are encouraged to read that week's chapter before meeting with others. Then, in your group setting, watch the video from Pastor Bill on each stage that compliments the corresponding chapter of the book. At the end of each chapter, you'll find some questions to stimulate reflection, and hopefully, conversation with others who are on the journey with you. Take time to think, pray, discuss them, and trust God to help you grow. We hope you will accept your mission from God and grow to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Check out the Mature-ish Study at:
RightNowMedia.org



FOR GROUP LEADERS:

Each week of the study is ONE stage. A recommended structure for study is:

1. Encourage your group to read that week's chapter in advance of small group time
2. During the small group time, watch video from Pastor Bill together on teaching and deeper thought
3. Study the written explanation of stage for that week
4. Discuss the guiding questions called "Pilot's Flight Plan" and Course Correction together. For those members who have already completed this stage of spiritual maturity, use the Captain's Log to guide others on their journey at this stage for deeper application.

Ten Weekly Stage Lessons

- Week 1: Newborn
- Week 2: Infant
- Week 3: Toddler
- Week 4: Child
- Week 5: Preteen
- Week 6: Adolescent
- Week 7: Adult
- Week 8: Parent
- Week 9: Grandparent
- Week 10: Godparent



WEEK ONE: Newborn

Be born again and receive God's wonderful new life.

Opening: The experience of birth can be traumatic. We are helpless and depend on our parents for absolutely everything from day one of our existence. Earthly parents are far from perfect, but if you could design the perfect Dad, what characteristics would he have and why?

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. What do you recall about your Newborn stage of spiritual growth? How did you become a believer in the first place?
2. Why is a newborn drinking milk an appropriate metaphor for a new believer reading Scripture?
3. What's the difference between Scripture being "milk" for some people, and "solid food" for others? (See 1 Corinthians 3:1-3)
4. What were/are the habits in your life that require(d) you to seek God's cleansing?
5. How do you try to remain clean after God cleanses you?
6. What connections have you discovered between your love for God and your amount of love for fellow believers?
7. What kind of Christian "family" do you currently belong to? How do they support you in your desire to grow spiritually?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: Find a Bible that's easy to read and begin reading Luke. If it's only five minutes every day, start there.

Captain's Log

If you're helping a new believer grow, I suggest:

- Spend time together, and at least some of the time, without a specific agenda. Take the new believer with you every chance you get—to church, to sporting events, shopping, and anywhere else. Your loving presence means more than you can know.
- Read the Bible together, just a short passage, maybe from the Gospels, and talk about what each of you observe in the text.
- Pray together. Make connecting with God in prayer as natural and normal as your conversations with each other.



WEEK TWO: Infant

Infant: Receive nourishing care from your loving heavenly Father and other spiritual “parents” who want to help you grow.

Pilot’s Flight Plan

1. Recall two or three people who “mothered” you with spiritual TLC during different periods in your spiritual journey so far. Specifically, how did each person help you make progress?
2. Have you come across anything in Scripture that has moved you to tears or caused you to feel confusion or sorrow? What was it? Have you discussed it with anyone yet? Why or why not?
3. Consider David’s image of God collecting every tear in a bottle and recording each sorrow in a book. What does that say about God? How does that make you feel?
4. Do you keep a spiritual journal? If you do, what benefits are you seeing? If not, how could it help you in your ongoing journey of spiritual growth?

Course Correction

If you do only one thing, do this: find someone who will be a mentor or coach for you. It may be one of the most important connections you’ve ever made.

Captain’s Log

If you’re helping someone in this stage grow, I suggest:

- Use at least five affirmations for every correction (and shoot for ten to one).
- Share the troubles that make you cry or groan. This will normalize inevitable struggles we all experience, and you can explain how God has brought you through . . . eventually.
- Many people have experienced difficult family backgrounds and have a hard time believing God really loves them. Consider asking, “How did your parents express their love for you?” And listen. Really listen.



WEEK THREE: Toddler

Toddler- Learn to walk in faith and talk to God in prayer as you grow in community with God and others.

Opening: Even if you're not new to the Bible, the book can seem a bit daunting. It's very thick, over 1,000 pages long and full of stories about faraway lands with character names that are unfamiliar to many and difficult to pronounce. Think back to a time in your life or childhood when you struggled with something at the time that seemed complex. How did you overcome the initial difficulty?

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. On a scale of one (least) to 10 (most), how would you evaluate your current walk with God? Explain your answer. (Are you keeping in step with the Spirit? Do you walk in the way of love? Do you walk in light rather than darkness?)
2. What dangers might spiritual toddlers get into, now that they're capable of walking where they want to go rather than where the parent takes them?
3. What difficult or challenging Scriptures have you found recently in your Bible reading? To what extent are you bothered when you come across lengthy names or unfamiliar concepts?
4. Have you ever felt that God is disciplining you? If so, how did it make you feel? Do you understand that these disciplines are signs of God's love for you? Why is it essential to understand (if not appreciate) God's purpose for discipline?
5. What do you most need to do at this stage of your spiritual journey:
 - a. Stay curious?
 - b. Stay real?
 - c. Or stay at it?

Explain your response.

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: As you read the Bible, stay curious. In each passage, ask who, what, when, where, how, and why. You'll be surprised how much you notice!

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual toddler grow, I suggest:

- As you read the Bible with your friend, point out amazing things and ask great questions.
- Take your friend with you to serve.
- Celebrate every question he or she asks.



WEEK FOUR: Child

Child - Put knowledge into action. Obey God in active faith.

Opening:

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. What are some of your favorite songs from your childhood, Christian or not? How have they influenced your life?
2. When you read about Jesus' interactions with little children, how does it compare to how you were treated as a child? Explain.
3. Since becoming a believer, to what extent do you feel you have "clothed yourself in Christ?" What have you already done to clothe yourself, and what do you still need to do?
4. If a young person asks you to explain the connection between salvation and good works, how would you explain it?
5. Have you ever been stuck and unable to continue growing spiritually because you weren't obedient to something God had instructed you to do? What was the problem?
6. Do you feel stuck right now? If so, what do you need to do to continue your spiritual transformation?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: As you read this chapter, the Holy Spirit probably brought at least one thing to mind in which He wants you to obey. If there is more than one, choose one, determine how you'll obey, and then do it. Don't wait. Do it!

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual child grow, I suggest:

- In this stage, people are often very eager to please God. Help the person clarify how God is leading him or her to obey.
- Provide "easy on-ramps" of ways the person can pray, give, and serve
- Be sure to communicate that disobedience is significant, but God loves, forgives, restores, and redirects.



WEEK FIVE: Preteen

Preteen - Discover who you are: your identity in Christ, where you belong, and your destiny in fulfilling God's will.

Opening:

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. Can you recall a story or lesson you learned as a preteen that has been lodged in your mind all these years? Why do you think you've remembered it?
2. Have you ever shown favoritism to one Christian pastor or leader to the exclusion of all others? How can this problem be avoided or minimized?
3. What has God shown you so far regarding your:
4. Identity?
5. Community?
6. Purpose and Meaning (Destiny)?
7. In what ways, if any, does your spiritual Preteen stage compare with the account of Jesus at age twelve in Luke 2:41-51?
8. How well do you think you've completed your first five spiritual stages at this point? Are you ready to move on? If not, which stage do you feel needs additional information?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: Find someone who isn't surprised when you ask hard questions and ask them!

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual preteen grow, I suggest:

- Welcome all questions. Answer them with patience and thoroughness. If you don't know the answer, say, "I don't know, but let's find out together."
- At this stage, people can be very critical of some leaders and blind to the humanity of others. Help them see more objectively.
- Don't be the only source of wisdom and love for the spiritual preteen. Introduce him or her to other mature, loving people who can have a positive influence.



WEEK SIX: Adolescent

Adolescent - Develop. Suit up in spiritual armor, step into your spiritual warrior, and join the battle.

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. What was one of the biggest challenges you remember about going through your biological adolescence? What did you learn that you can apply to this stage of spiritual adolescence?
2. Review the "Armor of God" below that Paul described. Which items are you most confident of and comfortable with? Which piece(s) could use a little more attention to before you go into your next battle?
 - a. Salvation – the helmet
 - b. Righteousness – the breastplate
 - c. Truth – the belt
 - d. Peace – the footwear
 - e. Faith – the shield
 - f. Knowledge of the Word of God – the sword
3. When you find yourself spiritually stuck, do you tend to rebel? To become self-righteous? Or to grow through the stalled period? Explain.
4. How do you feel to be at a stage that will begin to involve more risk on your part? Why?
5. How would you explain to someone what it means to "step into your warrior?" Have you done that (or are you ready to) so you can move on to the next stage?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: Take some time to imagine putting on each piece of spiritual armor, and then imagine yourself as God's warrior in your current struggles in life.

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual adolescent grow, I suggest:

- Be patient... very patient. Realizing this stage often has many ups and downs.
- Impart a vision of the person's impact. Discuss strengths, desires, and gifting, and paint a picture of how God might use him or her in the future.
- Good mentors, like good parents, give those they care for "roots and wings." Provide plenty of support and security, but also encourage creativity and courage.



WEEK SEVEN: Adult

Adult - Take responsibility for your own spiritual life. Be filled to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. When would you say you officially became an adult? What were the circumstances that caused you to arrive at that decision?
2. To what extent have you achieved the stage of spiritual Adult- of taking responsibility for your own faith and ongoing growth?
3. What are some spiritual battles you've faced recently? Do you feel that you were sufficiently equipped with armor and the sword of the Spirit (God's Word) to handle them? If not, what was lacking?
4. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect?"
5. Are you afraid of failing if you take responsibility to step up and attempt new and more challenging things for God? Why? What's the best and worst that can happen?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: Write out what your responsibility for your spiritual, relational, emotional, and financial health and what's not.

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual adult grow, I suggest:

- One of the most important tasks of adults is to clearly define their responsibilities. Don't make assumptions about what the person you're helping understands in this area. Take the time to list responsibilities and limits of responsibilities.
- Help the person determine the source of conflict and confusion. Is it from the tension between God's calling and the lure of culture? Is it from bad habits or false assumptions that are deeply embedded in their heart? Is it a genuine spiritual attack or a combination of all three?
- For many people, failure is traumatic. They can't "just blow it off" because, to them, it demonstrates they are defective. If the person's reaction is out of proportion to the event, explore that perception and feeling, and reemphasize the message of God's great love and grace.



WEEK EIGHT: Parent

Parent - Allow God to change the world by changing you. Become willing to take his life-giving water to others' Dead-Sea lives.

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. What experiences have you had so far, if any, with spiritual parenting? What were the results? Have you missed any opportunities due to fear or not knowing how to proceed?
2. What would you say is your current level of spiritual maturity and involvement with the flow of God's water/Spirit in your life? Are you ankle-deep, knee-deep, waist-deep or fully immersed? Do you think you're ready to go deeper? Explain your answer.
3. Have you had any challenging conversations with atheists or agnostics? What might you do or say differently next time?
4. How have you seen people respond to all the uncertainty of life today as the various "idols" have crumbled in the wake of the pandemic? Do you see opportunities to initiate conversations of life and hope during these times?
5. How can you see God changing the world by changing you?

Course Correction

If you do only one thing, do this: On your phone, your bathroom mirror, your computer or whatever you see regularly, write down the names of the three people you've thought about as you read this chapter.

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual parent grow, I suggest:

- Discuss the continuum from unbelief to faith in Christ, identify the place of each name on the person's list, and craft a connection plan.
- Pray with him or her for the three people on that list.
- Share some tools or communication strategies that have helped you make the gospel clear to the people in your life.



WEEK NINE: Grandparent

Grandparent - Move from adding to God's kingdom to multiplying the kingdom by mentoring your spiritual children to share the gospel.

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. Think about Isaac Newton's statement: "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." Who are some "giants" who contributed to your ability to see Jesus Christ more clearly? In what ways are you passing along what you've learned from them to the next generations?
2. The process used by the early church to expand the awareness and influence of God's kingdom was:
3. Evangelize: Disciple - mentor - multiply
4. Which of these steps do you do best? As a spiritual grandparent, where might you need to devote more attention?
5. What are some "walls" you've encountered as you've attempted to talk to others about Jesus? Were you able to get around them?
6. Which of the A-To-G suggestions for sharing your faith on pages 173-176 was the most beneficial as you consider how you might connect better with other people?
7. Read the story of the women at the well in John 4:1-26. What were some of your insights and takeaways after seeing how Jesus interacted with the women at the well?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: Talk to your pastor or mentor to come up with a plan to equip the people you lead to share their faith.

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual grandparent grow, I suggest:

- By now, the person has become a peer, so listen as much as you teach.
- Share tools, podcasts, training material, and other resources to help the person equip others to communicate the Good News about Jesus
- Take the person along with you to share the gospel with someone.



WEEK TEN: Godparent

Godparent - Everywhere you go, be a bridge that connects other people with God. When people look at you, they see Christ.

Pilot's Flight Plan

1. Do you see any comparisons between the Choluteca bridge found on pages 181-182 and the institutional church? If so, what are they?
2. How close do you think you are to being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God? How can you keep growing and moving toward that goal?
3. When was the last time you were a bridge between God and another person? What were the circumstances? How can you make that a more regular experience?
4. Now that you've read all the stages of spiritual growth, at which stage do you think you are right now? Do you think you have fully moved through all the previous stages and are ready to move to the next stage or do you need to keep working on something you haven't yet achieved? Explain.
5. What are three goals you'd like to set for your ongoing spiritual growth? What's the first step you will take toward accomplishing them?

Course Correction

If you only do one thing, do this: Like a project manager, write out your spiritual growth plan for the next five to ten years.

Captain's Log

If you're helping a spiritual godparent grow, I suggest:

- Enjoy every minute with that person!
- Together, strategize how you can have a greater impact on your church and your community by helping more people grow to the full measure of Christ.
- Give this book to the people in your sphere of influence.

