



## Transcriptions

### Ministering for Maturity

Ted Ward

**Annotation:** *Talbot Theological Seminary, November 1980.* Ted Ward asserts that the church in so many areas lacks maturity. The forms of leadership and organization we have inherited hinder development of Christian maturity. The emphases in this address include that all God's people bear responsibility for the development of the people of God; that the issues of our time are not homiletical but ecclesiological; that the pastor cannot rely on preaching as the sole form of development; and that he or she cannot avoid Christian education responsibility. The theological education curriculum needs a Christian view of maturity—what it is and what the church is about.



I had suggested for this lecture the title, Ministering for Maturity. You may have detected that, as we have gone through this lectureship, I have not singled out Christian education and educators *per se* as the target of my concern. As a matter of fact, I make no great distinction between educators, as in Christian educators, and others who are responsible for the development of God's people. As a matter of fact, I think one of the saddest realities within modern Christendom and the educational resources deployed in modern Christendom is the assumption that Christian education is something that the pastor can avoid having anything to do with by hiring a DCE and delegating it all the way. As a matter of fact, the pastor has a key responsibility for the development of God's people. The pastor who sees himself or herself strictly as a preacher is absolutely missing the point of what the Word of God teaches about the development of God's people. Preaching is, indeed, significant and important. It hardly needs to be redeemed. As a matter of fact, it's already well and thriving even though the rest of the church quite often isn't.

As a matter of fact, the great issues of our time are not homiletic issues, they're ecclesiological issues. The issue is what is the church and who are the people of God? And particularly we need, in our time, to take a hard look at the fact that the great Reformers overlooked the issue of church leadership and brought into the church tradition including until our time a very, very dubious strong distinction between clergy and laity which has, in our time, produced a very lazy laity; especially in an affluent society where church ministers can be bought uh, pardon me, hired. I warn you that the church of Jesus Christ historical and even contemporary—if you look at the whole world scene—uses as its norm the bi-vocational pastor. The employed pastor is the exception, not the rule, and the multi-staff hired leadership church is way off the norm though we tend to use it to start thinking with because that's all we've known, in many cases. But even in these United States, bi-vocational pastoring is not at all unusual especially in many States where the affluence of lifestyle is significantly less. And I submit that as the affluence of lifestyle in the United States decreases—and it will despite the promises of certain Californians who are sure that this isn't really the case. Easy there; easy there. We will, I think, rediscover something of the vitality of a church operating in a post-affluent society in which we find that leadership responsibility, in fact, is a concern for the broad church in fellowship. That, indeed, there are offices. There are responsibilities of leadership. There is the role task: the ministry of the elder, and there, indeed, needs to be preaching. But I suspect, as was true in the apostolic time, we may discover that those preachings are quite often multiple and that, as a matter of fact, all of God's people must carry a share of the load for the development of God's people collectively. I think that would be a somewhat different condition from what we have grown up with, most of us, and what we see around us, in general, in the United States.

We need above all else in theological education a Christian view of maturity. We have to have some idea where it is we're going, and what it is that the church is about. One of the sorest problems as I view the church place after place is the lack of maturity, and maturity is not equivalent to age. We have many old immature folk.

Now let us, first of all, understand that maturity is not a matter of arriving at a stage. We mentioned that; tried to develop it a bit yesterday. We reiterate it to start this morning: that maturity is not an achievement, a particular blessing, or some other thing. It is, in fact, a process in which one is doing the maturing, one is becoming what God has intended that we become as persons: spiritual beings alive, growing to maturity. A maturity that will be fulfilled in the culmination of things in the great plan of God in the whole of time, but a process that is going on very much in terms of our experience, as Christians, in time and place as we experience in church.

All aspects of personhood are involved in spiritual maturity. You cannot have a spiritually mature person who is emotionally immature. Consider: you cannot have a spiritually mature person who is morally immature. Maturity involves all aspects of personhood—and go back to yesterday's lecture and sweep together all those five temporal aspects of human personhood and recognize them all to be involved and necessarily to be reflected in spiritual maturity. We need to recognize, as leadership people, that it is our task to facilitate what it is that God is doing in bringing people to maturity. God brings people to maturity. God facilitates the maturing process in persons. We do not have to bring it to people. We don't have to lay it on people. We do not have to cause it to be. As leaders within a church in teaching, in preaching, in organizing, in parenting, what is involved in maturity is a process that God is carrying on in which we, as such leaders, facilitate by getting in tune with what God is doing.

First of all, we need to accept a supporting role, not a directing role. We need to see ourselves, not as the directors of events—as, if you please, the tour guide—but as the facilitator; as the one who makes sure that the resources are adequate, the circumstances are proper, and the environment is utilized.

Secondly, we need to very carefully understand to the limits of our capacity what it is that is going on in persons so that we can get in phase with it. We already have mentioned in another lecture that one of the great problems is preaching over people's heads; dealing in abstraction with people who are in concrete development stages. We do not cause people to become more thoroughly principled by simply throwing more and more principles at them. We have to help them come to experience whatever stage they're in in mental process development and in moral development to see its potential. Not simply to become aware of its inadequacy so that somehow they are forced on into later stages of development. The pressure, the force, the motive for development, God has placed within persons. We get in phase with it; we do not cause it to be.

Now I think there is some homework to be done and it is a very serious pity to me that, though our Lord has seen to it that he who was at the Creation, the Word was with God—at the very foundation of the world that same Word that is Jesus Christ; that same word that is word “logos” is not adequately respected in terms of what that word brought about in terms of physical Creation. And we do not, I'm afraid, in many cases in theological education take seriously enough that to be theologically educated involves to be properly articulated with the natural universe and to be knowledgeable, especially about that sixth-day creature that God's primary redemptive processes are focused on. We need, in other words, to take very seriously the need to study human persons and human groups.

We need, for example, the opportunity somewhere through a seminary education—and I'm referring not just to the Christian education majors—to become aware of Piaget's stages of mental process development. Because Piaget, that very delightful old Swiss gentleman who for many, many years made his career and, indeed, a remarkable worldwide name on the process of playing marbles with children because that's what he did day in and day out. Virtually across his lifetime he'd spent several days each week playing marbles with children. He died just about a month ago and, up until the last, he was still playing marbles with children. Because through that process of playing marbles with children, he discovered that you can see into all sorts of things that are going on in children as they develop in terms of all aspects of human personhood from the moral dimensions on through to the physiological dimensions.

We need to understand that, as he has helped us understand mental processes that, really, it's a very simple sort of construct. And we can grasp what is happening as people's minds mature and become more able to deal with certain kinds of things. And we need to understand, for example, that there are many people, as young people, who are dealing in a very concrete world. And the only way to get abstractions through to people in a concrete world is to make pictures out of them. And I refer here, not necessarily to flat pictures on paper or projected on walls, but pictures of word ideas, and our Lord seemed to know this. And as he dealt with people who were in concrete frames of reference, he took very complex principles and very complex ideas and made them simple and we call those simplicities, parables. And we need to learn how to use parables and create modern-day parables in order to communicate more effectively with developing people.

We need also to understand something of the research that Lawrence Kohlberg and others have done with reference to the stages of moral development so that we have some idea what it means to begin to be a moral-valuing person as a child. And to understand that it is perfectly normal for children to enter moral consciousness as very self-centered sorts of creatures seeing rights and wrongs in terms of what it means to them and how it works out for their benefit or their hazard. If we really understand that, we can then understand better what sometimes we see in retarded moral development among adults who persist in that very childhood stage of egocentric moral valuing: if it feels good, do it.

And we need to understand what that means and why that is the way a person is looking at life and what's going to be necessary for the person to come beyond that. We need to understand that Kohlberg's observations of young people, especially what we call in church juniors. As juniors become very difficult, they encounter a first great stage of disequilibrium where that old ego-centered scheme no longer seems adequate, and they wrestle with life to try to reorganize their scheming. And they come down ultimately then, predictably in a kind of peer-oriented notion of right is what others are doing.

And we need to understand that that's a perfectly reasonable, normal, predictable, inescapable stage of human development. And that as Christian people concerned with development toward maturity, we need know how to cope with that; not to fight with that as if somehow that were not in the nature of Creation. It is. It's there. How do we deal with it and how do we work with it so that it becomes itself a nurturing stage? Because, as a matter of fact, that same stage of development also has room within it for the recognition that rules and responsible laws are the voice of responsible others. And that 'other' orientation which, at the very primitive level, is a responsiveness simply to dominant people in the environment—parents or peers, friends, siblings—can mature at that stage of development on into a recognition that God has said certain things are right and certain things are wrong. God as 'other', the Bible as 'other', Christ the model as 'other' is quite available for young people at that stage. We need to learn, at that stage, the value of teaching by modeling. The value of teaching through the right handling of precepts, not as rules to be imposed vindictively, but as rules to be respected.

We need to understand how to treat even the Ten Commandments as a kind of gracious giving of God of the rulebook of life so that we can avoid the fundamental pitfalls that are built structurally into the nature of man and human society. There are ways to come at this developmentally that are not so much a matter of conflicting and fighting in an adversarial role with everyone that we cope with, but working supportively, working constructively, working positively so that people through time, through process of development can come to an appreciation of the marvels of God in his communicating with man.

And then we need to learn that there is such a thing in moral development as a trap: becoming fixated on the otherness of law. What the Scripture at one time says: the tables written on the stone of the wall. God would far rather write those in the heart. "The fleshy tables of the heart" is not a metaphor for Scripture memorization. It is a metaphor for bringing into life, itself, the essence of those externals that God has provided for us as he provided tables of stone to Moses. God does not want to write on externals so that you can respond to externals. God wants to develop you into a principled stage, and that principled capability is within every person.

We need to understand some of this because it directs us in terms of how to relate to people. And if I'm speaking cryptically this morning; I'm speaking too quickly over things, you say, but I don't know what you're talking about, that is a criticism of your present educational understanding and it is intended to be. I do not, in this short lecture, attempt to fill those gaps; simply to sensitize you that there is more to be understood about the creature that is the object of God's primary redemptive act. And if God created that way, it is our responsibility to understand what it is that God has done.

Through all of this, as we minister for maturity, we need to understand something of the maturing process that is going on within ourselves. We need to recognize our own development. We need to see ourselves, not as fulfilled creatures, not as completed handiwork of God, as God's little gems thrown down from the storehouse of his jewelry; but as creatures who are also in process of becoming. And we need to take a humble view of our relationship to others who are also becoming. And we need to be open enough, and free enough, and secure enough to reveal something of our needs. One of the greatest pities is the minister, the pastor, or the Christian education worker who must conceal his or her needs because there is no one there to minister to her or to him. What a pity. We need, in the fellowship of the community of Christ, to recognize that even the ministering folk must have others to minister to them. And in its total community of Christ, it is a matter of bearing one another's burdens, not laying all our burdens on one or two people.

And we need to understand ourselves as clearly as we can to get as clear as possible a self-view. To become aware of what our self-images are driving us toward. To become aware of what the impacts upon us, as persons, are meaning in terms of the development over our own sense of self worth. And through this all, to become humbly before God, maturing persons, his handiwork, his creatures. And, because of our recognition in humility of what it is that God is doing within us, be more responsive, more sympathetic, more alert to what it is that God is doing in others.

I'd like to bring you rather quickly through a number of things that come out of the secular research and show you how ultimately Christian much, if not most, of this is. In the study of moral development, asking the question of what sorts of forces affect development of people, I call attention to Piaget's four forces and factors affecting development. They are, first of all, "heredity and maturation". In the person, genetically—and, of course, this is Piaget's great point: that epistemology is genetic. It is within the nature of persons to have capabilities and tendencies that, in this great force called heredity and maturation which are programmed within us, they are in our genetic structure. We become something. We become fulfilled, as humans, to the extent that those five elements of natural humanity above that line fulfill because of the dynamics of Creation.

Secondly, "direct experience". And when we talk about an experience-based curriculum, we're talking about the very crucial matter of building a perceptual field through direct experience. One always understands in terms of perceptions received on the person's side of a perceptual wall. I cannot give you an idea. I can share with you my idea. You will perceive it, and rebuild it on your side of the wall. You will perceive it in terms that you understand. You cannot understand that which you cannot perceive. You perceive in terms of your experience. As an educator, as a leader, as a pastor, I can help you expand your experience. This is not just verbal experience, but it is actual direct contact experience with life and life dimensions, as well.

Although among these life dimensions, point three "social interaction", is perhaps the most singularly important: encountering other viewpoints. And one of the things that happens when we

withdraw Christian young people and create a kind of cocoon ghetto in which they will grow up is that they lack social interaction with contrasting viewpoints. And when they come into contact ultimately with contrasting viewpoints, it is as if suddenly coming into contact with a dazzling world that they cannot really perceive and often times they become temporarily blinded. We see this more commonly than we would like to admit of people who have had too narrow a background experience. God has put us in this world to be a part of this world, functioning within this world, set apart spiritually, and ministering and learning within the world. And there's good reason for that. We sharpen our own perspective on what it is to be Christian as we have interaction with those who are not.

Four: "equilibration". There is within the human being a very marvelous thing that Piaget calls, "the inner motor of development". There is operating in many of the realms—not just in the moral, but also in the intellectual and in the social—a thing called, "disequilibration" or the "equilibration process"; one of the few technical terms that I've used this week outside the realm of theology *per se*. But I will make no apology for this one because it comes from the realm of riding a bicycle and you know about that. You learn to ride a bicycle by learning how to how to equilibrate yourself on a bicycle. You get the picture? What is equilibrium? It's the thing that keeps you on center, right? And when you lose equilibrium on a bicycle, what do you do? Yeah, the word is fall and it's a rather simple process most of us have discovered by the age of six.

Equilibration is what you do on a bicycle. Do you ever reach a static state on a bicycle? Have you ever tried the little experiment of putting a thumbscrew on the handlebars of your bicycle so that once you get the thing going real well you tighten it up; you take your hands off it and it just keeps going straight? Have you ever tried that? It won't work. It won't work because the bicycle, like life itself, depends on being re-equilibrated. Every time you push down, your left pedal goes one way, right? And you throw your body the other way, and you disequilibrate, re-equilibrate, disequilibrate, re-equilibrate. And that is one of the finest pictures that I know of what goes on in the development of moral judgment, and the development of intellectual process, and the development of social being. All of life is a kind of a going back and forth from this to that and re-equilibrating constantly. And if we view maturity as somehow arriving at the point where we can turn on the thumbscrew, we're headed up against the wall. All of life is a process of handling that re-equilibration process with increasing confidence and that's known as maturity.

Many times children, when they hit those disequilibrating moments, kind of come apart and they take their burdens sometimes to parents and that proves to be a great mistake because parents quite often are convinced that disequilibration is somehow evil. Oh, John, don't talk like that. Don't ever say that and, for heaven's sake, don't let the preacher hear you say that. You know, poor little John has simply said, are you really sure that Jesus is the Son of God?

Now I would ask you, with raised hands this morning, if any of you have ever in your life had a disequilibrating moment that caused you to really wonder about many of the things that you thought you had all lined up? None of you? That's too bad. Equilibration is the motor of development. When a kid gets to a disequilibration moment, it's very exciting to say, this kid is on the threshold of making some important new discoveries. Stand by and hold on to him; don't force him into new discoveries. Stand by and become part of his discovery process. He's at the threshold of an important inquiry. Be there. That's known as competent parenting, competent teaching, and would, to God, it could [unclear] pastor.

Research has told us that there are a number of things that you can flat out recommend to teachers, to parents in reference to how to help children in their moral development. And I want to make from this an analog of spiritual development. The research, here, is in the realm of moral development and these particular seven points deal specifically with the moral development realm, but they come about as close as anything that I can come to a direct confrontation in spiritual development.

First of all, the thing that we can recommend most clearly to parents and teachers is that they learn how to stimulate inquiry within their children or students. To help people ask questions. To legitimize questions. To make questions reasonable and honorable.

Secondly, to stimulate verbalization, pardon the big word. This means simply helping people learn how to talk about things. Do you know one of the biggest problems in our society is, although we are a highly verbalized society, we tend not to know how to talk about certain classes of problems. And it takes skill to know how to teach people how to talk about things that are really bugging them. One of the reasons we have so much need for professional counselors, even within Christianity, is because nowhere else except in the professional counseling realm do we have people who know how to help other people verbalize things. And one of the great skills of a professional counselor is that he helps people learn how to verbalize things.

There are people who go through life with burdens that are so deep that they say, I don't know how to talk about it. I want you to know that, by the grace of God, I had a person come to me on this campus this week saying to me is it alright to have things that I can't talk about? And I say it's probably normal, but you probably need help with it. You need help of the sort that will help you learn to verbalize those things, and get hold of them, and get them up and look at them, talk about them, and bring them back into contact so that they don't become your anchor, your burden, your weight on the shoulder that holds you back in your maturity.

We can encourage teachers and parents to help kids and others ask, 'why?' 'Why', is the most elegant question that the human being can ask. Human beings are one of the few of the animal species—if you can pardon my use of the physiological distinctive here—who know how to ask why. 'What' is the classical animal question: What's for supper? It's human to say why carrots again? Why is a marvelous question and people can be encouraged to ask why questions. And if we as teachers and preachers and ministers and parents constantly are threatened by why questions, we're dead. We will not help people develop.

Four, to provide experiences wherein moral issues are examined. We need to get people out into life to encounter situations in which moral issues are at stake. I say to young people's leaders, take your kids out to visit hospitals; take your kids out to visit old folk's homes. They'll come home with moral issues to talk about. "Why is it that that lady had had nobody to visit her for two weeks? She said nobody had been to see her for two weeks. I didn't even know the lady and she held onto my hand and I didn't even know how to let go. I couldn't get her to let go. She said nobody had been there for two weeks". And somebody else in the group says, "I had the same experience with an old man and he said it was two years. I've seen 7, 8, 9<sup>th</sup> grade kids come back after those experiences and talk about moral issues. But if we keep them in the Sunday school class talking about Daniel and lions, we'll never get to real substantive moral issues. There's nothing wrong with Daniel, by the way. The issue is if it's a Daniel only diet, you're going to have more lion hunters than you have Christians.

Fifth, to dialogue in the sense of listening responsibly. Teachers, parents, adults in general within the church, all of us as Christians need to know how to dialogue. Now dialogue is a bad word because all of a sudden it's gotten a kind of theological meaning that says what do you do when you talk with people of other faiths and you pretend as if you really don't care what you believe? That's not what I mean. I'm talking about dialogue in its rudimentary sense that says an interaction between two or more persons in which each is, in fact, listening to the other and trying to respond to what the other is saying; not just sending out messages. So much of our so-called discussions are, you know, I make my speech; you make your speech. I make my speech, and while you're making yours I'm getting my next one ready. That's not dialogue. We need to listen responsibly. Listen so that I can respond. Good dialogue starts with listening skills. Remember that from another lecture?

To explore the disequilibrium states with the disequibrated—there's the big word again. When a kid, adult or whatever gets into a disequilibrium and things are becoming unglued and the things that they had assumed were rock-solid steady, and they were perfectly willing to tighten in the thumbscrew all of a sudden they find themselves going off to the side, they say I don't know how to understand this anymore. I thought I had it all together. The response of a responsible, trained, developed, maturing specialist is that's okay, let's talk about it; not that's not okay, let's get back on the straight and narrow.

Have you ever taught a kid to ride a bicycle? Some of you, as parents, have. One of the things that most of us, as parents, try at some point in that process is reaching into the bicycle when it starts to go off and re-equilibrating it for the kid, right? Have you ever tried that? You know, the kids starts to go—boy, grab the bicycle. You're running along beside, right? What happens next? Everybody goes on the ground. It's almost impossible to re-equilibrate for somebody else. I can't really, from where I am, get that hold on somebody else's system in order to really make it better for him or her. And usually, in the process, I trip over the wheel or the pedal and end up with some scars to boot.

We need to understand that that isn't the way you treat disequilibrium. You treat disequilibrium by encouraging the person to explore it, and easing the falls; but expecting them, tolerating them, and helping the other person to tolerate them. And then to discover ways to re-equilibrate for themselves. Putting it together again where they're ready to put it together. Now that is not an argument for a relativistic approach to truth. That is a response to the reality of how human development occurs. And I submit that it has a lot more maturity in it.

The last point up here is one that might be familiar to those of you especially who have studied the Bible: the notion of standing alongside. And I get a big kick out this because this plops right out of the secular research. And this notion of standing alongside has a strangely biblical meaning as we look at what Jesus Christ promised in the comforter, in the Paraclete, "And I send you another who will indwell." The Holy Spirit is God's presence with us standing alongside, and when I fall on my face or rear, as the case may be, the Holy Spirit is there giving me that recovery strength that lets me know I'm not alone. There are lots and lots of people who need nothing more complex than that. It's a matter of standing alongside. If you've ever done much in hospital ministry and especially in emergency room ministry, you know very well that what the person who is attending a loved one in an emergency room or an ICU really needs is not a moral speech. They really need a warm hand on the shoulder. It is that standing alongside that is ultimately human.

You also find it in a few places in the animal kingdom and it's very beautiful to behold wherever you find it. Are you aware for example, that one of the most beautiful illustrations of the *paraclesis* is in the specie whale? And when whales are traveling in pods and one falls ill—and they often do on their long migrations—that whale stands to be lost to the rest. That's called a pod not a flock, by the way. And when that one drops away from the pod, it is in the structure of the development of the whale that two others from the pod are identified and sent back to swim alongside and bring the ill whale back into the pod by swimming for that ill party. I ask you, should that be a picture of the church; that standing alongside that helps swim for in times of hardship? Oh, would to God that we could catch that.

The educator as a facilitator of human development is committed—not doing *to* people, but helping people become. The educator as a facilitator of human development is not changing people, but helping people develop. The educator as a facilitator of human development is not giving knowledge as if a commodity, but helping people discover meaning. And I submit, as a pastor, a teacher, that makes a difference.

We have a special way of looking at people. We look at people as the image of God. We respect them as spiritual beings equal before God with great potential, whole, alive, and eternal. I submit if you take that to the depths of your being it will affect the way you relate as a pastor, as a youth leader, as a parent.

We have a special kind of leadership, not from high status, but as a servant. We need so much to understand what our Lord said leadership is and isn't. It is not commanding, but exhorting. It is not ruling, but sharing because ours is a special sort of motive: joining as partners in the creative God's redeeming process. And if that doesn't make you feel good, I don't know what will. Your calling is nothing less than joining as a partner in the creative God's redeeming process creatively respecting the Creation and every creature in devotion to the Creator celebrating the redemption which gives meaning to every act of kindness and love.

If we're serious about participating in spiritual development, we need to understand that maturing is a natural process. It's not automatic. It's a natural process that fulfills when the supports are in place. Now those who avoid spiritual maturity do so through one of the following. And these are some of the things that we need to be ready to deal with because these are the roots of blockings of spiritual maturity. This is the negative side. At the personal level, sometimes we find Christians becoming disrespectful of other human beings even disrespectful of themselves. And that produces an abnormal situation in which spiritual maturity will come to a halt. Until people can get back into a respect relationship with other human beings and themselves, you're going to have a halt in the spiritual maturity.

Secondly, if there is a resistance to any part of the growing-up process, you'll find spiritual maturity suffering. By the way, there are such things as athletic freaks illustrated by Trudeau in reference to his little allegory about the fixation on tanning which describes the person who is resisting growing-up by holding a fixation on a very adolescent set of values.<sup>1</sup> And we have people who do that who are either into athletics or they're into some kind of a club activity. They're into

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Trudeau. *Stalking the Perfect Tan*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978

something and they really resist growing-up. They want to perpetuate childhood or adolescence and that would really clobber spiritual maturity.

Persons who disconnect one aspect of development from the others. This is closely related. The one who is the health food freak and that's where life is at. Blocking spiritual maturity because so much emphasis is on one of those aspects of human personhood that the others are neglected. A healthy body can become a hindrance to spiritual maturity if the seeking after the healthy body interferes with the continuing development of moral truth, moral consciousness, social development, intellectual development, and so forth. You see what I'm driving at? That disconnecting of parts can block spiritual development.

The resisting of the work of the Holy Spirit. And this is perhaps, from a theological scriptural point of view, perhaps the easiest to deal with, or I should say the most explicit to understand. In the social realm—you might want to think about this. Notice the difference, social realm and the personal realm. In the social realm a person who neglects family, whether a child or an adult, is headed toward a period of spiritual stagnation. A person who neglects church is headed toward a period of spiritual stagnation. A person who neglects community, in the broader sense, is headed toward a period of spiritual stagnation. Family, church, community. Those institutions ordained of God and laid down in the book of Genesis as the responsibility of people to be concerned about the relationship in family, the relationship as people of God, and the relationship of the people of God to a larger community.

I have an agenda of outcomes for Christian education that I don't have time to give to you. I'm going to suggest that the Christian education office may reproduce these and have them if you would like to look at what I call, *An Agenda of Outcomes for Christian Education*, really trying to be as concrete as I can about what might be a view of spiritual maturity from the institution of Christian education, theological seminary, parish level, and the whole.<sup>2</sup>

I've tried, in these lectures, to give you some glimpse of what it is that, at least, one scholar working in the field of human development comes to with reference to an understanding of the work of ministry. My role here has not been to somehow argue for or against any particular field of theology, to tell you that the field of Christian education is the most important or anything of that sort; but to point out to you that we all, as people in the community of God, have something in common and that is that every one of us has a concern for the development of God's people. Every one of us is a minister toward maturity of the people of God. And regardless of the sort of role that you are called to within the whole economy of God's kingdom, you share with every one of us a responsibility for the development of a mature Christian community in ourselves and in others.

May I read, in closing, the last portion of the first letter to the church of Thessalonica, Thessalonians 5:12 and following:

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is

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<sup>2</sup> See Document Archives, One Page Learning Activities.

good for one another and for all men. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances, but examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

Brethren, pray for us.