

# Forty Days of Purpose Devotional

## Day 28 "There are no shortcuts to maturity."

Why? If God is omnipotent, why doesn't He create shortcuts to maturity? We would all certainly like Him to, and the idea seems to be quite good. How much less trouble would there be, and how much more happiness? Wouldn't the quality of every church and every ministry be improved if ALL the people involved were instantly mature? We know that God means to finish the job He started when we first came to know Him (Phil 1:6), and so we wonder why He doesn't just get on with it. Why does God choose to let us mature, often slowly and painfully, rather than miraculously transform us? What's wrong with shortcuts, anyway? The problem is not so much that this idea is flawed, but that it is self-contradictory, which makes it impossible. But isn't everything possible with God? The answer is: NO! God can't lie, for example. And God can't make "maturity" mean what it does not mean. What does it mean? The essence of maturity is not just the end-state of a transformed life, but the personal experience of the process of transformation. The steps in our maturation involve repentance:

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9 [NIV])

The new life of the reborn Christian not only begins with repentance, but continues in it. When we "come to repentance" it is not for a brief visit, but for our lifetime on this earth. Certainly God inspires and enables repentance, but it is still something WE have to do. "Shortcuts to maturity" are impossible because only we can do what we must do – if God does it then we don't. A child cannot learn to walk by being carried.

- God's children are predestined for maturity, just as a healthy child will naturally learn to walk – but not without falling many times.
- Just as a child will only learn to walk by trying, and falling, we can only become mature by making our own choices, one by one, and taking responsibility for them.
- Our loving Father watches over us while we mature, so that, while we will fall, we will not die.

Imagine a brain transplant. There you are, lying on the operating table, and next to you is someone else's brain in a jar. You go to sleep, and the doctors open your skull, remove your brain and replace it with the other one, placing your brain – alive – in the jar. Ask yourself where "you" will be when you wake up. Are you lying on the table with a different brain, or are you in the jar, minus your body? If God removes your personality and replaces it with another, mature one, what has happened to "you"? Truthfully, you have not be "matured" but replaced. God loves YOU, and does not want to replace you with an artificial personality manufactured in the lab. As you slowly mature, YOU make choices and have experiences, and because the choices are yours you continue to be you even as you change. Praise God for His patience!

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