



Changing My Generation

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## Joy Starts Here Maturity Retreats with Chris M. Coursey:

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*Maturity is an unexpected solution* to troubled marriages, problems with children, addictions, depression, character weakness, spiritual dryness, the list goes on. Jesus offered unexpected solutions throughout His earthly ministry. For example, rather than deliver Israel from Rome's oppression like the people expected, Jesus fed people miracle bread and taught them Kingdom life. Instead of preventing Lazarus from dying like his family hoped, Jesus shows up late and raises His friend from the grave. There are numerous Scriptural examples where Jesus frequently responded to people's problems and needs in unorthodox ways. All too often we Christ-followers look to talk show hosts, magazines and the media to tell us what we need or how to fix what ails us. We even doggedly try to do all the right things in life and still fall short of the results we expect. Maturity is one solution you do not want to miss.

### *Maturity is an unexpected solution to problems...*

Maturity is the unexpected solution all of us rely on to reach our God-given potential. I remember one rainy afternoon when I performed below my potential. It was a time when my high school baseball team practiced indoors. One of the drills we ran was a "hot potato" exercise where two groups stood opposite each other in lines. The goal was to run toward your teammate then throw the ball until you were too close. At that point the next pair took turns and we returned to the end of the opposing line to start all over again. This drill was designed to quicken our reflexes and enhance our timing skills. Because I played first-base on the field, this drill was a useful exercise for my playing skills, but there was one problem. My eyesight was fading. I put off buying glasses for over a year. On this day in particular, we were indoors practicing with poor lighting. Here I stood, running and throwing the ball at my partner. Conditions were ripe for a disaster.



After a few rounds of drills, I noticed Brian, my partner, was throwing the ball a bit too fast. "Why is he throwing at me like this, isn't he paying attention?" I thought to myself. Due to the rapid pace of the exercise, I lacked the opportunity to tell him to soften his throw. Soon it was our turn. While running toward me, Brian fired the ball my direction. Only this time his throw was not at my chest, as it should have been, rather, the ball was flying at my head, with extra "zing." Before I could react, WAM! I felt something smack the middle of my forehead and white stars appeared dancing before my eyes. Piercing pain shot through my skull. I stumbled and tried to remain standing. Dizziness threatened to take me down. The sheer impact of the ball slamming me caused the entire gym full of students to stop their activity. Cheerleaders stopped practicing. My teammates cringed. Coach ran over and sat me down. He called for ice. A baseball sized lump soon appeared. Seams from the ball remained etched on my forehead. Ouch! This could have been prevented.

### *My injury could have been prevented...*



After this painful incident I invested in new glasses. Suddenly my eyesight improved. Now I could see in order to protect myself. My skills and timing increased. Rather than quit playing a sport I enjoyed, I made necessary improvements and adjusted. When it comes to life and relationships, growth and recovery increases our wisdom and makes us stronger. Problems such as character weakness, fearful living, low joy,

outbursts, rigidity, marriage failure, inconsistency, flawed bonds and untamed cravings deplete us. Much like my poor eyesight, all of us live below our potential when we fail to make joyful, strategic changes. From the day we are born we rely on people to help us thrive and give us what we cannot give ourselves. Unfortunately it is all too common for communities and families to lack necessary resources to help us be our best. This is one of many reasons why a joy starts here maturity retreat can be your turning point. In one weekend you discover practical steps that you and your people can take to cultivate maturity. You learn ingredients necessary to be who God has created you to be. Ingredients like joy are not to be simply spiritualized.

### *What does maturity formation do for me?*

Maturity formation accomplishes several things. One, addressing your maturity protects your children and family members by giving you the skills to repair when things go wrong. You pass on the best of yourself to those you love instead of pain, fear and dysfunction. Maturity equips your marriage as you develop the emotional capacity to grow and stay relational during hardship. Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Relational joy should always outweigh our emotional distress otherwise problems arise. Maturity retreats prevent disasters by examining the six life stages Scripture mentions so you identify your earned maturity and find community resources to grow. Maturity formation means filling holes in your life so your joy levels increase. You stay flexible instead of rigid. Effective leaders are those who receive feedback, address their wounds and learn from mistakes. Healthy parents are those who acknowledge their mistakes and repair with their children when things go wrong. Maturity retreats help leaders, parents, singles and groups assess weaknesses and identify resources. Maturity can transform the way you see and experience relationships, community, church and family. Go from fear to joy and love!



### *You pass on the best of yourself...instead of pain and dysfunction.*

All of us have areas in our character and identity that we cannot improve, on our own. Problems such as unprocessed pain, low joy, difficulty with the “big six” distressing emotions, addictions, and more rob believers of intimacy with God and others. Another advantage of a maturity retreat is you start to learn the value and necessity of true maturity instead of pseudo-maturity that looks good on the outside but inside runs on fear and fumes. In one weekend you discover essential needs and tasks to reach your potential and pass on the best of yourself to your community.

### *The weak and the strong must interact instead of avoiding each other.*

For a transformation zone to occur in our communities we must have three essential ingredients: tender responses to weakness, the weak and strong interact and we return to Immanuel’s shalom when things go wrong. All too often believers spiritualize growth and think they can change on their own. They try harder only to feel burned out and desperate. *I have my faith and that’s all I need!* Some say. We must walk out our faith in relationships with others to increase our ability to love, recover from distress and develop the character of Christ that is expressed in both good and hard times.

Have you noticed moments in your life when you responded in ways that bothered you? Possibly you said something you wish you could take back. Maybe you did something you regret in a vulnerable moment of pressure or strain. Surely you have watched the news or read about a Christian leader who fell to immorality, addiction or scandal. Possibly your church community bears the scars of a previous rupture or disaster. A maturity retreat examines how flawed bonds play into train wrecks like these and discusses solutions to avoid problems in the future. Maturity may be just what your church needs to reach its next level of growth.

## ***What a maturity retreat is:***

A maturity retreat consists of teaching, exercises and activities to promote Christ-like character change. Knowledge of maturity identifies cracks in your developmental foundation. Information is not enough to produce growth, however. A weekend retreat exposes faulty development and introduces repair skills that lead to restoration. All of us rely on community relationships, relational joy, skill training and *Immanuel* healing for growth, recovery and character development. A maturity retreat jumpstarts your race to wholeness.



***Good teaching is not enough to produce joyful character growth...***

## ***What a maturity retreat is not:***

A maturity retreat is not designed to replace your community with a seminar nor is it designed to advance you into the next stage of maturity *in the seminar itself*. This retreat does not replace the THRIVE Training though it is designed to prepare people for the more intense training THRIVE offers.

## ***Should Christ-followers pay attention to maturity?***

Consider the condition of the Western church for a moment. Immorality runs rampant, addictions prosper, good leaders fall by the wayside, marriages crumble and conflict tears congregations apart. Something is amiss. Besides being well versed in theology, believers require skills to deal with pain and recover when things go wrong. More often than not, relational skills are painfully absent in our churches and families. Some of us live according to our pain or malfunctions instead of the joy and peace our God graciously offers. You pay thousands of dollars a year for auto, health, life and home insurance in case of unfortunate disaster. A maturity retreat is cheaper and its impact can get you farther down the road.

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

Ephesians 4:15

## ***What do I gain from a retreat?***

You recognize your earned level of maturity. You discover holes and deficits that need attention and action. You clearly see the next step for growth. Maturity, as a concept, is now understandable. You know the need for maturity in your family and community and have additional skills to achieve your goals. There is now a common language within your church community to embrace maturity. You have a clear road map for maximum growth that leads to true maturity. You see the value of maturity and can't help but tell others!



## ***Who should attend?***

You! And anyone serious about being full of and expressing Jesus-like life. Whether your childhood was wonderful or painful, maturity formation is vital to Christ-like character change. Trauma and painful relationships stunt our active growth process. You may have lacked something essential in your development or maybe you enjoyed a wonderful childhood yet, you feel like something is missing. Either way, maturity paves the way to being unstuck. Most of us have some understanding of what maturity is by definition but we easily recognize deficits when we encounter them in ourselves and others. The goal of this retreat is to equip you grow like a well-watered plant and thrive. Learn more at [www.thrivetoday.org](http://www.thrivetoday.org).