

## Evotional

Sermon title: “Growing into an emotionally healthy adult.”

Bible passage: Luke 10:25-37. Speaker: Neil Durling.

Date: 20.10.13.

### Message:

**God wants us to be emotionally mature:** An emotionally mature Christian is someone who loves well. I would argue that the Priest and Levite were emotionally immature; they had separated loving God and loving others into different camps – they wouldn’t touch the injured man for fear that they would become unclean before God. He was dying, for crying out loud! The danger is that we can be spiritually mature (receive visions, grasp the depths of scripture, spend hours in solitude and prayer, etc.) and be emotionally immature. We have visions from God, yet repeatedly fly off the handle with those around us.

### Here are two myths about Christianity and emotional maturity:

1. **When I become a Christian Christ lives in me and I automatically become emotionally mature:** We believe 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!” We may well be a New Creation, but that doesn’t mean we are necessarily mature. The Israelites had four hundred years of slavery and were then set free. But they weren’t emotionally mature as a people, and spent forty years wandering around the wilderness. We know that physical growth is natural, but that intellectual growth is something we learn from others, and work at. I think emotional growth sits with the latter and is something that we learn.
2. **Christians are better at loving others than yet-to-be Christians:** Imagine the anger of those listening to this parable as Jesus tells them that the unclean Samaritan is the one who is loving. The lawyer who asks the original question can’t even bring himself to name the Samaritan when he answers Jesus at the end (“The one who has mercy on him.”). Let’s be honest, the statistics speak: divorce rate, sexual immorality, poor parenting, greed, conflict, anger are similar amongst those who do and don’t believe.

### So where am I emotionally?

- **Emotional baby:** A baby feels need but can’t speak so it whines, moans and cries instead. The parents must figure out why the baby is crying. If the baby doesn’t get any attention, it gets angry. Adults who act like this treat people as objects to fulfil their needs. They are tyrants and intimidating. Everything is one way and they are wrapped up in themselves.
- **Emotional child:** They communicate but are still reliant on others. If, for example, they aren’t picked for the football team they will get angry and will act out their feelings instead of articulating and discussing them. Adults like this don’t express their needs honestly and resort to distancing, whining, pouting, clinging, lying and/or with-holding.
- **Emotional adolescent:** They generally rebel against parental authority and define themselves in reaction to others. There is a fear of being treated as a child. They love their parents one day and hate them the next! Everything is black and white, there is no room for grey. These kinds of *adults* can’t give without feeling resentful. They keep score. They are into themselves.
- **Emotional adult:** This is what we’re aiming for!
  - *Appreciate:* People for who they are, not what they can get from them.
  - *Ask:* For what they need, want and prefer clearly, directly, respectfully and honestly.
  - *Respect:* People and things for what they are without having to change them.
  - *Resolve:* Conflict!
  - *Say:* Can say what they believe in stressful situations without attacking you.
  - *Space:* Give people room.

### How can we grow into emotionally mature adults?

1. **Accept the past:** Our upbringing and family have a massive role in shaping who we are today. We need to acknowledge that, which doesn’t mean we validate their actions. There will be others people and events in our past that we will need to accept also, rather than running from them.
2. **Accept ourselves:** Don’t take yourself too seriously or be too hard on yourself. Remember, we can only love others as much as we love ourselves. We shouldn’t be childish, but we are told by Jesus to come to God as children. We should have fun and a deep joy.
3. **Accept God:** The theologian Paul Tillich said that Christians need to “Accept our acceptance.” We have a great God and an amazing story of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, let’s learn to accept it.
4. **Accept others:**
  - *Love them:* The key word in this parable is “pity”. The Samaritan’s heart was soft and a soft heart is moved to do something.
  - *Need them:* None of us are invincible or an island (contrary to Simon and Garfunkel). We need people around us; prayer partners, home groups, Spiritual Mentors, etc..
  - *Release them:* Jesus said “Blessed are the peacemakers” not the peacekeepers. We should be people who try and make peace. There is no place for political games and deceptive division in the church.

**Questions:**

1. Do I agree with the description of an emotionally mature adult (somebody who loves others well)?
2. Have I ever bought into either of the two myths that are mentioned?
3. Where am I emotionally: A baby, child, adolescent or adult?
4. Am I able to accept my past?
5. Am I able to accept myself?
6. Am I able to accept God?
7. Am I able to accept others?
8. In which of the three areas (loving, needing or releasing them) do I struggle most to accept others?
9. Which steps will I take to help me grow into an emotionally mature adult?

**Prayer:**

Father God, thank you that you accept me as I am and long for me to become emotionally mature. By your grace, please help me to grow. Amen.