

News Story Summary

Do you remember how anxious you were to grow up? You couldn't wait to be a teenager, to get a drivers' license, to be 18 or 21 so people would consider you an adult?

Scientists and researchers began a debate years ago about when a person is really grown up or mature. Opinions vary. Some say young adult brains don't mature until at least the age of 25. Prison officials are re-evaluating whether there should be a designated prison program between the juvenile system and the adult system. A quick search of the Internet will provide you with a plethora of surveys, quizzes, and evaluation tools to help you determine your own level of maturity. The shooting death of an instructor by a 9-year old at a gun range has added to the debate about maturity.

This week's study in Hebrews challenges group members to distinguish between being grown up and being mature. Engage them in a discussion of the difference by using excerpts from various Internet sources about this ongoing debate.

(For more on these stories, search the Internet using the terms "how to be mature," "2014 young adult brain maturity," "2014 research how adults mature" and "9 year old on range".)

Focus Attention

Write this question on the board before group members arrive: *How would you define the difference between being grown and being mature?* Encourage discussion among group members.

Begin the group time by asking members to define the difference. For many, being grown may include a specific age or responsibility (turning 13 or getting a drivers' license). Their definition for being mature will likely include references to making decisions, accepting personal responsibility for bills and taxes, and so forth.

Share insights about the growing debate among researchers, scientists, and others concerning the development of the brain, scientific signs of maturity, and other insights gleaned from your research into the Internet articles about the debate among prison officials and the debate about age-limits on firing ranges. Read excerpts or statistics from these sources as well.

Ask: *How does all this research translate into the spiritual realm? Is spiritual maturity one of your goals as a believer? Why? How will you know when you are spiritually mature?*

Challenge group members by saying: *No matter what your physical age is, or how developed your brain is, growing in Christ and maturing in your spiritual walk with the Lord should be a priority in your life. Spiritual maturity is not an endpoint, however; it's an ongoing journey.*

Lead in prayer for today's study.

Challenge

Ask: If the researchers and scientists from the studies we discussed earlier used you as a test subject, what would they conclude? Would they label you as "mature" or "still a work in progress"? Explain your response. What about your spiritual maturity level?

Say: Think back to your initial spiritual birth. Consider the joy and excitement you experienced. Ask: How does your depth of understanding, obedience, and trust compare now with then? What steps are you taking to pursue spiritual maturity?

Re-emphasize that Christian maturity is a lifelong process.

Allow time for individuals to engage in silent, reflective prayer. Close the prayer, asking God to strengthen and encourage each individual in the group.