

THE SONSHIP CODE

THE FOUR STAGES OF SONSHIP

From Identity to Mature Representation

Lesson 8 | The Kingdom Codes Learning Portal

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From Lesson 7 to Lesson 8

In Lesson 7, we settled the foundational question: Who am I in Christ? We learned that beloved identity is received, not achieved, and that we live from sonship, not for sonship.

But identity is the beginning, not the end. A newborn child is fully part of the family on the first day of life, yet no one expects that child to run the family business. Belonging is immediate. Maturity takes time.

This lesson explores how a child who belongs grows into a son who can be trusted to represent the Father.

Core Idea

Sonship begins with belonging, but biblical sonship does not end with belonging. A child is received into relationship, formed in character, strengthened through testing and training, and increasingly entrusted to represent the Father.

For The Sonship Code, we use four New Testament words to describe this development:

TEKNON -> NĒPIOS -> NEANISKOS -> HUIOS

These words are not presented in Scripture as a rigid four-step process. But together they give us a helpful framework for understanding the movement from:

IDENTITY -> CHARACTER -> STRENGTH -> MATURE REPRESENTATION

SONSHIP IS RECEIVED.

MATURITY IS DEVELOPED THROUGH CHARACTER AND STRENGTH.

REPRESENTATION IS ENTRUSTED.

KEY TEXTS

John 1:12

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

Galatians 4:1-2

“Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.”

1 John 2:14

"I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."

Romans 8:14

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Romans 8:19

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God."

1. THE REVELATION

Belonging is immediate. Maturity is progressive.

New birth establishes relationship in the family of God. Growth develops the capacity to represent that family well.

This distinction is essential. If we confuse identity with maturity, we may begin to assume that because I belong, I am ready; because I am gifted, I am mature; because I am called, I am prepared; and because I have revelation, I can carry authority.

But Scripture shows that heirs grow. Children develop. Character forms. Strength, skill, and capacity increase. Responsibility expands as maturity is proven.

Even Jesus grew. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). If the perfect Son of God walked through a process of growth in His humanity, we should not be surprised that the Father takes us through one as well.

IDENTITY TELLS YOU WHERE YOU BELONG.

MATURITY DETERMINES WHAT YOU CAN RESPONSIBLY CARRY.

2. THE CODE

Four words, four questions, one direction.

The Four Stages of Sonship can be expressed as:

TEKNON -> NĒPIOS -> NEANISKOS -> HUIOS

TEKNON - IDENTITY: Who am I? I discover that I belong.

NĒPIOS - CHARACTER FORMATION: Who am I becoming? My character is formed.

NEANISKOS - STRENGTH, SKILL, AND CAPACITY: What can I carry? Strength is tested, and skill and capacity develop.

HUIOS - MATURE REPRESENTATION: Who am I representing? My life increasingly reveals the Father.

This fits inside the Sonship Code from Lesson 6: Relationship -> Identity -> Formation -> Maturity -> Commissioning -> Representation. Lesson 7 focused on identity. This lesson shows how identity grows through formation into maturity.

BELONGING -> FORMATION -> STRENGTH -> REPRESENTATION

3. AN IMPORTANT BIBLICAL GUARDRAIL

The framework serves Scripture. Scripture does not serve the framework.

Before going further, we need an honest clarification. The New Testament uses these Greek words in different contexts, and they are not presented as an official four-level discipleship chart.

Teknon refers broadly to a child, one born into a family.

Nēpios emphasizes infancy or immaturity.

Neaniskos refers to a young man or young person in the strength of life.

Huios is the common word for son and is used of both natural and spiritual sonship.

In fact, the words sometimes overlap. In Romans 8, Paul calls the same believers sons (huioi) in verse 14 and children (tekna) in verse 16. So, we are not claiming that every believer moves through four technical Greek ranks. These dimensions also overlap in our own lives. We can be mature in some areas while still developing in others.

We are using four biblical words to recognize four real dimensions of growth that Scripture describes. John himself writes to believers at different levels of growth: “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers” (1 John 2:12-14). Paul contrasts “babes in Christ” with the spiritual (1 Corinthians 3:1). Hebrews contrasts those who still need milk with those “of full age” (Hebrews 5:13-14). The pattern of progressive growth is seen throughout the Bible; the four-word framework is a teaching tool to help us recognize it.

THESE ARE NOT FOUR DIFFERENT KINDS OF BELIEVERS.

THEY ARE FOUR DIMENSIONS THAT HELP US RECOGNIZE THE PROCESS OF MATURATION.

4. TEKNON - IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Before we learn responsibility, we establish belonging.

The Greek word teknon means a child, an offspring, one born into relationship. It carries the warmth of family connection. John 1:12 says that to all who received Him, He gave the right to become children (tekna) of God.

A child does not earn entry into the family. The child belongs before walking correctly, speaking correctly, understanding everything, or carrying any responsibility. The relationship of beloved identity in the family of God comes first.

Teknon asks:

• Who is my Father?

• Where do I belong?

• What identity have I received?

At the Teknon dimension, the immature heart may still wrestle with deeper questions: Am I accepted? Have I really been forgiven? Am I enough? These questions must be answered by our identity in Christ, as we learned in Lesson 7, because unstable identity produces unstable development.

WE DO NOT GROW UP IN ORDER TO BECOME LOVED.

WE GROW UP BECAUSE WE ARE LOVED.

Formation must happen inside secure identity. Otherwise, growth turns into performance, and every correction feels like a threat to belonging.

YOU CANNOT BUILD HEALTHY MATURITY ON INSECURE BELONGING.

5. THE STRENGTH AND DANGER OF TEKNON

Childlike is not the same as childish.

Healthy childlike identity produces trust, security, wonder, dependence, and teachability. Jesus did not criticize childlikeness. He honored it: “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Childlikeness is meant to remain throughout maturity. A mature son still trusts, still depends, still wonders, and still receives. Paul says, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). He put away childish things, not childlike trust.

MATURITY DOES NOT OUTGROW DEPENDENCE ON THE FATHER. IT DEEPENS IT.

But there is a danger at this stage. Identity can become distorted when we stop at “God loves me,” “God accepts me,” and “I belong.” All of that is true. But belonging has purpose. Identity is intended to lead into formation, where the character and nature of Christ are developed within us.

A child who refuses to grow remains dependent in ways that eventually become unhealthy. Parents celebrate a baby’s first steps, but they would be deeply concerned if that same child were still taking a bottle and crawling at fifteen. Love receives us as we are, and love refuses to leave us there.

The love of God is the foundation in which we are rooted and grounded. Paul prays “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19). This is not just knowing about His love. It is knowing it by experience. When we are rooted in His love, we are positioned to be filled with His fullness.

BELONGING IS THE BEGINNING. IT IS NOT THE END.

THE FATHER RECEIVES CHILDREN, AND THEN THE FATHER RAISES SONS.

6. NĒPIOS - IMMATURITY AND FORMATION

What still governs me?

The Greek word nēpios refers to an infant, a small child, one who has not yet reached maturity. Paul often uses it to describe believers who should have grown but remain immature. “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1).

This gives us the second Sonship dimension: character formation.

Nēpios asks:

• What still governs me?

• What responses still need to come into correct alignment?

• Where am I unstable or easily influenced?

NĒPIOS REVEALS THE AREAS WHERE IDENTITY HAS NOT YET BECOME MATURE CHARACTER.

Immature Does Not Mean Rejected

This distinction matters. An immature child is still a child. Immaturity does not cancel belonging. It reveals the need for growth.

God does not say, “You are immature; therefore you are not Mine.” He says, in effect, “Because you are Mine, I will form you.” As we saw in Lesson 7, “whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). This truth protects us from shame. Correction is not evidence that we have been rejected. It is evidence that we have been received.

CORRECTION DOES NOT CONTRADICT SONSHIP. IT HELPS FORM IT.

7. GALATIANS 4 - THE HEIR WHO IS STILL A CHILD

The inheritance is real, but the heir must grow.

Galatians 4 gives one of the clearest pictures of this stage, and the word Paul uses for "child" in verse 1 is nēpios. "The heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father" (Galatians 4:1-2).

Notice what Paul says. The heir is truly an heir. He is "master of all." The inheritance is real and the identity is established. But while immature, he lives under guardians and stewards. Why? Not because he is rejected, but because immaturity limits the capacity for responsibility.

In the ancient world, a wealthy father would not hand the estate to a twelve-year-old, no matter how much he loved him. Love was the reason he waited. Releasing too much too soon would have harmed both the son and the estate.

Then Paul shows where the process leads: "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7). The word for son there is huios. In just seven verses, Paul moves from nēpios to huios.

IMMATURITY DOES NOT CANCEL THE INHERITANCE. IT DELAYS OUR ABILITY TO STEWARD WHAT ALREADY BELONGS TO US.

Guardians and Stewards Today

Within The Sonship Code, we can apply this principle more broadly. Immature sons need formation, instruction, boundaries, guidance, and correction as they grow toward responsible representation. God can use Scripture, parents, teachers, pastors, mentors, community, responsibility, consequences, and life itself to form us.

As sons mature, Holy Spirit increasingly becomes the primary internal Teacher and Guide of their lives. This is why relationship with Holy Spirit is vital for growth and development. Isaiah 11:2 describes the Spirit who rested on Jesus as "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." Later in our Sonship Code study, we will explore this sevenfold Spirit language more fully and how the seven Spirits of God (Isaiah 11:2; Revelation 4:5) deepen our wisdom and understanding.

A person who rejects every form of correction will eventually limit their own maturity. If no one can correct you, you may be gifted, called, intelligent, and experienced, but you will remain immature.

TEACHABILITY IS ONE OF THE GREAT MARKS OF HEALTHY SONSHIP.

8. THE NĒPIOS PROBLEM - INSTABILITY

Immaturity is revealed by what can move you.

Paul's goal for the church is "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine… but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ" (Ephesians 4:14-15).

Immaturity is easily moved by emotion, opinion, pressure, praise, criticism, new teaching, offense, fear, culture, and circumstance. The immature person often reacts before discerning. One sermon sets them on fire; one critical comment sets them back for a week.

Milk Before Solid Food

Peter writes, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Every child begins with milk. The writer of Hebrews calls milk "the first principles of the oracles of God" and says, "everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe" (Hebrews 5:12-13). The word for babe there is nēpios.

One of the most foundational truths a growing believer must feed on is the gift of righteousness: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). I am not righteous because I did everything right. I am righteous because Jesus did everything right, and I am in Him and He is in me. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

As we meditate on this reality, we grow, much like a baby growing on a bottle. Milk provides the basic nourishment that prepares us for solid food. Growth means moving from simply receiving the word of righteousness to becoming skilled in it, until it shapes how we think, discern, and live. Those who "receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life" (Romans 5:17). If we skip the milk, we will not have the capacity for solid food.

Hebrews describes maturity as the next step: "solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Notice the phrase "by reason of use." Discernment is not downloaded. It is developed through practice.

IMMATURITY IS FREQUENTLY REVEALED BY WHAT CAN MOVE YOU.

MATURITY INCREASES STABILITY.

9. THE NĒPIOS BATTLE - APPETITE VERSUS GOVERNMENT

Character develops when desire comes under Kingdom government.

The battle of immaturity is often appetite versus government. What do I want, or what is right? What do I feel, or what is true? What is comfortable, or what produces growth?

Immaturity says, “I want it now.” Maturity learns, “Not everything I desire should govern me.”

Character is not merely learned. It is practiced. The Nēpios dimension confronts our responses: How do I respond when I am corrected, ignored, hurt, delayed, or denied what I wanted? These moments are not interruptions to our formation. They are our formation.

MATURITY IS REVEALED IN RESPONSE.

Everyday Example: Tasha and the Corrected Report

Tasha had been a believer for three years and loved worship, prayer, and Bible study. At work, her manager returned a report with several corrections and a note: “Good start. Needs more detail.”

Tasha spent the evening upset. She replayed the comments, told two friends how unfair it was, and considered looking for another job. Nothing in the note had attacked her character, yet it felt like rejection.

During her prayer time that week, she sensed Holy Spirit gently ask, “Why did correction feel like rejection?” She realized she had carried the same reaction since childhood, when every correction from her father came with anger. Her identity in Christ was real, but this area of her life had not yet been formed.

Tasha went back to her manager and asked for specific feedback. The next report was stronger, and her manager noticed. Tasha did not just improve a report. She grew in an area where she had been a nēpios for years.

THE PLACE YOU REACT MOST IS OFTEN THE PLACE GOD IS FORMING MOST.

The Transition from Nēpios

Growth occurs when correction becomes instruction followed, pressure reveals formation, delay becomes development, failure becomes learning, and truth becomes practice. The question begins to change from “Do I belong?” to “What kind of person am I becoming?” That shift is movement toward maturity. What you are becoming reveals what you truly desire.

10. NEANISKOS - STRENGTH, SKILL, AND CAPACITY

Strength rooted in the Word.

The Greek word neaniskos refers to a young man or young person, someone beyond childhood and in the strength of life. John writes, “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14).

This gives us the third Sonship dimension: strength, skill, and capacity.

Notice the source of their strength. John does not say they are strong because they are talented, charismatic, influential, or recognized. He says, “the word of God abides in you.” Their strength is rooted in internalized truth, abiding in His presence, applying what they know, and resisting the lies of the enemy.

There is a difference between knowing Scripture and having Scripture formed within you. At first, you read the Word. Then the Word reads you. Then it corrects you, reshapes your thinking, and becomes part of how you respond. What was once information becomes internal structure.

THE WORD IS NO LONGER ONLY SOMETHING YOU STUDY.

IT IS BECOMING SOMETHING YOU CARRY.

11. NEANISKOS AND OVERCOMING

Strength that has passed through resistance becomes capacity.

John says the young men “have overcome the wicked one.” This speaks of tested strength. Strength that has not been tested is only potential. Strength that has passed through resistance becomes capacity.

The Neaniskos believer is learning how to stand, discern, resist, persevere, carry pressure, and stay aligned. Like a muscle that grows by working against weight, spiritual strength grows by remaining faithful against resistance.

STRENGTH IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF RESISTANCE.

STRENGTH IS THE CAPACITY TO REMAIN ALIGNED DURING RESISTANCE.

Character and Capacity

Character asks, “Who am I becoming?” Capacity asks, “What can I carry?” Both matter. Someone may have good motives but limited capacity, strong gifting but weak character, or strong character but undeveloped skill. Mature sonship develops both.

CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER MAKES YOU TRUSTWORTHY.

DEVELOPED CAPACITY MAKES YOU CAPABLE.

REPRESENTATION REQUIRES BOTH.

12. NEANISKOS DEVELOPS SKILL

Calling does not remove the need to develop capacity.

Spiritual maturity is not merely being sincere, passionate, or available. It also involves development. Jesus grew in wisdom. David learned leadership in caves before he led a nation. Joseph developed administration in a household and a prison before he managed Egypt. Paul spent years in preparation before his major missionary journeys.

A maturing believer should become increasingly skillful in the assignment God has given. Skill can include communication, leadership, stewardship, discernment, conflict resolution, study, decision-making, administration, craftsmanship, and emotional self-control. The carpenter who honors God with excellent work, the mother who learns patience, and the business owner who manages money with integrity are all developing Neaniskos capacity.

CALLING DOES NOT REMOVE THE NEED TO DEVELOP CAPACITY.

13. STRENGTH WITHOUT SUBMISSION IS DANGEROUS

Kingdom strength is power under Kingdom government.

The Neaniskos dimension carries a particular danger. Strength can become pride, independence, competition, or control. A person discovers, “I can do this.” But mature sonship must still say what Jesus said: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

When strength stops submitting, capacity becomes ego, gifting becomes identity, and authority becomes domination.

Jesus shows us the alternative. He possessed authority, power, and wisdom beyond anyone who has ever lived. Yet He said, “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19). He did not use His strength and skill independently. He used them in agreement with the Father.

THE GOAL IS NOT INDEPENDENCE.

THE GOAL IS INCREASING CAPACITY WITH INCREASING ALIGNMENT.

Everyday Example: Alex and the Growing Ministry

Alex was a gifted young worship leader. His team grew, his songs were shared, and invitations to lead at other churches started coming in. He was strong, and everyone could see it.

Slowly, Alex stopped asking for input. He changed plans without communicating them and became short with team members who disagreed. When an older elder gently raised a concern, Alex said, “I hear from God for myself.”

Within a year, two key team members had left, and Alex felt exhausted and isolated. In a quiet moment, he admitted the truth: his gift had grown faster than his submission.

Alex went back to his pastor, apologized to his team, and asked the elder to meet with him monthly. His gift did not shrink. It became safer to carry. Alex learned that strength is not proven by needing no one, but by remaining aligned while growing.

A GIFT CAN OPEN A DOOR. ONLY CHARACTER CAN KEEP YOU IN THE ROOM.

14. HUIOS - MATURE REPRESENTATION

How faithfully does my life represent the Father?

The Greek word huios is the ordinary word for son. It is used of Jesus as the Son of God, and it is also used of believers in passages about sonship, inheritance, and the Spirit's leading.

For The Sonship Code, huios becomes our primary picture of mature representation. Not because every use of huios means "mature son," but because Scripture repeatedly connects sonship with likeness, leading, inheritance, responsibility, and representation.

In Lesson 6, we saw that a son carries the family name, resembles the father, and represents the father's interests. That is the heart of the Huios dimension.

HUIOS ASKS: WHO AM I REPRESENTING?

Led by the Spirit

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). Mature sonship is connected with being led, not merely knowing, feeling, being gifted, or being busy. Being led by Holy Spirit requires sensitivity, submission, discernment, and obedience.

A MATURE SON DOES NOT MERELY POSSESS POWER.

HE LIVES UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

Making the Father Visible

Jesus revealed the heart of mature sonship when He said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Through His life, Jesus revealed what the Father is like, how He loves, what He values, how He confronts evil, and how He restores.

In the beginning, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion" (Genesis 1:26). Humanity was created to visibly represent God's rule and character within creation. Sin distorted that representation. Christ restores it.

So the Huios question becomes: Does my life increasingly reveal His nature, His wisdom, His peace, His justice, His compassion, and His truth?

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF MATURE SONSHIP IS NOT SELF-DISCOVERY.

IT IS FATHER-REVELATION.

15. CREATION WAITS FOR SONS

Not more impressive gifts, but the revealing of sons.

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19).

Creation is not waiting for more meetings, more information, more gifted personalities, or more Christian activity. It is waiting for the revealing of sons.

Within The Sonship Code, we understand this revealing as sonship becoming visible: believers whose identity has become character, whose character has developed capacity, whose capacity remains submitted, and whose lives increasingly represent the Father. As we saw in Lesson 6, creation is not waiting for us to escape it. It is waiting for us to reveal the Father within it.

CREATION IS NOT WAITING FOR MORE IMPRESSIVE GIFTS.

IT IS WAITING FOR THE REVEALING OF SONS.

16. A BIBLICAL PICTURE: JOSEPH THROUGH THE FOUR DIMENSIONS

From favored son to faithful representative.

Joseph's life gives us a vivid picture of all four dimensions working together.

Teknon - The Beloved Son. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children… Also he made him a tunic of many colors" (Genesis 37:3). Joseph knew he was loved. He had a coat and a dream. His identity was clear long before his maturity was.

Nēpios - The Immature Dreamer. "Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more" (Genesis 37:5). The dream was from God, but Joseph's handling of it was immature. He had revelation without wisdom. His brothers sold him, and his formation began in a pit.

Neaniskos - Strength Under Pressure. In Potiphar's house, "the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man" (Genesis 39:2). He developed skill in administration and integrity under temptation: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Then came prison. The psalmist says, "Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him" (Psalm 105:19). The word

that once made Joseph proud was now making him strong.

Huios - Mature Representation. When Joseph finally stood before Pharaoh, the king said, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” (Genesis 41:38). Pharaoh saw God in Joseph. Years later, when Joseph faced the brothers who betrayed him, he did not take revenge. He said, “God sent me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5), and he promised, “I will provide for you and your little ones” (Genesis 50:21). Joseph had become a son who represented the Father’s heart of mercy.

The boy with the coat became the man with the character to carry the assignment.

THE DREAM CAME AT THE BEGINNING.

THE CHARACTER TO CARRY IT CAME THROUGH THE PROCESS.

17. GROWTH IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

You can be strong in one area and immature in another.

Spiritual development is not always a straight path, and it is not always even. A person may be secure in identity but immature emotionally, strong in Scripture but weak relationally, gifted publicly but undisciplined privately, or mature professionally but fragile under correction.

That is why we should not simply ask, “What stage am I in?” A better question is, “Where do I still need to grow?” Most of us are Huios in some areas and Nēpios in others.

Do Not Turn the Stages into Labels

The framework is meant to help us grow, not to classify people. We should never say, “You are only a Nēpios,” or “I am a Huios.” That quickly becomes spiritual pride. The stages are a personal mirror, not a ranking system.

Maturity Is Not Superiority

Mature sons do not become more valuable, more loved, or more important than others. A newborn and a grown adult have equal worth, but they do not carry equal responsibility. Maturity changes responsibility, not worth.

MATURITY DOES NOT INCREASE YOUR VALUE TO GOD.

MATURITY INCREASES YOUR CAPACITY TO REPRESENT HIM RESPONSIBLY.

THE FRAMEWORK IS FOR MATURITY, NOT STATUS.

18. AUTHORITY FOLLOWS FORMATION

Authority is a responsibility entrusted to maturity.

Greater authority requires greater restraint, wisdom, accountability, humility, and alignment. Authority is not a trophy we win for maturity. It is a responsibility the Father entrusts to maturity.

Paul understood this when he told Timothy, “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). The qualification was faithfulness, not just ability.

Jesus models this perfectly. He carried extraordinary authority, yet He never used it for ego. He used it to heal, restore, serve, and ultimately to lay down His life.

AUTHORITY IS NOT A TROPHY FOR MATURITY.

AUTHORITY IS A RESPONSIBILITY ENTRUSTED TO MATURITY.

19. THE FOUR STAGES AT A GLANCE

Each dimension has its own question, need, and danger.

TEKNON - IDENTITY

Question: Who am I?

Needs: Belonging, security, love, and identity.

Danger: Identity insecurity, or stopping at belonging and refusing to grow.

NĒPIOS - CHARACTER

Question: Who am I becoming?

Needs: Correction, instruction, boundaries, and formation.

Danger: Resistance to correction.

NEANISKOS - STRENGTH

Question: What can I carry?

Needs: Training, resistance, responsibility, and opportunity.

Danger: Pride in strength.

HUIOS - REPRESENTATION

Question: Who am I representing?

Needs: Commissioning, stewardship, accountability, and ongoing dependence.

Danger: Independence in authority.

The Father knows what each season requires. And at every stage, the safeguard is the same: returning to relationship with the Father. He will never give you an assignment that you can complete without Him. He will also never give you anything to replace your need for Him.

EVERY STAGE BEGINS AND ENDS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

THE KINGDOM NEVER ADVANCES OUTSIDE OF RELATIONSHIP.

20. WHAT FORMS SONS

Holy Spirit, the Word, relationship, and pressure.

We do not mature by willpower alone. The Father uses several tools together.

Holy Spirit Forms Sons

Holy Spirit reveals our identity in Christ, produces His fruit, corrects, guides, teaches, strengthens, and leads. That is why Romans 8 connects sonship with being led by the Spirit. He does not only give gifts to sons; He forms the character of sons.

The Word Forms Sons

John connects the strength of the young men with the Word abiding in them. Scripture becomes our foundation, correction, wisdom, and internal government. The Word you abide in becomes part of the person you become.

Relationship Forms Sons

Formation is relational. Sons grow through abiding in Christ, fellowship with Holy Spirit, healthy community, mentorship, serving others, and accountability. In Lesson 3, we learned that correct relationship sustains increase. Here we see that correct relationship also sustains maturity.

Pressure Forms Sons

Pressure reveals which dimension still needs growth. Criticism reveals identity. Delay reveals character. Resistance reveals strength. Authority reveals maturity.

PRESSURE DOES NOT ONLY SHOW WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND YOU.

PRESSURE REVEALS WHAT HAS BEEN FORMED WITHIN YOU.

Do not waste pressure. Ask the Father what He is forming through it.

21. MATURITY IS REVEALED IN RESPONSE

Maturity is what truth has formed in you.

This principle appears throughout The Kingdom Codes because it matters deeply. You can recognize maturity by how quickly someone recovers from offense, how they receive correction, how they handle success and failure, how they treat people under their authority, and how they treat people who can do nothing for them.

MATURITY IS NOT MERELY WHAT YOU KNOW.

MATURITY IS WHAT TRUTH HAS FORMED IN YOU.

22. THE SONSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

A formation map, not a mechanical formula.

The full pathway can be pictured this way:

RELATIONSHIP -> IDENTITY -> FORMATION -> CHARACTER -> STRENGTH -> CAPACITY -> MATURITY -> REPRESENTATION

What God forms inwardly becomes visible outwardly. That is the revealing of the sons of God.

This is not a rigid formula. It is a formation map that helps us recognize where we are, what God may be developing, what still needs growth, and what greater responsibility may require. It also fits the Kingdom Codes pathway we have followed in every lesson:

REVELATION -> APPLICATION -> TRANSFORMATION -> MATURITY -> REPRESENTATION

23. CHRIST AT THE CENTER

Jesus is not the final stage of a chart. He is the Son we are becoming like.

Jesus is the source, the pattern, the standard, the life, and the goal of sonship. We are not maturing into independent sons. We are maturing into Christlike representation.

Jesus reveals the mature Son perfectly. He knew His identity at the Jordan River. His character was tested in the wilderness. He carried strength and authority in His ministry. He remained submitted in Gethsemane: “Not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). He represented the Father in every word and work. And He gave His life for the world.

THE GOAL OF SONSHIP IS NOT SPIRITUAL STATUS.

THE GOAL IS CHRISTLIKE REPRESENTATION.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Many believers know they are children of God. That is foundational. But Scripture continually calls believers to grow.

The Father never intended for His children to remain unstable, easily offended, untrained, governed by appetite, or incapable of responsibility. Grace receives us where we are, but grace does not intend to leave us immature. As we learned in Lesson 7, grace is not only unearned favor. It is also God’s empowering presence that helps us grow.

THE FATHER LOVES HIS CHILDREN TOO MUCH TO REFUSE TO RAISE THEM.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Choose one area of your life, such as your marriage, work, finances, ministry, or emotions, and reflect on it through the four dimensions:

1. **Teknon:** In this area, am I living from belonging or from performance?

2. **Nēpios:** What repeated reaction reveals that something still needs to be formed?

3. **Neaniskos:** What strength or skill is God developing in me here?

4. **Huios:** What does my life in this area reveal about the Father?

Do not only ask, "What can I do?"

Ask, "Who am I becoming?"

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Where is my identity secure, and where is it still vulnerable?

2. What does pressure most often reveal in me?

3. Where am I tempted to operate independently instead of remaining aligned?

4. What Kingdom Code can I apply here to break through?

ONE QUESTION

If the Father were raising me in one area right now, what would He be forming?

ONE ACTION STEP

Identify one area where you recognize Nēpios reactions. This week, invite one trusted mentor, pastor, or mature friend to give you honest feedback in that area. Receive it without defending yourself, thank them, and put one piece of their counsel into practice.

DECLARATION

I am a child of God, and I belong in my heavenly Father's family.

I do not grow in order to be loved; I grow because I am loved.

I receive correction as evidence of sonship, not rejection.

The Word of God abides in me, and I am becoming strong.

My strength remains submitted to the Father.

I am being led by Holy Spirit, and my life will reveal the Father.

Jesus Christ is my center, Scripture is my foundation, and Holy Spirit is my guide.

I am moving from revelation to representation.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Identity has been established. Now maturity must develop, and maturity prepares us for responsibility.

The next lesson answers an important question:

HOW DOES GOD MOVE SOMEONE FROM BEING CALLED TO BEING READY TO CARRY THE CALL?

IDENTITY -> FORMATION -> MATURITY -> COMMISSIONING -> REPRESENTATION

[NEXT LESSON: CALL, CHARACTER, AND COMMISSIONING]

RELATED CODES

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Establish belonging before maturity.

[EXPLORE]

WHAT IS BIBLICAL SONSHIP?

Understand the larger biblical framework of sonship.

[EXPLORE]

THE CODE OF ALIGNMENT

Bring behavior and identity into agreement.

[EXPLORE]

KINGDOM SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Build the structures maturity requires.

[EXPLORE]

THE CODE OF SHALOM

Learn to remain governed under pressure.

[EXPLORE]

TAKE HOME POINT

SONSHIP IS RECEIVED.

MATURITY IS DEVELOPED THROUGH CHARACTER AND STRENGTH.

REPRESENTATION IS ENTRUSTED.

Teknon reveals identity.

Nēpios reveals where character is being formed.

Neaniskos reveals strength and capacity.

Huios points us toward mature representation.

You belong before you mature.

You are formed because you belong.

You become strong through abiding, testing, training, and obedience.

THE GOAL IS NOT TO HAVE THE TITLE OF SON.

THE GOAL IS TO REVEAL THE NATURE OF THE FATHER.

Discover the Kingdom Code you need.

Apply it. Move forward.

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