

2 BASICS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

I. YOUR BIRTH - B. Two Basics for New Christians

Becoming a Christian means adding many new parts to your life. It's like growing up all over again. How do you do this? How do you move from birth to significant growth?

The following two outlines have proved tremendously valuable to many people. Probably 99 percent of your struggles, problems and hang-ups as you grow in Christ will be solved if you are sensitive to these two outlines.

1. FACT · FAITH · FEELING

First of all, remember the three "F's" in the Christian life. The first is the "F" of Fact. The second is the "F" of Faith. The third is the "F" of Feeling.

FACT

Your relationship with Jesus Christ is not based on feelings but facts, historical facts recorded in the Bible, *God's Word*; Christ entered history, died on the cross, rose again, and is alive today and invites you to become children of God. These are facts of history.

FAITH

When you put faith in those facts- -that is, when you act on them and ask to become members of God's family and to have Jesus as your Savior- -at that instant you are born into God's family (John 1:12, John 3). The "F" of Fact becomes very personal. It becomes something, which has meaning in your life.

FEELING

Often the result of putting faith in these facts and in Christ as your Savior is a wonderful feeling. However, this is not always so. Suppose the following day you don't feel very close to the Lord. Does that mean He's not very close to you? Does that mean your birth into God's family was phony and really didn't happen? Does that mean there is no validity in the facts of God in which you put your faith? No, not at all!

It is exciting to feel close to Christ! However, there will be many times in life when you will not feel very close to Christ. Sometimes you won't feel close to the Lord because of sin in your life. If that is the case you need to confess the sin so that you may once again be in close fellowship with Christ (John 1:1-10).

There will be times in your life when although you are reading the Bible and praying and although there is no known unconfessed sin in your life, you still don't feel close to God. At these times remember He is still close to you (John 14:15-23).

God does not build a life on the foundation of feelings. Feelings are given by God, but He doesn't want you to base your life on feelings as though they were facts. If you did you might think, for example, " You know, I feel so and so doesn't like me," and pretty soon you'd be saying, " I know so and so doesn't like me!" Yet if someone asked, " What makes you

think they don't like you?" you would probably have to say, "Well I just know they don't." What happened in your mind in that thought process was that feeling became fact.

God builds a life on the basis of fact. That's why life with Christ can be so stable. You need to be grateful to be close to God. However, when you don't feel close to Him, you don't need to work up a feeling. Instead, you need to read the Bible, pray, confess any sin in your life and rejoice that Jesus is close to you even though you don't feel that He is.

Whenever you go through a struggle with feelings, it's great to enjoy the book of Psalms. The Psalms can be a great encouragement in those times when your feelings can't quite kick into gear.

Keep in mind that the three "F's" must always be kept in order. Fact is the basis of faith and feeling is the emotion that tags along at the end.

Take a minute now and think about which "F" gives you the most trouble. Write it down and pray now, asking God to help you in this area.

2. EAT · RELAX · EXERCISE

After the three "F's," what else as a babe in Christ do you need to know?

There are three things a baby must know to grow. He must eat, sleep (or relax), and exercise. Can you imagine the problem a baby has if he never eats? He soon dries up and withers away. Or suppose he eats and relaxes but never exercise; he'll soon become like a balloon. So the doing of all three is essential to his growth.

Not only are these important for your physical life, but also for your spiritual life - for your growth in Christ.

EAT

The eating process as you grow in Christ involves digesting the Bible. Read it every day. Be faithful in taking 10, 15, 30, 60 minutes a day to study the Bible. Have a notebook and in that notebook write down what God has been teaching you. Then, as you leave your study time with Christ take a phrase, a sentence, a verse, or a thought that you will meditate on during the day. This way you're really eating all day long in a very, very healthy way.

It will be important that you schedule time to eat. Don't just fit it in when you finally have the time. There really is nothing more important in your daily schedule than spending time studying the Bible - eating properly. So, whatever you do, start building an excellent diet right now by beginning to read the Bible. The first series of study questions in this manual will help you get started on eating properly.

There will be days when reading the Bible will seem boring. If so, stop and pray, asking God to bless you as you read. It may still seem boring, but remember that your soul needs to be fed every day. Develop this excellent habit. Really eat well and study the Bible every day!

RELAX

Having eaten properly, you also need to relax correctly. What does that say? That says pray! Let God worry for you. Don't be embarrassed to really be honest with God. The author of Hebrews says you can come boldly into the presence of God and know that He understands your struggles and temptations because He lived on this earth and went through that which you go through. (See Heb. 4:12-16.) As you relax through prayer, pray very specifically for friends, family, your life, etc.

I would encourage you to have a prayer time every day. Set aside time in your schedule when you have important conversation with Jesus Christ. And then learn what it means to pray all day long. Learn what it means to pray as you pass from class to class, as you drive to work, as you shop for food, as you talk with people on the phone and say, "Hey, let's pray together before we sign off." Really become a person who relaxes well by praying much.

EXERCISE

Then, of course, you must exercise. The first way to exercise is by being with those who know and love Jesus Christ - by being with God's family. They have the same heartbeat. There you can share your agonies and hang-ups, and no one will laugh because you are in love with each other because of the love of Christ in you.

Many people who know the Lord have never developed this area of exercising. Plan your schedule so that every week you're exercising with believers. This is why it is important to worship regularly in some church. This is also the reason you need to make it a point to meet with a small group fellowship. This is when the family of Christ gathers to exercise and talk about diets (what we've been studying in Scripture), talk about our praying life, and talk about our hang-ups and struggles. Over the years I have seen so many men and women who didn't think the fellowship of the Body of Christ was important for them, and as a result felt alone and defeated out on their own.

You exercise by being with people who know and love Christ, and you also exercise by being with those who are not Christians - not yet, at least! That's when your faith is put to the test. That's when eating and relaxing takes on muscle. When people raise questions, when people laugh and mock, this can be exciting.

Do you know what this means? It means that you have a purpose in every relationship in your life. If you are with people who know and love Christ, your purpose is to exercise your faith and to help them exercise and share. If you are with people who do not know and love Christ, your purpose is to help them come to Him. One of the greatest hang-ups of our day is people who have no purpose in their lives. Because of your commitment to Jesus Christ, He brings purpose into every single relationship that you have (2 Corinthians 5).

Make certain that you grow well. It's very simple to grow, but there are certain things you have to do. Choose to eat, relax, and exercise. Put these things in your schedule now and ask for God's help to do them.

What presently is the hardest area of growth for you? Is it eating? Is it exercising with the committed because you're upset at them? Why not talk it out and pray it out with someone? You'll grow through it.

Keep in mind that the Christian life is a birth and then it's a growing process. How great that you've been born into the family. Now the question is, "How are you growing?" Let's grow together that Jesus Christ might be honored, that we might glorify God and through it the world might know that Christ is love.

God bless you.