

Suffering Because of Spiritual Growth

Lesson 7

THE MARKS OF A BABE IN CHRIST

Everyone who is a Christian is or has been a babe in spiritual maturity. The moment a person is born into God's family by God's grace through faith in Christ he is a babe in spiritual matters. He cannot help himself for babyhood is his state as a result of being born into God's family.

It is perfectly normal to go through a baby stage as a Christian, but it is abnormal to stay in a state of babyhood. A failure to grow in Christian maturity will produce a spiritual misfit. We do things as an infant that we would never feel free doing as an adult. For instance, when I was a baby, I sucked my big toe, but it sure would look silly for me to suck my toe today.

There are two ingredients that are essential for a physical baby to grow up. They are food and exercise. A baby already has life but life can only mature with these two elements. This is also true for the babe in Christ, for he is already spiritually alive because of the new birth but he must hunger for spiritual food found in the Bible and he must exercise faith-obedience by applying the Bible to his life.

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).

“For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.” (Heb. 4:2).

Babes in Christ will often do things out of the ordinary and these things might be shocking and amusing to more seasoned believers. Often baby Christians will show a great deal of zeal (and we thank God for zeal in Christians), but often this zeal will be misused. They have zeal without proper knowledge of how to use this zeal. Therefore, babes will often offend unsaved and saved folks alike.

Probably the most crucial stage of a Christian's life is that time immediately following his conversion. If seasoned Christians follow up the young believer and instruct him in the Word, he will grow. If he is not followed up, his growth will be stunted and this will effect his whole Christian life. Spiritually helping new Christians has been one of the great weaknesses of evangelical Christianity. Evangelists are satisfied to get people to make a decision and then they drop them. As much or more effort should be spent on follow up as is spent on evangelism.

I am convinced that a great many people who make an initial profession of faith in Christ do so out of some emotional need. Their profession was made to get them over some emotional crisis such as the death of a loved one, or the breaking up with a girl friend or boy friend, or the threat of divorce, or some financial crisis and such like. They have declared a need and have exercised some kind of faith but perhaps their faith has not been directed towards Christ because they did not have sufficient knowledge of Christ to make an intelligent decision. Therefore, through follow-up many people actually learn more about Christ and then genuinely take hold of Him for salvation.

THE BIBLICAL MARKS OF A BABE IN CHRIST

Unstable Doctrinally. “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” (Eph. 4:14). The babe in Christ is pushed around by every wind of doctrine and easily persuaded into some new and exciting teaching. He is an open target for false teaching, being lured into some modern day cult. Groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses get most of their converts from untaught church members.

Easily Deceived. “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” (Eph. 4:14). Babes in Christ lack spiritual discernment, for they do not understand true

doctrine. They can be led off into all kinds of excesses and extremes of professing Christianity. There are so many real Christians who are babes who get taken off into the extremes of the tongues movement or end up with some off-shoot branch of Christianity.

Unreceptive in Many Areas to the Word of God. *“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.”* (Heb. 5:11). The babe in Christ is unreceptive or indifferent to the Bible because he has a limited spiritual capacity.

Satisfied to Live on Milk Instead of Strong Meat. *“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.”* (Heb. 5:13), The spiritual babe wants to stay on the simple truths of the gospel and has little desire to use his brain and study the Word of God. In fact, the deep things of the Bible bore him.

Not Able to Discern Good and Evil. *“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”* (Heb. 5:14). A babe in Christ may involve himself in things that do not glorify the Lord because he cannot discern good and evil. Sometimes the morals of a babe in Christ are not always as we would like them to be, but we know that God is at work in him and will bring him to maturity in time.

LOGICAL MARKS OF A BABE IN CHRIST

A baby in Christ will have many of the same characteristics as that of a physical baby. Here is a great opportunity to determine where you are in your spiritual growth.

A Baby’s Attention Span is Short. You must amuse or lose the babe in Christ. The baby Christian must be entertained, and his ability to concentrate on spiritual things is quite limited. He only understands the basic principles of the Word and operates on feeling and sight rather than on faith. *“We live by faith, not by sight.”* (2 Cor. 5:7).

The babe in Christ wants to go to a church where there is a preacher who tells jokes, where there is a great deal of singing and where there are a lot of outward, external things happening. He wants to feel good when he leaves the service and does not care whether he has learned anything or not. A babe in Christ would not know when he is being taught the truth because he has little or no ability to discern truth. If the preacher hollers, shouts and cries, he is preaching well no matter what the content of the message might be.

A Baby Innocently Gets in Trouble. Babes in Christ are guilty of innocent spiritual mistakes. They mean well and think that they are doing right but they are continually doing the wrong thing, creating problem situations. The tragedy is that they feel that what they are doing is right when it may be wrong according to the Bible, but they do not know enough of the Bible to give them a sound foundation for their beliefs.

A Baby Does Not Speak Well or at All. A babe in Christ has a hard time speaking out well for his Lord. When he does speak, he often says the wrong thing or says the right thing in the wrong way.

A Baby Has No Scale of Values. A spiritual babe puts his own personal wants above anything else. He is self-centered.

This problem of spiritual babes is nowhere better seen than in the average local church. There are some people in a local church that think that everything must revolve around them. They expect special attention and often leave a local congregation because the pastor and elders will not constantly give them what they think is proper attention.

A Baby Gets His Feelings Hurt Easily. A babe in Christ has to be pampered and burped and gets hurt when any other person says anything that might offend. Babes in Christ can be very sensitive people!

A Baby is Erratic and Not Dependable. A babe in Christ will run hot and cold in spiritual things and cannot be depended upon for effective service for Christ. One day he is up emotionally and the next day he is down in the pit of despair. He talks a lot about doing God’s will but when it comes to doing it he is not around to do it.

A Baby Has Times of Extreme Independence. Most babes in Christ go through a stage where they feel that they have no need for human teachers, commentaries, Bible study aids and so forth because God can teach them the Word apart from any human helps. What babes in Christ fail to see is that God has taught men for two thousand years and their learning can be very valuable in understanding the Scriptures. Also, God has ordained that there should be teachers of the Word who are specially gifted by God to teach His people spiritual truth.

A Baby May be Over-confident at Times. A babe in Christ is over-confident in spiritual things. He thinks he knows it all and has all spiritual truth. No one can teach him anything and he is critical of all other Christians who do not agree with him. He is usually not too flexible in doctrine and personal relationships with other people.

A Baby is Hopelessly Dependent upon Others. A babe in Christ is dependent upon others for spiritual growth and guidance. He sometimes draws his spiritual life from others rather than from the Lord Jesus Himself. The spiritual babe certainly does not operate as a self-sustaining believer-priest before God.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

There is a great need to pray for and spend time with new believers in Christ. The first six months to a year are crucial for the normal, healthy spiritual growth for a new Christian. You must give as much time to building the saints as you do to saving the sinner.

Those who are more mature in Christ must not lose patience with those who are babes. Babes can be annoying and irritate the nerves but with prayer, time and a lot of tender loving care that baby will begin to grow up.

If you are a babe in Christ, you may have some areas of your life that are more noticeably carnal than other areas. For instance, you may not have as much a problem with loss of temper as you do with lust. You may not be very materialistic but you are lazy. Every Christian has areas of carnality that must come under the controlling work of the Spirit.

As a babe in Christ, you are naturally going to make many spiritual mistakes out of ignorance, and you will stumble along until you get some maturity in your life. You will have zeal without knowledge which can be very dangerous, but you get maturity by applying the Bible to your life and this means making mistakes.