



New Beginnings

New Beginnings is something intended to assist the new christian in understanding and entering into the walk that God has just initiated in his or her life. It should be a gathering of ideas and material, verses and such that helps a person understand who they have become and how they can succeed in living this life as a Christian. It will in time involve some doctrinal teaching as to who God is, understanding His nature, who the Son is, who the Father is, the Holy Spirit, putting off and putting on characteristics. But it seems to me that it should primarily be something practical, something truly effective, so that our relationship with God through Christ is strong, healthy, robust, and the enemy cannot come in and do damage to that relationship so as to slow us down or stop us in our growth.

God Loves You.

What does a new Christian need to know in order to be successful in his or her walk? Central to that is understanding that God is *a God of Love*, who is seeking to benefit his children, seeking to nurture them and guide them into paths that will yield eternal health, satisfaction and joy. Knowing that even when we fall in some way, find that we slip up, find that we maybe do something we thought we had turned away from, God is ready to hear us, God is ready to say, "Come near to me. Draw near to me and I will draw near to you." Jesus often used the analogy of an earthly father's love to illustrate the love of God the Father. Most succinctly, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, he demonstrated the eagerness of the Father, who was looking every day for the errant son's return and when he saw him "afar off", he ran to meet him and embraced him. That is how God our Father responds to us when we turn back to him. (Luke 15:20)

The Blood of Jesus.

The path, the means by which we can do that, is the blood of Jesus. Jesus shed his blood to purchase

our forgiveness. That forgiveness is not a one time forgiveness for one sin or one set of sins. It is a forgiveness, a sacrifice, that has power for eternity. It is a sacrifice that covers last year's mistakes, this year's mistakes and next year's mistakes and all the years coming.

One of the lessons that God has to continue to teach us is that we depend on Him and on His Holy Spirit to live in a holy way, and that we often have to come back and ask God to forgive us, to cleanse us and to restore us. So when those things crop up that just blind-side you, and you say "Wow! What happened? I thought I was all fixed up. I thought I was walking with God, and I did this. I don't understand!" Well, you have to understand that when that happens you, then just immediately, as fast as you can, turn back to God and say "Father, please forgive me. Wash me in the blood of Jesus and set me on a straight path."

The enemy is going to try to convince you that your experience is not really true. He will try to convince you that you just had an emotional experience, that it wasn't really valid, and so he's going to try to convince you that it wasn't a real thing. When he does that you have to learn to just immediately turn to the Father and say, "Father God, forgive me. I don't want to go back to being what I was before. I want to walk with you, Lord. Cleanse me and restore me in Jesus' name."

The Body of Christ.

Another thing that is important to recognize early in your walk is the value of the Body of Christ. We are not called to walk alone, not even in the sense of just walking alone with the Father and the Son. We are always with Him. We are never alone in that sense. Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." But he also said through the Apostle Paul that we are One Body, and each individually members thereof; and the purpose of the Body, the members of the Body, the gifts in the Body, is



to build up one another in our most holy faith, so that we can attain to the stature of the measure of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). So the important thing here at this point is to recognize that the Body of Christ, fellow believers in Christ, is here to help you.

There are going to be times in your walk when you will have struggles, and God has designed it that yes, we can turn to Him, He's going to help us, but He also has designed members in the Body who have gone through what you are going through, and they will be there if you will seek them out. They will be there to give you counsel and support; to pray with you and give you comfort and encouragement so that these things won't stumble you.

The Word of God.

A crucial element of the Christian walk is feeding on God's Word. No one would expect to be going to work everyday, putting in eight hours of hard labor and do that without eating in the morning, taking a break for lunch, then coming home and having dinner, just to keep your strength up. No one would do that unless they absolutely had to, and I suppose there are some people that have to, but they don't last long. In this country of the USA we have an abundance, and that's what we do. We get up in the morning, if you're like me you have something hot to drink first, kind of get adjusted to the fact that you are awake, and then you eat something. Then you go out and you work, and about eleven or twelve you stop and you get lunch.

So you go back to work, you get off at four or five, you go home, Mama's got dinner on the table – if you're truly blessed – , and you eat again. Because you need that strength. And that's just exactly what's happening when you feed on the Word of God. In the spiritual realm, that's what's happening. And even that alone is not enough. You see, you have to feed on the Word of God in

collateral with the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit as Teacher.

So whenever you approach the Word, yes the Inspired Word of God, this book that we received, called The Bible, whenever you approach it, you need to turn first to the Father through Jesus and say something like, "Father, I know this is your Holy Word, and I know that it was breathed by the Holy Spirit upon men who were devoted to you, who loved you and sought your face, and you spoke through them. And they recorded it and the Church recognized these books of the Bible as the Word of God. I thank you for this Word that's been brought down through the ages, that the devil has tried to stamp out and he couldn't do it, because you wouldn't let him. I thank you for this Word, Lord.

"Now I pray for the Holy Spirit to hover over me and in me and through me and wake up my mind so when I look at this Word, I will see what you intended when you had it written; that you will speak your Word to me out of your Word, your Living Word, your Word for the moment. I pray that you will speak to me your Word for the moment out of your Word for the ages. I ask it in Jesus' name."

If you approach the Word that way, looking to the Holy Spirit to do the teaching, you will find that it is a rich storehouse of knowledge and guidance and comfort and encouragement and rebuke and discipline. It is all those things and more. In fact it just won't sit still, when it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. As Charles Finney observed, "Each time I read it, it is a new edition."

Praising God With A Sincere Heart.

If you really want to lay a great foundation for life in Christ, then one of the things you want to do is to learn how to Praise God; how to give thanks to God, how to lift him up for who he is, how to



become a true worshiper of God; just elevating him in your mind and heart, learning how to enter into worship in all of its forms. Look especially in the Book of Psalms, and the Book of Revelation, at the means that faithful men and the saints have employed to demonstrate their love and adoration of God.

Consider some of the things that are mentioned in the Book of Psalms.

- Psalm 98:4, “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the *harp*, with the harp and the sound of *singing*, with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn. *Shout for joy* before the LORD, the King.”

- Psalm 134:1,2, “Praise the LORD, all you servants of the Lord. *Lift up your hands* in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.”

- Psalm 135:3, “Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; *sing praise* to his name, for that is pleasant.”

- Psalm 138:1,2, “I will praise you, O LORD, with *all my heart*; before the ‘gods’ I will sing your praise. I will *bow down* toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness”.

- Psalm 141:2, “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the *lifting up of my hands* be like the evening sacrifice.”

- Psalm 144:9, I will sing a new song to you, O God; *on the ten-stringed lyre* I will make music to you.”

- Psalm 147:7, “Sing to the LORD with *thanksgiving*; make music to our God on the harp.”

- Psalm 150:3-6, “Praise Him with the sounding of the *trumpet*, praise him with the *harp and lyre*, praise him with *tambourine and dancing*, praise him with the *strings and flute*, praise him with the clash

of *cymbals*, praise him with *resounding cymbals*. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”

Consider this report when the Israelites celebrated the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem at the leading of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 12:43 reports, “And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with *great joy*; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was *heard even afar off*.”

- Revelation 7:9,10, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, *standing* before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they *cried out in a loud voice*: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”

- Revelation 19:5-7, “Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!’ Then I heard what *sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like peals of thunder, shouting*: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and the Bride has made herself ready.’”

Worshiping in Spirit and Truth.

This praise, whether loud or soft, whether public or private, whether individually or corporately, is valid and acceptable to God, when offered in the name of Jesus, and when it comes from a sincere heart. Jesus said in John 4:23,24, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.. God is spirit, and *his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth*.”



Jesus spent a lot of time teaching people to be real, to be honest and simple in relating to God. He spoke of those who pray on street corners to be seen of men, saying, "They have all the reward they will get" (Matthew 6:5). So if we worship God to make an impression on people, they are the only ones who are impressed. God is not impressed. He recognizes the worship that is truly directed toward Him, not done to impress others. Such simple, sincere adoration of the Living God is pleasing to the Father.

When once you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, and followed him in baptism, you have begun a new life, as a child of God. Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away: behold, all things are new!"

Putting Off - Putting On

Having become a "new creation" by being born into the Kingdom of God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, one might be tempted to say, "Well, that's done! Now I can just coast through life. God has it all taken care of." That would be a mistake.

Having become a new creature in Christ is merely to become a baby in Christ. Does a baby live its life in the crib, just being lifted and fed and cuddled, or does it grow and learn to walk and talk and live a full existence? The answer is obvious, and has a corollary in the Christian experience.

Paul speaks in Ephesians 4:17-28 of first the mode of living found in the world, a life of sensuality and darkness of mind, a continuing effort to indulge lust that is never satisfied. Then in verse 20 and thereon he says, "You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to *put off* your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and

to *put on* the new self, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin'; do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need."

Paul writes similarly in Colossians 3:5-14: "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you once walked when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech out of your mouth.

"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him -- a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all and in all.

"So as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

So you see we are called to put off the ways of sinful behavior and put on the ways of right living, in imitation of Christ, who is the image of the Father. It is really a process of being taught in God's Word and by the Holy Spirit to identify and renounce



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that which is the fruit of the flesh, and grow by the Holy Spirit the fruits of the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:16-23, Paul develops the same theme, telling us, "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." After identifying some works of the flesh, he tells us in verses 22 and 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Now let me ask you this: Does a tree bear fruit by merely willing it? Or does a tree need nourishment from the soil in which it is planted, and water from beneath the soil, and a healthy environment to breathe in? It is the same with us. We cannot merely decide we will put on these qualities and change by mere will power. We must be planted in the soil of God's Word, watered by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and growing in the environment of healthy relationships. The fruit will be born as a natural consequence of being properly nourished.

As noted above, this does not mean that one is suddenly perfected in the likeness of Christ, although God deals with you as if you are, because of the righteousness of Christ in whom you now believe. In the outworking of daily living, there is a growth in Christian nature over time. There will be times of regression, but that is the time to turn to God in Christ and request forgiveness and renewed capacity to obey Him.

Never let the devil tell you that you are a fraud, or a hopeless case. God in Christ is there to restore you. He will bring you through the hills and valleys of life to finally stand before Him in the streets of glory, redeemed and glad to say so!

If you follow along the path outlined above, we

trust that your new beginning will be the start of a long, eternally satisfying walk with God: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

We invite your response to this message. If you have prayed to receive Christ, please let us know, and seek out a church where Jesus is the focus of attention. If you feel led to contribute to this effort, send correspondence to:

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