

Helping Young Christians Grow

The New Testament likens new or immature believers as **spiritual infants**:

“Like **newborn babies**, crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:2, 3.)

Another is a reprimand for older, yet immature believers:

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still **an infant**, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.” (Hebrews 5:11.)

Paul looked at converts as one would look at little children:

“As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her **little children**.” (1 Thessalonians 2:7.)

So young believers need to be treated like **helpless infants** and fed simple, practical food that will enable them to grow. If I can draw a picture, when Ross, Bryce or Paul was a **tiny baby**, you didn’t throw him a T-bone steak and expect him to cope. You fed him smooth, creamy, tasty and sweet baby food. Then they grew up and much later tucked into the T-bone steaks.

Every Christian, whether young or old and immature (like the Hebrews), needs to know, believe and trust a few vital concepts (elementary truths) and to make them their own. These are the starting point in any follow-up or mentoring or pasturing, call it what you will.

1. Assurance of their salvation. (John 1:12, 1 John 5:11, 12)
2. Assurance of forgiveness (1 John 1:9, Ephesians 1:7)
3. Assurance of help in temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)
4. Assurance of answered prayer (John 16:24)
5. Assurance of guidance (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

I take one concept at a time and discuss it with each new believer, individually, taking as long as it takes for them to get the message. Then I suggest that they **memorise** the verse. I also show them how to read the Bible on their own and how to respond to the Lord on the basis of the Word. I talk about praying about everything. They need to concentrate on developing their relationship with the Lord.

Quite soon, I challenge them to take a stand with the people they know, and to work out what they are going to say to them. They need to “confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord” — as much to help themselves as to convert someone else. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has delivered from trouble.” (Psalm 107:2.) A good outline or model is Paul’s approach in Acts 27.

Once the new believer is functioning as they should and enjoying their new faith, then you can move on. Only then.
