

GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Birth and Infancy: Survival Basics

1 Peter 1:3–7



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In the growth process, as members of God's family, we enlarge our reservoir of knowledge and we strengthen our grasp of understanding. We also increase the sensitivity of our conscience, the level of our discernment, and the boundaries of our perception. Ideally, our intuition and imagination also grow proportionally, providing us with a solid base of awareness of and enthusiasm for life. But these are not what we might call *foundational*, nor do they emerge in any great measure during the infant stage of our existence. Infancy is back-to-basics time! It is during that era that we set the cornerstone and fix in place the initial blocks, upon which we develop the balance of our lives, spiritually speaking. Because of the essential nature of these truths, it is helpful for us to return to them periodically and be reminded of their importance.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Reminder of the Ages and Stages of Growth (see chart)

- Birth and infancy: "Help me!"
- Childhood and discovery: "Tell me!"
- Adolescence and irresponsibility: "Show me!"
- Adulthood and maturity: "Follow me!"



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Redemption

Ransom—the idea of freeing someone held prisoner in exchange for something else—appears as a theme throughout the Bible. When the people of Israel as slaves in Egypt could do nothing to free themselves, God stepped in and provided a way out. Therefore, Isaiah called Israel, "the ransomed of the Lord" (Isaiah 35:10). Under Old Testament Law, if an ox killed a person, the owner himself faced death. But since the killing was not a willful act, he could escape capital punishment by paying a ransom to compensate for the one who died (Exodus 21:29–32). For intentional murder, however, the criminal could not be freed from his or

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Quotable

*To grow in Christ,
you must learn how
to walk—by the
power and leading
of the Holy Spirit.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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her penalty through a ransom (Numbers 35:30–32). Throughout the Psalms, David both cried out for and praised God for his ransom (Psalm 31:5; 69:18).

Paul's readers had intimate knowledge of slavery and the slave market and would have understood well what he meant when he wrote to Timothy that Christ had given "Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). Those living in Ephesus in the first century, just like everyone, needed redemption from the slavery of sin. Sin causes each to stand before God, guilty and condemned to eternal death. But according to His Father's will, Jesus came to the earth to "give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 26:29). His suffering and death paid the price for humanity's sin and provided the means for those who believe in Him to be redeemed unto God.

2. A Return to the Basics of Spiritual Infancy

- **The *Birth* Basics**

Must be born from above

Must be biblical

Must be personal

Must be authentic

- **The *Growth* Basics**

How to obey: importance of trust

How to eat: importance of nourishment

How to talk: importance of prayer

How to walk: importance of the Spirit



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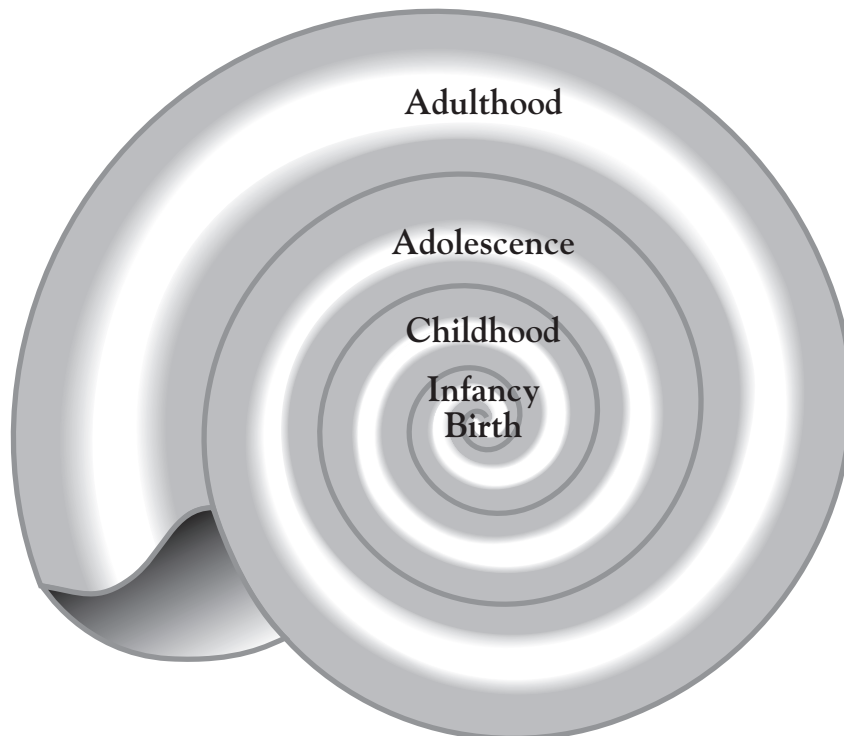


LET'S LIVE IT

All of this presents an opportunity for anyone who hears these truths to respond. There are two particular responses each of us must consider.

- **Have you been born from above?** When Jesus confronted Nicodemus with matters of eternal significance, the issue for Jesus was not the young man's pedigree. Jesus made it clear that he needed to wrestle with his spiritual birth—had he been born of the Spirit. Have you? Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ and received the free gift of eternal life in His name? If yes, you have experienced a new birth from above.
- **Have you passed the infant stage?** Once you have come into God's family by faith, the expectation is that you grow up spiritually. In what ways do you feel you are moving toward the end of the infant stage of your new life in Christ and starting down a path toward spiritual maturity?

Ages and Stages Toward Christian Maturity



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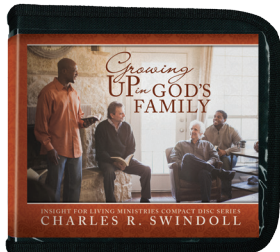
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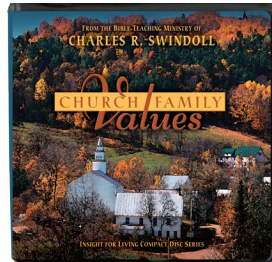
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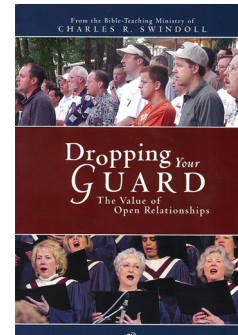
Tools for Digging Deeper



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