

GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Ages and Stages of Growing Up

1 Peter 2:1–3



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Few things are more thrilling than birth. And on top of that, the time of infancy that follows is both exciting and intriguing. All who work with babies and bottles, toddlers and high chairs, building blocks and toy boxes enjoy one of the special delights life offers. It may be exhausting, but there are special moments of sheer exhilaration, unduplicated by any other involvement. Yet with all the thrills, there are also the threats unique to newborns. Being so tiny and dependent, their little lives often hang perilously close to danger and death. What is true of infant humans is equally true of infant believers in God's family. As we shall soon discover, their needs are great, their hunger is constant, their discernment is nonexistent, yet their potential is nothing short of remarkable.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Place Where We All Begin

- The fact of birth
- The reality of infancy

2. The Lifestyle of the Newborn

- *What is it like? (Characteristics)*
 - They need a great deal of time and hands-on attention.
 - They require constant supervision.
 - They are totally dependent on others.
 - They need constant repetition about the basics.
- *What makes it so exciting? (Benefits)*
 - Rapid growth occurs during this stage.
 - They have uncomplicated innocence and simplicity of life.
 - Total trust — infants trust their caretakers implicitly.



Quotable

*A mature Christian
is not easily
offended, not
given to fads, and
understands the
value of service.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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- *What are the dangers? (Perils)*
 - Total lack of discernment
 - Unawareness of danger—vulnerability to false teaching
 - Lack of involvement
 - Time of many failures and mistakes

3. The Essentials of Surviving Those Early Years

- Affection and affirmation
- Basics—information and doctrine
- Compassion and courtesy
- A diet of biblical nourishment



LET'S LIVE IT

Growing from infancy to adulthood in life doesn't happen overnight. Likewise, growing up in God's family is a process that takes time—and that process, at times, needs to be nourished and restarted. Self-evaluation, in the context of a loving and supportive Christian community, is essential to God's plan for your spiritual growth.

Still, you may be feeling frustrated with where you are presently. If you are in the birth and infancy stage, maybe you wish you could be like the more mature Christians around you. Perhaps you are frustrated because you want to grow up faster. If so, relax. It's okay to not know how to run when you're just learning to walk.

If you are a baby Christian, what are some exciting characteristics of your life with God?

If you are in another stage of spiritual growth, what can you do to protect and encourage baby believers?



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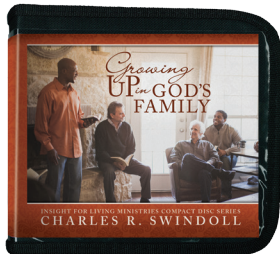
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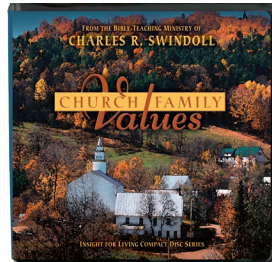
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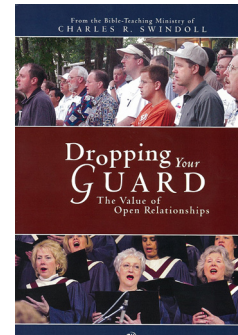
Tools for Digging Deeper



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