



Spirit of Grace

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Spiritual Babies

Babies are cute - really, really cute. In fact they are the very essence of cuteness. It seems like they are just begging to be held, loved, and played with. Of course they are also messy, noisy, and demanding. At that early stage we don't mind, but we do expect that as they grow and mature they will become a little less so. And by the time they reach adulthood we would be appalled if they were to act out the way they did at six months or a year.

The Bible speaks of newborn babes in Christ, and suggests that there are definite parallels between the physical and the spiritual. Having placed my faith in Jesus in the spring of 1973, it has been some time since I was at that baby stage, but I can vividly remember those early, exciting days as a new believer, and some of the victories and struggles I experienced. I had some great times in those first couple of years, but I would never want to go back to that spiritual state.

I was much more superstitious in those days. Once I realized that God could speak to me, I started expecting to get words from Him in every possible way, and nearly all the time.

If I had a small accident He was surely telling me I must be doing something wrong. Anything unusual or unlikely was taken as a sign from heaven. Sometimes I requested signs. One day I daydreamed about going to China as a missionary. It seemed like a good idea, and at that time I didn't have the sense to allow God much time to veto my plans. I was ready to start packing, but decided I would ask the Lord to move upon someone to say something about China that day, and I would take that as a sign I was to go. I went through the rest of the day eagerly waiting to hear someone, anyone, make mention of China. I now shudder to think how I was ready to make such a major move on such flimsy "guidance." God was merciful and kept all conversations away from that subject, and I gave up the idea. Easy come, easy go!



I had a box of "*Precious Promise*" cards, each card containing a verse of Scripture with a promise or an encouraging word. I used to pick those cards at random and attempt to get guidance for pressing issues. Sometimes I would pull out card after card looking for just the right promise, to match my hopes and dreams. It was a terrible way to receive guidance from the Lord, but I was spiritually, as well as naturally, young and unwise in the ways the Holy Spirit leads us.

I was also a lot more nervous then. I could turn from a euphoric spiritual high to the depths of depression and despair on a dime.

Small problems bothered me far more than they should, and little victories elated me a great deal more than was reasonable. Whenever I felt I had offended God I would go to great lengths to make it up to him. In my earliest days I often resorted to fasting as a form of penance. And since I was constantly making mistakes and doing things I felt guilty about, I ended up doing a lot of fasting in those days. In my first six months as a Christian I think I must have lost around fifteen or twenty pounds.

To quote Charles Dickens: "It was the best of times; it was the

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worst of times." Still God was gracious to me, watched over me, and made sure my foolishness and poor judgment didn't hurt me too much. Most of all, He kept me in the faith. With all my issues, faults, and spiritual childishness, I never turned back, and forty years later I still love Jesus and count it the great privilege of my life to know Him and serve Him.

Let those of us who have been in the faith for many years show love and patience to the baby believers in our midst. They need our guidance and support. And if their immaturity grates on us at times, let us remember that where they are, we once were.



Philippines This Month!

STILL NEEDED—OVER \$5,000



In just a couple of weeks Dennis and Benedicta are scheduled to leave for the Philippines where they will minister in a teaching conference and preach in evangelistic outdoor meetings. As of the time of printing this newsletter we are still needing around \$5,600 dollars for the completion of the budget. Your help is very much needed.

\$3,000 of this budget has been set aside for helping families and churches that have suffered great

loss as a result of the November hurricane that so devastated this nation. **If we do not meet our budget we will not be able to give this much needed aid.** Your contributions to our ministry, marked "Mission Philippines" will make a huge difference in the lives of men, women, and children who so desperately need our help, both spiritually and materially. **Please pray and consider sending us a generous donation.**

We also need your prayer support. Prayer enlists the assistance and grace of God, and no measure of good intentions, careful organization, and human compassion can make up for its absence. Please pray for us and for this mission.

Your donations are needed and greatly appreciated. You can send a check to Spirit of Grace Ministries, PO Box 2068, McKinney, TX, 75070 or you can donate online through PayPal or a credit card.