

Facts

for New Christians

But I have trusted in thy
mercy; my heart shall
rejoice in thy salvation. —
Psalm 13:5

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for New Christians

Dr. Patrick R. Briney

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Mission Boulevard Baptist Church

2006 Mission Boulevard

Fayetteville, Arkansas 72703

(501) 442-2565

bapcoll@comp.uark.edu

<http://www.uark.edu/studorg/bapcoll/>

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I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

—Isaiah 61:10

Welcome to God's family!

And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. —Psalm 35:9

I am glad that you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour. The Bible says in Psalm 118:15 that "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." Everyone, who understands the eternal issues you resolved by turning your life over to Jesus Christ, rejoices with you. You have made the most important decision of your life! This booklet was written to help you understand what has happened to you and what you should do to fully experience the blessings of God and of spiritual growth. There are unlimited opportunities to satisfy and fulfill you if your heart is set on following Christ.

What does it mean to be a Christian?

- You have eternal life! (First John 5:13)
- You have been saved! (Romans 10:13)
- You have been born again! (John 3:3)
- You are a new creature! (Second Corinthians 5:17)

How did it happen?

- by believing God's promises (First John 5:13)
- by repenting and confessing your sins (Luke 13:3)
- by accepting Jesus Christ's Lordship (Romans 10:9)
- by relying on God to help you (John 6:29)
- by not relying on your own efforts (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Finish the following statement:

I am saved because _____

How long will this last?

- FOREVER! (John 3:16)
- ETERNALLY! (John 5:24)

Pop Quiz Questions!

1. If you have eternal life (*eternal* = never ending; *life* = relationship with Jesus Christ), will that relationship ever cease?
2. According to First John 5:13, what can you know?

In Acts 11:26, "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The word *Christian* means to belong to Christ, and the word *disciple* means to be a follower of Christ. The disciples were not ashamed of these labels because they loved their Savior Jesus Christ.

How does one follow Jesus Christ?

- by loving God more than anything else (Matthew 22:37-38)
- by following Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23)
- by experiencing the abundant life (John 10:10)
- by growing spiritually mature (First Peter 2:2)
- by bearing much fruit (John 15:8)

Sadly, many Christians do not experience the fulfilling life of being a disciple because they fail to follow Christ.

What must you do to be a fulfilled disciple?

God has given you three important resources.

1. The Bible—God's Word (First Peter 2:2)
2. The Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)
3. The Church (Ephesians 4:11-16)

How do you begin?

1. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:36-40).
2. Obey God. Do what He says (Luke 6:46-49).
3. Be baptized, and participate in the church (Acts 2:41).
4. Pray everyday (First Thessalonians 5:17).
5. Read and study God's Word (Second Timothy 2:15).
6. Share with others what Christ has done for you (Mark 16:15).
7. Join a Bible study group (Acts 2:42).
8. Begin studying the *Follow-up Lessons for Spiritual Growth* booklet. Call the Mission Blvd. Baptist Church at 501-442-2565, or send a request to 2006 Mission Blvd., Fayetteville, AR 72701.

Congratulations! You are on your way to becoming a mature disciple of Jesus Christ.

Important things to know

1. YOU ARE SAVED!

One thing a Christian has no doubt about is that he is saved. God said that's how it is, so who is going to tell God that He is wrong? It can't be stated more clearly than First John 5:13 records by saying: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Of course, if you are relying on anything else other than God's promise (that is, trying to live a good life to outweigh the bad in your life), you can't know for sure if you'll go to heaven. The fact is, you will never get to heaven by trying to be good enough. God says trying to get to heaven by living a life that is "good enough" is useless. Only a vain person would think that he is good enough to get to heaven. He won't make it. On the other hand, if you are confident in the Jesus Christ, then you can be confident in your salvation.

2. YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE!

*E*ternal means that something never ends. It is forever. Any thing that comes to an end or can be terminated is not eternal. *Life* according to First John 5:12 is a relationship with Jesus Christ. This is spiritual life as opposed to physical life. Therefore, when the Bible says "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" it is telling you that you have a never-ending relationship with Jesus Christ. This is eternal life, and nothing can bring this to an end. Once saved, always saved.

3. YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN!

It is so good to know that God forgives and forgets. You have more sins than the hair on your head. Just think, if the punishment for just one sin is eternal death (never-ending separation from Christ), then additional sins only add to your guilt and deserved punishment. What a relief it is to receive God's mercy and grace when He forgives you! Romans 5:1 expresses the experience of salvation by saying: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." However, don't think that your sins

went unpunished. You are forgiven only because someone else was punished for you. Because God is just, He requires that justice be carried out. Ephesians 1:7 says that because of Jesus Christ “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” If that doesn’t make you appreciate Christ, nothing will!

4. CAUTION: GUILT TRAP!

You are saved, have eternal life, and spiritually you have a new nature. However, your body remains unchanged, and, therefore, you will continue to struggle with temptations to sin. When you yield to sin, you will feel guilty and ashamed before God. Subsequently, you will not feel like praying, fellowshiping with other saints, or reading the Bible. The feelings associated with sin will compound your problems. Instead of avoiding God and neglecting His resources, you need forgiveness. Don't be surprised that God will forgive you. He knows how you really are. He understands your weaknesses. He wants to bless you and to help you become stronger in the faith. Prepare yourself to run to God for help and forgiveness when you sin. Resist the temptation to avoid God. First John 1:9 says that, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God will forgive you, so forgive yourself. Feeling guilty all the time makes life miserable, and you can’t serve God very well that way. Also, remember that you can’t hide anything from God, not even a thought. If you think it, God hears it. You might as well say exactly what’s on your mind to Him because you can’t deceive God. Do what you’re supposed to do, and confess sin immediately when it happens. Admit your wrong with a sorrowful determination to turn from it, accept God’s forgiveness, and get on with your spiritual training.

5. BEWARE OF THE JUDGMENT!

As a Christian, you can’t lose your salvation. Sins that you commit as a Christian will be forgiven when you confess them. However, you will, nonetheless, be judged for your behavior as a Christian. Some people think that Christians can live an ungodly lifestyle without punishment. Well, they will be shocked to find out that God chastises His children and judges them. Hebrews 12:6 says, “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” Just because you cannot lose your salvation is no reason

to sin. Galatians 5:13 pleads saying, “For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” First Corinthians 3:11-15 describes the judgment of Christians, and verse fifteen says, “if any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” Yes, a Christian will always be saved, but not unpunished for an ungodly life-style. He will suffer loss. So, be forewarned!

6. YOU ARE A BABY!

Christians are born twice, physically and then spiritually (John 3:3-6). Therefore, new Christians are spiritual babies who have just been born. Spiritual babies have needs that parallel the needs of physical babies. They need love, food, protection, orientation, guidance, etc. Babies are very vulnerable to their environment. They will eat anything and touch anything not knowing what is good for them and what will hurt them. Reading the Bible is the safest thing to do. That’s why First Peter 1:2 says, “as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Hebrews 5:13 says, “For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.” Babies have their hard knocks and find it difficult to understand some things. But, as you probably know, that’s part of growing up. It takes time to learn and to become skillful in spiritual discernment. So, hang in there.

7. YOU NEED GOD'S RESOURCES!

God does not leave you on earth to try to make it on your own. With all the confusion, disorientation, and ignorance in the world, you wouldn’t have a chance to survive spiritually and to resist deception. Therefore, God left you with three very important resources: the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. Consider the promises and exhortations associated with each resource. With regard to the Bible, Second Timothy 3:16 says: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” As for the Holy Spirit, John 16:13 explains that, “when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come.” Concerning the Church, Hebrews 10:25 says, we should “not forsake the assembly of ourselves together, as the manner of some is,” and Ephesians 4:11-16 explains why the church is so

important. These verses represent only one thought for each resource, but there are many more important things to know about the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the church which will be discussed in later studies.

8. YOU HAVE A NEW FAMILY AND NEW FRIENDS!

When you became a Christian, you were adopted into the family of God. Second Corinthians 6:18 says that the Lord "...will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty." That means that other Christians are your new brothers and sisters. Moreover, the Lord wants to be your best friend. John 15:14 says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Having friends that are also friends with Christ are very important. They provide a good example for you, counsel, love, and a good influence. Non-Christians cannot and will not help your spiritual growth. In fact, they can compete with your friendship to Christ. James 4:4 says, "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Will you choose to make friends with those who blaspheme God or with those who are friends of God? Be alert to the spiritual struggles you will encounter and remember that you should influence your worldly friends to Christ rather than to be influenced back into worldliness.

9. YOU NEED TO BE SPIRIT-FILLED!

You will only be fulfilled as a Christian as long as you are Spirit-filled. There is no pleasure in claiming to be a Christian and then not living like one. Rather than only thinking about what you should do, just do it. Being Spirit-filled means that the Holy Spirit is in control of your life. God's will is your will, and your desire is to glorify Him and to serve Him. Ephesians 5:18 commands you to be filled with the Spirit, and Galatians 5:25 says that "if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Yield yourself to the Spirit of God. You will never regret it.

10. YOU HAVE AN ENEMY!

Christians are at war! Ephesians 6:10-18 explains how you are in a spiritual warfare and how important wearing spiritual armor is. Our chief enemy is that age-old Serpent, the Devil (also

known as Lucifer, *Diabolos*, or Satan). First Peter 5:8 warns to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” He is actively seeking and destroying his victims. In other words, as a Christian you are a target for destruction whether you like it or not. One of Satan’s greatest weapons is to convince Christians that there is no danger and no enemy. If you fall for this lie, you won’t last long. Satan is real. He tempted Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1), and He even went after Jesus (Matthew 4:10). He will be after you too. So, beware.

11. BEWARE! PITFALLS!!

Second Corinthians 2:11 cautions you about your enemy “lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Satan always tries to get the advantage over you, and the only way to successfully fight him is to be aggressive rather than passive. Fight for the cause of Christ. Be actively engaged in spiritual training and ministry participation, and be on the look out for evidence of spiritual decay. For example, Ephesians 4:2-3 says, “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Unity, harmony, and peace with your brethren is right. Anything done, thought, or said that works against this goal will work advantage for Satan. There will be times when for no apparent reason you become suspicious or hostile toward a brother or sister. Where did that thought come from? The Devil. If you are naturally prone to having conflict with people, then you can count on the Devil using this weakness of yours against you and those you associate with. Study the Bible carefully, and seek counsel from your pastor and older Christians to learn the right way to think. When you experience confusion, doubt, hostility, suspicion, and conflict among your fellow brethren, beware, because Satan is trying to make you fall.

12. YOU NEED A VISION!

As a new Christian, God is concerned about your future. Before you accepted the Lord in your life, you had your own ideas and ambitions. But, as a Christian, God has a wonderful plan for your life. The Bible warns in Proverbs 29:18 that “...where there is no vision, the people perish.” The Lord wants you to live a fruitful and directed life. God adds you to a local, new testament church in order to realize the fulfillment of His plan for you. The Great Commission

Jesus gave the church expecting you to participate in is recorded in Matthew 28:19—20 which states: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Jesus expects that all the goals, skills, and doctrine that He taught His disciples be taught to every generation of disciples. Now, it is your turn, but, don't worry. Training to be a disciple is enjoyable and easy enough for anyone to do. The Lord has provided pastors and teachers and others to help you fulfill God's plan for your life (Ephesians 4:11-16). As a Christian, you need a church home to fulfill Christ's vision for you, and God has just the place for you. First Corinthians 12:18 says: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Together, we can reach the world for Christ!

13. ABOVE ALL ELSE, LOVE GOD!

There are many things to learn about and to do, but none are more important than loving God. In fact, the first command to obey is to love God. In Matthew 22:36-38, Jesus told a lawyer that the first and great command in the law was to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Loving God is the first command because if you love God, you will do everything else that He expects of you (Matthew 22:39-40). In Revelation, the first sin Jesus rebuked was the church's loss of love for Him. This one sin is so great that Jesus threatened to remove their authority as one His churches even though they had done everything else right. If the first and greatest command is to love God, then the first and greatest sin is failure to love God. To nurture your love for God, ask Him for Spiritual guidance to increase your love for Him, study His Word, participate in studies, and fellowship with church brethren who love God.

May your journey through life be abundant in Jesus Christ. To continue your training, request and study the booklet *Follow-up Lessons for Spiritual Growth*.

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. —Habbakuk 3:18

