

TO THE BABE IN CHRIST

I understand that you may have started out excited to begin a new life in Christ. Realizing you are forgiven and loved tends to have that effect on us. It causes us to feel grateful, and to want to do and to give in return, even though we know we can never repay Jesus for what He did for us in Calvary. Yes, you were willing. But as time ticked on, and as life's distractions lured your attention from Jesus to your day-to-day obligations and circumstances, you lost that zeal.

My purpose with this letter is not to cause you to feel ashamed, but to appeal to you and to reawaken your desire to build a relationship with Christ. I hope to renew your hunger for knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and good works.

Examine Yourself

Take a moment to examine yourself:

1. Do you regularly set aside time to study God's word with no distractions?
2. Do you pray without ceasing? (i.e. when you awake, throughout the day, giving thanks, when in trouble, when things are going well)
3. Are you ever-changing, due to the Holy Spirit transforming your heart and mind?
4. Do you look more like Christ in your daily thoughts, words, and actions?
5. If someone needed help or spiritual guidance right now, would you be prayerful, ready and equipped with the Word to serve him/her?

Part of our job as Christians is to care for the poor and needy. It is our responsibility to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. We are charged with being well-studied and in constant prayer for the sake of the people who might be saved as a result of coming in contact with God's elect.

Many times, we are the only *God* people will ever see. We are God's agents. He lives in us and works through us. If we have consumed God's word, He is able to draw it from us to minister to ourselves as well as others when it is needed.

When you pray, are you mostly praying for things you'd like to have, change, or experience?
How often do you pray for the benefit of other people?

Again, I understand that life can get in the way of your intentions, that your current circumstances may seem urgent, that you may not have the answers or clarity you'd like about certain things, that people look down on you for choosing to be a disciple of Christ, that so many claim to have the answers and that their ways don't require the discipline or sacrifice that Christianity requires, or that it may be hard for you to study and to understand what is written. But be encouraged.

You have the authority to unplug from the busyness of life. You can cut through the noise of this world. You have the power to resist temptation. You can sit still and hear God speak through your spirit. He's always been there. He is still there. Silence the noise so you can reconnect with Him.

How are you different/better since you've accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior? How have you served other people? How have you made a difference in the world around you? How have you allowed God to work through you to reach someone in need?

Your Efforts

You may be thinking that you make an effort to read the Bible, to pray to God, or to help others. I have to ask, is this a sincere thought, or rebuttal? I'm not writing to you to be offensive or to receive a personal response. Instead, I'm writing to evoke your reflection and repentance.

Is studying the Bible or praying a priority for you? Do you spend more time with God or watching your favorite TV shows? Do you spend more time with God or with your friends and family? Where do your priorities currently lie?

Friend, reading a few scriptures and having quick devotions may make you feel good about yourself, but doing this is not enough for you to gain a good understanding, wisdom, or knowledge of the scriptures. It's not even enough to get you through the day. Honestly, how many times have you had your morning devotion, but by lunchtime depression has set in? How many times have you armed yourself with the scripture-of-the-day from your favorite Bible app, only to find that you are frustrated and short-tempered at work? How many occurrences can you recall where you have prayed at the start of your day, but by evening, you are angrily fussing with your loved ones?

I don't enjoy saying this to you, but I find it necessary to hold up a mirror for you to look into, so you can be honest with yourself. You know the truth. You know what your relationship looks like. And to be honest, your sisters and brothers in Christ also know what your relationship must look like.

While you *can* receive the gift of salvation and show no resemblance to the Father, you can't claim to study, pray, and do good works and not be found out. Your siblings in Christ who do what you claim to do are able to recognize another who does the same. How? By their fruits. If you study consistently, pray without ceasing, and do good works, there will be evidence of it. I strongly advise you against wearing a mask and making false claims. Humble yourself, be honest, and do the work.

If you aren't regularly spending time in God's word, you will not be able to pull from it the things you need to get through trying times, nor will you be able to help someone else with the Word of God, if you aren't well-studied and prayed up. Humble yourself, so you can see how far you are from the finish line. Even if you were able to say that you have been doing everything you possibly can in service to God and His kingdom, there would still be much work awaiting to be done.

Understand that the time you spend with God is a reflection of your commitment to your relationship with Him. If you really want to know Him, you have to know His word and spend time in prayer with Him.

How often should you study?

You should feed on the Word as often as you need to feed yourself food, as often as you need to drink water, as often as you need to pay your living expenses. The point I'm making here is that your study time should be regular, consistent. Not occasional.

We need God in every moment of every day. We should never wait until life feels out of control to turn to God or to try to read the scriptures. It's best to study now, so that WHEN life happens, we can pull from our Spirit the things of God and His Word.

All that I have said here is in love. I am but a servant who desires the best for you. As I minister to you, I examine myself. This is your nudge to go higher, to be better for the sake of the Body and the world around you. If you feel sorrowful, and that leads you to true repentance (a change of heart/mind), I have achieved my goal with this letter.