



A Christian's Believer's
Quick Guide
toward
Spiritual Maturity



by Phil Smith

Dear Reader,

I do not like the idea that believers, generally, are left to *reinvent the wheel* to learn spiritual maturity. This is just a quick guide to help you fit the foundational pieces together toward what you are truly seeking. Things like joy, peace, overall contentment, and a practical method of finding the best way for yourself in this life.

This guide may not answer many of your questions. Its intent is to point you to the pieces that you need for spiritual maturity, that would be acceptable in many Christian denominations. I intentionally left many denominational distinctives out so the foundational format would be viewed by more denominational hierarchy.

In the future, I will be expanding this guide into a book, that will give more concrete explanations of each section. My desire is to help each believer know what they believe well enough to teach a small child.

May the Holy Spirit guide you in His lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness (Jer. 9:23-24.)

CH Phil Smith

The art work was chosen on the front cover to reveal the purpose of this booklet. The information and format was designed to give you a strong foundational *tap root* like some oak trees. The children signify that spiritually you are starting out as naive and incompetent as an infant. The butterflies symbolize that you are morphing into a new creation.

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What is salvation?

There are many terms and phrases to name what just happened to you: *Being Saved, Born Again, Ask Jesus into your Heart, Become a child of God ... Confirmation*. But what it comes down to is that you sinned and disobeyed God, however, you believe that God sent Jesus (the Christ) to take the punishment (by dying on the cross) for all your sins (things you do, say, or continue to think that disobeys the Bible or God's leading in your life). Also, when you *repent* and *believe*, you are turning from wanting your own way and accepting that God's way and desire for your life is better than what you can do without Him. You are allowing God to be the "Lord" or boss to manage all of the wants and desires of your life. (Acts 16:31; John 1:12, 3:16; Revelation 3:20)

What does it mean?

When you sin (*things you do, say, or continue to think that disobeys the Bible or God's leading in your life*) against God, there are three parts to each of your sins. There is God's ***punishment*** that separates you from Him (eventually to the place made for punishment that the Bible calls hell.), the ***feeling of guilt*** that hinders your relationship with God, and the ***consequences*** of your actions. When you have trusted in what Christ has done for your salvation, God promises to take the punishment of all your sins and throws them in the deepest sea (Micah 7:19) and remembers them no more (Jer. 31:34). You are made redeemed (bought back) and justified (not thought as guilty) before Him. God also takes away the guilt of your past sins.

What are first steps?

Baptism and Lord's Supper (Communion) are, at least, two of the special things Jesus asked us to do. Some churches add more and explain their purpose a little differently. But basically these are actions that solidify what we believe and help us to remember what Jesus did for us. Most churches believe they do not add more to our salvation. Baptism is an action that is done (hopefully) soon after one becomes a believer and follower of Jesus. The Lord's Supper (Communion) is done on regular intervals to help the follower to not only remember what Jesus did and build unity in love among the believers, but also, to help remind us to keep our sins confessed. You should not partake if you are carrying unconfessed sin in your heart (1Cor. 11:23-32; Mark

11:25; Mt. 5:23-24). Guilt is a very good indication of this. More of this will be discussed later in the section on sin.

What about the Bible?

God spoke to men many years ago either by a voice they could hear or through their spirit (inner-voice/conscience) by His Spirit. Whichever way God used, we have His words today the way God meant them (in the manuscripts). The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. Unless you learn both of those languages and the culture of when they were written, you will have to use a translation in your language. Because languages and word usage change with time and area cultures, no translation is perfect for you. However, I will suggest using either the New King James, English Standard Version, or the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Either will be good as you get started. If you like the beauty of the old English, you can use the King James Version.

Copyright laws are the biggest reason for so many versions in each language. However, what this does for you, as a person not fluent in Biblical Greek and Hebrew, is it allows you to see a better meaning of a passage if you take the differences and merge them as a whole. Having a Parallel Bible or Bible software with that function is a good way to solve half of your proper interpretation pit falls. I never felt that a paraphrase version was good for learning the writer's original intent. I have used them to find a way to apply the scripture to today a few times.

The other reason for so many versions in each language is the intent of the publisher/editor. You have word-for-word, thought-for-thought, and paraphrase translations which are further separated by grade reading levels. Rose Publishers has a good pamphlet that adds more explanation of the differences. NOTE: Beware, there are translations that ignore good biblical hermeneutics (translating principles) that promotes a non-conforming belief.

Getting to Know God?

Many believers know about God, but they really do not know Him. To know God is to trust God. Just like you trust a best friend because you know them well, the more you apply what you know about God the

more you are able to trust him in all areas of your life. You need to learn how God is all-knowing, all-powerful, Love, Kind, Just, Righteous (Jer. 9:23-24), present everywhere, in control no matter what happens, Holy, Faithful, Unchanging, Truth, Gracious, and Majestic. As you learn to apply these attributes to your daily activities, your faith will grow beyond your highest dreams. The first six listed are the main attributes. The rest are attributes that form from a combination of two or more of the first six.

What are the rules?

God only has two real principles (commandments) that we need to live by. (Mt 22:37-40, Mk 12:29-31; Lk 10:27) We are to first love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and second love your neighbor just as you do yourself. This may sound simple, but it is not.

To love God with all your **heart** (desires) means to surrender (give up) what you think is best for you and trust what God gives back to you will be from your best desires. God knows you better than you know yourself. He wants you to be able to look back at the end of your life and say, "Thank you for giving me what You did and not what I wanted." Note: Be careful on what you beg for from God. Because He may let you have something that you think is good for you and let you miss out on what is best or get something that is bad for you.

To love God with all your **soul** (spirit, conscience) deals with two parts. First, is your salvation (as mentioned previously). Second, this is you trying to communicate (talk) with God all the time. Your spirit is your intercom (walkie-talkie) system with God. When you become one of God's children at salvation, He puts His Holy Spirit inside of you to increase the power to your walkie-talkie (spirit) and give you the ability to improve your understanding of His truth. Your spirit also allows Him to guide you and answer questions. Most new believers have a hard time learning to use this. The reason is that they have a hard time discerning (knowing the difference between) their spirit and their heart. Both inner-voices sound the same. However, the basic rule you have to remember is that the Spirit can never ever disagree with what the correctly-interpreted Bible teaches. So you have to know what the Bible teaches (and some by trial and error) to better know which is the Holy Spirit's leading from your selfish wants and desires.

To love God with all your mind is easy to explain but very hard to do without help from the Spirit. The easy answer is, don't let anything get into your mind that is not good for you to live according to God's word. Though Jesus said, "it is not that which goes in the body that defiles it, but what comes out." However, the computer mantra holds true "Garbage In, Garbage Out."

To love God with all your strength is basically all that you do is for Him and all that you own is His to guide you to use for what He knows is the best plan in your life. Your strength is your time, talent, abilities, and all that they produce (house, car, children, money, etc.). You see yourself not as an owner, but a steward and assistant manager of what God has given you (Deut. 8:17-18; Mt. 6:19-21). By doing so, you mitigate the effects of those things to cause you to stumble and sin.

To love your neighbor just as you do yourself is to do for those, that God allows in your sphere of influence, as you would want others to do for you if you were in his or her place. God does not require you to share all that you have in most cases. As you learn to listen to His Spirit, it will guide you on the who, what, when, where, why, and how to share. So work on hearing His voice.

This is a short version of the basic principles (rules) in living like a believer in Jesus Christ (Christian). Let's continue and learn more about each part about living for Jesus.

What is God's Love like?

Paul tells us what God's love (agape) is like in the first letter to the Corinthians. He states

1 Cor 13:4-7

Love is **patient**; love is **kind**. Love does **not envy**; is **not boastful**; is **not conceited**; does **not act improperly**; is **not selfish**; is **not provoked**; does **not keep a record of wrongs**; **finds no joy in unrighteousness**, but **rejoices in the truth**; **bears** all things, **believes** all things, **hopes** all things, **endures** all things. (1 Cor. 13:4-7, HCSB)

There are two words in the NT Greek text that is translated as love. Philos and Agape. Agape is a self-sacrificing devotion. This type of love

puts another's or something's welfare and betterment above its own, even unto death. Philo is more of a fellowship and camaraderie. Philo is a type of devotion and actions one would see between very good friends or soldiers. These are not degrees of love, but types of love.

Use the above verses as a checklist to figure out if you are loving your neighbor as yourself. After a while it should become natural. It may seem impossible to have that love for our enemies (Mt 5:44, Lk 6:35), but remember (1 John 4:19) that God first and always had this love for you. In 1 Cor. 13:4-7, replace the word "Love" with "God." Then think how He has and will always have these feeling toward you first.

What is Spiritual Maturity?

The axis on which spiritual maturity rotates is God's agape love. Signs of spiritual maturity is a consistent display of unity in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, keeping one's sins confessed, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. Eph. 4:3, 13; Col 3:14; God abhors those who sow discord among the brethren. Mt 5:43-46, Loving your enemy as yourself is an effect of Agape love. 1 Corinthians 8, reflects that giving up your freedoms for the weaknesses of others demonstrates spiritual maturity.

What are the Fruits of the Spirit?

Paul tells us what type of attitudes and characteristics we should and shouldn't be demonstrating in the book of Galatians. He states:

Gal 5:16-26:

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar, about which I tell you in advance—as I told you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit. We must not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (HCSB)

What should my new life look like?

Paul shares to the church at Colossae:

Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must [forgive]. Above all, [put on] love—the perfect bond of **unity**. And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful. Let the message about the Messiah dwell richly among you, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with **gratitude** in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:12-17, HCSB)

Why must I forgive those who seriously wronged me?

Hate, Bitterness, and Unforgiveness is a poison you drink, while you hope the one that hurt you is hurt; Trust is for the one who did the hurting; Forgiveness is for the one who was hurt. The intent of the hurter to ask for forgiveness is to get the one hurt to stop hurting themselves with bitterness so trust might, one day, be reestablished. This is why God says we must forgive to stop hurting our self. Just because you forgive someone does not mean you have to trust them.

For any relationship to last you must have: *Commitment*, *Compromise*, and *Forgiveness* for each other. For a relationship to be enjoyable, you need Fellowship (fun, engagement, challenge), *Charity (type of Love)*, and *Trust*. For a relationship to succeed you must have: Knowledge, Closeness, Communication (message, receipt, feedback, and acknowledgment), Vulnerability (honesty/openness/ trust), and Commitment.

How does God deal with my sin after becoming His Child?

There is some disagreement by some churches on certain particulars, but all agree that God forgives you when asked with a sincere heart. When I was young, I wondered why in Leviticus chapter five God required three different sacrifices for one sin. Then one day I was trying to find a good way to explain our sin to children without confusion. Then I realized, God was demonstrating the different parts of our sin -1) His punishment or penalty for sin which is death, 2) the guilty conscience or spirit from the sinful act, and then 3) the consequence or effect from the sinful act. When a new believer accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord, God takes away all of His punishment and the past guilt for your sins. Because God said “whatever you sow you also shall reap,” God cannot take away the consequences and effects of your sin. But He can help mitigate the effects if you let Him guide and help you through them.

As I believe, as one of God’s children, I no longer have any of the punishment of my sins (past, present or future) or the past guilt of my sins. Because God promises to take the punishment and the past guilt of your sins and throws them in the deepest sea (Micah 7:19) and remembers them no more (Jer. 31:34). And God cannot break a promise. However, I still have the guilt of my future sins and the consequences of all my sins to handle. God never wants anyone to feel guilty. Usually when we feel guilty we do not want to talk to the one the guilt with which it is associated. That is why the devil wants you to feel guilty, so you will not talk to God. God wants to use gratitude to draw you to him and not guilt trips.

In 1 John 1:9, God has already promised to take the guilt away from all your sin if you would just confess and sincerely apologize. You are not telling God anything he doesn’t already know. So the main person you are hurting by not confessing is yourself. However, the consequences of your guilt can affect those around you also. As I mentioned earlier, God uses guilt as an indication (alarm) that you may have sinned. Many followers sear their conscience by holding on to unconfessed sin. Your spirit / conscience is your intercom to God. So by not confessing your sin, it is like turning down the volume on your intercom with God.

How do I pray?

Basically, there are three types of praying: Thanks, Help (for yourself or others), and Confession. Prayer is communicating with God. Even though God already knows your needs before you pray, for starters, you pray so you know it is God when He answers. There are other reasons that will be mentioned in the expanded version of this booklet. You do not have to pray out loud for God to hear you. He knows your every thought.

The Bible states we should pray without ceasing. You may ask, "How can anyone do this?" As you mature in Christ, you can learn to discern His voice and carry on short conversations through your spirit with God's Holy Spirit (you are only limited by what you can hear back from God). This will not take many years for most people. You have to know the correct interpretation of the Bible to be able to discern His voice. What you believe you hear from God cannot disagree with what the Bible teaches at all. If it does, then you are saying that God has changed and has lied. None of those can happen which means you were listening to the wrong voice, your selfish inner desires. You should be able to work your way up over the years to where you pray about most everything. Or in other words, always have your spiritual ears open so He can guide you to make course changes as needed.

Memorize scripture! It is hard to discern God's voice if you do not know the scriptures. You can start with the promises. See other handout.

What is the Lord's Prayer?

"Our Father who lives in heaven, Hallowed be [*Help me respect and keep sacred and holy*] Your name.

Your kingdom [*the fulfillment of your plan*] come. Your will be done [*Help us to allow You to have control over all that we think, say, and do the way You want it done*] on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day [*today*] our daily bread [*the food or basic needs we need to keep able to serve Him*].

And forgive us our debts [*the sins and wrong things we have done against You*], as [*when*] we forgive our debtors [*the sins and wrong things others have done against us*].

And do not lead us into temptation [*let us go where we will not be tempted greater than we are able to overcome and not sin*],
But deliver us from the evil one [*the Devil or anyone who wants us to sin against You and others or that plans evil against us*].
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever
[*Because You are a faithful, loving, all powerful, all knowing, eternal God that is everywhere and in control, it is only what You do will be what we will appreciate and want forever whether we know it or not.*]
Amen [*so be it*]."

Daily devotional quiet time

It is good to have a regular time where you study the Bible and have formal prayer with God. My wife and I have gone completely through the Bible almost every year of our marriage. The early years we read Oswald Chamber's *Utmost for My Highest*. This may be hard for new believers. *Utmost* is very deep but challenging toward spiritual growth. There are more daily devotionals than anyone can count. Let the Holy Spirit guide you to the ones you should do each year.

Most believers do what I call formal prayers during this time. This is you talking directly to God without waiting for a response from Him. Some use *ACTS* - Adoration, Confession, Thanks, Supplication. Your *Hand* - thumb - Those closest to you, index finger- those that point you to God, middle finger - leaders, ring finger - the weak, pinky- last but not least, yourself. Informal prayer is you listening and talking to the Holy Spirit throughout the day.

Do I have to be a dumb sheep?

You do not have to act like one, but remember as compared to Jesus, our good shepherd; we are relatively dumb as sheep when it comes to guiding our way through our life choices. As you learn to discern his voice, He can give you the best course corrections at the best moment. You start to learn to discern His voice by asking "Yes" and "No" questions. You then take the answer that does not disagree with the correct interpretation of the Bible. Next, tell God he has permission to do whatever it takes to get you in the right direction, if what you heard was not from Him.

There are four things to remember about hearing God's voice. First, do not assume the answer gives permission to more than the question asks. If you ask God if you should buy a house, you hear, "YES". Do not immediately go out and buy any house you want. It may not be the best for you. You must ask all the relative pronouns: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then still give God time to do whatever it takes to get you in the right direction, if what you heard was not from Him.

Second, do not assume all your current interpretation of scripture is absolutely correct. I am not sure there is anyone who interprets all scripture the best way God intended. Yet there are those who are within a ten percent error rate. This does not give you permission to ignore good systematic interpretation. Easy commandments like thou shall not murder, steal, covet or hate are black and white. A hard one would be like if you feel you must disobey an authority, you better know for certain that God wants you to and accept the consequences that come with that disobedience.

Third, there are four answers that God can give, Yes, No, Wait, and Silence. Silence is the hardest answer to rest on. The others are fairly easy to understand. When God says No to a good thing is the second hardest. But you can trust that that when He does say No that He loves you and has something much better on your path in the future. Once it took me 25 years to get that best thing, but I am glad he made me wait. He gave me the best desire of my heart. I would not change a thing that I had to endure, because it was required to get me the best desires of my heart.

Fourth, as your humbled knowledge and discernment of the proper systematic interpretation of the Bible grows, the more detailed your communication with God will be. Pride will throw a wrench into the workings faster than anything. Also, systematic interpretation means that the interpretation of a verse or set of text cannot disagree with any other verse or set of text in the Bible. If there is a conflict, then one or both of your interpretations are wrong. You cannot say with absolute certainty that one is correct. For me, I can say that after 50 years of studying God's Word, I have solved 90% of the conflicts in the Protestant Bible that are inconsequential to me serving God and 100% of those that are important to my faith. My desire to know the truth and

my perfectionist attribute does not allow me to ignore any verse. I have gone completely through the bible around thirty times in my devotional life. This doesn't count special research.

Christian Fellowship and Worship

In the book of Hebrews, it states that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. The reason being is a fourfold purpose. 1) Have a place to learn the Bible, 2) Chance to fellowship with other believers, 3) A spiritual family that can help in a time of trouble, 4) A place to practice your gifts and talents and serve before you go out to serve in the community and beyond.

Your worship and praise is important to your spiritual growth. Worship extends from your gratitude for what God has done for you. Praise is telling others what God has done for you. As you grow to understand the true value of God's gift, love, and provisions in your life, more gratitude should swell inside of you. Your words of thankfulness toward God is your worship. As God provides for you and you share a testimony of that with others, that is praise.

A pet peeve that I have, is I don't believe that singing "I worship and praise You" is actual worship and praise. It is singing about worship and praise rather than actual worship and praise. The act of listing what God did should increase your gratitude and intensify the worship and increase your faith over time. The act of listing what God did (for others to hear) is praise. As others hear of God's faithfulness in all areas of your life, their faith grows and non-believers believe.

My life is like a mansion?

When you are first saved you initially submitted to God as Lord over your life. This means you want God's will to be first in all that you do. This is easier said than actually worked out. When Paul said we work to work out our salvation, (Rom 5:28) he was not saying you had to work to earn your salvation. Paul and the writer of Hebrews said salvation comes by faith alone. However, you do have to work out how you model a Christian life. I like the analogy that our life is like a mansion with hundreds of rooms in it. Many of which you do not even know about or understand their impact on your life.

Though you gave God control over the rooms (areas) of your life that you use daily and know that God must have control over, it is the other secret or unknown rooms (areas), that will be stumbling blocks for you, that he needs control over. He will ask for control of them before they become a stumbling block. He wants to turn secret and unknown areas into stepping stones to maturity.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Many think God is supposed to be Omni-benevolent (only give good gifts). He can't be. He is benevolent, but He is also Just. Simply stated is that God said, "Whatever you sow, you will reap." To explain it, there are consequences for our every action. The consequences are not only yours, but everyone else's consequences are out there, too. As I explain to my soldiers, these consequences are like a mine field. Some of the consequences are pretty bad. Now let me ask you, would you rather walk through a mine field alone or with someone who knows where each mine exists? God is the only one who knows where they are and He can only guide you through them if you are listening to Him.

One confusing side to letting God guide you is that it does not mean you will not hit a bad mine (consequence). However, what it does mean is that, God does not allow you to go through a trail or temptation that he has not made a way of escape (1Cor 10:13). Also whatever bad happens, he will use it for your good (Rom 8:28). God never puts stumbling blocks in front of his believers. They are always meant to be stepping stones. So if you do not learn what God intended (Warrior Tasks and Drills) to mature you the first time, then you will have to repeat it later down the road. Instead of running from your trials, accept them with God's leadership. Then your foundation will not be missing any blocks.

God's promises that we can see as a whole are: Ps 37 (especially verse 4); 139:17-18; Jer. 29:11-14;

What if I don't want to obey God's leading?

If you have a hard time obeying God's leading, you can do two things. First admit to God that you don't want to obey and ask for help to allow Him to help you obey. Second remember that God only guides

you through the things that lead to you getting the true and best desires of your heart. If you do not follow, then you may have a longer and harder journey to just get close to where you could have been if you follow God's first leading. God does promise to help us (Heb. 13:6).

Why does God seem to leave me when bad things happen?

Remember Hebrews 13:5-6 (Duet. 31:6-8; Ps 118:6), God will never ever leave you even though it may feel like it. When David prayed in Psalm 13 wondering where God was ... He remembered who God was and that He was faithful to keep his promises. When the harsh wind of reality in life's consequences bites, many times we may feel alone. We can remember the poem "Footprints in the Sand." That is when God is carrying us as we continue to trust His guidance.

How can I strengthen my relationship with God?

If you implement the previous chapters, you have most of the work done. But to tie it all together you must remember a great relationship needs five things: Knowledge, Closeness, Openness (vulnerability), Communication (bi-directional), and Commitment. As you commit to read and learn to properly interpret the Bible, be in a constant state of prayer (listen to your spirit/conscience and not your heart), and promptly confessing your sins your individual relationship with God will flourish. Plus, getting involved in a local Bible-believing church through service, ministry, worship, and fellowship will mature your relationship with God by the conflicts that occur in those settings (Heb. 10:19-25; Prov. 27:10, 17).

What is the Armor of God?

Paul tells us how God provides for our protection in the letter to the Ephesians. He states:

Eph. 6:10-18

Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take

your stand. Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit, and stay alert in this, with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. (HCSB)

Belt of Truth – This is the knowing and understanding of God's truth (Bible) and always choosing to maintain your integrity. The belt holds down the breastplate, gives you a place to secure your sword when not in offensive use, holds up your groin/ hip protection, and holds your clothing in place for battle. This means you need to know the correct interpretation of the Bible so you know what righteousness is and to help you know if you are listening to your heart or the Holy Spirit.

Breastplate of Righteousness – This comes from loving God with all you heart and mind. Righteousness stems from the intent or reason you do things. Are your plans based in selfishness or according to the leading of God's Spirit and love? Be careful of what you allow into your desires and thought process. Always do what is right according to God's Word and leading.

Shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of Peace – This is not only knowing, but also understanding and living the Gospel so you can share it with others by your words and actions. You cannot reproduce if you do not know the Gospel well enough to share it. When you know the Gospel well enough, the gratitude will spur you to share. When you are prepared, the Spirit will carry and guide you to where God wants you to share the Gospel with others.

Shield of Faith – This replaces your fear and doubt. Your faith gets stronger the more you know who God is and rest fully on His attributes and promises in all areas of your life. Since most of us do not have the faith like a two or three-year-old child in God's abilities when we first become a believer, we have to go through trials to increase our faith. The two things I never ask God for are more Faith and Patience. The only way to get them is to go through trials. I don't

ask God for more problems. Yet I know that faith and patience will come as God carries me through any trial He allows to come my way.

Helmet of Salvation- Your mind is the source of your will and faith for salvation. It comes in the form of your trust in God's promises from the Gospel and the willingness to surrender your desires to God's control and desires. God's desire is to have a relationship with you in order to mature you while giving back to you the best desires of your heart (Ps 37:4). The helmet originates from God's (Heb 13:5-6) faithfulness to keep his promises which protects your salvation.

Sword of the Spirit - This is God's Holy Spirit living and speaking (Rāma) through your spirit/conscience. After you read and memorize scripture, you let the Spirit guide your words and actions according to the correct interpretation of the bible scripture(Logos). This is an offensive and defensive weapon. It cuts both ways by protecting you from evil in the world and by cutting away at any wickedness in you. Plus, He knows the future better than you do. So, trust Him.

At age eight, I went forward at a tent revival for salvation. I was not counseled sufficiently for proper growth toward maturity. That left me with doubts and fears. Through the last 50 years of studying the Bible and trying to walk with God, I realized that my helmet of salvation may have felt flimsy, but I discovered it to be a perfect fit and made of the strongest material. As I learned how to share the Gospel (shoes) to where a child could understand, I felt a stronger burden to share it with others. By studying the Bible, my belt became more heavy duty with accessories. It taught me about righteousness (breastplate) to protect me from the wounds of a guilty conscience. By learning to understand and rest fully on more of God's promises my shield of faith kept getting bigger and stronger. Also, as I learned how to discern God's voice through my spirit (conscience), understanding the Bible made the Spirit (sword) easier to hear and follow throughout every situation of my life:

Conclusion

I have given you the foundation that will help you become a more mature believer at an enhanced pace. Our communities, states, country, and world do not have the time to wait for Christians to mature. Non-believers despise hypocrites. The moment you call yourself a Christian, they expect a mature demeanor. It does not happen in Christianity as it does not in life. Once you become a

follower of Jesus as your Lord and Christ, you are not perfect, just redeemed. You will start through your infancy stage and go through the natural progression as you did when you were a child. Except the older you are, the faster you should move through them. However, some of the hurdles you have to get over are higher because of learned bad habits. Depending on your background, the younger you are the lower the hurdles. Now, this is where you go out and “work out (not for) your salvation”. Taking the tools that I have given you and turn those obstacles into stepping stones. While using 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as a checklist, fulfill the two Greatest Commandments to maintain unity in the (universal church) body of our Savior and Lord, Jesus and faithfulness to the scriptures.

My prayer is that this will help you understand the basics of being a follower of Jesus.

CH Phil Smith

Consistent Spiritual Disciplines

- Confessing your new sins ASAP
- Pray continually (speaking and mostly listening)
- Read and study the Bible
- Memorize verses (especially promises)
- Share what God has done for you with others
- Faithfully meet with other spiritually mature believers for mentoring, worship, praise and bible study

Daily Checklist

- Am I loving the Lord my God with:
 - All my heart?
 - All my soul?
 - All my mind?
 - All my strength?
- Am I loving my neighbor as myself?
- Is my love:
 - Being Patient?
 - Being Kind?
 - Absent of Envy?
 - Absent of Boasting?
 - Absent of Arrogance?
 - Absent of Rudeness?
 - Absent of Selfishness?
 - Not allowing me to be easily provoked?
 - Forgiving of other's wrongs?
 - Finding no joy in unrighteousness?
 - Rejoicing in the truth?
 - Bearing all thing?
 - Believing all things?
 - Hoping all things?
 - Enduring all things?

Phil was born and raised in middle and southeastern Tennessee. He and his wife Debbie have two older sons. Phil began studying at Tennessee Temple University in 1978. Before his senior year, he enlisted into the US Air Force for over ten years. He graduated from John Brown University in 1987 with a B.A. in Bible. Phil and Debbie completed training at Child Evangelism Fellowship's Children's Ministry Institute in 1995. They served as directors at Child Evangelism Fellowship of SW Alabama for nine years. They founded Wee Can Know in 2004. Phil and Debbie each graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 2007 /10 with a M.A.C.E. in Childhood focus. In 2009, Phil was commissioned as an Army Chaplain and served in Iraq and Haiti. He retired as an Army Chaplain in 2019. They each have over 42 years of ministry experience with children as well as youth and adults.

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