
The Novice Christian

Christians affect history, from an eternal point of view, only when they operate within the revealed plan of God. As the believer goes, so goes the community and the nation to God.

Distortions of truth have caused chaos in the church age ever since the time of the apostles. A balanced, bona fide approach to the Christian Way of Life can only be achieved with a thorough understanding of the plan of God, from the viewpoint of God Himself.

Any Christian believer is either winning or losing in the attempt to live as a Christian. A believer is either living according to the revealed plan of God, or is serving “the ruler of this world.” There is no in-between or middle ground.

There are two types of novice believers.

The **first type** is the person who has recently accepted Christ as Savior and is making the first tentative steps as a babe in Christ. This person usually has little information beyond that required to understand the Gospel message. Nevertheless, with perseverance and hard work, and with the aid of fellow believers and Bible teachers, the babe in Christ can make rapid progress toward a useful and productive Christian life.

The **second type** of novice is the person who has lived for one, two, or more years since salvation without taking advantage of the provisions the Lord has made for spiritual growth, edification, and production in the Christian life. This individual is a pitiable creature, showing the symptoms of spiritual malnutrition, who flounders around knowing that something is wrong but never able to figure it out. The older novice may simply be neglecting the Word of God in favor of other pursuits or may, even as a believer, actually be opposed to Bible teaching. Whatever the cause, this novice misses the boat entirely.

God the Father’s ardent desire for each of us is that, as His children, we “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” and that we fulfill the plan of God so carefully laid out in the Scriptures.

Characteristics of the Christian Novice

1. The Christian novice is born again. A person who is not saved does not fall into the novice category. On the other hand, a novice believer may have every outward characteristic of an unbeliever, and yet be saved. It is important for advanced Christians who want to have a ministry of Bible teaching to be able to discern the difference.
 2. The novice Christian is almost totally unaware of God’s plan for his life. Therefore, for God’s plan he substitutes what he assumes, what he thinks, what his own standards dictate to him, what he concludes from all this internalizing what surely must be God’s plan for his life. Often, the novice concludes that it’s important to have a sweet personality, or to adhere to a particular set of taboos, or moral do’s and don’ts.
 3. The novice usually attends church and participates. His church activities distinguish him from the more frivolous members of society who he thinks of as worldly.
 4. The novice Christian often regards the Bible-oriented believer as a cultist. He has “never heard that doctrine before”; and he disdains the things that don’t match his opinions. The mental block of the novice Christian results from arrogant subjectivity, resistance to Bible truth, failure to understand the meanings of Bible words, or laziness of mentality. In spite of his “sweetness”, this believer is often word that an unbeliever in his private life.
 5. The novice believer has never been weaned from the “milk” of the Word in order to learn the plan of God. So, for the real substance of the Christian life, he substitutes other things, such as emotion, feeling saved, having a rosy glow, getting a thrill from the message (or illustration). He does not live the Christian life; he is not spiritual; he does not study the Bible. He just wants to be sincere and try to do his best.
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6. Behind the novice's façade of sweetness is hypocrisy, hardcore self-righteousness, implacability, adverse reaction to anything new in doctrine. The average novice believer is highly critical, disdains the things he didn't think of himself. He is not interested in a teaching sermon; he wants, in fact, short sermons, pithy sermons, sermons that re-emphasize his opinions of the world scene.
 7. The novice believer often loves sharing, however, because he likes the sound of his own voice, and because he can express his opinion, give his testimony, receive adulation from others.
 8. The novice wants a convenient church and a convenient pastor who doesn't offend anyone; he wants counseling and compliments and to be married and buried. Otherwise, he thinks of his pastor as a social ornament, someone in the background at gatherings who can be pointed out.
 9. The novice Christian is easily led into social action and "crusades". He likes thinking of himself as a world-changer. Sometimes he gets into civil disobedience. He wants to straighten out everyone who is not in his mutual admiration society – he wants to straighten out the government.
 10. The novice Christian is "ignorant of God's righteousness and goes about to establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God."
- The solution, of course, for both the babe in Christ and for the novice Christian, is to submit to the authority of the Word of God, under the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit, through faith and obedience, to advance toward the goals of conformity to the image of Christ and the production of the acceptable fruit of gold, silver, and precious stones.
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