



Lake Wales  
Church of Christ  
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.  
Lake Wales, FL 33898  
[www.lakewalescoc.com](http://www.lakewalescoc.com)  
(863) 676-4114

**VOL. XXIX**  
**NO. 27**  
**July 6, 2014**

# Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

**—Proverbs 18:10**

## Four Ws Every New Christian Needs to Grow

Few transitions in nature are as abrupt and complete as the birth of a new Christian.

When a baby is born, he is the same person, but he goes in a single instant from getting all his oxygen and nutrients through a tube connected to his navel, to getting all his oxygen and nutrients through his nose and mouth. Once he takes that first breath, his connection to the placenta is severed forever.

Since becoming a Christian is described as being “born again” (John 3:3–5) maybe that’s a pretty good illustration of baptism. When a person becomes a Christian, an instantaneous change occurs. He is the same person, but new things are instantly true. From the second he comes out of the water, his sins are washed away, he is a part of the body of Christ, and his eternal destination has been switched from Hell to Heaven. A bright wedge has been driven into his life at the moment of his baptism, separating the old man from the new man. The angels above rejoice as they look down upon a person being stripped from Satan’s grasp and included in the family of God (Luke 15:1–8).

A brand new Christian is described as a “babe in Christ,” which is not at all an insult. Everyone starts somewhere, and new Christians are deserving of extra love and support. We do not press a steak knife into the little clenching fists of an infant and expect him to cut his own meat. Having babes in Christ is a joy and blessing. And it is also a big responsibility! The problem occurs when babes in Christ remain babes in Christ for years. We exclaim with joy when infants take their first steps, and speak their first words. The situation would be different if the child were fifteen years old and still hadn’t walked or talked.

Sadly, Jesus warned us that many would fail to thrive spiritually, and would indeed fall back into the world. In the parable of the soils in Matthew 13:18–25, Jesus explains that many who initially respond to the word would form no deep roots, and die in a time of temptation; and that many who initially respond to the word have too many other weeds and thorns growing where the word should be, preventing the word from producing any real harvest. Only some bring forth fruit.

The church’s responsibility in raising mature Christians is thus a serious matter. Our responsibility does not end at baptism, it begins! We are not only to “baptize them” but also to “teach them all that I commanded” (Matt. 28:18–20). Here are four things that the Bible identifies as keys to helping babes in Christ mature.

### **1.) Word**

1 Peter 2:2–3 says, “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

Turning loose a new Christian into the world without the direction of the word of God is like turning loose a boy into the city without knowledge of traffic, roads, and open manhole covers. Preachers must make a priority of continuing classes with new converts, grounding them in the word of God. Congregations that fail to follow through with comprehensive Bible teaching for new Christians will never close the back door of the church, and will always be left wondering what happened to the many who were baptized but who are no longer in attendance.

## 2.) Welcome

*Time Magazine* just ran a June 2014 cover story on preemies that proved, once again, that babies with no physical human contact fail to thrive despite all the other measures taken. They have emotional and physical problems and eventually die. Now-a-days, “cuddle care” is emphasized in neonatal units as much as medication and vital signs.

Human contact is important for a new believer, too. Older, mature Christians might think that a few Bible-based sermons ought to be enough to keep a new believer in the pews, but that’s rarely the case. He needs a new family to replace the one that he lost in the world (Mark 10:29, Acts 4:32–35). This is not to say that fuzzy feelings will ever replace truth, but rare is the individual who will hang around to hear truth proclaimed if he feels waves of rejection from a church family who will not accept him, greet him, speak to him, eat with him, or help him. It is puzzling why some churches still act as coldly to new believers as *Cosa Nostra*. New believers are not outsiders, and should not have to prove their worth to be included in the organization. It is not the new convert’s responsibility to make these connections—it is rather the church’s responsibility to reach out to the new convert.

The Bible emphasizes the role of the church as the believer’s family. Thirty-nine times the Apostle Paul uses the phrase “one another” to describe the church’s responsibility, things like, “greet one another,” and “love one another,” and “wait for one another,” and “comfort one another,” and “be kind to one another,” and “build up one another.” Patience is important too. We must beware overly harsh judgments as a new believer learns the ways of Christ, cleans up his language, changes his behaviors, and grows in faith. Like a child brought from a straw mattress in an orphanage and adopted into a mansion with a hundred rooms, it will take some time to learn the new ways of life.

Furthermore, it would be a huge mistake for the church to think that the preacher has the time to become a close personal friend with every new convert, or could or should maintain the church’s “social calendar.” All members should be interested and involved in reaching out to and welcoming new members.

### **3.) Worship**

The Bible emphasizes the purpose of worship as a faith-building and faith-grounding experience. “With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16). “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24–25). Worship is not just a new extracurricular activity to be inserted into an already-busy schedule. Instead, it is the time and place where babes in Christ gain teaching, admonishment, wisdom, delight, and encouragement. Thus, new members should be encouraged to attend worship, and made to feel comfortable there.

### **4.) Work**

Often we seek to protect new converts from meaningful work in the body of Christ, But in fact, the sooner the believer can take off the bib and put on the apron, the sooner he will feel like a vital part of the body of Christ that he believes in so deeply (Rom. 12:6–8). Both Paul and Apollos began using their talents immediately after becoming a part of the church (Acts 9:20, 18:27–28).

It is good for the congregation’s leadership to have a plan in place whereby new converts are encouraged and asked to discover their talents and pitch in to help. Obviously, it won’t be in leading in prayer or teaching a class right away. But there are other things to be done as he grows in the faith. No one will be driven away by a request to help and participate. Rather, they will be instilled with a sense of belonging, of being a part of the team. Every new player wants to hear the coach call his name and send him onto the field, and grows discouraged when he is made to sit on the bench week after week. —*John Guzzetta*

---

### **Quote of the Week:**

“Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him and to let him know you trust him.” —*Booker T. Washington*