

Compass

Balance and Center the Experience

If you came to this site out of curiosity and related to the message, good on you. Maybe you're unfamiliar with Christianity, or just have a vague notion of its meaning. If so, the following suggestions will help—a Freshman Orientation of sorts—as you follow through with your new experience.

Preconceived “religious” expectations will frustrate even the most-sincere commitment. Don't stress over behavior modification. Learn to nurture the inner peace, and your choices will boost healthy changes.

You connected to God by grace through faith, not the goodness of your deeds. *An authentic relationship with God takes effort to balance and center the experiences of life with his divine presence now living in you. Positive changes will lead you closer to God. Your conscience helps steer the way. Scripture is the compass.* Tougher adjustments may take more effort but the end result is totally worth it.

To maximize the experience of knowing Jesus, *tap into the harmony between your core self and union with God.* Nothing compares to the sense of joy, peace and love one feels through that connection.

At the point of contact (your prayer) *God's breath infused his life into you.* “Spirit gives birth to spirit...” John 3:6 NIV. It helps to read Scripture daily, talk to God, and bond with Christians through friendship and activities of shared interest.

Read a few books. Some solid starters are:

More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell; *Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren; *A Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel, and *A Case for Faith* also by Lee Strobel (there is a teen version of this one); and *Is Atheism Dead?* by Eric Metaxas. There are tons more but these will get you rolling.

Internet sites and cable TV offers *a mix of speakers discussing basic themes and Christian topics*. Mostly a matter of personal taste, a few to consider are: David Jeremiah, insightful Bible teacher and author; Greg Laurie, evangelist for Harvest Crusade; Frank Turek, apologist and campus speaker; and Ben Witherington III, New Testament scholar and seminary professor.

There are many more too numerous to list here. These mentioned didn't solicit an endorsement, nor is their personal style appealing to everyone. Critics often sling negative verbiage at various front-and-center ministers.

Many so-called spiritual cops are self-appointed. Learn to discern for yourself. An old adage among Christians regarding sermons is; ***“Learn to pick bones out of fish,”*** i.e. most messages have a positive take-away. The Holy Spirit will help you find useful lessons. You don't like a certain guy, don't judge, move on. No harm, no foul.

A totally righteous YouTube site is the “Bible Project.” ***Cartoon drawings of books in the Bible that give a brief account in easy to understand voiceover.*** It also gives key definitions of Bible words and concepts. Fun to watch.

You've heard of the wolf in a sheep costume? Sadly, it happens. Be aware that unscrupulous people may

misrepresent the gospel and use pressure, guilt trips or promise personal riches while fund raising for their private gain.

Soon enough, you'll realize Christians aren't perfect. Sincere believers work with God to develop more Christ-like character. We don't mature in the Spirit overnight. ***Ideally, we cut each other some slack, knowing change takes time.*** The process is easier with support from others who are also committed to changing themselves.

Remember, we're trying to ***emulate Jesus. He alone is our model*** and guides us to the best version of ourselves.

Life Sentence of Bulk Mail?

Also buying product from TV programs (even good ones) will put you on a mailing list and bring an avalanche of never-ending requests. A book you might want can be bought at a local book store or commercial website without signing up for a life sentence of bulk mail. Many ministries sponsor global humanitarian efforts you may feel strongly about and wish to support. Check for ECFA accredited organizations before giving.

Your goal should be to ***find a local church to attend. Simply watching TV or YouTube programs won't allow a newbie to mature in a balanced way or gain a sense of family and unity found in a shared community of believers.*** Try out a few churches, visit with friends or family members, and ask God to help you decide.

Important factors are how you relate to the music, the sermons, people you meet (are they warm and friendly or judgey and up tight?). Also, what extra features and

activities are offered? Check out shared interest groups, child care, volunteer ops, kids' programs, study groups, community outreach, and coffee bar. Someplace near your neighborhood helps.

The Bible should be the guiding authority of doctrine for any spiritually healthy church. That's a given. ***Avoid churches that compromise crucial points about the nature of God, the nature of human beings, and the nature of salvation.*** Come-along-later religious movements miss on these basic principles. Stay away.

Charismatic believers reach an enhanced spiritual level through the ***“Baptism in the Holy Spirit”*** (Acts 1 & 2). That experience—supplemental to meeting Jesus (aka being “born again” John 3:3)—will bring greater sensitivity to God's presence in your life and add a spiritual dimension that enriches the personal nature of your relationship with Jesus.

Some churches are more focused on this, others leave it for individuals to decide. One thoughtful book on the topic worth checking out is *The Spirit-Filled Life*, written by John MacNeil.

Best of all, you're in a relationship with God. ***There's a learning curve, some trial and error, and personal adjustments. Learn to focus on Jesus' presence inside you.*** New meaning and purpose have started. They remain throughout the journey. Enjoy the trip.

“Jesus Laughed—His Life and Time Between the Lines,” is a short overview of the gospel written by the Gospel Dude, paraphrased in story form. Read the sample chapters provided here, and ***buy an e-book on Amazon.***