

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—

1 Peter 2:2 (NRSV)

Seems like babies are always hungry. They are either hungry or sleeping! Their only skill in the earliest stages of life are to eat, grow and absorb information. In some ways, that lasts our whole life.

Yes, we gain more skills. Yes, we don't get to sleep as much. And yes, we grow out of being fed to feeding ourselves, but the fact of the matter is, we constantly have to feed our bodies, feed our minds and feed our spirits so we can remain strong. Without nourishment, we become weakened and are easily susceptible to disease. Most of us have a sense of how that works physically, but it is true of the mind and spirit as well.

What are diseases of the mind and spirit, signals of spiritual malnutrition? Resentment, chronic anger, overwhelming guilt, shame or stubborn denial, depression and discouragement all come to mind. Weakness of character, the inability to stand up for what you believe in, to withstand peer pressure to compromise your standards or to keep your priorities in order are also consequences of not feeding one's spirit.

Feeding your spirit is like feeding your body—some things are better for you than others. “Spiritual food” includes study of the scriptures. I mean ALL the scriptures. Not just select verses that go down easy, but the hard ones too. Some passages need “chewed on” for a while. Some will “taste good” at first, but give you “indigestion” later. To get a complete picture of God, and of God’s plan and will for the world, we have to read and understand the whole Bible, in all its various perspectives; histories, parables, poetry. All of it together conveys the glorious, abundant, overflowing love of God for the world God made and all that is in it.

Our “thirst for God” is quenched by spending time in prayer, meditation and attentiveness to the presence of God. Without this, we become spiritually dried up, hard, bound up. We are less resilient and cannot respond properly to the world around us. When we get spiritually dehydrated, we can become disoriented and confused, more easily tempted because our values are skewed and our priorities out of order.

For optimum health, strength and maturity, take care of your spirit as much as you take care of your body. Both are essential to having the full, productive life God meant you to have.