

GROW THE FAITH YOU
ALREADY HAVE

SOLID

FROM MILK TO MATURITY IN CHRIST



PAUL MAZZAPICA SR.

A FREE PREVIEW

SOLID: From Milk to Maturity in Christ

by Paul Mazzapica Sr.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to explore SOLID.

What follows is the complete first chapter, “The Hunger You Cannot Explain,” exactly as it appears in the book. My hope is that it puts words to something you may already have been feeling — a hunger for something more than where your faith currently is.

If it resonates, the rest of the book walks through what that hunger is calling you toward. And if you’d like an honest, personal starting point before you read further, there’s a free 15-minute Faith Foundation Assessment at solidthebook.com.

— *Paul*

CHAPTER ONE

The Hunger You Cannot Explain

Every newborn enters the world hungry, not confused by the need, not ashamed of it, simply dependent on someone else to meet it. That is not a flaw in the design. It is the design.

When Jesus said you must be born again, He was describing more than a transaction. He was describing the beginning of new life. New life begins with hunger. So the question has to be asked: is that hunger still alive in you, or have you slowly learned to function without it?

For some, the answer comes easily, their faith still burns with life, and their walk with God continues to grow. But for others, something has quietly shifted. Not a crisis. Not a falling away. Just a subtle cooling that happened without a single dramatic moment to point to.

You still believe. You still show up. You still call yourself a follower of Christ. Yet if you are honest, something that once felt urgent now feels more like routine. Nobody warned you this would happen. The truth is, many believers around you are carrying the same quiet concern, even if they have never said it out loud.

You are still reading the Bible, but the Scriptures that once seemed to speak directly into your life now do not land the way they once did. The sermons that once stirred something deep within you now feel predictable. The sense of closeness to God that once came easily feels less accessible, less vivid. Somewhere beneath all of that, a question begins to form that most people hesitate to say out loud:

Is this it?

I remember sitting one evening with my Bible open. I was reading the same words I had gone through many times before. There was not anything wrong with them. They were still true, but they did not land the way they once had. It was not doubt, I still believed everything I had always believed.

It was more like the difference between a fire and an ember. Both are real. But only one of them warms the room. Familiarity and comfort, I was learning, have a way of sneaking in so slowly you do not notice until the warmth is already gone.

That evening helped me recognize something I had not wanted to admit: familiarity can settle over faith so quietly that you do not notice the warmth fading until you have already grown used to the chill.

What Happened?

A lot of people just push that question away. It feels ungrateful, or even risky, to give it any real attention. So, we hide it under a pile of tasks. Faith keeps going, but it starts to feel more like a routine than something alive and growing. Just maintaining, really. Since nothing is obviously broken, it can be easy to stay in that rut for a long time.

Let us try looking at this from a fresh angle. Maybe your questioning is not a sign that something is broken. It might not be evidence that you are drifting, it could just be

that you are developing. This restlessness that keeps bubbling up during this season should not just be shoved down; it needs to be understood. To make some sense of that, it helps to go back to the beginning. It may not mean you are drifting. It may mean you are growing. That restlessness does not need to be shoved down; it needs to be understood. To understand it, we have to return to the language Jesus used from the beginning.

There is a reason Jesus chose the language of birth when He described what it means to enter the kingdom of God. He did not say you need to be reformed, improved, educated, or corrected. He said you need to be born again. That single word, born, carries more weight than we usually stop to appreciate.

Birth is a beginning, not a completion. When a child enters the world, they are fully alive, fully present, fully loved, and yet entirely dependent. They cannot feed themselves. They cannot walk. They cannot articulate what they need. They require constant care, constant nourishment, constant presence. That is not a defect. It is exactly how birth is designed to work. The helplessness of a newborn is not a problem to be fixed; it is the natural and necessary starting point of a life that will, in time, grow

into something extraordinary. Their dependence is not a defect. It is the natural starting point of a life that, with time and care, is meant to grow.

When Jesus told Nicodemus, a respected teacher and man of learning and religious standing, that he needed to be born again, He was not describing the finish line of faith. He was describing his first breath. He was saying: everything you think you know about how to approach God, you need to set aside and start over. Not from your strength, not from your knowledge, not from your long resume of religious observance. From the beginning. Like a newborn. Hungry, dependent, and entirely in the hands of the One who made you. He was calling him back to the beginning, away from self-reliance, religious achievement, and the assumption that knowledge alone could bring him near to God. Nicodemus had to come as every believer must come: hungry, dependent, and entirely in the hands of the One who gives new life.

Your hunger is not a problem to be solved. It is evidence that your new life has begun. That is why spiritual hunger matters. It is not something to fear or hide. It is one of the

clearest signs that new life is present and still asking to grow.

The Gift of the Early Days

If you are new to faith, or if you can still remember those first weeks and months after you came to Jesus, you know there is something distinct about that season that can be difficult to explain until it has been lived.

Everything feels vivid. The world looks slightly different. Familiar things carry new weight. A song you have heard a hundred times suddenly brings tears to your eyes. A verse you once skimmed past now seems to reach right off the page and into the center of your chest. Prayer, which may have felt awkward or performative before, begins to feel less like a ritual and more like a real conversation with a God who is present, personal, and near.



*I do still remember the early days
in my own journey. Everything felt
simple then, I never really
questioned any of it; my faith was
just there, steady and full speed
ahead. Prayer was not something I
had to work at, it felt natural.*

*Looking back now, I can see what I
could not see then. That closeness
was not something I manufactured.
I did not pray my way into it or
earn it through consistency. God
was close, closer than I realized,
and what I was experiencing was
less something I had built and
more something I had been
handed. It was simply given, and in
His kindness, He made sure I felt
it.*

This is not just your imagination; it is not simply an emotion getting worked up into some spiritual fever. This is the real presence of God meeting a soul that has just opened up to Him, often for the very first time. He is close in those early days in a way that feels almost physical. The truths He brings near in that season are the simplest and most essential ones:

You are loved,

You are forgiven,

You belong to Him,

You are not alone.

These are the truths that function as milk, and like milk for a newborn, they are not simple because they are unimportant, they are simple because they are foundational. Every complex and profound thing you will ever come to understand about God rests on this foundation of these four truths. Take them away, and everything collapses, just as happens when you remove the foundation or cornerstone of a building.

Reassurance: You Are Loved

The first and deepest truth milk delivers is this: you are loved by God. Not a distant, hands-off kind of love, not a general love that covers everyone in theory but reaches no one personally. God's love knows you by name with a love that knows your history, your failures, and your fears, and chooses you anyway.

Most of us were not taught this kind of love. We were taught the other kind: the kind you earn, the kind that comes with conditions attached and disappears when you fail to meet them. From an early age, the world trains us to manage how we are perceived, to lead with our strengths, hide our struggles, and present

the version of ourselves most likely to be accepted.

Without realizing it, many believers carry that same exhausting pattern into their relationship with God, quietly assuming He operates by the same rules everyone else does. But He does not. God's love is different. When that truth begins to settle into your soul, something changes at a level that is very hard to put into words.

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

— Romans 8:38–39 (NIV)

Paul wrote these words from prison, which is worth remembering. His confidence did not come from an easy life. It came from a life marked by shipwreck, beatings, imprisonment, and rejection, and yet he had discovered, in the middle of all of it, that none of those things had the power to touch the one thing that mattered most.

Read that list slowly: death, life, angels, demons, the present, the future, things above, things below, and anything in all creation. Paul is not leaving loopholes. He is being exhaustive on purpose because he knows how easily we search for exceptions. We quietly wonder whether our situation, our failure, or our history might be the one thing too complicated for God's love to cover. That is exactly Paul's point: there are no exceptions. God's love is not given with hidden conditions or quiet limits. It is given freely, fully, and without strings attached.

Identity: You Are His

Close behind the question of God's love comes the question of identity. The two are more deeply connected than most people realize. The way you receive God's love shapes the way you see yourself, and the way you see yourself shapes how you live.

Before faith, most of us build our sense of identity from the materials the world provides. We are what we do. We are what we achieve. We are what other people think of us. We measure ourselves by success, failure, approval, rejection, and every changing standard around us. These identities are not

meaningless, but they are fragile. They shift with circumstance. They require constant maintenance. They can be taken away.

When someone comes to faith in Jesus, something fundamental changes beneath the surface. A new identity is received, not earned, built, or performed. It is an identity that cannot be taken away because it does not rest on anything you have done or anything that can be done to you.

*“To all who did receive Him, to
those who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become
children of God.”*

— *John 1:12 (NIV)*

Not servants. Not subjects. Not admirers from a safe distance. Children, with all the access, belonging, and security that word carries. When Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) that “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here,” he is not describing a slight improvement or a course correction. He is describing a complete change of identity. You are not a cleaned-up version of who you used to be. In Christ, you are made new.

This new identity does not erase the old wounds or immediately resolve the old patterns. But it gives you a new foundation while healing and growth continue. You are no longer defined by what was done to you. You are no longer imprisoned by what you have done. You belong to God, and that belonging becomes the most stable truth about who you are.

Forgiveness: You Are Free

One of the heaviest things a person carries into faith is the weight of their past. One of the most profound gifts God gives in those early days is the experience of that weight being lifted.

*“As far as the east is from the west,
so far has He removed our
transgressions from us.”*

— Psalm 103:12 (NIV)

East and West never meet. Here, the Psalmist is reaching for an image of infinite distance, something without a measurable endpoint, to describe what God does with our sin. He does not store it somewhere nearby where it can be retrieved later. He does not reduce the

sentence and leaves the record intact. He removes it. Entirely.

*“Therefore, there is now no
condemnation for those who are in
Christ Jesus.”*

— Romans 8:1 (NIV)

No condemnation. Not a reduced sentence. Not a conditional verdict waiting to change based on your future performance. None. Zero. The verdict has already been rendered, and it is not guilty. This matters: the verdict is not “not guilty” because the charges were ignored. It is because they were paid for in full by Christ. Jesus took what we deserved so that we could receive what only He deserved.

This freedom is not something you earn by doing better. It is something you receive by believing what God says is true. In the early days of faith, God often makes this reality deeply personal, not just intellectually acknowledged but actually felt, because He knows we need to experience the weight being lifted before we can begin to build on the freedom He has given.

Comfort: You Are Not Alone

One of the quietest and most profound gifts of early faith is the discovery that you are no longer facing life by yourself. Before faith, most people carry their burdens in private. Fear, shame, confusion, and grief are often managed alone because admitting them out loud feels too risky.

Then you come to God, and something shifts. You realize that the One who made you already knows everything you have been carrying, and He is not repelled by any of it. He is present in the ordinary Tuesday, in the 2:00 a.m. fear, and in the moment of failure you would hardly know how to confess.

Being truly known and still not abandoned produces something deep within the soul. It is not the happiness that comes from good circumstances, which is real but fragile and changes with everything life brings. It is steadier than happiness, rooted beneath the surface where circumstances cannot easily reach. The early church had a word for it. Scripture calls it joy.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Notice that joy appears second in that list, right after love, and before peace, patience, or any of the other qualities we often associate with spiritual maturity. Joy is not a reward for advanced disciples. It is among the first things the Spirit produces in a life that is opening itself to God. It grows naturally from the deep assurance that you are loved, forgiven, and no longer alone.

This matters because when that joy becomes less effortless, as it eventually does for most believers, it does not mean the Spirit has left or that faith has failed. It means the relationship is deepening beyond the emotional high of the beginning and becoming something more durable. God's presence has not vanished, and neither has joy. Both are being rooted more deeply, no longer dependent on feeling alone, but formed into something steady enough to hold when life begins to test it.

When Comfort Becomes a Ceiling

This is the heart of what this chapter-and this entire book is really about: the gifts of early faith are real and necessary and good and they

were never meant to be the whole story. Milk is a perfect food for the stage it is designed for. A newborn who is fed milk is not deprived; they are nourished exactly as they should be. But a ten-year-old who is still living exclusively on milk is not thriving the way a ten-year-old should. The same food that was perfect at one stage becomes insufficient at another, not because the food changed, but because the person did.

For a long time, I kept trying to find my way back to the feeling I had at the beginning of my faith journey. I tried more Bible reading. Longer prayer time. The harder I chased it, the more it seemed to stay just out of reach. I thought something had broken. I kept reaching for what I remembered, the closeness, the clarity, the ease of those early days, and coming up just short. What I did not understand yet was that God was not asking me to go back. That season had done its work in me. He was not calling me back at all. He was calling me forward, and what had felt like distance was actually a direction.

The closeness of those early days was real, comforting, motivating, but it was also introductory. It established a foundation that needed to be built on; it grounded my faith in truths that would later have to hold under pressure. The shift that followed was not a withdrawal of God's presence, but a change in how that presence was experienced. What had once been carried was now meant to be walked. This is where the language of Scripture becomes especially important:

“In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

— Hebrews 5:12–14 (NIV)

The point is not to diminish milk, but to place it in its proper role. It is still necessary, but it is no longer sufficient for you to continue to

grow. Very often, the problem comes when comfort starts to function as a ceiling rather than a floor. The truths of early faith, you are loved, you are forgiven, you belong to Him, and you are not alone, are meant to be the foundation you stand on, not the room you stay in.

So, the hunger you may already be feeling, the sense that there must be more, that the surface is not enough, that something deeper is calling-is not ingratitude for what God has already given you. It is evidence that you are growing. It is the natural and healthy appetite of a maturing believer, one who is ready for something more substantial than what sustained them early on, and a sign that God is not finished with you yet. This hunger is not something you want to suppress or apologize for; it is an invitation to follow, and following this hunger will change everything.



Closing Thought

Born again means born hungry. It means you arrive at faith with nothing of your own and everything provided for you: love you did not earn, forgiveness you could not manufacture,

an identity you did not build, and a joy that comes from outside yourself. The early days of faith allow those truths to take root deeply enough to support the growth still ahead.

If you are in those early days, receive this season fully. Do not rush it or be embarrassed by it. Let your God love you with the closeness, patience, and tenderness that steady a soul at the beginning of the journey. The simplicity of this beginning is not a limitation. It is a gift of grace.

If you have been a believer long enough that the early days feel distant, let this chapter remind you of what is still true. The foundation has not moved. You are still loved with that same love. You are still forgiven with that same completeness. You still belong to Him with the same security. You are still not alone. Those truths do not expire. They deepen as you grow into a fuller understanding of what they mean.

These foundational truths are where faith begins, but they were never meant to be where it stops. What comes next is not about leaving behind what God gave you at the beginning. It is about letting it do what it was always meant to do: hold the weight of everything still to come. The chapters ahead are about that movement: stepping beyond the

starting line and learning how to grow into the deeper, stronger life God has been preparing you for. It will not always be comfortable, but it will be worth it.



Reflection & Discussion

- Think back to when your faith first began, or to a season when God felt especially close. What truths felt most alive to you then? How has your experience of those truths changed over time?
- Read 1 Peter 2:2. What does it mean to “crave” spiritual milk? What would it look like for your hunger for God to be that instinctive and natural?
- Have you ever confused “starting” your faith with “staying” in the same place? What made it easy to stay comfortable rather than grow?
- This week, identify one simple truth from this chapter, that you are loved, that you are forgiven, that you belong to Him, or that you are not alone, and write it somewhere you will see it daily. Share

with your group: which truth do you most need to be reminded of right now?

A Prayer

Lord, thank You that You meet me exactly where I am. Thank You that from the very beginning, Your love has been the foundation beneath my feet. Remind me today that I am fully known and fully loved, not because of what I have done, but because of who You are.

As I begin this journey toward greater maturity, quiet the voice that says I am not ready or not enough. You began this work in me, and I trust You to carry it forward. Help me to crave more of You, not out of duty, but out of genuine hunger.

Amen.

Where the Book Goes From Here

*Chapter One is just the beginning. Here's
what's ahead in SOLID:*

2 Why God Starts You on Milk

Why God intentionally begins every believer with the simplest truths first — and why one word, “Come,” was always enough.

3 Rooted and Ready

What it actually takes to move beyond the truths that got you started, once something in you senses you're ready for more.

4 Your Part in This

If God's grace can't be earned, what is your role in your own growth? A simple answer that turns out to be demanding.

5 The Ninety-Five Percent

The gap between a faith that can quote the right answers on Sunday and a faith that survives an ordinary Monday.

6 Where Faith Actually Lives

Why the few hours you spend at church matter less than the hundred-plus hours you don't.

7 When God Feels Distant

What to do in the quiet seasons when prayer starts to feel like speaking into an empty room.

8 When Holding On Is Enough

How to keep walking when faith no longer feels fresh, easy, or naturally sustained.

9 Doubt, Fear, and Honest Faith

What to do with the questions you've been afraid to ask out loud — and why asking them is not the same as losing faith.

Final From Milk to Maturity — SOLID

Where all nine chapters come together into what it actually means to be SOLID.

If This Chapter Spoke to You

❖ **Take the free Faith Foundation**

Assessment — a short, honest, 15-minute look at where you are in your faith journey right now, with a personal starting point at the end. Available at **solidthebook.com**.

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*“Is your faith really **SOLID**?”*