

The Christian Buff

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Introduction

Buff: “A person who is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about a subject, but who is not a practitioner.”

Example: “Bill is a Civil War buff.”

Every trade, profession, or body of knowledge has its buffs.

Firefighter buffs love to go to fires and watch the professionals at work. Many of these buffs are highly knowledgeable about firefighting practices, equipment, and techniques.

It is the firefighters who roll up to a fire, go into the building to rescue people, doing the hard work and taking the risks until the fire is under control. The buff watches, fascinated, from a safe distance, taking notes and updating his technical databases.

Police buffs have police scanners, go to crime scenes, talk to any cops who will listen to them, watch detective shows on TV.

The police officers and detectives search for suspects, sit for hours on surveillance, face down violent offenders, apprehend perpetrators. The buff stands behind the yellow tape, follows the case on a scanner, or on TV, as information is published.

The World War II buff is often very well educated in everything about WWII: the primary causes for

the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, Japan, Italy, the history of the war prior to American involvement, and the details of the warfare in all of the theaters of conflict.

The soldiers, marines, sailors, pilots, drive straight at the enemy and confront him face to face. They take the ultimate risk, make the ultimate sacrifice.

As knowledgeable, patriotic, and supportive of the military as the buff may be, the closest he gets to combat is reading Richard Tregaskis, “Guadalcanal Diary”.

I Am a Buff

I am a military aviation buff. I have enjoyed everything about flying and the military since I was a child.

I was seven and in the 3rd grade, in 1941, when the U.S. got into WWII. My family got into support of the war effort immediately. The short street we lived on in Coffeyville, Kansas, was unnamed, so my folks and the neighbors got together and had the street named MacArthur Road. They made their own sign to post at the highway end of the street.

(Regrettably, if you look at the street now on Google Street View, it has been renamed McArthur

Street. Some misinformed public servant (back in history) had the street renamed; I don't know when that happened.) Army convoys would pass by on the highway, sometimes stopping in a large field nearby to bivouac or stop for lunch. We gathered peaches from the neighbor's orchard to pass out to the troops.

We kids loved the airplanes. We had scrapbooks of cutouts from magazines of every military plane we could find, and our art projects were of P-40's (later P-51's) shooting down Zero's or Messerschmitt's.

I took flying lessons in the 1970's, got a private license, and have logged about 200 hours in Cessna's. I worked for a defense contractor in the 80's and 90's, and I was assigned to project teams who carried out computer and communication surveys of U.S. Air Force and Army bases in England, German, Korea, and in the U.S. I was in hog heaven. Fighter planes, bombers, tankers all around.

Our office for four months in England, at RAF Upper Heyford, was 50 yards from the taxiway, where F111 fighter-bombers rolled by on their way to take off for training sorties. We conducted interviews with officers and NCO's in every functional area on the bases, so I became thoroughly familiar with most of the operational processes of Air Force activities. In spite of several years of this kind of exposure and experience, I never participated in a military mission, certainly not as a pilot, but not even as a passenger.

The only time I was on a military aircraft was as a photographer for the U.S. Parachute Association, at the world championships in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 1972. I sat in the door of a Huey helicopter and took pictures of skydivers exiting another Huey flying in formation. I wore a parachute for safety purpose. I watched, at 12000 feet, while others jumped; I stayed in the Huey, tied in the door with a safety line.

In short, I am the very definition of an aviation buff, "enthusiastic and knowledgeable, but not a practitioner."

Phil is Not a Buff

We homeschooled Phil through high school. When he was 17, he passed his GED test and enrolled at Austin Community College. After two years there, he transferred his credits to the University of Texas. By this time his aim was to enroll in US Air Force ROTC and become a pilot.

While working toward a degree in aeronautical engineering, Phil learned to fly, got a private pilot's license, and spent a lot of time training as a cadet officer candidate.

When he graduated, he was commissioned and went to Laughlin Air Force Base (AFB) in Del Rio, Texas. He spent a year there in primary jet training, after which he was assigned to Tinker AFB, as a pilot in an AWACS plane.

After several months of training to fly heavy aircraft, Phil became an AWACS co-pilot, and later a command pilot, serving several tours of duty in Saudi Arabia and Turkey flying surveillance over the no-fly zones.

After about four years of this duty, he was assigned to Flight Instructor school, where he spent several months learning to train pilots. He was assigned as an instructor pilot (IP), to Vance AFB, Enid, Oklahoma, where he served out his career as IP, and carrying out various administrative and command responsibilities. He retired recently as a Lt. Colonel.

What's the Point

So – in terms of military aviation, what is the difference between me, and my son, Phil? That's easy. He's the "real deal". I am a buff.

As knowledgeable and enthusiastic as I am, I can never do what he does. It is pointless for me even to fantasize about it. He has those years of education, years of pilot and command training, years of hands-on experience at performing the duties of an Air Force officer. For 22 years he has made a useful contribution to our country and trained many others to do the same. Meanwhile, I have watched from the sidelines.

The Christian Buff is a Novice Believer

I want to distinguish between believers who are Christian buffs and those who do useful work for the kingdom of God.

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.

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 older novice 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 worse than 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 emotions, “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.
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.”

For the Christian buff, the solution 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.