

Peter impresses me as a man who had a lot to say when he was talking, but when he sat down to write, he became very concise and carefully considered his words. These opening verses of First Peter have given us an incredible promise and an enormous challenge. First, Peter told us that the power of God supplies us with everything we need pertaining to life and godliness. (1:3) Then he told us to make every effort to add to our faith the virtues that we see in God: excellence, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. (1:5-7) If we didn't have the preceding promise, we would think it was an impossible effort to make, an unattainable goal. But he already declared that God's divine power has equipped us to do this. We have everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

Adding these qualities to our life increases our likeness to Christ and therefore our glory and excellence reflect God's glory and excellence. (Romans 8:29) People begin to see something of the winsomeness of Jesus in us when we increase in our godliness and love. Paul wrote to the Philippians that we were to ¹⁴ *Do all things without grumbling or questioning,* ¹⁵ *that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,* ¹⁶ *holding fast to the word of life,* Philippians 2:14-16a (ESV)

This addition to our faith is what we call the process of sanctification. The Holy Spirit will point out areas of our life that need to change. (John 16:8) When we aren't as kind as we should be, He makes us uncomfortable. When we compromise His standard of godliness, we get that twinge of conviction. Then we are to make every effort to change. We pray for the application of the divine power to change the way we think. (Ephesians 4:23) We trust that the Spirit will aid us in exercising self-control. But it is an effort.

This is not for the half-hearted who want to slide into heaven someday but in the meantime live for selfish pleasure. These additions come from a heart that longs to please their Savior and be effective and fruitful. (Ephesians 5:10) The reason they have such a longing is that they have seen His love for them and they long to return that love through obedience and service.

The heart that is captured by the love of Christ, will long to be effective and fruitful. (John 15:16) ⁸ *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Peter has just told us how we can be effective. It is by God's power and with our every effort that we

Commented [notes1]: 2 Peter 1:3 (ESV)

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

Commented [notes2]: 2 Peter 1:5-7 (ESV)

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,
⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,
⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Commented [notes3]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Commented [notes4]: John 16:8 (ESV)

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

Commented [notes5]: Ephesians 4:23 (ESV)

²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

Commented [notes6]: Ephesians 5:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Commented [notes7]: John 15:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

see these qualities increase. This is what we need for the Last Days, to be increasingly like Jesus, our perfect example.

Of the one billion Christians on earth, every one became a Christian through the knowledge of Jesus, of what He has done for them, and by faith they accepted the gracious gift of salvation like you and I did. But only some of them will become effective and fruitful in that knowledge. (Matthew 13:22) Some will catch the desire to please the Lord and be effective by means of service. We are to be servants of Christ, but as new believers we can easily be influenced by man to serve a man and call it serving Christ. Serving Christ is doing what He instructs you personally to do and not what a man decides you should do. (Galatians 1:10)

I was caught up in that for years. I would go out on the streets and pass out literature and collect donations to print more and try to find people to witness to. Every day we had a score card, how much in donations, how many pieces of literature, how many souls won, etc. I thought I was serving God. I was serving a man who told me that was what I was to do for God. He told us that that was the way we could be effective and fruitful. In reality we were serving him, not God.

I was not acting according to what Peter tells us in this passage. He is telling us the path to an effective and fruitful life is to apply the power of God to the transformation of your character so that you are more virtuous, godly, knowledgeable, steadfast, kind and loving. **Grow in Christ and you will be effective and fruitful!** It is much easier to do a program or follow set of steps some man developed. The Bible doesn't give us a set of steps, it presents an impossible standard and says that through the power of God you can move toward that standard. And as you do you will be effective and fruitful. The life of the Holy Spirit flows from a transformed life, and it is the Spirit that makes us fruitful in ways that last. (John 15:16)

It is not a one time or temporary effort but something that should be continually increasing. Paul calls it going from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Corinthians 3:18) The more we take on the attributes of our Savior, the more fruitful we become. Look at the fruit from His 3 years of ministry! His program was to listen to the Father and obey Him alone. (John 5:19)

But what about those within the one billion believers that don't seem to grow and change? What of those who continually cling to gossip and can't stop criticizing their fellow believers and refuse to forgive and move on? (1John 1:6) What of those who just seem to be a part of the body for what they can receive and never seem to serve one another in love or die to their flesh? ⁹ *For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.*

Commented [notes8]: Matthew 13:22 (ESV)

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Commented [notes9]: Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Commented [notes10]: John 15:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Commented [notes11]: 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Commented [notes12]: John 5:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

Commented [notes13]: 1 John 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

When we forget our first love and the overwhelming relief of having our sins forgiven and being free from guilt, we stop responding to the love we've received. We love because He first loved us. (1John 4:19) When we stop considering the greatness of that love, our love grows cold. There is no longer the passion to become the holy and unblemished bride of Christ we are called to be. (Ephesians 5:27) We stop adding to our faith, and when we stop adding those Christ like qualities begin to diminish. We can go forward or backward, but it is rare that we stay at the same spiritual stage. Apathy is backsliding.

When we consider how passionate Jesus was to redeem us and the price He paid, what does our apathy say about us? When we consider God's sacrifice of His one and only Son, how is it even possible that we could lose our gratitude and stop responding? It's no wonder Jesus has such a harsh attitude toward the lukewarm. (Revelation 3:16)

Keep adding to your faith! Keep increasing in the likeness of Christ. That is the only way to produce fruit that remains and be effective from the eternal perspective. (Psalm 1:1-3)

10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. We don't want to be of those that no longer see clearly where we came from and what God has done for us. So, we need to be all the more diligent to make our calling and election sure. What are you called to? We are called to be saints of the Most High God. We are the elect out of all the people on the earth to know the only true God and experience His mercy and grace. (Deuteronomy 7:6) But Peter is telling us we better make ourselves sure of it. We had better be increasing as that is a sign our relationship is real. If we are not, how can we be sure we are truly in a relationship with Jesus? Doesn't faith produce works? (James 2:26) Shouldn't our faith be evidenced by spiritual growth? (1John 2:6)

Peter is telling us that if we are going to put anything into practice, it should be increasing in these godly attributes. If you are going forward, he promises you will never fall. How can he say that? Backsliding begins by stopping that increase and settling down where you are. But then you start letting little things slide, and then bigger things. Finally there is a denial of faith altogether. We can stop backsliding where it starts by making sure we continually are growing in the faith and increasing in our love for God.

Let's be all the more diligent to make our calling and election sure. Let's practice these qualities. If you are going to put anything into practice, it should be these qualities. Of course they are formed and strengthened by knowing God in His Word and prayer and increasing in love for Him. Remember, that is the Great Commandment. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Commented [notes14]: 1 John 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

Commented [notes15]: Ephesians 5:27 (ESV)

²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Commented [notes16]: Revelation 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Commented [notes17]: Psalm 1:1-3 (ESV)

¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Commented [notes18]: Deuteronomy 7:6 (ESV)

⁶ "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Commented [notes19]: James 2:26 (ESV)

²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Commented [notes20]: 1 John 2:6 (ESV)

⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Commented [notes21]: Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The God that gives us everything we need for life and godliness will help us persevere to the end. Though Peter is probably referring to the 2nd Coming, entering His kingdom is not just something we do when we die (Luke 17:21). It is being a subject of the King today. As we increasingly become more like Him who is the servant of all, we find that rich provision and entrance into His kingdom even now. (Matthew 13:45-46)

I hear from some who are constantly seeing God at work in everything. They rejoice at the little parts the Lord blesses them with, participating in His work in the world. They are overjoyed to get to give of themselves to whatever God calls them to do. It seems they see His hand at nearly every turn. God has richly provided for them an entrance into His eternal kingdom through their spiritual growth.

I'm not saying they are saved through their works. I'm saying they increasingly become subjects of the King and are welcomed into His fellowship *as* they grow spiritually. If you want to experience the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus even now, keep growing. Keep adding to your faith. Make your calling and election sure.

12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. If we have a rich entrance into Jesus' eternal kingdom even now through the increase of these qualities, Peter is going to keep reminding his flock of these qualities. Every godly pastor will remind his flock of the need to be Christ like and grow spiritually. (Galatians 4:19) Even though their congregation has heard it a million times, even though they are students of the Word, a good pastor won't let their congregation forget that it is this process of sanctification that makes us effective and fruitful. Don't get sidetracked with something else.

13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. Peter had a talk with the Lord shortly after his restoration in which the Lord told him that he too would be crucified. (John 21:18-19) I'm not sure if Peter is referring to that, or if he had another revelation. I've heard of some dear brothers having a revelation that they were soon to die and it gave them time to do the last important things they needed to do. I know of one great man of God who got it wrong for whatever reason, and remained an invalid for a few years after what he thought was God's revelation of the time of his death. He remained faithful answering letters from his bed.

In any case, Peter was correct. He only had a short time left, and he knew that this reminder was an urgent message for those living in the Last Days. Keep growing. Don't get apathetic in your faith. Keep increasing in these attributes of Christ.

Commented [notes22]: Luke 17:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed,
²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.'

Commented [notes23]: Matthew 13:45-46 (ESV)

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Commented [notes24]: Galatians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

Commented [notes25]: John 21:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.
¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.)

And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

I know I need to hear it again and again. Satan is so subtle and our flesh can be pretty demanding. I need a fresh look at the cross on a regular basis. (1Corinthians 1:18) That is one purpose of communion. That is why Jesus asked that we do it often. We need to remember the price that was paid as it spurs us onward in love. As long as Peter was still alive and kicking he was determined to keep reminding those in his care to press forward.

Commented [notes26]: 1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. When his mission on earth was done and God called him home through that death that Jesus predicted, he wanted to know that his flock was enduring and remembering to keep growing. He wanted to so drill this into their hearts and minds that long after he was gone, they could easily recall this message he preached.

As I prepared this I asked myself just what have I been driving home to you? What will you remember after I'm gone? I suppose it would be dedication to the Word of God. We teach and preach the Word. (2Timothy 4:2) We draw our conclusions from the Word. This is one of the main sources of the change that takes place in us. (Ephesians 5:26) It is through the study of the Word that we come to know the Lord better. (2Peter 1:19)

Commented [notes27]: 2 Timothy 4:2 (ESV)

² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Commented [notes28]: Ephesians 5:26 (ESV)

²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Commented [notes29]: 2 Peter 1:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

But we can't just have head knowledge. We need to let the Spirit apply it to our lives. We need the intimacy that comes through letting the Spirit speak to us and pouring out our hearts to Him. We need the Spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

Commented [notes30]: John 4:24 (ESV)

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

I would hope that you would also remember that I taught that we should have a living relationship with Jesus. It is through the Word and this living relationship that we increase in these attributes Peter has described, and through them that we are effective and fruitful. Through them we experience a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ even now. Grow up into Christ! (Ephesians 4:15)

Commented [notes31]: Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

I want to conclude each sermon of this series with a benediction from the closing of the letter of Jude. *²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* Jude 1:24-25 (ESV)

Questions

- 1 What has Peter told us we already have?
- 2 Why do we need to be more Christ like?
- 3 What is the promise for those that keep increasing in these qualities?
- 4 How do we become effective and fruitful?
- 5 Why don't some people mature?
- 6 Can we just stay at our current spiritual state?

- 7 What is our calling and election?
- 8 What do we need to keep from falling?
- 9 Who are those who have a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom?
- 10 What things did Peter want his flock to remember?