

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 4: *Our Productive Faith, Part 2
(The Groundwork for Christlike Character)*
Text: 2 Peter 1:5
Date: Sunday, September 16, 2012

*Colonial Hills
ABF
Baptist Church*

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

Feel free to be creative regarding the use of visual aids for your class/table. Pastor Phelps has been using PPT quite effectively in his ABF class, and even those at a round table could use a laptop or tablet if they thought it might be helpful. Some people are more visual learners, so even just seeing the outline (with the blanks filled in) and some of the explanations would be helpful to them.

I also recognize that I've been pretty weak with illustrations in these lessons—I've always struggled with using good illustration. I will work on incorporating these more, in order to clarify and drive home truth. In the meantime, please feel free to come up with and include your own.

The Daily Online Bible Study on the Single Focus website (<http://bit.ly/QJQBoB>) may be a beneficial resource for those in your class or at your table. I've been taking the full lesson notes and using them as daily devotionals following the Sunday morning study each week. This page continues to be the most-visited on the website (roughly 30-40 views a day), and one user commented that it helps in "reinforcing the previous lesson and [preparing for] the upcoming lesson."



LESSON PLAN

We're going to take three weeks over Part 2 of "Our Productive Faith," totalling a four-week study altogether over 2 Peter 1:5-11. We could also have easily taken two weeks over Part 1, as was evidenced by the length of last week's lesson. 2 Peter 1:5-11 is a crucial paragraph to understanding Peter's whole epistle and its contrast of true faith versus false teaching, for in it he reveals the

fruition of true faith which stands in blatant and opposed contrast to the doctrine and ethics of false teaching. Therefore, to take a couple extra weeks on this portion is not tedious or superfluous, and we will still finish the 2 Peter series well before the end of the year.

Much of the material for the next three lessons is taken from Jim Berg's, *Essential Virtues: Marks of the Christ-Centered Life*, a study of the list of virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-7. This is a wonderful book that I would heartily recommend. I had the privilege of serving on Dr. Berg's staff as he was writing this book, and I was able to hear much of this material in the process. I believe that Dr. Berg both helpfully outlines and explains these virtues, providing convicting application along the way. Throughout these lessons, when I have a quotation without a citation, please know that I am referencing this book. Finally, in addition to Dr. Berg's book, for further study, I would also refer you to Michael Green's commentary on 2 Peter in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* series.



NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 1:5-11 – *Our Productive Faith, Part 2 (The Backbone of Christlike Character)*

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: In his book, *Essential Virtues*, Jim Berg begins his studies of the qualities listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7 with a farming illustration.¹ Having grown up on a farm, he imagines that in his adulthood, he came into possession of a fully functioning farm, equal in size, equipment, and buildings to the one he grew up on. Imagining that his boyhood dream was to farm, he asks what he would do in that situation. For a kid who grew up on a farm and who had his dream come true, that's a no-brainer! He asserts that he would immediately begin to explore the farm, examining the buildings, testing the machinery and tools, surveying the acreage, checking the fences and wells, sampling the soil, etc. Says Berg, "I would find out all I could about what I have to work with....I would *explore the farm.*"

¹ Berg, 13-14.

However, he adds, "to be truly productive, I must also *work the farm*....I just get up early every day, get into the fields, tend the livestock, fix fences, pull calves, bale hay, harvest wheat, repair machinery, and buy and sell stock." Yes, true farmers must both explore and work their farms.

Likewise, true faith both explores its wealth and works its wealth—it both recognizes what it has and operates that. As in the physical world, God has ordained within spiritual growth the needs for cooperative effort. "While God is the only one that can make corn and wheat grow and the only One who can turn a calf into a healthy side of beef, He has so set up the world that I must do something with what He has provided—all the while depending upon Him to give me what I need to do what He asks me to do."

In our text, we spent lesson 2 "exploring the farm" in verses 1-4—examining all that God had given us in our faith, all "the provisions He has made available to us to work the farm." Now, in verses 5-11, we are told that we must "work the farm"—to give diligent effort to practically maintain and bring to fruition what He has given to us.

Before we actually begin to "work the farm" and cultivate Christlike character in our faith, let's actually consider the list at hand in verses 5-7. A few observations should be noted:

- According to this passage, these qualities must be tied to the "great and precious promises" of God that we read about in verse 4. Berg writes, "[God's promises] work hand in glove with His commands. For example, in this passage before us we will hear God command us to cultivate in our saving faith 'virtue.'...Are there any promises of God to motivate and sustain us in that pursuit? There certainly are! Jesus Himself told us in Luke 9:23-24, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.' [cf. John 12:24-26]." Berg then shows how the same is true of God's command to "add knowledge" for applicable promises are discovered in Jeremiah 29:13; Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalm

119:11, 105, 130. Therefore, “in order to be able to obey His commands [vv. 5-7], we must believe His promises [vv. 1-4].”² Indeed, the righteous one must live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

- These qualities must be developed both simultaneously and sequentially.³ The inspired grammar of this passage makes it clear “that none of the traits can reach maturity unless the previous supporting traits are maturing well.” Berg refers to a baby developing in the womb to illustrate this point. “Even though all the parts are developing at a certain rate all the time, there is a noticeable developmental sequence as well”—first the head and brain, then the heart, etc. Likewise in this passage, “each trait supports the development of the next in the sequence, yet none can be ignored until the previous ones are developed since all are commanded elsewhere in Scripture.”
- Each quality in this verse is headed by a definite article (“the”). This ensures that we do “not get the common understanding of these words confused with the more specific and intense Christian meaning.”⁴ As we study each quality, we’ll consider these meanings. This is important, because “the great difference between Stoic and Christian ethics is that the latter are not the unaided product of human effort, but the fruit of our being partakers of the divine nature. Nevertheless, human effort is indispensable, even though it is inadequate.”⁵
- That last point is further highlighted by the reminder that that these qualities are introduced by an active imperative—“add” (“supplement” in ESV, “supply” in NASB). “[This] word *epichorēgō*, *add*, is a fascinating one. It is a vivid metaphor drawn from the Athenian drama

festivals, in which a rich individual, called the *chorēgos*, since he paid the expenses of the chorus, joined with the poet and the state in putting on the plays. This could be an expensive business, and yet *chorēgi* vied with one another in the generosity of their equipment and training of the choruses. Thus the word came to mean generous and costly cooperation. The Christian must engage in this sort of cooperation with God in the production of a Christian life which is a credit to Him.”⁶ Echoes Berg, “In the same manner, Peter is teaching us that we are to supply (through the provisions God has granted us in verses 1-4) or set the stage through proper responses for God to do His work of producing these characteristics of Christ in us....[we must] earnestly and wholeheartedly cultivate the conditions whereby God can and will work out these qualities in our lives.”⁷ Indeed, “The grace of God demands, as it enables, *effort* in man.”⁸

- These qualities summarize full-grown maturity in Christ. “It is a character that is honored much by Christ [cf. v. 11] because it is so much like Him. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones observes, ‘It is a perfect list; you cannot add to it. He deals with the whole of the Christian life.’”⁹
- Thus, these qualities (vv. 1-4) in cooperation with the foundation of verses 1-4 are “the only antidote to the sensual, lawless appeals of the world and to the libertine false teachings around them” in chapter 2 (cf. 1:8-11).

With these observations in mind, we’re going to take the next three lessons to consider practically how to “work the farm”—how to cultivate in our faith the Christlike character God has designed it to display (cf. Ephesians 2:10). We’ll do this via the outline provided in the chart on the final page of this lesson.

² Ibid., 18-20.

³ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁵ Michael Green, vol. 18, 2 *Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 86.

⁶ Ibid..

⁷ Berg, 22.

⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁹ Berg, 2.

THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 5)

Peter lists three virtues that constitute the groundwork for Christlike character.

1. Faith

We don't need to take very much time with this term, since we already studied it in lesson 2—"Our Precious Faith." This is the quality that gets the ball rolling for all the rest. Without saving (and, therefore, living) faith, there will be no excellence, knowledge, self-control, etc. Cf. Romans 5:1-5

*It has already been argued that "faith" in 1:1 refers to personal faith or trust. The same is likely here. Trusting God is the root from which all the other virtues spring. Those who rely on God and his promises begin to live a new way. Peter's theology here is in accord with Paul's, who said that faith expresses itself in love (Gal 5:6). All the godly virtues in the Christian life find their source in faith, in trusting God for everything, and the culmination and climax of such faith is love.*¹⁰

Application: One again, we should pause "to make your calling and election sure" (v. 10). If you are constantly "falling" short (v. 10) in your Christian maturity, it may be that there's no spiritual life to mature. At best, the lack of spiritual production produces a kind of spiritual blindness or forgetfulness and lack of assurance (v. 9); at worst, it demonstrates the self-deception of the individual, who is a professor only, without any actual possession of the "divine nature" (v. 4). A constant frustration with spiritual failure, an ongoing apathy with regards to Christ's character, a habitual neglect of cultivating a relationship with Jesus—all these are symptoms and warning lights, indicating that something is wrong with our faith. Is it absent or unattended?

¹⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 37, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 298-99.

2. Excellence

We're going to translate this Greek word (*arete*) as "excellence," since in our modern usage we would consider all the qualities of verses 5-7 to be "virtues." And, instead of tracing the development of this term in Greco-Roman and then New Testament usage,¹¹ we're going to allow Michael Green to provide us with a wonderful understanding of this term.

*It means 'excellence', and was used to denote the proper fulfilment of anything. The excellence of a knife is to cut, of a horse to run.*¹²

This definition is obvious in Philippians 4:8 in which we are told to think upon those things in which there is "virtue." Building on this definition, Berg explains that "a warrior could be considered excellent [Gk. *arete*] only if he was brave and courageous in battle....A fishing boat was considered excellent only if it floated."¹³

¹¹ The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* provides us with a helpful timeline of the development of this concept in Greco-Roman thinking, which laid the foundation for how Peter and Paul uses it (Vol. 1. Ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-], 458-60):

It might be rendered a. "eminence" ... It can refer to excellence of achievement, to mastery in a specific field, on the one side, or to endowment with higher power on the other, or often to both together.... Already in the time of Homer it is used to denote one particular human achievement, namely, b. "manliness" or martial valour. In relation to the goal which it serves, this often comes to denote c. "merit".... At the time of the Sophists the intellectual aspect of the term on the one side, and the ethical, dating from Socrates and Plato, on the other, achieve a prominence unknown in ancient Greece.... ἀρετή becomes a leading tool in the language of Greek moral philosophy in the sense of d. "virtue."... ἀρετή approximates to δικαιοσύνη [dikaioσύνη or "righteousness"], which elsewhere is logically subordinate to it as one of the four cardinal virtues. Indeed, the two words become almost equivalents.... Later the ἀρετή of a god often came to signify in particular e. his "self-declaration" as such. ἀρετή thus came to be linked with δύναμις [dunamis or "power"], as a more comprehensive synonym, in relation to powerful divine operation.... ἀρετή also means fortune, success (Hom. Od., 13, 45), a good worth seeking, especially in the sense of special prominence among men, i.e., f. "fame." It thus comes to be synonymous with δόξα [doxa or "glory"].

For a world in which man constantly saw himself morally responsible before a holy God the Greek concept of virtue could not finally fulfil its apparent promise. Though not irreligious, it was far too anthropocentric and this-worldly in orientation. What both the OT and NT attest is not human achievements or merits but the acts of God.

¹² Green, 87.

¹³ Berg, 28.

So, we recognize now why “Peter would set this virtue first in his list. None of the other qualities will be used for the right purpose until we decide what our purpose is and commit our lives to it. What then is the ultimate purpose for the believer?”

Peter hints strongly at the answer. For he has already used this word in verse 3, when speaking of the impact of Christ’s character on a man which leads him to commitment....In a word, his life must reflect something of the attractive character of Christ. For He was the Man par excellence, the proper Man. True human excellence, then, is...Christlikeness.¹⁴

Peter uses the word another time in his epistles and clearly defines what is our purpose in life that we must conform to in order to manifest this “excellence” (Gk. *arete*). In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter writes, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies [Gk. *arete*] of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (NASB).

Here Peter is telling us that God has arete—something that should not surprise us since what makes Him God is that He is excellent in all things that make a being worthy of being God. But since this verse is a purpose statement for the believer, we find also what makes us excellent.¹⁵

Indeed, Green had it right: “True human excellence, then, is...Christlikeness.” Or, to quote Berg again,

We have one major purpose on this earth then. We are to become like Christ in our character and then by our manner of life to show others what Christ is like so that they will honor Him too. Cf. Matthew 5:16; Romans 12:1-2¹⁶

Therefore, put simply, “excellence” is “capturing the heart for Christ,” or “cultivating a God-mandated purpose to develop and display the excellencies [character] of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Consider that this is “*normal* Christianity when measured by Bible standards [cf. Matthew 7:24-27].”

Illustration: In her book, *The Death of the Grown-up*, Diana West, a syndicated columnist for the Washington Times, laments the cultural phenomenon prophecied in 2 Timothy 3:1, 4—that “in the last days...men shall be...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (cf. also 2 Timothy 4:3-4). She writes,

Once there was a world without teenagers. Literally. “Teenager,” the word itself, doesn’t pop into the lexicon much before 1941. This speaks volumes about the last few millennia. In all those centuries, nobody thought to mention “teenagers” because there was nothing, apparently, to think of mentioning.

In considering what I like to call “the death of the grown-up,” it’s important to keep a fix on this fact: that for all but this most recent episode of human history, there were children and there were adults. Children in their teen years aspired to adulthood; significantly, they didn’t aspire to adolescence. Certainly, adults didn’t aspire to remain teenagers.

A lot of things have changed. For one thing, turning thirteen [nowadays], instead of bringing children closer to the adult world, now launches them into a teen universe. For another, due to the permanent hold our culture has placed on the maturation process, that’s where they’re likely to find most adults.

The National Academy of Sciences has, in 2002, redefined adolescence as the period extending from the onset of puberty, around twelve, to thirty....These are grown-ups who haven’t left childhood.

¹⁴ Green, 87.


¹⁵ Berg, 29.

¹⁶ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁷ Ibid., 38, 30.

What has also disappeared is an appreciation for what goes along with maturity: forbearance and honor, patience and responsibility, perspective and wisdom, sobriety, decorum, and manners—and the wisdom to know what is “appropriate,” and when.

Etched into our consciousness, in the universal shorthand of Hollywood and Madison Avenue, is the notion that life is either wild or boring; cool or uncool; unzipped or straitlaced; at least secretly licentious or just plain.¹⁸

 **Application:** Consider and discuss some thought-provoking quotes by Dr. Berg.


*There will be no significant maturing in the Christian experience until a believer comes to the realization that because of Christ’s work on the cross on his behalf, he belongs entirely to God to be used entirely for God’s purpose. He must, furthermore, agree with that understanding and commit himself to living that way for the glory of God. This is where many contemporary believers stall. (pp. 30-31) → (1) What strikes you about that statement? (2) Where is your life at in regards to the “agreement” spoken of? *Open discussion.**

Through [the testimony of some godly saint, young or old, a Scripture text from a sermon, or the obvious biblical wisdom of some statement] the Spirit of God will capture the heart of the tender believer who is truly seeking something more than the morass of his lukewarmness [which is tragic and dangerous according to Revelation 3:15-19] and the guilt-induced stupor, which have dominated his own life and the lives of most believers around him. (p. 31) → (1) Can you share testimony of being captured by the Holy Spirit in regards to this kind of “excellent” purpose-filled living? Perhaps this lesson is it.

(2) Can you share testimony of “lukewarmness” and “stupor”? Will you “wake up”? *Open discussion.*

*The other interesting principle taught from Romans 12:1-2 is that Paul sets worldliness in direct opposition to the wholehearted dedication God is calling us to. While Christ is calling us to a single-minded resolve to be like Him, Satan has set up the world to entice us away from that resolve. (p. 33) → (1) What is worldliness, and how does it pull up away from Christ? (2) Contrast these two pulls from John 10:10 and 1 John 2:15-17. *Open discussion.**

*Can you also see why a wholehearted, single-minded resolve to become like Jesus Christ [i.e., “excellence”] is the only remedy? Most believers try to deal with worldly influences piecemeal—fighting this or that temptation and arguing about this or that worldly element—and in the process lose the battle in their own souls. There is no standard to measure the influence of these elements unless one has determined to live an entirely Christ-centered life in the first place. (p. 37) → (1) Explain what Dr. Berg is saying in your own words. (2) Does your own personal and corporate Christian experiences support this statement? (3) Do we see biblical authors express this resolve (cf. Psalm 27:4; Philippians 3:13)? (4) Have you made a “wholehearted, single-minded resolve to become like Jesus Christ”? *Open discussion.**

 Furthermore, discuss what promises will compel us to “add to our faith” this commitment to developing Christlike character? *Open discussion, but the answer is everything that “God has promised...to those who will make Jesus Christ central in all things” in verses 1-4. Cf. James 4:8-9*

In this virtue, we are allowing God’s Spirit to “capture our heart for Christ”—we are donning the mindset that turns away from the allurements of the world and of our own sinful heart to cultivate the essential virtues Peter is going to lay out for us. So, “the most fundamental question before you is

¹⁸ Diana West, *The Death of the Grown-up: How America’s Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 1, 4, 5, quoted in Berg, 35-36.

‘Who has your heart?’” “This is where we must all start, and where we must all return, every time we go back to pursuing our own way rather than the ways of Christ.”

Perhaps we need the challenge that stirred Dr. Berg in his own pursuit of glorifying God through cultivating Christlikeness—“You are not ready to live until you know what you want written on the tombstone.” Consider writing your own personal purpose statement or use the one below to help you “add to your faith, excellence” each day:

*Because of what He did in my place on the cross,
what He has said to me in His Word, and
what He will require of me at the judgment,
I must live all my life under the lordship of
Jesus Christ today.*¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., 39.

3. Knowledge

“Virtue, or *capturing the heart for Christ*, leads naturally to knowledge, or *informing the heart about Christ*.” In light of 2 Peter 1:2, 3; 2:20; 3:18, most commentators agree that Peter has in mind here the specific knowledge of Jesus Christ. So, even though Peter is undoubtedly writing against, in part, the error of an early form of Gnosticism, he finds nothing wrong with knowledge. Indeed, “the cure for false knowledge is not less knowledge, but more.”²⁰ The key lies in what should be known and how it affects us.²¹

To flesh this out, consider the following explanation:

*[Peter] means information about Jesus Christ and what pleases him. It is the kind of knowledge that comes from reading, thinking, and discussing as a Christian. If we want to grow in Christ-like goodness we shall have a hunger and a desire to grow in our knowledge of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:17; Phil. 1:9; Heb. 5:14). The nineteenth century Scottish preacher John Brown, whose commentary covers only this chapter [2 Peter 1], said that this knowledge means, “making a distinction not only between what is true and what is false but also between what is right and wrong—what is becoming and unbecoming—what is advantageous and hurtful.”*²²

This knowledge, then, could be defined as a “God-taught understanding of the person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ.” Indeed, Jesus Himself is called “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24; cf. Colossians 2:3), and He gives wisdom

²⁰ Green, 88.

²¹ “Knowledge, including knowledge of Scripture, that is not turned into practical action, that does not produce the character of God/Jesus in one’s life, is worse than useless, for it can blind one to his or her true sorry state” (Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006], 180). Cf. 2 Peter 1:8-11

²² John Brown, *Parting Counsels: An Exposition of 2 Peter 1* (pp. 75–76) quoted in Christopher Green and Dick Lucas, *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 59, quote in Berg, 42.

through the knowledge of Himself to those who listen to and obey His words (cf. Matthew 7:24-27).

According to Matthew 7:24-27, the one who will add “knowledge” to his Christ-centered commitment must both “hear” and “do” Jesus’ words. Regarding hearing, “Proverbs 2 outlines the kind of purposeful and diligent attention that must be given to the words of God if one is to become wise. This is no casual take-it-or-leave-it or I’ll-read-my-Bible-if-I-have-time attitude. The disciple who wishes to become wise—Christlike—makes the reading, memorization, meditation, and study of the Word a consistent part of his life.”²³

It is the lack of cultivating this virtue (i.e., the knowledge that comes through hearing) that causes many “camp decisions” to flounder and be short-lived. Without adding to those decisions of “excellence” and commitment the ongoing knowledge of “the person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ,” the decisions run out of fuel.²⁴

Secondly, adding “knowledge” to “excellence” requires “doing” Jesus’ words according to Matthew 7:24-27. This is echoed by James in James 1:22-25 and will be the focus on the next two lessons.

In the meantime, it should be enough at this point to recognize that this kind of “knowledge” is more wholistic than simply getting some more facts, regurgitating some information, doing a little bit of reading here and there, etc. This kind of “knowledge” speaks of a Christ-centered worldview that “views everything in the world through the lens of God’s person, purposes, and plans, as revealed

through the person of Jesus Christ.”²⁵ Thus, it recognizes the divine priority of the eternal over the temporal, therefore bringing understanding, meaning, and significance to the temporal. Berg explains:

The kind of Christ-centered worldview we are talking about is far more than WWJD (i.e., “What would Jesus do?”). It is rather, what is Jesus Christ like? What has He done? What has He said? What is He doing in the earth today? What role does He wish me to play? What kind of person does He wish me to become? How does He wish me to view temporal things? How does He wish me to view eternal things? And what will really matter in the end when I stand before Him as my Judge?²⁶

Therefore, like a GPS, “knowledge” helps you navigate your way through and determine your position in your cultivation of Christlike character.

Application: To determine how Christ-centered your worldview is—how “knowledgeable” or wise you are—ask yourself these questions:

- “When I suffer (i.e., physical pain or relational hurt from betrayal, persecution, or loneliness), which seems more real to me—my temporal pain or the eternal God and His purposes and plans for me?” Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
- “When I face a decision [including how to respond to a test or temptation], does the temporal object or situation seem more real to me than the eternal God and His purposes and plans for me?”

Illustration: “God-fearing pastors imprisoned in Russian gulags before perestroika did not experience restless agitation though they were restricted in many inhumane ways. They longed to be with their families and to be worshipping with

²³ Berg, 43.

²⁴ Wisdom is the possession of the one who wants to know Christ because he wants to be like Christ. In other words, he cultivates knowledge because he is cultivating the pursuit of the excellence of Christlikeness. This is important because God will not reveal knowledge about Himself with illuminated understanding to a person who is not intending to use that knowledge of Christ to become like Christ. Notice what Solomon says, “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the [upright]. (Proverbs 2:6–7; see also Psalm 25:12)” (Ibid., 49).

²⁵ Ibid., 45.

²⁶ Ibid.

their believing comrades, but they were not frustrated with life nor experiencing the profound emptiness of the average Christian today. Their lives in prison testified that God has indeed provided ‘all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge’ of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3). Since their lives were continually connected to the external reference point of the eternal God, they were stable and joyful. The ‘imprisoned’ feelings of the normal believer today are the result of the emptiness within him caused by his own obsession with the temporal. His emptiness is not the result of the structures, environment, and people around him. He has turned away from Jesus Christ and has sought satisfaction elsewhere (Jeremiah 2:13).”²⁷

Application: “Wisdom is, therefore, ‘fellowship-knowledge.’ It is the product of the interaction between a God-seeking man and his Savior through the Word of God. A. W. Tozer put it this way:

For millions of Christians...God is no more real than He is to the non-Christian. They go through life trying to love an ideal and be loyal to a mere principle....A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestations....

If we cooperate with Him in loving obedience, God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian and a life radiant with the light of His face.”²⁸



What are the practical applications that need to be made from this point? (1) *We must daily spend time with Christ in His Word—1 Peter 2:2; Colossians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:15-4:6; Hebrews 5:12-14;* (2) *We must be sure to respond consistently and effectively to the preaching of God’s Word;* (3) *We must be sure to apply a Christ-centered perspective to issues and decisions;* (4) *etc.*

CONCLUSION

Having been gifted by God with a lavish and abundantly supplied faith, let us “work the farm” and cultivate the conditions within which God can produce the image of His Son in our character.

²⁷ Ibid., 50.

²⁸ Ibid., 50-51.

ESSENTIAL VIRTUES

| Loving God with My Whole Heart | Loving Neighbors as Myself |
|--|---|
| <p>THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 5)</p> <p>Saving FAITH</p> <p>Being a “partaker of the divine nature” through the righteousness of Jesus Christ</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Pursuing the EXCELLENCE of Christlikeness</p> <p>Cultivating a God-mandated purpose to develop and display the excellencies (character) of Jesus Christ</p> <p>↓</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-taught understanding of the person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ</p> | <p>THE TRADEMARK OF CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 7)</p> <p>BROTHERLY KINDNESS</p> <p>Cultivating a God-engendered affection for and service to those in the “household of faith”</p> <p>↓</p> <p>LOVE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-imitating mindset that scripturally and sacrificially meets the spiritual needs of others</p> |
| <p>SELF-CONTROL</p> <p>Cultivating a God-empowered mastery of my internal desires</p> <p>↓</p> <p>ENDURANCE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-sustained faithfulness under external pressure</p> <p>↓</p> <p>GODLINESS</p> <p>Cultivating a God-honoring devotion to Jesus Christ that promotes righteousness and opposes evil</p> | <p>COMPASSION like Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a tender-hearted disciple-maker who seeks the lost and who by his example and effort disciplines others to live a Christ-centered life.</p> |
| <p>COMMITMENT to Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a whole-hearted disciple who chooses the appeals and ideals of Christ and rejects the appeals and ideals of the world.</p> | <p>COURAGE for Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a brave-hearted disciple who advances Christ and His ways and opposes evil in himself and others regardless of risk to himself.</p> |

ESSENTIAL VIRTUES

CORE VALUES