

Peter's Last Instructions: Know and Grow in Christ; 2 Peter 1:1-11

Instructions; we all love them don't we. I mean who doesn't like to be told what to do. And yet, we know that without instructions we often end up making a mess of things. But it is not enough to just have instructions, we also need to be able to understand the instructions and directions. Try to put together a piece of furniture, or set up some technological device without clear and good instructions and you can end up frustrated and have things that do not function correctly. There are times when we can have good directions or instructions and still misunderstand them. I came across a story of "A family that left on vacation and were driving to Disneyland. Three days later they returned home. Their curious neighbors immediately questioned them, "We thought you went to Disneyland. Why have you returned so soon?" The weary travelers sadly reported, "As we approached Disneyland, we saw a sign that said: 'DISNEYLAND LEFT.' We were not sure where it had gone, but figured it was time to come home."¹

In Peter's last recorded instructions, we see him encouraging Christians to know and grow in Christ as they mature in their Christian faith. Christian maturity is a vital and important emphasis to God and is expressed in numerous biblical passages. Peter is writing his second letter near the end of his life. He knows that he is going to be executed for his faith. In 2 Peter 1:13-15 he writes that "it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made

¹ Michael Hodgin, [*1001 More Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 104-105.

clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” Though he does not tell us specifically the recipients of the letter it is most likely the same churches in Turkey to whom he wrote in 1st Peter. Even though this letter was written sometime in the 60’s AD under a time of great persecution by the Romans exerted on Christians, the passage like all of God’s Word speaks to important issues we encounter in our lives.

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: ² Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.²

² [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 2 Pe 1.

Commentator Jim Samra says that “Second Peter 1:1–11 is one of the great scriptural passages on the process of spiritual growth because it contains the goal of the process (becoming like God through our relationship with him), the steps to achieving this goal (making every effort to add the seven virtues), and the reasons to diligently pursue spiritual growth (assurance of salvation here and a rich welcome in heaven).”³

1. Know and Grow in the abundant peace and grace of Jesus

Simon Kistemaker writes that “Throughout this epistle Peter urges the readers to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (refer to v. 8; 2:20; 3:18). This is Peter’s main concern in writing his epistle. He urges his readers to increase their personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior. He begins his epistle with a prayerful wish for grace and peace through knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. He concludes his letter with an exhortation to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18).”⁴ The knowledge that he is speaking about is a deep personal intimate relationship with Jesus. The source of this relationship is God’s grace demonstrated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result of this grace we experience peace with God and an inner peace, which Jesus teaches us is a lasting peace

³ Jim Samra, [James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 205.

⁴ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#), vol. 16, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 244.

that cannot be shaken when we remain and grow in our relationship with Jesus.

2. Know and Grow in the abundant power of Jesus

God's grace and peace does not leave us at our own resources to grow and mature. He also provides abundant power. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:18-20. "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." Peter says that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Bruce Barton writes that "Not only do believers have grace and peace in the knowledge of God (1:2), but they also receive that divine power to live for God *through the knowledge of his Son, Jesus Christ*. An intimate knowledge of Christ gives believers power for life and growth."⁵ Max Anders says "The more we come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way, the more we begin to understand who he really is and what he has done for us. As we grow in this kind of understanding, we begin to appreciate his divine power that assists us in growing spiritually."⁶

3. Know and Grow in the abundant promises of Jesus

There are many promises of Jesus in the Bible. He promises peace. He promises forgiveness and cleansing of sin. He promises reconciliation

⁵ Bruce B. Barton, [1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1995), 161.

⁶ David Walls and Max Anders, [I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude](#), vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 109.

with God. He promises his presence and power within us. He promises wisdom. He promises victory over sin and death. He promises to resurrect and transform our bodies. He promises us eternal life. He promises his Second Coming. In this passage, the promises of Jesus include being partakers in the divine nature and escaping the corruption of the world and evil desires.

Jim Samra says that “In shockingly strong language, Peter says that believers are able to partake of or participate in God’s divine nature. This doesn’t mean that believers somehow become God. It means that believers’ natures are transformed so that we are like God. This is the essence of the process of growth for Peter. Every promise that believers have been given is for the purpose of causing us to escape from the corruption of this world and make us like God.”⁷ Now it is important for us to understand what Peter is saying and what he is not saying. Peter is not saying that we become gods or that we become divine. We will always be creatures and only the triune God is divine.

As Simon Kistemaker notes Peter “says that we participate in God’s nature, not in God’s being. He has chosen the term *nature* because it indicates growth, development, and character. The expression *being*, by contrast, points to essence and substance. We can never participate in God’s essence, for we are and remain human beings who have been created by God. What Peter discloses is that we share God’s holiness, which we experience through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our

⁷ Jim Samra, [James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 203.

hearts (see 1 Cor. 6:19).”⁸ Daniel Akin writes that “Peter wasn’t suggesting that Christians will actually become gods, be absorbed into deity, or even share in the divine nature in every way. He was simply saying they will be morally perfected by sharing in God’s moral excellence. He’s speaking of that real union with Christ Jesus that begins at conversion (cf. John 1:12; Rom 8:9; Gal 2:20) but won’t ultimately be realized until he comes again. The apostle John articulated this “now but not yet” understanding well when he said, “Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).”⁹ Through the transforming power of the indwelling Holy Spirit we move closer to God reflecting more of his character, and further away from the corruption and evil ways of the world.

4. Know and Grow in abundant faithful living for Jesus

As Christians we need to take our spiritual growth and maturity seriously. We see in this passage a balance between what God does and what we are called to do because of what God has done in our lives. We are to make every effort to have certain virtues characterize and grow in our lives. It all starts with personal faith, trust, and commitment to Jesus.

One of my former seminary professors writes that “Verses 8–11 teach the practical consequences of Christian growth. The first is stated in verse 8: “These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance

⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, [*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*](#), vol. 16, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 248.

⁹ James Shaddix and Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in 2 Peter, Jude*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), 2 Pe 1:4.

they will make you active and effective” in the knowledge of Christ. The absence of these makes a man blind to heavenly things, so shortsighted that his vision extends only to that which is earthly (v. 9). Second, by cultivating these virtues we receive confirmation and assurance of our “calling and election” (v. 10). That is, we have evidence that we are really among those whom God has called and chosen to be his own. Finally, the practice of these virtues brings a rich heavenly reward (v. 11).¹⁰

Peter writes that we are to make every effort to add goodness to our faith. Kistemaker says that “Of the seven virtues that are directly related to faith, Peter mentions goodness first. It relates to one of God’s characteristics (see v. 3). Because it is a divine attribute, we ought to reflect this virtue in our lives. Our daily conduct should be a demonstration of moral excellence. Faith and excellence support one another.”¹¹

We need to make every effort to add knowledge to our faith. God created us with minds and we need to use them. We need to have insight and discernment in the circumstances and events that we face. We need to use our common sense in the things we say, do, and think. We need wisdom and discernment to live our lives the way God desires.

We need to make every effort to add self-control to our faith. We need to control our passions and not be controlled by them. Even though

¹⁰ Curtis Vaughan, “[2 Peter](#),” in *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary*, ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972), 792.

¹¹ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#), vol. 16, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 251.

we are weakened by our sinful nature we can exercise self-control over our passions through as we submit to the control of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Galatians 5:22-23 says that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

We need to make every effort to add perseverance to our faith. Michael Green describes this quality as “the temper of mind which is unmoved by difficulty and distress, and which can withstand the opposition from the world without an enticement from the flesh within.”¹² Perseverance means “to remain under” a particular conflict. It is defined as the characteristic of a person who is not swerved or deterred from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and godliness by even the greatest trials and sufferings.

We need to make every effort to add godliness to our faith. Daniel Akin says this is “the piety and devotion to God that is manifested in both right feeling and right behavior toward him. Believers should demonstrate appropriate respect and reverence toward their God, a posture that should then be expressed in relationships he has sanctioned as reflected in the two remaining qualities in verse 7” of brotherly kindness and love.¹³ We practice godliness when we are completely conscious of God’s presence in each situation.

We need to make every effort to add brotherly kindness to our faith. We need to love each other from the heart. God cares about our

¹² James Shaddix and Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in 2 Peter, Jude*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), 2 Pe 1:5–7.

¹³ James Shaddix and Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in 2 Peter, Jude*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), 2 Pe 1:5–7.

relationships with each other. We need to make every effort to add love to our faith. This is a deep, committed sacrificial love. It is a love that will demonstrate itself in sacrificial acts towards others.

Peter says that the result of knowing and growing in the Lord is productive and effective Christian living. The result of not growing is spiritual blindness and ineffective Christian living. I want to close with the words of Bruce Barton. He says that “Our faith must go beyond what we believe; it must become a dynamic part of all we do, resulting in good fruit and spiritual maturity. Salvation does not depend on positive character qualities and good works; rather, it produces those qualities and works. A person who claims to be saved while remaining unchanged does not understand faith or what God has done for him or her. Faith in and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to growth in these qualities causes believers to make a difference in their world and persevere to the end.”¹⁴

Peter’s challenge to us is for spiritual maturity in our Christian faith. We are called to know and to grow in Christ. This can happen as we gather for worship, as we pray, as we study God’s Word and apply it to our lives, as we serve God and one another through the gifts and talents he has given us. And most importantly, it happens as we submit to the power and control of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

¹⁴ Bruce B. Barton, [1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1995), 168.