



SERMON QUESTIONS

2 Peter 1: 5-8 | January 22, 2017

GATHERING

1. Name two things that you think come naturally to you, that you did well with almost no training.
 2. Name two things that you are very good at right now. Are they the same two things you mentioned in the last question or did you train yourself to be good at something that was not natural to you?
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LOOKING AT THE TEXT

Peter opens his letter with the encouragement that we can know Christ and this relationship can change our lives. In particular, he says that we can live a godly, God-centered life. We can participate in God's divine nature and escape the forces of death in the world (corruption) caused by evil or misplaced desires. This is why he opens the letter with a blessing of grace and peace in abundance. **It is a great promise, but how do we enter into this?**

Peter uses a first century rhetorical technique that might be called a "ladder of virtue." It was pretty common in his day for ethicists to describe the good life as an accumulation of virtues, one following the other. The first virtue and the last were most important and the order of the ones in the middle was not as crucial. One did not always grow a life in the exact order listed. With this in mind, we look at the words of Peter.

There seems to be some logic as to the order, but we do not want to press it too far. The overall point is that we must cooperate with God in what he is doing in us. Spiritual growth is not automatic and it is not instantaneous. ***It is a process of learning to walk like Jesus as the Holy Spirit convicts and guides us.***

1. Certainly the Christian life starts with faith. This is the precious faith mentioned in verse 1 which rests in the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus. Our faith is in what God has done for us in Jesus who is our sacrifice for sin and the

giver of new life. **When were you first conscious of having faith in Jesus Christ? Did it happen in an instant or was it a long process?**

2. Peter says “add to your faith, goodness...” This is a very generic word both in English and in the original language. It was not used too often in the Bible but was common in Greco-Roman philosophy. “Good” represented something’s purpose perfectly fulfilled. So, a good knife cut well and a good horse ran beautifully. **But what was the good of humanity? What is a person for and what is living well?** Peter picks up this word to say “this is what you were mean for: to do good by the power of God’s Spirit.” He uses this generic word because our godliness should be evident to the watching world.
What have you discovered about the good that God has called you to do?
3. We are to add to our goodness, knowledge. Obviously while we seek to be good we must ultimately learn what good is from looking at Jesus. This word knowledge is not relational but informational. It comes from learning more about the faith from scripture and other believers. **What are the things that Christians and our larger culture agree on when it comes to what is good? Where do we differ?**
4. After knowledge comes self-control. This was prized among the Romans but for Christians self-control is really responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the ways we participate in the divine nature. **Can you think of a time when you knew you had to take a step of obedience despite what you felt?** This is how self-control works and we will never experience the fullness of life in Christ if we are not willing to obey simply out of love for God.
5. The last one we look at this week is perseverance. Simply put it is the willingness to continue to do good, to learn and to obey. While we cannot be dogmatic about Peter’s order we can see that doing visible good, as informed by knowledge of what it means to follow Christ and exercising Holy Spirit fused self-control are part of healthy godliness. Perseverance is committing to the life time process of spiritual growth. **What is God calling you to persevere in right now in your life?**

FURTHER APPLICATION.

Notice how these different virtues balance one another. Some traits, like doing good, are easier for some personality types, while other traits, like acquiring knowledge or perseverance come naturally to others. In this section, Peter is telling us that spiritual growth is a process that we participate in. Some aspects are easier than others but all must be cultivated if we are to experience abundant grace and peace.

