

Being Useful
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2 Peter 1:1-11

Have you ever been involved in building or renovating a building or a home? **Did you enjoy or just endure the process (or both?) What was worst part? What was FUN about it?** Though construction and renovation can be a pain, I've always enjoyed the excitement of watching the process as something new comes together.

We all know there are some important rules to a successful building project:

- A building is only as strong as its foundation and its structure.
- You must use the correct materials and you SHOULD use the best quality.
- To build a beautiful and structurally sound building, you need a blueprint that's been designed by a gifted architect.

Big idea: Peter begins his second letter to Christians with instructions on how to build a life in Christ. It's a life that imitates Jesus as He allows us to tap into His divine nature. This lesson is Peter's "Blueprint for Building a Life in Christ."

2 Peter 1:1–11 (NLT)

Greetings from Peter

This letter is from Simon* Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness* of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

- Peter identifies himself as having the high calling of an apostle ('one who is sent out') of Christ and the low status as a slave to Christ.
- He says he and we have the exact same precious faith. Peter may be an apostle chosen by Christ, but because Jesus is righteous and merciful He gave you and me the same faith. My life in Christ is built with the same materials (faith) as the Apostle Peter's life in Christ. What a thought!
- We said a building is only as sound as its foundation. We put all the weight of us, and our stuff, on the foundation of our house every day.
- Our faith in Christ is the foundation on which we build our life in Christ. Everything begins with faith and everything rests on faith. The same faith in Christ that saves you is the same faith that holds up your life in Christ.
- **What does "faith in Christ" mean to you? In addition to "saving faith," day to day how can you tell when your faith is strong or weak?**

The Life Application Study Bible says:

The attitude of trust and confidence that the Bible calls belief or faith (Hebrews 11:1, 6) is not something we can obtain without help. Faith is a gift from God

(Ephesians 2:8-9). No matter how much faith we have, we never reach the point of being self-sufficient. Faith is not stored away like money in the bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus.¹

- When you come into your house do you tip toe in saying I sure hope this foundation holds me up? Do you do that with your faith?
- We should JUMP UP AND DOWN on that foundation of faith! TEST it! Trust it! In a storm we may have to get down in the basement and CLING to it! Rest assured our foundation of faith WILL HOLD!!!!
- Verse two is an architectural rendering of how life in Christ can be:

² May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

- We need a clear vision of what we're building. When you look at architectural renderings of houses can't you just see yourself living there?
- Would you like more grace, more peace, and more knowledge of Jesus?
- That's a beautiful design, Peter. What materials will Jesus use to build it?

³ By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

- Peter says that Jesus has delivered everything we need to build a life with Him; a life that imitates Him. In case you missed it, all the materials are stacked up and ready to be put in place using this blueprint.
- Verse four says these materials have an eternal lifetime guarantee based on the "great and precious promises" of Christ! They will last forever and they will work perfectly for this project.
- **What are some examples of the "great and precious promises" of Jesus you treasure? What's the BIG promise of verse four?**
- No good builder stops construction at the foundation. How many followers of Christ stop building and growing the moment we're saved?
- Because of the promises of Jesus, Peter says we should start building on the foundation of our faith. Look at verse five; I like the wording of the NIV.

2 Peter 1:5–11 (NIV)

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, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

- Here are seven qualities that should be evident in the life of any growing, productive, effective follower of Christ. Let's see if we understand them.

- Goodness (virtue) – **what does it look like when someone is virtuous?**
- Knowledge – **What kinds of knowledge should a believer ask God for?**
- Self-control – **Self-control over what? Why do believers need to exhibit self-control?**
- A thought: A believer without self-control doesn't appear very different from an unbeliever!
- Perseverance (patience) – **How is this different than self-control?**
- Godliness – **What does a godly person look like?**
- Mutual affection (brotherly love) – **If I'm a believer, do I have to love every brother and sister in Christ?**
- Number seven is the peak on top of our house: agape love. **Okay Bible students what is agape love?**
- **How can the average follower of Christ pull off a life that's growing in all these areas? Look back at verse five. What do the first few words of verse five tell us about what Peter wants us to know?**
- If we can add these qualities to our foundation of faith, what will life be like? Verse eight:

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 whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

- Peter doesn't say having these qualities earns entry into Heaven!
- You can be saved and going to heaven even if you're "house of faith" is run-down when it comes to these seven qualities.
- Having these qualities doesn't make you a follower of Christ; but being a productive follower of Christ should make us have these qualities.
- Verse eight says we should possess these qualities in increasing measure. **If we're not building on and growing in these qualities, what kind of Christ follower does verse eight say we are?**
- **Verse nine: How does he describe that kind of believer?**
- Not working to grow in these seven areas is like forgetting that Jesus saved us; spiritual amnesia. *"Oh, wait a minute. I don't act like that, I forgot, I'm a Christian!"* Sometimes not as ridiculous as it sounds.
- Let me add an important point. It would be easy for a long-time follower of Christ to assume these verses apply to new believers. "You baby believers pay attention!"
- Even if you started building on the foundation of faith God gave you years ago; and even if you worked hard on all these qualities; the elements of life take a toll on our house!
- Does my virtue have some wood rot? Is my self-control sagging? Is my perseverance faded and dull? Do I need a fresh coat of brotherly love?
- The foundation and structure are SOLID because the master builder made them that way, but maintenance is constant and sometimes we even need some major renovation on these qualities.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We said that Peter has given us a “Blueprint for Building a Life in Christ.”
- God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. Peter instructs us to add to our foundation of faith these seven qualities of life in Christ.
- Verse eight says having these seven qualities will make us effective and productive in knowing and growing more like Jesus.
- Verse nine says NOT having these seven qualities and continually reinforcing them makes us nearsighted. Let me try to help us remember.
- Do you remember Mr. Magoo? Mr. Magoo wasn't a bad guy, but he had a problem. **What was it? How did his problem affect Mr. Magoo and those around him? Why didn't he solve his problem?**
- Do you really want to be a Spiritual Magoo? Oh, if you're saved you'll come out okay in the end like Magoo always did. But look at the chaos and disruption we leave in our wake because we're too nearsighted to see that we're not being all Jesus has equipped us to be!
- I don't want God to say to me one day: *“Congratulations, you got here by the skin of your teeth, nearsighted and unproductive servant!”* I want to hear: *“Well done! You were good and faithful!”* How do I do that this week?

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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