

Feed My Sheep, 1 & 2 Peter: Lesson 9

## Be Who You Are

**Memory Text:** “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” (2 Peter 1:5-7)

**Setting The Stage:** If I were to mention Ivy League, what comes to you mind? I wouldn't blame you if some of you thought about the NCAA (Ivy League is a collegiate athletic conference). Maybe the names L.L. Bean Lacoste, Izod, and Dooney & Burke come to mind? The term Ivy League definitely has connotations of academic excellence, selectivity in admissions, and social elitism.

You've heard of Brown University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Yale University, haven't you? These are the eight schools that make up the Ivy League. The average 2016 tuition & fees for the Ivy League colleges is \$47,697 for all students. The average acceptance rate for Ivy League schools is about 10%.

Ivy League schools are generally viewed as some of the most prestigious, and are ranked among the best universities worldwide. All eight universities place in the top sixteen of the U.S. News & World Report 2015 university rankings, including the top four schools and six of the top eleven.

Where did the term “Ivy League” come from? Students long revered the ivied walls of older colleges. “Planting the ivy” was a customary class day ceremony at many colleges in the 1800s. At Penn, graduating seniors started the custom of planting ivy at a university building each spring in 1873 and that practice was formally designated as “Ivy Day” in 1874. The first usage of Ivy in reference to a group of colleges is from sportswriter Stanley Woodward. The first known instance of the term Ivy League being used appeared in The Christian Science Monitor on February 7, 1935.

Many students want to be a part of the Ivy League schools. And that's okay I suppose. It's good to want to achieve and succeed in life. Getting a good education is important. It helps a person get ready for their life-long career. It lays that solid foundation to build a life on. Going to school is a good thing. Getting an education is important.

Did you know there is an education available that is far more important than many realize. There is a school looking to enroll as many students as possible. This school promises a life-changing experience, the adventure of a lifetime. The school doors are open, enrollment is not selective, and everyone can afford to attend class here

because tuition cost has been paid already. This school doesn't have four walls, a president or academic dean, or classrooms, desks, or chairs. The school I'm referring to is the school of Christ.

### **Sunday / A Precious Faith**

2 Peter 1:1-4; Proverbs 9:10; John 17:3

We are each invited to attend the school of Christ. In His offer for rest, Jesus first invited us to come to Him. And in coming to Him He invites us to participate in something vitally important. Jesus said, "Learn of Me." (Matt. 11:28, 29) If we come to Christ to find rest and He invites us to learn of Him, then in coming to Christ haven't we enrolled ourselves in His school, the school of Christ?

It sounds like an apprenticeship, doesn't it? "Learn of Me." If I want to learn a trade, I need to learn from somebody with experience. Apprenticeship is a "system of training a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training and often some accompanying study (classroom work and reading)."

Jesus had invited twelve men to accompany Him during His 3 ½ years of formal ministry. He wasn't going to be here for very much longer and He knew if He was going to leave the work of carrying the gospel to the world in good hands, He needed to train a new generation of practitioners. So He invited them to join Him and learn of Him. And He invites us today to learn of Him as well.

To learn of someone is to get to know them. Essentially, Jesus is inviting us to come to Him and get to know Him. When you get to know somebody, you learn to like them, respect them, trust them. Jesus invites us to learn of Him in an intimate, close way.

**2 Peter 1:1-4.** Knowing Christ is the greatest knowledge that can be acquired. You might know a lot of things. I thought I knew everything when I was a youth. When you think you know everything you really know nothing. We might know how a computer works, have a grasp on the laws of physics, be able to recite the elements chart, play several musical instruments, know the dynasty's of China and Egypt, star constellations, who the presidents of the U.S were along with their vice presidents, etc. but if we don't have a saving knowledge of Christ, it really is all very pointless. Knowing Christ is the greatest knowledge that can we acquired.

**Proverbs 9:10:** "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." If you want true wisdom, it starts with knowing God.

**John 17:3:** "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." To know God is to enter into life and to know that eternal life is yours. Obviously we're talking about more than a general familiarity with God, His nature, and His teachings. The devil knows certain things

about God. He knows the Bible and truth. But the devil won't experience eternal life, because He doesn't *know* Christ. To know Christ is to love Him and trust Him, because He has won your love and confidence. And He was able to do that because you spent time getting to know Him.

The lesson books in the school of Christ are nature, the working of God's providence, the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and the Word of God – the Bible. The teacher in the school of Christ is none other than Jesus Himself.

## **Monday / Love, The Goal Of Christian Virtue**

2 Peter 1:5-7

There are many courses of study a person can pursue in school. We all have to take those general courses to begin with, and that always includes some type of...math. As in regular school, we also will be confronted with math in the school of Christ. But I want to assure you, this is math you will want to learn. ☺

We are familiar with great mathematicians of the past and present. Although others also developed the techniques independently, Sir Isaac Newton is regarded as the "Father of Calculus" (which he called "fluxions"). Archimedes is universally acknowledged to be the greatest of ancient mathematicians. Carl Friedrich Gauss, the "Prince of Mathematics," exhibited his calculative powers when he corrected his father's arithmetic before the age of three.

**2 Peter 1:5-7.** This passage of scripture highlights the mathematics of salvation. In math we were first taught numbers, then to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. From there it got more complicated. We learned algebra, geometry, calculus, logic, number theory, probability and statistics, etc.

The point is, the teacher started with the basics and built on those concepts to advance us. Building blocks. And it's the same in the school of Christ. In learning of Christ, He starts us off with the basics then advances us in our knowledge and experience with Him. What we will discover is that what we are we are by the grace of God and that by this same grace we will not be where we were yesterday in our walk with Him.

Notice the math component, to add. We can all do that, amen? What we are invited to do here is add our diligent pursuit of Christian virtues to the gifts God has already given us. The word "add" involves the idea of supplying or furnishing. By God's grace we are to build our spiritual experience with spiritual building blocks.

**Faith.** We are to add to our faith. In v. 1 we have received precious faith by virtue of divine mercy, which seeks to bring salvation to all. This faith may refer to that faith by which the believer responded to God's call, or to the beliefs they accepted when becoming Christian's, or both. Either way, this faith acknowledges Christ as Savior. We are dealing with Salvation 101 here.

**Virtue.** “Goodness” or “moral excellence.” It is considering the uplifted Christ that stimulates us to give up sin and to follow after the qualities that Jesus so persuasively displays. By apply this counsel you and I will build balanced, solid Christian characters.

**Knowledge.** Add to your faith and virtue, knowledge. This knowledge is a practical understanding of God’s ways and plans for us individually rather than merely intellectual attainment.

**Self-control.** The KJV uses the word “temperance,” which not only includes the idea of using moderately those things that are helpful, but also avoiding the use of those things that are harmful. What good would acquiring the preceding qualities be if we lack self-control. Add to your knowledge discipline.

During his term as President of the U.S., Lyndon Johnson was somewhat overweight. One day his wife challenged him with this blunt assertion: "You can't run the country if you can't run yourself." Respecting Mrs. Johnson's wise observation, the President lost 23 pounds. We can't be successful in our Christian walk if we lack self-control.

**Perseverance.** The KJV says “patience.” Literally, “a remaining under,” stressing a brave steadfast perseverance under adversity. Especially applicable to God’s last day saints (Matt. 24: 13; Rev. 14:12).

**Godliness.** “Piety” in Christian conduct, which grows out of reverence for God. It molds and shapes our words and deeds. To profess loyalty to the high standards of Christianity, and yet live no better than the unconverted, reveals insincerity and hypocrisy.

**Brother kindness.** (Gr. philadelphia) “Love of the brethren.” In classical Greek he word implies affection for one’s blood relative, but the NT *philadelphia* embraces all members of the church. In a church surrounded by pagans there was need for this type of love and affection. The same is true today.

**Love.** This is *agape* love. This is true Christian affection that seeks only the good of the one loved. *Agape* is an affection base don knowledge and reason, an affection that is willing to sacrifice self for the best good of the loved one. This is what God feels for Christ and for us, and what we wishes we would feel toward one another.

Love is the capstone, the crown, of all the preceding qualities listed by Peter. It is the greatest of all virtues (1 Cor. 13:1-3). It is that which does no ill to its neighbor (Rom. 13:10). Its absence cannot be compensated by sacrifice, not even of life itself. Interestingly, it is love that draws us to Christ, and it is the end goal of the Christian life.

Essentially Paul is referring to the experience of sanctification, or as he puts it in 2 Peter 3:18, “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are born into faith when we receive Christ as our personal Savior, and by His grace, we grow into those men and women, boys and girls, Christ desires to see. We should always be advancing. We are called to grow while the world around us is declining morally. A distinction between the two camps will become more and more apparent as we near the coming of Christ.

## **Tuesday / Be Who You Are**

2 Peter 1:8-11

Before anyone think I’m promoting a self-help type of Christianity, let me ask you a question. Why does Peter, in v. 5, says, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add...”? What is the motivation for adding, advancing in our Christian faith? Peter says, “For this very reason make every effort...” For what reasons do we incorporate the spiritual building blocks into our faith? **2 Peter 1:2-4.**

In these verses, Peter is saying, “Now that God has done and is doing His part, we must do ours. We work on the plan of addition, while God works on the plan of multiplication (“grace and peace be multiplied”). Question: Can you get to the number 100 quicker by adding 1 to 2, etc. or multiplying your numbers?

*“The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man’s sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them.” (AA 532)*

Here the author is reflecting heaven’s optimism about the potential for change and growth in human beings, in each one of us. God stands ready to do his part. He ready to reveal to the universe, while at the same time defying the unjust claims of the enemy, those who have worked with Christ in perfecting Christian character. It was the enemy of souls who said it wouldn’t be possible. And yet, revealed in the lives of those who have been making their calling and election sure, is the evidence of the power of God to save us them completely. Why? Because God’s grace and peace is multiplied to us.

**2 Peter 1:8-11:** “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an

entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

**2 Peter 3:18:** “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” If we’re not growing we’re stagnating.

### **Wednesday / Shedding The Tent**

2 Peter 1:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:12-57

**2 Peter 1:13, 14.** From the Sabbath School Study Guide: In 1956, Oscar Cullmann wrote a short study called *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament*. He argued that the concept of the resurrection is quite incompatible with the concept of the immortal soul. Furthermore, he said that the New Testament lies squarely on the side of the resurrection of the dead. “No other publication of mine,” he later wrote, “has provoked such enthusiasm or such violent hostility.”

What happens to a person at death? What does the Bible say? Essentially, at death a person sleeps awaiting one of two resurrections (John 5:28, 29). If we are Christ’s and He is ours then we are guaranteed that we rise to life in the first resurrection which occurs when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). We do not receive immortality until the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-54). If we had innate immortality then why would we seek for it (Rom. 2:7)? The good news is because Jesus rose from the dead, if we die in Christ, we can be certain that we will rise also (1 Cor. 15:12-57).

### **Thursday / Faith In The Face Of Death**

2 Peter 1:12-15

**2 Peter 1:12-15.** Is Peter’s salvation math really that important? Peter thought so. Although the Christian’s of his day already knew these things and were established in present truth, Peter felt the need to take the time remind them (and continue to remind them) of how important it was to advance in their Christian walk.

How does this work? How are grace and peace multiplied in us? As we work out our salvation with “fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), which just simply means we make it the number one priority to carefully develop the Christian virtues in our lives (spiritual building blocks, adding virtue to faith, etc.), God multiplies His peace and grace to us. Peace that passes all understanding, grace that much more abounds where sin might abound.

As we are careful to not “frustrate the grace of God” (Gal. 2:21) in our lives God’s grace will work in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. This is what Peter means when he tells us to make our “calling and election sure.” (2 Peter 1:10)

We take those “exceeding great and precious promises” found in the Bible and make them our very own. Make them personal. Put your name in them. “If I (Chris) confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness.” “I will never leave you (Chris) nor forsake you. Therefore I may boldly say, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” “If I seek first the kingdom of God, God will add to me all His blessings.”...

What do these promises do for you? Enable us to become partakers of the divine nature (v. 4). Enable us to be overcomers (v. 4). Help us to be fruitful and grow (v. 8). Help us to see ahead and remind us to press on (v. 9). They will cause us to stand and not fall (v. 10). Ultimately, we’ll be ushered into God’s kingdom (v. 11). Isn’t that what you want; to be with Jesus; to see His precious face? What could prevent us from pressing on, scaling higher, building characters, by God’s grace that He multiplies to us, adding grace to grace?

**Appeal:** In 2002, two men savagely attacked a young man by the name of Jason Padgett leaving him with a severe concussion and post-traumatic stress disorder. But the incident also turned Padgett into a mathematical genius who sees the world through the lens of geometry.

Padgett, a furniture salesman from Tacoma, Washington, who had very little interest in academics, developed the ability to visualize complex mathematical objects and physics concepts intuitively. The injury, while devastating, seems to have unlocked part of his brain that makes everything in his world appear to have a mathematical structure.

You don’t have to mathematical genius to enter the school of Christ, but when Christ gives us a renewed mind at conversion, He works in us to build the spiritual concepts, to grow us, to develop us, to sanctify us, and ready us for an entrance into His kingdom. Don’t you want that experience? Do you want to keep growing, advancing, and reflecting Christ’s goodness in your life?