

BEING A BETTER DISCIPLE

WHAT IT MEANS TO SURRENDER & FOLLOW

Lesson 1 – Obedience, Awareness, Trust

What is a Disciple? We might say a disciple is apprentice or one who follows the commands of someone else. Discipleship then is the condition of being a disciple or follower of someone. As a disciple of God, we need to see that discipleship is a total surrender, not a conditional surrender, “whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple”, [Lk. 14:25-33](#),. We should “calculate the cost”, [vr. 28](#), on our discipleship, having the willingness to “give up all”, [vr. 33](#).

We do not mind talking about ourselves or things we love. You don’t have to twist a grandparent’s arm to get them to talk about their grandchild. A key to being better at *making* disciples is to *be* a better disciple. If we love God, we will talk about Him!

We need to see the importance of, not just coming to a relationship with God, but continuing to grow in our relationship with God. A continual growth that goes on for the rest of our life. Growth to the point that we don’t mind at all talking about Him and that He is clearly evident in our life.

Thus the objective of this study: making ourselves a better disciple of God. We need to see the need to surrender and follow Him in all aspects of our life.

In [Gen. 2:15-20](#), God tells Adam the rule about the trees and has him name the animals. From the very beginning we see what it means to surrender to God:

1. Obedience is required, Adam had to name the animals and they were not to eat of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
2. Brings awareness to our situation, Adam was alone (Eve wasn’t created yet). His relationship with God should have been the top priority.
3. Trust & Faith are necessary, Adam didn’t know the consequence of eat from tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Had he simply obeyed God, sin would not have entered the world.

Consider that Eve knew the rule about what tree she was not allowed to eat from, [Gen. 3:2-6](#). This is discipleship, by definition, teaching others to obey. Since Eve wasn't created yet, when God first told Adam the rule, we conclude then Adam taught Eve the rule. However, Eve did not follow the rule and shared the fruit with Adam, who was with her and did not stop her from disobeying, [vrs. 6](#). They did not surrender to God, they did not follow God. They did not exhibit good discipleship.

As we look at [Gen. 4:3-7](#), in [verses 3-4](#), we see Cain's offering was from the ground and Abel's was from the flock. We can speculate as to why God had no regard for Cain and his offering but it would just be speculation. What we do know is, the offerings were different and that God did not have any regard for Cain's offering.

The Hebrew writer calls out this event in [Heb. 11:4](#), "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." From this we see:

1. By Faith Abel offered a better sacrifice, faith came into play. In light of the definition of faith in [Heb. 11:1](#), there must have been a level of trust in God that Abel had that Cain did not.
2. Through the sacrifice came the "testimony that he was righteous". Surrendering and following God does require that we get things right.
3. "God testifying about his gifts", plural implies there was more than one. And it is God who is doing the testifying or "being a witness" about his gift. There is a relationship here.

Back to [Gen. 4:5-7](#), we see for Cain's offering "He had no regard". So Cain's very angry and his countenance fell, meaning he was visibly angry. In [vr. 6](#), God asked, "Why are you angry?". Why do we think Cain was angry? Wasn't the offering that he gave under his control? Yes it was. Any frustration he had should have been toward himself. We need to "calculate the cost", [Lk. 14:27-33](#). We don't say, "I am following God" and then do whatever we want and think it is ok. God expects us to obey.

In [vr. 7](#), it is interesting that God gives him a chance to get himself together and make things right. I think here, we have a picture into God's grace. "Come now let us reason together says the Lord", [Is. 1:18](#).

Cain had a decision to lift his countenance, because sin was crouching at the door. Surrender is a decision on our part. Cain could have "calculated the cost", came back and tried again to get it right.

1. Obedience is required, we have to offer the right sacrifice.
2. Brings awareness to our situation, there is disregard when we offer the wrong "sacrifice".
3. Trust & Faith is necessary, we need to lift our countenance or be consumed by sin.

Satan is a roaring lion seeking to devour, [I Peter 5:6-10](#).

Lesson 2 – Discipline & Training

Michael Phelps is the most decorated athlete in olympic history. Here is his practice routine for the Olympics:

- swam 13 kilometers a day (over 8 miles) six or seven days a week
- at least 49.6 miles every week. Even on Sundays and birthdays.
- spending 5-6 hours in the pool a day.

- Breakfast: Three fried-egg sandwiches with cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, fried onions and mayonnaise. Two cups of coffee. One five-egg omelet. One bowl of grain. Three slices of French toast topped. Three chocolate-chip pancakes.
- Lunch: One pound of pasta. Two large ham and cheese sandwiches with mayonnaise on white bread, plus energy drinks.
- Dinner: One pound of pasta, an entire pizza, and even more energy drinks.

His schedule during the 2008 Games:

- Woke up 6.30am, arrived at the Olympic Village cafeteria by 7am
- Two hours before his first scheduled race for the day, Phelps would begin his stretching routine: arms, then his back, then work down to his ankles
- Then 45 minute warm-up routine in the pool: 800 meters of mixed styles; 600 meters of kicking, 400 meters pulling a buoy between his legs, 200 meters of stroke drills, and a series of 25-metre sprints to elevate heart rate
- Then wait for the race to start

Athletes focusing on a goal are very disciplined. Even denying themselves of various comforts, fun and relaxation to pursue a goal. As a disciple of Jesus, discipline is needed. Jesus said “if anyone wishes to come after me, let him **deny** himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”, [Mt. 16:24](#); [Mk. 8:34](#). He said close to the same thing again in [Luke 9:23](#), “if anyone wishes to come after me he must **deny** himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me”. In both statements He calls out that we need to deny ourselves. (Emphasis mine.)

To deny ourselves as a disciple means we fully surrender to God. To fully surrender and follow takes discipline. Just like an athlete training to win. We understand this concept but when it comes to following God, we often convey the idea that we “automatically have it”. That being saved means every action is perfect, and then we don’t know what to do when we fail. Discipline is training, practice. Being a disciple, following God, is a practice.

In [Heb. 12:1-11](#), we see the discipline of our heavenly Father. In [vr. 1](#), we see that sin can entangles us. Remember, it crouches at the door. But like an athlete we are to run the race set before us. We need to keep “fixing our eyes on Jesus”, [vr. 2](#). This is more than just looking at Him, we are to lock our eyes and focus on Him. The language implies we are not looking at other things. He is our guide, our example, our pattern.

“The Greek word for ‘looking’ is a much fuller word than we can find in the English language. It has a preposition in it which turns the look away from everything else. You are to look from all beside to Jesus. Fix not thy gaze upon the cloud of witnesses; they will hinder thee if they take away thine eye from Jesus. Look not on the weights and the besetting sin-these thou hast laid aside; look away from them. Do not even look upon the race-course, or the competitors, but look to Jesus and so start in the race.”
(Charles Spurgeon, 1888, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit The Rule of the Race, No. 2037, p. 3)

Jesus, the author and perfecter “of faith”, or as some translations read “our faith”, is not just an example for us to follow. He is the actual author and perfecter of faith.

How is He the author and perfecter? There are two faiths to consider. There is “thee” faith, what God has given us to believe in and there is “our faith”. When we take what God has given us to believe in and

actually believe in it. Paul writes that he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to salvation “from faith to faith”, [Rom. 1:16-17](#). Here we see two faiths.

Here are a couple of examples: Paul writes, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept **the** faith”, [II Tim. 4:7](#). In contrast in [Col. 2:5](#) he writes “rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of **your** faith in Christ”.

Why is understanding that there are 2 different “faiths” important. God remains the almighty whether we believe in Him or not. Jesus remains resurrected whether we believe He is or not. God gives us the freedom to believe whatever we want, to put our faith in whatever we choose. Because, what we believe in does not change who God is. Our faith does not change the Faith, but when we surrender, the Faith changes ours!

Continuing in with the text in [Heb. 12:3-4](#), consider Jesus who endured the hostility against Him, so that we don’t lose heart. We are blessed to not face adversity in discipleship to the point of shedding blood. In [vrs. 5-9](#), we see without discipline, we are “illegitimate children”. Unfortunately, in our country, it seems earthly fathers who discipline their children is becoming less and less. Keep in mind, discipline is not punishment, but can be included in that. Discipline is education, training, instruction, nurturing and chastising. God disciplines us because He loves us.

In [vrs. 10-11](#), we are taught that discipline isn’t always fun, just like practice for an athlete isn’t always fun. The Greek word for “trained” is “gymnazo” and means “to practice naked (in the games), that is, train (figuratively): - exercise”.

This training, just like for an athlete, makes us better. Practice means I put in the work, even when I don’t “feel” like it or feel that I will not be good at it. We practice love because we know it’s the right thing to do, even when we don’t feel like being loving. If we have surrendered ourselves, eventually, loving is what we become. All of God’s discipline then, “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”.

In [I John 1:5-7](#), walking is “present participial tense”, meaning it’s a continuing action. That’s the context of John’s letter, being mindful of how we are participating (walking for example). In [I John 3:18-21](#), John instructs us to love in deed and truth...participation! Don’t just say it show it, [vr. 18](#). In [Vr 19](#) then, the “By this” means by what has just been said. We shall know by participating in love and the things given to us by God, that we are of the “truth and assure our hearts before Him”.

To be “of the truth” is to be of God, [Jn. 18:37](#). The word “assure” here means that if we have this strong unselfish, unconditional love, then our heart has no reason to doubt, or be fearful, or get discouraged, by the things of the world. If we are denying ourselves and practicing Jesus’ teachings, then we can assure our hearts.

Just like you need to get confidence in anything new that you are doing. You need to give yourself time to be confident as a child of God. You don't start gardening, for example, and have total confidence in what you're doing. You don't start anything and have total confidence in what you're doing until you get some experience. If you start something and have total confidence, usually it's over confidence and means you will mess up. For example no one wants an overly confident teenager behind the wheel of a car.

Continuing in [1 John 3:20](#), our heart condemning us becomes a good thing, because it means we know better. It means we have an awareness of how we are walking and following God. God knows us better than we know ourselves and knows our good intentions. If we are walking surrendering ourselves and following Him, then God will see that and judge us accordingly. Finally, John says in [1 John 3:21](#), If our heart does not condemn us, meaning we are walking as a disciple of God, [2:6](#). Then we can be confident before God. “Let us draw near with confidence”, [Heb. 4:14-16](#).

Jesus said “If anyone wishes to come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross **daily**”, [Luke 9:23](#). If being a child of God meant that we were always perfect, then there would be no need to take up our cross daily.

Remember, discipleship is a practice:

[1 John 3:10](#), “anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God”

[1 John 1:6](#), “if we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth”

[II Peter 1:4-10](#), You can partake of His “divine nature”, [vr. 4](#), “as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble”, [vr. 10](#).

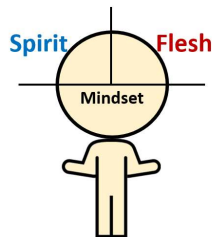
[Gal. 5:21](#), if you practice the deeds of the flesh you will **not** inherit the kingdom of God.

Lesson 3 – Spiritual Mindset

From the garden we see we are made in the image of God. And we’re made to be in a relationship with God. However, the knowledge of good and evil removes us from the Tree of Life, [Gen. 3:22](#). It also removes us from the intimate relationship with God that Adam and Eve had. But we are still spiritual beings made in His image. God rescues us as we seek Him, His knowledge and His Wisdom.

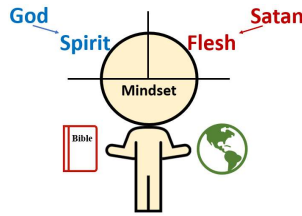
Surrendering ourselves spiritually changes our physical behavior. We typically think of surrender as a military term. We don’t really use it in any other parts of our life because we as a society are all about self. We will not surrender to anyone. Our relationship with God demands total surrender of our spirit in order to see the knowledge and wisdom of God.

This is important because we want to understand that **when we surrender ourselves we are surrendering our spiritual mindset to follow God’s spiritual nature**, which results in changing our physical behavior. We see in [Rom. 8:5-8](#), the mind set on the spirit is life and peace, as the flesh cannot please God.



Jesus said in [John 3:8](#), “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit”. Jesus is talking about being born of the Spirit but how He talks about the Spirit is very interesting. You can’t see the wind but you know it is there. You can feel it and see the effects of it, but you still don’t see the wind.

What influences our thoughts also works this way. We can't see the spiritual influence, but we know it's there.



It is the armor of God aides us in fighting the spiritual war in our mind, [Eph. 6:11-12](#). Again, when we talk about surrendering to God, ultimately, what we are talking about is surrendering our spiritual mindset. Being made in the image of God, we are to surrender ourselves to Him. This is a “top down” approach focusing on the spiritual instead of focusing on the physical. Usually, what we do, is a “bottom up” approach where we focus on the physical, while trying to pull the spiritual down and make it fit.

Lesson 4 – Spiritual Mindset Part 2

Knowing we need to have a spiritual mindset, what can we do to help ourselves with this. In [Col. 1:9-14](#), Paul shares a prayer that he has for the Colossians that helps teach us some things we can do to better focus our minds on spiritual things.

Col. 1:9-14

Be Filled with Him

Vr. 9, “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”

Part of the ask in Paul’s prayer is that they “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”. We are to be filled! Surrender requires all, filled to the top, not partly filled. We are to be filled with:

1. Knowledge of His will

[Ecc. 12:13](#) - fear God and keep His commandments

[John 14:15](#) – If you love me you will keep My commandments

[Rom. 12:1-2](#) – The transformation and renewing of your mind, proves the will of God

2. Spiritual wisdom

[I Cor. 2:2,7,12-13](#), Jesus crucified

[II Tim. 3:15](#), “sacred writings that give you the wisdom that leads to salvation”

3. (spiritual) Understanding,

[I Jn. 5:20](#), “the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true...”

Grow in Him

Vr. 10, “So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”. We are to be “Increasing in the knowledge of God”, remember our walk with God is a practice, a continual effort. We are to prove ourselves doers of the word, not just hearers. Our actions should be reflecting God, [James 1:22-25](#). We are also to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.”, [II Pet 3:17-18](#).

Vr. 11, “strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously”

- **Rom. 1:16**, the power of God is the gospel
- **I Cor. 1:18**, the word of the cross is the power of God
- **I Cor. 1:24**, Christ is “the power of God”

The power for us to better overcome the fleshly mind and grow in our spiritual mind, is to grow in being a disciple of Jesus. As we grow in our relationship with Him our spiritual mindset grows.

Give Thanks in Him

Vr. 12, We are to joyously be “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light”. Paul tells us that in “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.”, **Col. 3:17**, and “in everything give thanks”, **I Thess. 5:18**. If nothing else, our “share in the inheritance” is reason to give thanks!

Vr. 13-14, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”. The imagery of darkness and light is a powerful one. There is only 2 options. We are in the light or darkness. The movement to His kingdom is done by God through His son. Jesus tells Paul that He wants him to preach to the Gentiles “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God”. In Christ, in His kingdom, is our redemption, **Acts 26:18**.

Lesson 5 – I am the Vine

From **John 15:1-10**, we see that as a disciple of Christ we are to abide in Him, abide in His love and finally abide in His commandments.

Vr. 1, As we look at **vr. 1** and the following verses, understand this is part of a larger conversation. Jesus started talking to them back in **chapter 13**. We are now in the middle of a discourse that continues into **chapter 16**. Jesus is speaking to the apostles. The specifics of what He is saying is TO them, the 12 apostles. This is important. It is always important to look at the context of scripture.

The context here is that He was hours away from being crucified and He was giving them some final words so that they “may be kept from stumbling”, **16:1**. Ultimately, He will commission them to go into world and make disciples, **Mt. 28:19-20**; **Mk. 16:15-16**.

John is sharing this dialog from Jesus before His death, that seems to be a commission in and of it self.

- **13:36**, He tells them where He is going they cannot follow
- **14:15**, He tells them if they love Him they will keep His commandments
- **14:18**, He won’t leave them as orphans
- **14:26**, the Helper will teach them
- **14:31**, the “ruler of the world” was coming, but I do “as the Father commanded me”
- **15:13**, no greater love than laying down life for friends
- **16:13**, the Spirit will guide them into all the truth

In all of that context, He introduces metaphor of “I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser.” It may be a metaphor that relates back to **Isaiah 5:1-7**, where God gives the nation of Israel every chance to grow “good grapes”.

Here though, Jesus is obviously using the metaphor in reference back to Him loving the Father and doing the will of the Father. A vinedresser oversees the growth of the vines, including the branches. Remember, the context here is that Jesus is about to be put to death. After His resurrection, the apostles are going to go out and “bear fruit”. This is all part of God’s plan in establishing His kingdom, the church, [Eph. 1:19-23](#). You can come to a knowledge of Jesus, but positive action is still needed. We can do things that cause us to fall from grace, [Gal. 5:1-4](#).

Vr. 2, He “takes away” is the Greek word “airo” which is a verb that means “to lift, by implication to take up or away; figuratively to raise (the voice), keep in suspense (the mind); away with bear up), carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away up).

Jesus is preparing his apostles for the stress that will come. For the fear, deception, hurt, all the things that they will see and feel, watching Him be crucified. Folks who don’t believe that one can fall away will explain this passage away by saying that not all branches are “real branches”. However, Jesus doesn’t teach that. He says the branch is **in** Him, it just doesn’t bear fruit. It’s like saying Judas wasn’t a real apostle. He obviously was, but then he made bad decisions and did not follow Jesus as He should. God the Father is the vinedresser. In light of the timeframe that Jesus is saying all of this to His apostles, when He says “every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away”, could be a reference to Judas, [Jn. 18:2-4](#), [Mt. 27:3-5](#).

Pruning is actually a cutting or trimming of the branches that is a way the vine dresser controls the growth and health of the crop. For us, we could consider the discipline of our heavenly Father as “spiritual pruning”. Being able to take some discipline, even pain, allow us to grow better fruit, [Heb. 12:1-11](#).

Vr. 3, Jesus says, “you are clean” when He washes the disciples feet, in [John 13:2-14](#). Jesus washing their feet after the Passover meal, is the event that began the conversation that lead into all of this teaching. Jesus tells them they were already clean because they had already “bathed” in His teachings and only needed their feet washed the time. They were all clean, except for Judas, whose heart had already been moved to betray Him, [13:2 & 11](#).

Back in [verse 2](#), “prunes” in the Greek is the word “kathairo” and means to “cleanse” (from the Greek word “katharos”). Here in [verse 3](#) the word for “clean” is the actual word “katharos” and means “clean”. Here is Verses 2 and 3 transliterated:

“every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away it; and everyone that fruit bears he cleanses it that more fruit it may bear.

Already you clean are by reason of the word which I have spoken to you”.

I don’t see there being any reason here to get too hung up on the use of words, prune or purge vrs. clean. The point is Jesus has prepared them for what He is going to have them do. For us, we are made clean, as they were, by obeying Jesus’ teaching.

To continue to play on the vine, fruit metaphor, Peter says we receive an imperishable seed, the word of God, [I Peter 1:21-23](#).

Lesson 6 – I am the Vine Part 2

Vr. 4, The same dependency that the branch has on the vine, we have on Jesus. The branch cannot bear fruit without the vine. It cannot exist without the vine. Jesus said “Abide in me and I in you.” Speaking to them individually, they were to abide in Him and He will abide in them. They were dependent on Him and He will supply them accordingly, as the vine does the branch.

In, **Jn. 14:16-17**, He promises them the Helper, the “Spirit of Truth”, who is already abiding with them and will be in them. He tells them in **14:20**, that they will know that He is in the Father, they in Him and Him in them. Meaning they would be in the Father as well. And to be certain, He says in **14:23**, “we will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

Notice “abide in Me” is stated at the beginning and end of the verse. As we look at this verse in light of our relationship with God, this point also becomes very important to us. The apostles were not going to be on the outside looking in. We are not on the side, observing the vine. We have to be IN Him. As we see how the vine sustains the life of the branch, we see how our life is sustained by Jesus. And how we come to have God abide in us.

We do not have to think of surrender as a one way street. when we surrender to God we're inviting him to influence us through His Spirit when we give our all to God we give Him the opportunity to give us all we need. Our surrender gives Him access to touch the broken and wounded parts of our soul. Surrender gives Him permission to take control when everything seems out of control.

Consider that when we abide in Jesus we “become partakers of the divine nature.”, **II Peter 1:2-4**. This isn't that we become God, but through Christ, we can take part in His fullness, **Ephesians 3:17-19, John 1:16-18**. In Christ we see God's grace, holiness, righteousness, etc. As we abide in Christ we see and grow in His nature.

As we looked back into to see the interactions with the Spirit and the Father, we see how we abide in Him. It is through obeying His commandments, **14:15 & 21-25**. To obey His commandments and “receive the word implanted”, **James 1:21-25**. We are surrendering to Him. Not just obeying a rule to check a box off a list, but surrendering so that we are abiding in Him, listening, following Him as He abides in us.

Vr. 5, Jesus does begin to expand the specific inclusiveness of the audience for the teaching. While the inclusivity of the scope has broadened beyond just the apostles, it is good to note that He is still speaking on an individual level. The context here shows the branches are obviously not groups or denominations of people, but the actual people themselves.

As the apostles will go and teach others what they have been taught, others, meaning us, will abide in Him and He is us. But He is the vine, we are all the branches. He is the source. All of our nutrients, all that sustains our existence comes from Him. We are totally dependent on Him for our fruitfulness. Apart from Him none of us can do anything.

Truly abiding Jesus is more than just doing some “religious” activities once in a while. To abide in Him, means we are walking on His path. Not a path off to the side, but His path. And if we get distracted it means we repent and get back on the bath. The bearing of fruit of God in our lives means He is evident. It means people see Him in all that we do. If they don't know they are seeing God in us, at least they know there is something different about us.

Vr. 6, In **verse 5** He to broadened the scope to “he who abides in Me”. Inclusive of anyone who will hear and follow the apostles as they eventually go forth preaching Jesus. In this verse the scope remains beyond just the apostles. “If anyone” (any man, any person) does not abide in Me, he is thrown away”.

These are strong words. No matter how you want to dissect these words, we cannot escape that there is ultimately punishment for those that do not abide in Christ. For example, understanding that if we love Him we will keep his commandments, **14:15**. On the other side of that, there is consequence for those that do not love Him and do not keep His commandments.

Explaining a parable in **Mt. 13:24-30**, Jesus says that the devil is at work sowing tares among good seed. Those tares will be gathered and thrown “into the furnace of fire”, **Mt. 13:37-42**. Presenting the scene of judgment, Jesus says for those who did not do the good things illustrated, that He will say to them “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels”, **Mt. 25:31-41**. Notice those on the right, that Jesus calls home, ask when they saw Him and did these good thing. Because they did these things, as part of everyday life. It’s who they are. They did these kind actions without even thinking about it! When we surrender and practice doing things of His divine nature, we eventually begin doing good things without thinking about it.

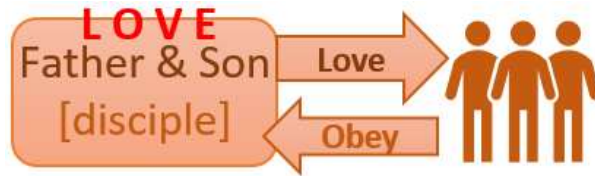
Vr. 7, When Jesus says “ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you”, it is important to understand the context. He is talking to the Apostles. As we read through the book of Acts we see the apostles doing miracles as a means to validate themselves in sharing the gospel message. It was evident there was discretion with the miracles that they could do. They could decide when to do a miracle and with who to do it. For example, Paul commanded a spirit of divination to come out of a girl because he was annoyed, **Acts 16:16-18**. So it appears the “ask and it shall be done” is referencing actions such as this, in what they will be able to do as the preach.

For us we would certainly understand context is important. It doesn’t mean if we ask Him for \$1,000,000 we’re going to get it. Rather, as we abide in his words and ask from Him, He will give. God never runs out of grace, forgiveness, love, joy, peace, patience or any of the fruits that we bear in Him.

Vr. 8, “By this is My Father gloried”, by how? By abiding in Him and His words. When we let our light shine before others and they see the good things we do, we glorify the Father, **Mt. 5:16**. You can’t be a light to the world if you are dark. A branch does not bear fruit if it is not attached to the vine. Proof of discipleship is: 1. bearing much fruit and 2. glorifying God.

Vr. 9-10, “Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept my father's commandments, and abide in His love.”

This is the last time Jesus says “abide in”. He now transitions from using metaphorical language to speak directly to the essence of our relationship with Him, abiding in His love. He clearly defines how we do this. We abide in His love by keeping the Father’s commandments. Keeping the commandments is important, but don’t miss what makes it so important. It’s the relationship that exist that prompts us to do so.



The Father loves Jesus. Jesus loves us. We are to abide in His love.
 If we Obey His commandments we abide in His love.
 Jesus kept the Father's commandments and abides in His love.

The relationship of Father and Son exist in love and obedience. We are brought into a loving relationship with God, when we obey. And when we obey, we grow in love.

Doing some good things or refraining from some bad things isn't following Jesus. Following Jesus is about loving Him. God wants us to love him. God wants the entirety of our being, heart, soul, mind and strength, [Lk. 10:27](#). When we surrender to God, we find all of those other things come into place. Jesus surrendered to the will of the Father, putting Himself on the cross. Through that surrendering, love was fully manifested. We see the beauty and power of love through that sacrifice. We know how to love, because God first loved us, [1 Jn. 4:8-13](#).

Lesson 7 – Abide: In Him, In His Love, In His Commands

Abide

In John [15:1-10](#), we see Jesus use the word “abide” 8 times in these 10 verses. Once we come into a relationship with God, we need to abide, or stay there. This means we are giving ourselves up, surrendering to Him.

[Mt. 16:25-26](#), “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

[Mk. 8:35-36](#), “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?”

[Luke 9:24-25](#), “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?”

[Jn. 12:25](#), “he who loves his life loses it and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to eternal life”

What does a life of surrender to Jesus mean for us? It means we lose our life. Surrendering to Him means we are about follow Him and His righteousness. It is about trusting God, even when we can't make sense of life. We choose Jesus or we choose ourselves. Either Jesus is leading or we are. It's not hard to understand it's just hard to do.

We are all under sin, “there is none righteous, not even one”. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”, [Rom. 3:9-10 & 23](#). The one thing we all have in common is none of us are righteous before God. Paul goes on to say in [Rom. 6:17-18](#), that we are now a slave of righteousness. Slave in the Greek is “douloo” and means “to enslave (lit. or fig.): bring into (be under) bondage, X given, become (make) servant”. It is also translated as “servants”. Surrendering ourselves as a disciple of Christ means that I am now a servant for Him.

The context for the disciples following Jesus is different than it is for us. He was right there in front of them, they were trained for 3 years. But, at the end of the day for us, we must see what it means to abide in Him. We must have arrived at a place in our understanding that He is our master. He is our King. We need to make sure we understand that making Jesus “our personal savior” doesn’t mean we make salvation into whatever we want it to be. Rather, we understand, that our life is ruled by Him. Our personal relationship with Him is in that context.

In Him

Jesus comes to earth and literally has a human relationship with people. He calls apostles, He leads disciples, He goes against rulers. In **Mt. 4:18-22**, (paralleled in Mk. 1:16-20), when Jesus said “follow me” there was action. Jesus made four fishermen, fishers of men. They left everything to follow him.

In our world today, we are all about ourselves. At the root of almost everything we do is “me”. What is in it for me, what about me? Is following Jesus just saying “I follow Jesus”? Or is there more? Jesus says it is not at all about “me”. He tells us that we need to deny ourself. The apostles would go on to pay the ultimate price in following Jesus. They were all willing to die for their relationship with Him.

We all follow something or someone, even if that someone is ourself. We may follow a person's teaching or our own philosophy. For most people following Jesus means living good lives. Be kind, show love, go to church, read the Bible, feed the poor, pray for others, etc. Or it means don't swear, cheat, lie, steal or hurt people. Very few people truly count the cost of being His disciple. We are usually trying to follow Jesus without fully surrendering. We don't want to fully surrender because it means giving up what I want.

Imagine your Life is like a house with many rooms. And just like in real life, with company at our house, we may keep them at the door. Or we only let them just inside. We do this with Jesus spiritually. When we first meet Jesus, we have Him at the door or invite Him to come in, but only to just step inside a little bit. Just like company in our home, we don't let Jesus see all of the rooms of the house. We certainly don't Him to see the messes. Jesus sees the messes but He doesn't force His way in.

The more comfortable we are with the company in our house, the more rooms we let them see. That's how it is with Jesus. He doesn't care about the messes, He knows they are there. He wants us to invite Him in. Into every room. We should not be keeping any room to ourselves. Surrendering to Him means we let Him into every part of our life. If we haven't, then we haven't totally surrendered. Total surrender is how God truly transforms our life.

When Jesus said “follow me” he meant for there to be action on our part. God initiates a relationship with us through His son. We respond back by following Him. Surrender is a continual process. It's the continual action of letting Jesus into every room.

In **Col. 2:6-14**, we see the power of being transformed in Him. **Verses 6-7**, we have surrendered to Him and are letting Him into every room in our spiritual house. We see in **vr. 8**, the action is on our part to not become captive. If I stand and call for you and you don't move to come to me you're not following. If I call you and you begin to move, you're following. It is a continual process. There is continual movement. If we stay still, we're not growing and we're not following. In **verses 9, 10 & 11**, in Him is the fulness of Deity, in Him we are complete, in Him we have the circumcision made without hands. Having been buried with Him in baptism, we are “raised up with Him”, **vr. 12**. We were dead in our transgressions, but He made us alive, having forgiven us, **vrs. 13-14**.

In **Mt. 10:32-39** the confession of Jesus before others is an example of an action of surrender to Him. Verses, **38-39** show this is a total surrender: “he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost life for my sake shall find it”. Jesus did not make this a “half in” relationship. This kind of commitment is divisive. Thus, He brought a sword, **vr. 34**. Our relationship with God, is first and foremost.

In His Love

We see that love exists in the Father and Son’s relationship. The Father and Son abide in love and give us the opportunity to share in that Love.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, **Rom. 5:8**. Jesus said that there is no greater love than one who lays down his life for friends, **John 15:13**. Surrendering to Him means we are to “grow up” in Christ. This causes the “growth of the body” to be built up in love, **Eph. 4:14-16**.

Peter tells us in **I Peter 4:8**, to keep fervent in our love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. When we have a better understanding of our relationship with God, it helps us in our relationships with each other. For example, we know love and how to love better, because we see God’s love for us.

In His Commands

In our lives consider how Jesus calls us to action. “If you love me you will keep my commandments”, **John 14:15**. This statement is all encompassing. This means that we are allowing Jesus into every room in our lives. He did not say love me when it's convenient. He did not say keep my commandments when it's convenient.

Just because we call Jesus “Lord” does not mean that we have Him at that position in our life, **Mt. 7:21-27**. And just calling Him that, does not mean that we get into heaven. In His example, the people are actually doing “religious” things and He tells them they won’t get to enter heaven. We have to act on what He has said to do, **vr. 24**.

Lesson 8 – Mt. 16:24, Deny Self, Take Up Cross, Follow Jesus

This lesson is a look at **Mt. 16:13-24**, to see what it means to deny our self, tak up our cross and follow Jesus.

vr. 13-14, Jesus asks the apostles who people say that “Son of man” is? Jesus calls Himself the “son of man”, seemingly as a term of humility. After all, He did empty Himself, **Ph. 2:6-8**, coming to earth to be born like a man.

vr. 15-19, Jesus now asks the question of them. A direct shot at their conviction. Peter was convinced Jesus was the Christ the son of God. Peter saw the same miracles that others had seen, which confirmed that Jesus was the Christ, **Jn. 10:24-25**.

vr. 20-23, Peter did not understand Jesus’ true calling. Peter would have had the Jewish mind set of an earthly kingdom. That the Jews were going to be restored to power, militarily, socially, politically, etc. Jesus reveals that he must suffer and be killed. To Peter, this would not have fit the plan. If Jesus is the Messiah, which Peter had just confessed too, then how would He save the people if He was going to die? How would the Jews get their kingdom?

Peter had observed that Jesus was the Christ, but had not yet fully surrendered to Him and what needed to be done. Peter thought he understood the plan and was figuring what Jesus was saying didn't fit into it. He was so convicted in his thinking that he even rebuked Jesus in private. Peter was not yet convicted on God's purpose. Jesus replies that he was setting his mind man's interest, not God's. This provides context to [verse 24](#). To deny ourself and take up our cross means that we seek God's interest first rather than our own.

[vr. 24](#), "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'" The word "cross" in Greek is "stowros" and means "a stake or post (as set upright), that is, (specifically) a pole or cross (as an instrument of capital punishment); figuratively exposure to death, that is, self denial".

God requires a daily sacrifice of taking up our cross. We are to deny our self and follow Him. No longer following our interest or the things of the world, we are to "lose our life" for Him.

What does surrender to God look like? What do we need to do in our surrender to God?

1. "If anyone wishes to come after Me". First of all notice Jesus points out there is a choice on whether or not you want to follow Him. In [Jn. 10:24-31](#), the Jews asked Jesus to tell them plainly if He was the Christ. In [vr. 25](#), He comments that He did tell them plainly, but they don't believe. Contrasted with those who did believe and follow Him. In [Acts 26:28](#), King Agrippa commented that Paul was almost persuading Him to become a follower of Jesus.

2. "he must deny himself" – We must do what He is saying Peter did not do, put God's interest above our own. Surrender means we stop resisting God's authority in our life. We don't like this point because we are selfish beings and we like to be in control. We need to realize that God is the creator of the universe and that, ultimately, He is the one who is in control. God knows what we need and will take care of us.

- [Mt. 6:32-34; 10:28-39](#), We are to seek Him and His righteousness, **the spiritual before the physical**.
- [Psalm 9:10](#), "And those who know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, O Lord, has not forsaken those who seek you".
- [Proverbs 3:5](#), "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding".

3. "take up his cross" - When we understand that God is ultimately in control and understand what He has done for us, it prompts our desire to gladly take up our cross.

In [John 21:9-12](#), Jesus, already having fish on a fire, asks Peter, John and those with them to bring over some fish that they had caught. I find that interesting. It seems to be a "passing of the baton" if you will. Jesus had told them He would make them fishers of men in [Mt. 4:19](#). They had followed Him, learning and studying from Him. Jesus has already been crucified and is now resurrected, the salvation of man had been revealed, Christ has done what He came to do. It was now time for the disciples to "take up their cross".

In [Acts 4:19-20](#), Peter and John, before the Sanhedrin, couldn't stop talking about what they had seen and heard. They had become witnesses to these things and were so excited about them, that they could

not help but share them with others. We should be the same way. “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me”, [Galatians 2:20](#).

4. “follow Me”

We see John the Baptist’s first word in proclaiming the path for Jesus is “repent”, [Mt. 3:2](#). Repentance is turning away from something and going in the opposite direction. I would submit to you that our repentance is not just about turning away from something. Because we could turn from something bad and go to something else bad. Rather, repentance is about turning from bad and going in God’s direction. Repentance in scripture meant different things for folks. Some were leaving the following of the old law, family teachings, Pagan rituals, worldly practices. Whatever they were leaving, they were turning to God. Repentance is about changing life to follow God.

Surrendering and following Jesus means we die to self. The next day, we die again. And the next day we die again and so on. Remember, it’s a practice. Some things are easier to die to than others. Some days are better days than others. But following Jesus means we continue to die to self.

- [Acts 17:30](#), “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent”.
- [II Peter 3:9](#), “The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness but is patient toward you not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”.
- [Col. 3:1-4](#), Set your mind on things above. Our life is in Christ.

Lesson 9 – Rom. 12: 1-2 – Be Transformed

Have ever you heard someone say “I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious”? Or “I’m spiritual but I don’t like organized religion”? Being a follower of Jesus isn’t just something where we say “I believe” or “I’m spiritual” and so think we are good before God. Being spiritual is certainly good, but we can be “spiritual” without God. Eastern religions, pseudoscience, astrology, for example, are ways people live “spiritually” but without God.

We are to keep seeking and setting our minds on things above as our life is with Christ, [Col. 3:1-4](#). We need to have a spiritual mindset focused on God and the things He wants us to do. God has always wanted man to obey Him, being active in the relationship. From the very beginning, God put Adam in the garden to “cultivate and keep it”, [Gen. 2:15](#).

Being a disciple of God means there is to be change in our life. Visible changes that helps lead other to Christ. God has given us salvation. God has given us the means necessary to live for Him. What He has given us in His grace is a gift. We can ignore all that He has given us and live unchanged or we can take the tools He provides and continually use them to transform ourselves as His disciple.

Paul gives us a powerful message in [Rom. 12:1-2](#) and following. Studying this passage shows us the awesome transformation that is ours to be had as a disciple of God, if we put forth the effort in spiritual service to Him.

[Rom. 12:1-2](#)

[12:1](#), “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

Paul urges the brethren. The word “urges” is “parakaleo” and means to “call near, that is, invite, invode”. We see then, that what Paul is calling them to do is very important.

Mercy is God NOT GIVING us what we DO deserve. Compared to grace being God GIVING us what we do NOT deserve. Paul speaks of God’s mercy in [chapters 9 and 11](#) and bringing salvation to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. “For God has shut up all in disobedience so that he may show mercy to all.”, [Rom. 11:32](#). The word in the Greek for “mercies” is translated as “compassion” in [Ph. 2:1, Col. 3:12](#) (NASB).

God is rich in mercy, which is an extension of His love, [Eph. 2:4-5](#). As a result of that, even though we were dead in our sin, He made us alive in Christ. Seeing this great mercy and compassion God has for us should spark a change in our behavior. This is where the willingness to “sacrifice” ourselves come from.

Presenting our bodies puts importance on our physical actions. But notice the physical actions are to be a “living and holy sacrifice”. We are to be a **living** sacrifice, not a dead one. In the Old Testament, followers of God, killed a sacrifice outside of themselves and presented it to God. Under the new covenant, followers of God are the sacrifice and we present ourselves alive before Him. A death still happens though, in regards to us being a sacrifice. Our old self dies in baptism with Christ death, [Rom. 6:4-7, Gal. 2:20](#).

We are to also be a **holy** sacrifice. The Greek word is “hagios” and means “sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated). That is what we are to be. In [I Cor. 6:19](#), Paul writes that our “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you”. We have the spirit of God in us which sets us apart from the world, making us holy.

Sacrifice acceptable to God

When you stop and think about the sacrifices in the Old Testament, it can be a bit gruesome. But a perfect God demands an atonement, or cleansing, for anyone outside of His perfection to be able to approach Him. Animal sacrifices, showed the ugliness of sin and the need for an atonement to be able to approach God.

Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice that cleanses us for sin, [Heb. 10:12](#). But if we go on sinning willfully...there is no longer a sacrifice for sins, [Heb. 10:26](#). God expects us to behave. He expects us to present our actions and ourselves to Him as the sacrifice that He now requires. Remember, it was Abel’s sacrifice that was accepted, [Heb. 11:4](#). And while the physical sacrifice there was important, the main thing Cain missed was not getting himself right before God spiritually.

Spiritual Service of Worship

Jesus points out that the Father seeks worshipers who worship in spirit and truth, [Jn. 4:23](#). It is interesting that God seeks these worshipers. While Jesus is speaking to the woman in the context of “corporate” worship, we see the importance of our spiritual focus as He says we must worship Him in “spirit and truth”, [Jn. 4:24](#).

Paul uses the Greek word “*latriah*” for “service of worship”. It’s only used 5 other times in the N.T. translated as “service” the other times. Remember passages like [Mt. 7:21-23](#), where Jesus points out that people who did “religious” things will still not enter into heaven. God wants our “service of worship” to be driven by “spirit”. God wants our life to reflect Him and the spiritual mercies He has shared with us.

Lesson 10 – Rom. 12: 1-2 – Be Transformed

12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Do not be conformed to this world

In case there is any confusion that Paul emphasizing our spiritual service, he plainly tells us not to be conformed to the world. The course of the world is in accordance with the “prince of the power of the air”, **Eph. 2:2**. If we are a friend of the world we are an enemy of God, **James 4:4**. The “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”, **I Jn. 2:16**. We cannot live as a disciple of God and be conformed to the world.

Be Transformed by the renewing of your mind

To combat being conformed to the world Paul tells us to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind”. The Greek word for “transformed” is “*metamorphoo*” from which we derive our word “metamorphosis”. The word is only used 3 other times, translated as “transfigured” in **Mt. 17:2 & Mk. 9:2** and as “changed” in **II Cor. 3:18**. Our transformation as a disciple of Christ comes from our mind focusing on spiritual things. In this letter, Paul has already stated that “the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”, **Rom. 8:6**.

Prove what the will of God is: good, acceptable and perfect

The overall high level will of God is that we follow His commandments. The renewing of our mind to focus on spiritual things allows us to see and know the right and good things we should do. And by doing those things we are doing the will of God, silencing the “ignorance of foolish men”, **I Ptr. 2:15**.

In the following verses of **Rom. 12**, all the way through **15:7**, Paul will go into a discussion, giving instruction on how we should conduct ourselves before the world, **12:9-13:14**. Looking just through the end of **chapter 12**, there are about 26 or so items (listed below). There are still more items concerning our relationship with brethren, listed in **14:1-15:7**.

Paul’s list from Romans 12:

Let love be without hypocrisy	Bless those who persecute you (bless and do not curse)
Abhor what is evil	Rejoice with those who rejoice
Cling to what is good	weep with those who weep
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love	Be of the same mind toward one another
Give preference to one another and honor	Do not be haughty in mind
not lagging behind in diligence	associate with the lowly
fervent in spirit	Do not be wise in your own estimation
serving the Lord	Never pay back evil for evil to anyone
rejoicing in hope	Respect what is right in the sight of all men
persevering in tribulation	Be at peace with all men.
Devoted to prayer	Never take your own revenge
contributing to the needs of the Saints	Do not be overcome by evil
Practicing hospitality	overcome evil with good

The renewal of our mind to focus on spiritual things allows us to conduct ourselves in a way that proves “that which is good and acceptable and perfect”. We are to behave differently than world. We are to let our “light shine before men in such a way that they can see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven”, **Mt. 5:16**.

Lesson 11 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Whatever you want to call the need for us to grow as a disciple probably works. Whether you want to call it spiritual transformation, spiritual formation or just plain spiritual growth, just so we understand, that as a disciple, we do need to continue to mature and be transformed spiritually. In light of what was looked at in **Romans 12:1-2**, I call it “spiritual transformation”. We need to recognize that we do need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We do need to behave differently than the world. If not, than are we truly being God’s disciples?

Dr. Dallas Willard, former Prof. of Philosophy, USC, said it this way:

“We have to deal with a massive population of church and unchurched people who think of being saved or being right with God, merely in terms of a picture of justification, not regeneration. Being born again is usually understood now, not in terms of being animated from a life from above, but in terms of the profession of faith. Often, a profession of faith in the death of Christ as bearing the punishment for sin that otherwise would fall on us. This understanding usually prevails in ways that do not involve, may not even make mention of, participation in divine life. And of course one can mention it without engaging it. And then, of course, the otherwise natural progression into discipleship and in spiritual transformation naturally does not occur, and the churches and surrounding societies flooded with discipleship-less Christians whose lives seem not to differ profoundly, if at all, from non-Christians.”

(Spiritual Formation as a Natural Part of Salvation, Wheaton Theology Conference, 4.17.09
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCJ-qYsRbM0>)

In **John 21:15-19**, Jesus asks Peter 3 times if he loves Him. Jesus uses "agapao" the first two times he asks Peter the question and Peter answers with "phileo". Jesus uses "phileo" the third time and Peter answers with "phileo". But with each of Peter’s answers, Jesus, tells him to tend or shepherd His sheep. Finally saying to Peter, “Follow Me”. We circle back to the very same words in which He initially called Peter to be His disciple, **Mt. 4:18-19**. Being a disciple of Jesus, is action, movement, there is something for us to do. He wanted Peter to continue to follow Him and He wanted Peter to influence others as well, as he followed.

Peter’s second letter is one of the latest writings in the New Testament and is a letter that encourages growth and gives warning. In **II Peter 1:2-11**, Peter gives us a list that helps us understand what it means to follow Jesus. Maybe this is part of the way Peter was fulfilling Jesus’ ask of Him to feed His sheep.

The list of things in **verses 5-7**, seem to be a natural progression of growth. Peter’s letters are words that have some “milage” on them. He had certainly been through a lot and would know what it means to progress in spiritual growth. This is not a list where you have to fully complete Step 1 and only on completion can you go Step 2. The first items on the list do seem to lay a foundation for the later items on the list. For example, we don’t just start out as Christians with perfect agape love. As we continue in our spiritual growth, the later items continue to strengthen the earlier items. All of these are done with the understanding that in doing these we are partaking in His “divine nature”.

Vr. 2, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;”

Grace

Grace allows us to have the means to approach God. Just to be totally clear, our salvation comes from God, not from us. He saved us by grace. Our relationship with Him is because of Him! Always has been. Always will be. There is no relationship with God that is without grace. We don’t help Him come to us.

We don't help Him give us salvation. Grace is Him giving us the gift of salvation in Christ and then He is with us to take care of that gift. He helps us with our "connection" to Him in Christ. But the gracious giving of salvation is all Him. That being said, we need to understand God has always wanted us to do things in our obedience to Him.

In looking at [Eph. 2:5-10](#), we see in giving us His grace He "made us alive together" and "seated us with Him in the heavenly places", [5-6](#). This is "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;" [7-8](#). As we continue reading to [vr. 10](#), we see, that while we are saved by His grace, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works". God has work for us to do!

You have been "justified as a gift by His grace", [Rom. 3:24](#). We are saved by grace! Obedient actions to God's law do not nullify His grace. If we could obey God perfectly then we wouldn't need grace. But we can't, so we need God's grace. Grace is about means, not merit. Grace involves effort not earning. Grace is not about achieving, but it is about Action.

The human condition is that we are separated from God, lost and sinful, with no way to get back to Him. But He has graciously given us a way back to Him through His Son. As a disciple of Christ, we need to think about what we need to do for Him, instead of what God can do for us and in light of what He has already done. Not just in the daily physical routines of life, but in a spiritual understanding of salvation.

Peter wants grace and peace to be multiplied in our knowledge of God. In [II Peter 3:18](#), Peter closes his letter encouraging us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ". Growing in grace means we grow to have confidence in God and His salvation. Even in the face of adversity. We need to focus less on actions to please ourselves and more on actions that please God. It's taking the "top down" spiritual then physical approach. We need to know it's not what I do that saves me, it's what God has done that saves me.

"Happy are they who know that discipleship simply means the life that springs from grace, and that grace simply means discipleship." (From "Costly Grace" from the book "The Cost of Discipleship" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Copyright 1948 * 1976 by The Macmillan Company)

Lesson 12 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Peace

We think of peace as the absence of war and it is, but when it comes to our relationship with God, we need to realize, that if we are not in a relationship with God we are at war with God, separated from Him. Peace isn't about not having stress or conflict in life, in fact, we can have that and still have peace. Peace is achieved when we see our spiritual condition in Christ, saved from the domain of darkness, now righteous before God. Like someone who is drowning and getting rescued, peace is about seeing all that God's grace provides and knowing we are saved.

Our war with God began in the garden when sin entered the world. It's the enmity or strife, between the seed of woman and the seed of the serpent, [Gen. 3:15](#), that separates of us from God. In [Eph. 2:13-19](#), Paul points out that Jesus takes away the separation, not just between Jew and Gentile, but between us and God.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand”, **Rom. 5:1-2**. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”, **Rom. 5:10**.

When we see the beauty of Grace, that God has given us salvation through His son, this should bring us spiritual Peace, every day that we exist on this earth. Regardless of what I am going through in life, because of His grace, I am a child of God and I can stand in this peace.

When you see “grace to you and peace” or “grace and peace” written together in the new testament as a type of salutation, grace always comes first. This matters and is not by accident. You cannot be **at** peace with God if you don’t accept the gift of God’s grace, including His son. You cannot **have** the peace of God if you don’t have Jesus.

Through Jesus we are reconciled to God, **Col. 1:19-22**. This peace with God, is through the blood He shed on the cross. In **Col. 3:15**, Paul says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.” The peace of Christ is seeing that God has reconciled us back to Himself through His son.

Having the peace of Christ is seeing that God has given us our salvation in Christ. Our trust in God is enhanced when we trust in the salvation of God in our every day life. This is peace. **Ph. 4:6-7**, “Be anxious for nothing...the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension”. **Isaiah 26:3**, “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.” To relieve our stress, we need to look at the peace we have with God spiritually. Our spiritual mindset. Peace there, means that we have peace even when we have stress and do not have peace in the world.

Jn. 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, no let it be fearful”. Notice, to not let our heart (thoughts, feelings) be troubled or fearful is up to us. Jesus gives us peace. He gives us reconciliation back to God, because of this, we as His disciple and need to live in a way where we do not let ourselves become troubled or fearful.

We cannot give our burdens to God if we are separated from Him. If I want to give you my cell phone to borrow, I can only hand it to you if you are next to me. The same is true in our relationship with God, we can’t give Him our struggles if we are not close to Him. This is the importance of discipleship. God’s peace brings us into a relationship with Him, which allows us to give Him our burdens.

Rom. 16:20, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” If we need to remind ourselves that Satan will be crushed under our feet, then that’s what we need to do. The world’s peace only last as long as we’re in the world. Peace with God lasts into eternity.

Knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord

The understanding is that we are growing in “the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” and that grace and peace are multiplied there. We have to grow in our knowledge of God to grow in grace and peace.

This is the first mention of “knowledge”, which will be mentioned in vrs. **3, 5, 6 & 8**. The word for “knowledge” in the Greek is the word “epignosis” (from G1921) and means “recognition, that is, (by

implication) full discernment, acknowledgement". This word is also used in [verses 3 & 8](#). This is knowledge toward an object, continuing to mature, but never fully matured. Meaning it is more than just a possession of facts. It's the idea of learning and understanding more about something you love and are passionate about. In [verses 5 & 6](#), the word for "knowledge" is "gno'-sis (from G1097) and means "knowing (the act), that is, (by implication) knowledge; science".

In [Gal. 4:8-9](#), Paul mentions the time when the Galatians "did not know God" and says that now, they have "come to know God". So, we see there is a transition. But it's not just knowing there is a God, but it's about coming to know God more intimately.

In [Acts 17:22-24](#), Paul explains to those in the Areopagus, the site of the most prestigious political and philosophical minds of the time, that the "unknown god" they have an idol set for, is the God who created the world. Paul writes in [Rom. 1:18-20](#), that from the creation of the world "His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen". Evidence of a supreme being out there that created us can be seen, to an extent, debated and concluded. By seeing a creation that did not create itself, mankind can deduce the existence of a creator, God. Mankind has seen evidence of invisible attributes, eternal power and a divine nature. But the only way for us to truly know anything about the eternal Creator that is out there, is for Him to reveal Himself to us.

Ultimately, the narrative of scripture is that Jesus brings to us the knowledge of God. John says it this way in [I Jn. 5:20](#), "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, in order that we might know him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." It is Jesus who give the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God", [II Cor. 4:6](#).

Lee Strobel, a former atheist, wrote many books including one called "Is God Real", has his publisher tell him, their tech folks saw that 200 times a second, people around the clock, some where in the world, were typing into a search engine, the question "Is God Real". Knowledge, not just that God exist, but knowledge about the God we read about in the Bible is made evident to us with the historical Jesus. The importance of Jesus, having lived, died and resurrected, cannot be underestimated. The evidence for Jesus historically is there and is at the core of our faith. Otherwise, we are people who are to be pitied, [I Cor. 15:16-20](#).

There is enough evidence to logically deduce He died and rose from the grave. For example, at the time Paul writes [I Cor. 15:3-8](#) there were over 500 witnesses ([vr. 6](#)). Peter points out that he was a witness to Jesus, the son of God, later in this passage in [verses 16-21](#). We are not following "made up" tales. Rather, we are growing in assured knowledge from the God of the bible, who has revealed Himself to us through Jesus, our Lord.

Lesson 13 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Vr. 3, "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

As we start to look at [Verse 3](#) now, it should be seen that it is the continuation of thought from [verse 2](#). Meaning, we see His divine power in the knowledge of God and Jesus.

The word "Divine" in [verses 3 and 4](#) is the Greek word, "theios" and means "godlike (neuter as noun, divinity): divine, godhead". "Theios" is from the root word "theos", which is the word most often

translated as “God”. [Acts 17:29](#) is the only other place “theios” is used and it is translated as “Divine Nature” there. Knowledge of God comes through Jesus our Lord, which is a manifestation of God’s divine power. Jesus told Philip, if you have seen Jesus you have “seen the Father, [Jn. 14:9](#).

John says the Word was God “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”, [Jn. 1:1](#). In [Jn 1:14](#), “dwelt” is from the root word “tabernacle”. Jesus is God encamping among us. And in [Jn. 1:18](#), John explains no one has seen God, but the only begotten God (Jesus) has explained Him.

Paul writes “And He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. God revealed Himself through His son. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him.”, [Col. 1:15 & 19](#). Jesus and Him crucified, is how we see the divine power of God, [I Cor. 1:18 & 24](#).

God’s divine power has granted to us “everything pertaining to life and godliness”. There is not anything that remains for God to give us that pertains to life and godliness. He has given us everything! We’ll look at godliness more in [verse 6](#).

We come full circle now as “Life and Godliness” come through the “true” or “genuine” knowledge of Him who called us”. We called in “His own glory and excellence” by coming to “the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” where also Grace and Peace are multiplied, [vrs. 2](#).



Transliterated: “As all things to us, divine power His which [pertain] to life and piety, has given through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.”

[Ph. 3:7-11](#), We see what it means to surrender in [verses 7-8](#). Paul counted his earthly gain as loss for Christ’s sake, obtaining righteousness, an attribute of God, on the basis of faith, [vr.9](#). Ultimately, the we may “know Him and the power of His resurrection”, [vr. 10](#).

Lesson 14 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Vr. 4, For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The “for by these” speaks to what was mentioned in the preceding verses. God, giving us knowledge of Him, showing us His divine power and enabling us to have life and godliness. Through mankind’s participation in all of these, He has granted us “precious and magnificent promises”.

While Peter doesn’t include specific promises, we would understand his reference to include these promises and everything pertaining to “life and godliness” including the promise of “eternal life”, [I Jn. 2:25](#). Through God’s promises we see His plan of salvation. From man’s sin in the garden, God knew He would have to bring man back to Himself. His promises through time, like promising Abraham he would be the father of many nations, [Gal. 3:29](#). Ultimately, God’s promises bring us to Jesus.



The word “partakers” is “koinonos” and means “a sharer, that is, associate: companion”. Through what God has done, He has granted us the privilege to share in His “divine nature”. Not that we become God, but we become like God. The same way man became “like” God coming to know good and evil, **Gen. 3:22**.

In **Romans 1:20**, Paul uses the word “theiotes” which is from “theios” and it means “divinity”. Translated as “divine nature”, this is the only time in the N.T. “theiotes” is used. In **Col. 2:9**, Paul is explaining that, in Jesus, all the “fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form”. Paul uses the word “theotes” which also means “divinity” translated as “Deity” or “Godhead”. It is from the root word “theos”, which we looked at in **vr. 3**.

We partake in His divine nature by sharing in qualities like holiness and righteousness. But how do we even begin to become the holiness or righteousness of God? How does one even begin to describe what it means to become a sharer in His divine nature? God is our supreme creator, who alone exist eternally. How do we even begin comprehend Him?

Here are some verses from Isaiah 40 as the prophet writes to describe God. (From the New Living Translation for the sake of being easier to provoke thought on the awesomeness of God.):

12 Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale?

13 Who is able to advise the Spirit of the Lord? Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him?

14 Has the Lord ever needed anyone’s advice? Does he need instruction about what is good? Did someone teach him what is right or show him the path of justice?

15 No, for all the nations of the world are but a drop in the bucket. They are nothing more than dust on the scales. He picks up the whole earth as though it were a grain of sand.

16 All the wood in Lebanon’s forests and all Lebanon’s animals would not be enough to make a burnt offering worthy of our God.

17 The nations of the world are worth nothing to him. In his eyes they count for less than nothing mere emptiness and froth.

18 To whom can you compare God? What image can you find to resemble him?

19 Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains?

20 Or if people are too poor for that, they might at least choose wood that won’t decay and a skilled craftsman to carve an image that won’t fall down!

21 Haven’t you heard? Don’t you understand? Are you deaf to the words of God the words he gave before the world began? Are you so ignorant?

22 God sits above the circle of the earth. The people below seem like grasshoppers to him! He spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them.

23 He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing.

24 They hardly get started, barely taking root, when he blows on them and they wither. The wind carries them off like chaff.

25 “To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One.

26 Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.

27 O Jacob, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights?

28 Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

In **Rom. 11:33**, Paul writes “Oh, the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” Speaking to the “confidence we have in Christ toward God” Paul writes to the Corinthians that we are “being transformed into the same image of glory to glory”, **II Cor. 3:4 & 18**.

God allowing us to participate in His divine nature is Him allowing us into His presence. He does so, through Christ, by forgiving our sin. Not only has He forgiven our sin, but God actually invites us into a relationship with Him! We love because God loves us and “the one who abides in love abides in God and God in him”, **I Jn. 4:8 & 16**. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, **Rom. 8:10-11, I Cor. 3:16, II Tim. 1:14**. Our lives are “hidden with Christ in God”, **Col. 3:2** and we are “being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created Him.”, **Col. 3:10**.

As mentioned in Lesson 6, through Christ, we can take part in His fullness, **Ephesians 3:17–19**. Because of Christ, we are made holy, righteous, justified and we get to partake in His grace, forgiveness and love. All of which, are aspects of His divine nature.

Peter points out that we are partakers of His “divine power”, **vr.3** and “divine nature”, **vr. 4**, as long as we “practice these things”, **vr. 10**. Faith alone will not produce in us what God wants us to be, any more than having faith that I can run a 5K will produce that result. If I even want to begin to be able to run, I must produce some action.

Because of what God has done for us, we have also escaped the corruption of the world. The word “lust” is from the Greek word “epithelia” and means “excessive desire”. The idea is, there is corruption in the world and it operates through excessive desire. Participating in God’s divine nature, inclusive of our spiritual mindset and being conformed to the “image of His son”, **Rom. 8:6 & 29**, allows us to escape these worldly influences.

Lesson 15 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Vr. 5, “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence (virtue), and in your moral excellence, knowledge,”

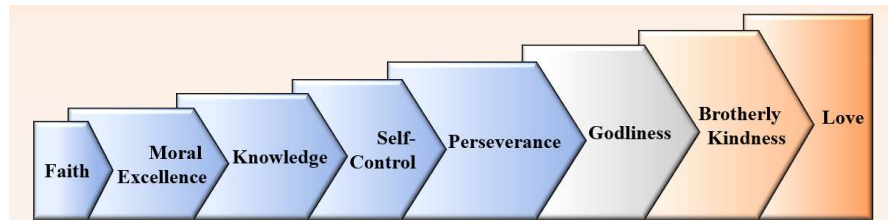
Peter will now go into a list of things that we should continue to do as a disciple of Christ. Things we continue to grow in because of the relationship we have with God and so that we can continue to escape the influence of the world.

“Now for this reason”, in seeing what God has done for us, we should be “applying all diligence” in our faith. The word “applying” also translated as “giving” in the KJV is the Greek word “pareisenegkantes” and means “bear in along side”. Transliterated would be “brought in besides”. How much is ALL diligence? It’s all of our being. We should be loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength,

Mt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30, Lk. 10:27. We should always seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, **Mt. 6:33.** Always striving to grow in our faith. We are to “grow up in all aspects into Him”, **Eph. 4:15.** God has done all of the work in bringing us salvation, but He still expects us to do some things. Some of the things we are to do is grow in the attributes that Peter will proceed to list.

Brother Guy N. Woods, says this concerning the following attributes that Peter lays out: “It is important to observe that it was the apostle’s intention to indicate that each of these graces grows out of, and this produced by, the one which precedes it. Before each grace mentioned, the verb ‘supply’ is to be understood. Each creates and makes possible the next; each tempers and makes perfect that which goes before it. The preposition ‘in’, which he attaches to each, indicates that the grace which follows is included in the one which precedes it, and is thus produced by it.”

(Woods, 1958, A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude, p. 152)



Faith

It makes sense to start the list with faith because we don’t take meaningful action with things we do not believe in. Faith then, is where we start in changing our life for God. Faith is having belief in something, based on evidence and/or experience and taking action based on that. We do this in everyday life. We believe something so we take action according to experience and evidence. I believe the grocery store has the food I want. So I am going to go to the store to buy it.

When the Hebrew writer says that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not see”, **Heb. 11:1.** We need to understand that faith is based on something. The scripture is assurance, conviction, evidence that we can believe in. The New Testament is a collection of historical accounts, written by eyewitnesses, in the presence of other eye witnesses, about divine events, so others, like us, may believe, **Lk. 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3; Jn. 20:30-31; I Cor. 15:3-10; I Tim. 3:16; I Jn. 1:1-4.** Peter also, after he gives this list we are studying, says they didn’t just believe “cleverly devised tales” but they saw and actually heard the voice of God, testifying that Jesus is the son of God, **II Ptr. 1:16-21.**

The apostles saw and heard Jesus, this is the evidence of their faith. Our faith is in this evidence that they wrote down about what they saw and heard. God gave us this faith, this evidence, conviction to put our faith in. Scripture is what we believe in to take meaningful action. Jesus is “the author and perfecter of faith”, **Heb. 12:2.** Faith is the gospel and is how the righteousness of God is revealed, **Rom. 1:16-17.** As was touched on in lesson 2, when we see “from faith to faith” in **vr. 17**, the first faith is “thee” faith that God has given us, the gospel, Jesus, etc. The second faith is our faith. For example, Paul encourages the Philippians to strive “together for the faith of the gospel”, **Ph. 1:27.** In **2:17**, he gives a good call out to the “sacrifice and service of your faith”.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And the one who comes to God, “must believe He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him”, **Heb. 11:6.** Faith is inclusive of confidence and trust. It means we can depend it to take action. We do not change ourselves for anything we do not believe in. Do we have confidence in God? Do we believe in what Jesus said and did? And do we know that doing it will get us to heaven?

Faith should continue to grow. Like building a brick wall, each brick makes the wall stronger. When we take action to move closer to God, what we receive in that growth, whether good or bad, becomes a brick we add to the wall. The bits of knowledge we gain, the lessons we learn, the steps we take are all bricks we add to our wall of faith make it stronger. I move forward in faith, based on the evidence I have. Ultimately, the foundation of our faith, is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, [Rom. 1:3-5](#), [I Cor. 15:13-17](#). In Him is my faith to move forward!

Moral Excellence (Virtue)

We don't use the word "virtue" much in daily life, so I think we have lost touch with it' definition. We would define it as "behavior with high moral standards". The Greek work for "moral excellence" or "virtue" is the word "arete" and means "properly manliness (valor), that is, excellence (intrinsic or attributed): praise, virtue". It's the same word used in [vr. 3](#) for "excellence", or some translations keep it as "virtue".

Besides [verses 3 & 5](#), the only other times the word is used is in: [Ph. 4:8](#) as "excellence" NASB, "whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things". [I Peter 2:9](#), as "excellencies", "so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light".

Virtue is supplied by faith, meaning I believe God did "those things", so I will do "these things". Or, to put it more directly, I have faith God gave salvation, so I will act as one who is saved. A person with virtue is someone who acts with excellent character and continues to train to be excellent in their behavior and habits. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect", [Mt. 5:48](#) and "love your neighbor as yourself", [Mt. 22:39](#).

Loving our neighbor as ourself is a second command like the first, which is to love God with all of our being. On these two commandments depend "the whole Law and the Prophets", [Mt. 22:36-40](#). Moral excellence is patterned after God and His commandments. This is the standard of measure we put ourselves and our behavior up against. The same way we use a tape measure to build a house, we use God's virtues as our standard of morality. Adding virtue to our faith means that we are acting in a way that reflects our faith. Having "vices" or immoral actions, would be the opposite of how we should behave, [Gal. 5:16-17](#).

Paul's instructions are that in whatever we "do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord", [Col. 3:17](#). Walking as a disciple is a continuous practice, [I Jn. 1:5-7](#). To be spiritually transformed means we continue with a spiritual mindset so that our physical behavior is different. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another", [Jn. 13:35](#). "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples", [Jn. 15:8](#). Reflecting God in our life through moral, virtuous behavior, is how the world knows we are His disciples.

Knowledge

This is the 3rd time Peter has mentioned knowledge in the first 5 verses. Typically, In early stages of our Christian growth, knowledge isn't there or is very limited. This isn't a ridicule, this is just part of the natural progression. Peter did not list it first for a reason. Training comes first. Faith prompts us to change our behavior, moral excellence comes as we start behaving based on the knowledge we have. Just like a parent trains a child. Brush your teeth, take a bath, etc. That's training. As they get older they

come to a knowledge of why these are important. We teach our children to behave, being moral excellence and then they come to know why it's important. Both of our children have thanked us for teaching them to behave. While they did not always like the teachings at the time, they have now come to the knowledge of why we taught them the things we did.

In [Eph. 4:11-15](#), we see that God gave some to fulfill different roles for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. While some may perform different roles within the church, "we ALL attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Emp. Mine). No matter what our talent or function may be, we are all to continue to mature to the fullness of Christ. Meaning, we all are to continue grow up in knowledge!

Unfortunately, many followers of Christ don't continue in knowledge. And so our growth in being spiritually transformed stops or is very limited. We are to continue to grow in our knowledge. To "put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created Him", [Col. 3:10](#). Knowledge is what brings us growth in His word. It is how we come to know more about His truth and are able to sharpen the focus of our spiritual mindset, escaping "the snare of the devil", [II Tim. 2:24-26](#).

Knowledge, specifically God's knowledge, is what we add to our moral excellence, as we come to understand why the things God has given us are good. Just like a child comes to understand why a parent taught them the things they did.

We do need to stress the importance of it being God's knowledge and our surrender to it. The world has all kinds of different definitions of knowledge. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was that the Father would give them "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him", [Eph. 1:17-19](#).

To try and have virtue or moral excellence without the knowledge that is from God causes a problem for us, as we see in our society today. There is no sense of moral excellence, because our society has it's own definition of morality, based on it's own knowledge. Morality, or knowledge of what is "right", all become relative, because individuals back up their moral behavior based on their own personal "knowledge".

In [II Cor. 10:5](#), Paul writes "We are destroying speculations in every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ". We need the knowledge of God so that we can "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" against anyone who wants to turn away from the truth", [II Tim. 4:2-4](#). We can not know or defend right behavior if we don't have knowledge from God.

We properly grow in morality, virtue and faith when we surrender ourselves to knowledge that is from God. If we don't grow in the knowledge of God, then we end up letting society dictate the definition of our moral behavior. It becomes me against you, instead of being you and I following God.

Lesson 16 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Vr. 6, "and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,"

Self-Control

The phrase "self-control" is the Greek word "engkrateia", which means "self-control or temperance".

Acts, 24:25 and Gal. 5:23, are the only other times the word is used. It is the ability to control ourselves physically, emotionally and even spiritually.

From Guy N. Woods, "It denotes self-government, discipline, the ability of one to control his own life. It is acquired through the exercise of discernment, the knowledge by which one differentiates between right and wrong, and thus develops from it. One possessed of such knowledge, and being thus equipped to identify evil, is able to avoid it." (Woods, 1958, A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude, p. 151)

To have self-control or temperance, we have to have our mind set on the spiritual. The practice of surrendering ourselves, setting our mind on things above, **Col. 3:2**. When mankind does not submit to a spiritual mind, God gives us over, or allows us to have a depraved mind, **Rom. 1:28**. Interestingly, the phrase "gave them over" in the Greek is "paradidomee" and means "to surrender, that is yield up". When we do not follow God, we lose self-control and follow "unrighteousness, wickedness", etc. **Rom. 1:29-32**.

Paul writes that God's grace instructs us "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly", **Titus 2:11-12**. We work to have self-control as we fight against the deeds of the flesh and try to do the fruit of the Spirit. An awareness to focus on our spiritual mindset helps us in our self control. Impulse is the opposite of self control. For example, an "impulse buy" is something you bought without thinking it through.

Here are a few examples where we all, as disciples of Christ, need reminded to show self control:

- Anger. We are not to let the sun go down on our anger and with that, no unwholesome word should come from our mouth, **Eph. 4:26-32**.
- Speech. We are to let our "speech always be with grace", **Col. 4:6**.
- Politics and Work. We are to submit to institutions, honor the king and be submissive to employers, **1 Peter 2:13-18**. Put this with always speaking with grace and we realize that being a disciple of God means that I speak about my government and employer with respect.

These are things we encounter in everyday life and things that a lot of people struggle with in various ways. It doesn't mean we can't be upset, voice concern or take a stand on things that are right. But it does mean as a disciple of Christ we are to conduct ourselves exercising self control. We need to continually strive to control our behavior in all aspects of our life. The goal is to always have Christ reflected in our behavior.

Perseverance

Translated as "perseverance" in the NASB, NIV and NKJ and "patience" in the KJV and ASV. It is the Greek word, "hupomone" and means "cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy: -enduring, patience, patient continuance". It's often translated as "patience". The real idea being, to have the ability to "stick to it".

If you don't have self control, you will not have perseverance. Self-control puts our mind on spiritual things, perseverance keeps it there. James uses the word in **James 1:3-4**, translated as "endurance" (NASB). James sheds some light on the kind of perseverance Peter is speaking to. As you read from **James 1:2-4**, James actually tells us to consider it a joy when we encounter trials, because the testing of our faith produces "endurance". And "endurance" will have its perfect result. We need to "keep on, keeping on", disciplining ourselves to persevere through the trials of life.

Paul writes that we “exult in our tribulation, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance and hope and hope does not disappoint”, [Rom. 5:3-4](#). When we persevere through tribulations as disciples of God, we continue to grow and be transformed spiritually. We see the benefits of proven character and hope in the trials of life. We see the good that is and can come, in spite of the bad we are in. We see purpose and meaning where there doesn't seem to be any.

We are told to “run with endurance the race that is set before us”, fixing our eyes on Jesus, [Heb. 12:1-2](#). The word “endurance” is the same Greek word Peter uses. The source of our perseverance or endurance, is to keep looking to Jesus.

Our life as a disciple is one where we keep pressing on, [Ph. 3:12-16](#). Again, the source of that is to be “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”, [vr. 14](#). Even Paul had to have the mentality to reach forward. It's all part of our spiritual focus or “attitude”, [vr. 15](#), to keep persevering.

Godliness

What is godliness? We would probably answer that with something like “to be like God”. And being “like God” is different than being “god like”. Being like God is to follow Him, while being “god like” would be a person trying to become a god. But to try and be more specific than our definition of “to be like God” may prove to be a bit difficult because there is so much included in being like God.

It seems to me, that Peter has brought us to the point of what it means to live godly lives by putting it at this position in the list. To live godly and grow in godliness, is to live and grow in our faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control and perseverance. Godliness grows as we continue “applying all diligence”, [vr.5](#), in continual growth of all the qualities he has listed so far.

The qualities listed thus far have been concerning our internal spiritual growth. It is us surrendering to God and growing as His disciple. Letting Him mold, shape and direct us as His children. Godliness is now a shift outward. So that all of these qualities, that we have been building on internally, are now reflected outwardly in our lives, from God through us, to those around us.

Godliness in the Greek is “eusebeia” and means “in humble reverence and deep piety to God”. The word is used 15 times in the New Testament. Peter uses it 4 times; here in [verses 6 and 7](#), in [1:3](#) and [3:11](#). Luke uses it in [Acts 3:12](#), translated as “piety” or “holiness”. Paul uses it 10 times, [I Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7 & 8; 6:3, 5 & 6](#) and in [6:11](#). He also uses it in [II Tim. 3:5](#) and [Titus 1:1](#).

In [I Tim. 3:16](#), Paul speaks to the “mystery of godliness” for us, “great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory”. This verse and [Ph. 2:5-11](#) are two quotes of early creeds from the first century. We see godliness in Jesus. When we pattern our actions after Jesus, we are exhibiting godliness. I have come to the conclusion that Peter is saying, when we put together and exhibit faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control and perseverance, along with the spiritual things given to us by God, we reflect godliness. As disciples of Christ, we continue to discipline, practice and train ourselves to have the spiritual mind set needed to exhibit these qualities in our life. And as we continue to do so, a life of godliness springs forth stronger and more consistently. Not that we will do everything perfectly, but eventually, these qualities become such a part of us that we can do them more without thinking about it.

In [I Tim. 4:8](#), Paul writes, “godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”. Godliness is an elevation of thinking in our spiritual mindset. We reflect God in our life, not because we are trying too, but because we are surrendering to Him, following Him, and are devoted to Him, making godliness a natural result. In [Mt. 25:37-40](#), the righteous didn’t recognize that they were doing generous things, they were just doing it because it was the right thing to do. It was just part of what they did living life. This is godliness.

Lesson 17 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Vr. 7, “and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.”

Brotherly Kindness

Inclusive in our godliness is “brotherly kindness”. This is the word “philadelphia” in the Greek. There are 4 main Greek words for love (there are additional derivatives as well). Agape, which most people have heard of and is next in Peter’s list, means “love, that is, affection or benevolence; dear, love”. This is the main word used for love in the New Testament. The word “storge” means “empathy” or “bond”. It is not used in the New Testament, unless you count it being used as compound word. The word “Eros”, means “romantic or erotic love”. It is also not used in New Testament, but the idea is present in places like [I Cor. 7:8-9](#) and [Heb. 13:4](#).

Another Greek word for love, is “philadelphia” which means “fraternal affection – brotherly love (kindness), love of the brethren”. That is the word used here for “brotherly kindness”. It’s root word “phileo” is the word used when Peter answers back that he loves Jesus, [Jn. 21:15-17](#).

While brotherly kindness is not the same level of love as “agape” love, it is still a kind affectionate love, that we are to share with brethren, [Rom. 12:10](#), [Heb. 13:1](#). As godliness began an outward shift in the focus of the qualities listed, brotherly love continues that outward focus. When leading a godly life we can better extend brotherly love to those around us.

In [Col. 3:12-14](#), in the context of being a disciple and being with other disciples we are to “put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Agape love is, by far, the form of love we should have. But, it certainly makes sense that the natural transition of growth as a child of God is to go from brotherly love to agape love.

Love

The final quality in Peter’s list is “agape”, love, the usual Greek word used for love in the New Testament. It is very interesting that Peter is showing a progression from the brotherly, friendship love that he expressed to Jesus in [John 21:15:19](#), to agape, God’s love. Peter certainly understood progression in spiritual growth. He sometimes gave the right answer, he sometimes put his foot in his mouth and even after Jesus’ resurrection, he wasn’t ready to commit to being a disciple of agape love. But he now writes about how we transform ourselves spiritually, starting with Faith, then Moral Excellence, then Knowledge, Self-Control, Perseverance and Godliness. Living a life of godliness we better understand brotherly kindness and ultimately love. Specifically God’s love. Love that is mutually fulfilling, giving and sacrificial.

Paul makes a list of his own in [Rom. 5:1-5](#), where he also starts the with faith. Faith allows us into grace, then we hope in the glory of God. Then he speaks to, tribulations bringing perseverance, then proven character, then hope. Then from hope to agape love. Again, we see a list of qualities that shows transformation in Christ, beginning with faith and ending with agape love.

Jesus said, “Greater love has not one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”, [Jn. 15:13](#). We know He showed such love by allowing Himself to be put to death on the cross. To lay down your life for someone, even by human standards, is the ultimate sacrifice. But not only did Jesus lay down His human life, He gave up His eternal heavenly home to do it. “He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men”, [Ph. 2:6-7](#). He left being the creator to live in the created. He removed Himself from eternity, to come and die. He left the glory of heaven, to not just dwell on earth as a man, but as a lowly “bond-servant”.

As Paul writes concerning what Jesus gave up, he says earlier in [Ph. 2:2-3](#), that “if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love”...we are to “do nothing from selfishness”. There is no “self” in love. Jesus, showed us that. He showed us that in a way even, beyond what we can comprehend. How do we grasp what He gave up for us by leaving heaven? Living such a lowly life and dying on a cross? And yet, He did. At the root of our problems is us. Selfish us. If we could learn to give up “self” more, we would love more. Love is unselfish surrender, leaving heaven and dying on a cross.

Lesson 18 - II Peter 1:2-11 – Spiritual Transformation

Vr. 8, For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These qualities are ours to have and in them, we should be increasing. We are to be growing in these qualities continually in our life. They are to become part of our character and continue to abound and multiply. We never reach a level where we have accomplished everything there is to accomplish in our walk as a child of God. And that is the beauty in growing as a disciple of Christ. We never run out of things to learn, comprehend or to make part of our relationship with Him or with others.

For anyone who has ever felt like the things they do don't matter or that their life doesn't matter, know you matter to God. These qualities, to say it in the positive, render us useful and fruitful. This continued positive character comes in the “true knowledge of our Lord”. This “true” or “full” knowledge is supreme, full, complete, knowledge. Ultimately, true knowledge is not just “of Him” but “is Him”.

We are able to see and know God because of Jesus. We see the “true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”, [Col. 2:2-3](#). He enables us to partake in the divine power that brings us these qualities to grow in. Peter is reminding us of the importance of abiding in Jesus. Jesus is the vine that is the source for us to bear fruit, [Jn. 15:1-5](#). It is in Christ that we are “being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him”, [Col. 3:10](#).

Vr. 9, For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins.

On the opposite side of the coin from [verse 8](#) is Peter's point here. If we lack these qualities we are “blind or short-sighted”. Being short sighted is his metaphor for not growing as we should. We are only looking at what is right in front of us. The word in the Greek is “muopazo” and means “to shut the eyes, that is, blink: cannot see afar off”. Spiritually speaking then, this means we are just seeing what is around us, not ever looking up and out to see what is around us, thus limiting our ability to move forward. Ultimately, we are to be “fixing our eyes on Jesus”, [Heb. 12:2](#). When we can see ahead spiritually, we are clearly seeing the path we are on and the direction we are going.

When we stop growing in these qualities, we stop growing as His disciple making ourselves blind to what Jesus has done for us. We need to possess these qualities and allow them to formulate good works in our lives.

Just because we are saved by grace does not mean we just sit around and do nothing. God has always had things for man to do. We should be doing the “good works, which God prepared beforehand”, [Eph. 2:8-10](#). All of these qualities are gifts from God. He allows us to share in them, grow in them and even give them. God has purified us from our sins, reconciling us back to Him, [Rom. 5:9-11](#), [Eph. 2:1-5](#). When we do not grow in these qualities, Peter says it’s like we have forgotten what God had done for us.

Vr. 10, Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

This is the second time Peter uses “diligent”, or “diligence”. He first used it in [vr. 5](#). This is an eager effort on our part, demonstrating that we have things to do to be “certain about His calling and choosing”.

God calls us through the gospel, [II Thess. 2:13-14](#), but we can choose not to respond. Just like if a parent calls for their child to come to them, the expectation is that the child will obey. God’s “calling and choosing” us is an invitation for us to obey Him. The expectation is that we will follow His calling and act on keeping His commandments, [Jn. 14:15](#).

Being a disciple of God is a practice, as Peter points out here. We have to obey the will of God to be right with Him, [Mt. 7:21](#). When he says “for as long as you practice these things” he is pointing out, there is a continual effort on our part. To have fellowship with Him we have to practice the truth, [I Jn. 1:6](#).

A quick note that living for Christ does not nullify grace, [Gal. 2:20-21](#). While the context in the Galatians passage is in regards to the law, the principle still applies to us. Our having to do something in obedience does not mean we are earning our salvation. Paul says we no longer live, Christ lives in us and the life we live in the flesh is by faith in God. Grace is NOT nullified by this. It means we are gladly receiving the gifts He has given us and practice our obedience out of gratitude. Simply put, we surrender ourselves as His disciple. Incidentally, we see then when grace is nullified. It’s when we do not live in Christ. Like a disobedient child who does not respond to the call of the parent. This is all the more reason to be diligent in practicing these things.

Vr. 11, for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Peter begins the list noting the first quality: faith, which supplies, the next, moral excellence, [vr. 5](#). Then knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. He points out that we should be increasing in these qualities, [vr. 8](#). Now, with this verse being part of the thought in [verse 10](#), he notes our “practice of these things”. This is the way we enter God’s kingdom. When we grow in and practice the qualities Peter has listed. With these, God will abundantly supply us with entrance into His eternal kingdom.

The language here is not speaking to “being saved” or “born” into His kingdom. There must be a new birth, one that is of water and spirit, [Jn. 3:2-6](#). Peter has already written that the Father enables this birth by the resurrection of His son, for us through baptism, [I Ptr. 1:3; 3:21](#). But here in [verses 10-11](#), Peter is now speaking to our actions after our spiritual birth and how we are to live being in God’s kingdom, [Col. 1:13](#), [Heb. 12:28](#).

The call of being a disciple is one of tremendous price. It requires full surrender of all of our being. It takes continual practice, on going training, and constant discipline. Through God's grace, we do see fruit from the labor while we are on this earth. But it still does not compare to the ultimate reward. As faithful children, when Jesus comes again, we will get to enter into the holy presence of God in heaven, to live with Him there forever.

"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.", [II Ptr. 3:17-18](#).

