

CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

A Study of 2 Peter

STUDY TWO

To Be Useful and Fruitful, Here's How

2 Peter 1:1–11

With God's gift of eternal life comes the joy and rewards of living for Him while we're on this earth.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DEEP in our souls is a yearning for significance. People need to know that their lives matter. That *who they are* and *what they do* are important, valued, and appreciated. As followers of Christ, we especially want to make a difference for good in our world and for the kingdom of God.

When this hunger for usefulness goes unmet, people wither inside. They may watch others using their gifts and helping others, and they wonder whether they have what it takes.

Truthfully, however, all believers have what it takes to be significant in God's kingdom—despite their limitations and weaknesses. Peter, whose courage crumbled when he denied Christ three times, declared it so:

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.” (2 Peter 1:3)

We have *everything* we need! God has enabled us with the Holy Spirit's power and, as Peter will explain, given us promises that secure our relationship with Him. Our part is to put our confidence in God and act on what He says. As we do, our character grows and so does our fruitfulness. In God's kingdom, anyone can be useful even when they stumble—Peter is a prime example. In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* study, he will show us how.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Perhaps past failure has discouraged you. Or maybe you feel limited by your circumstances. Invite the Lord to reassure you through His Word.

Father, You know me and You know my past. Show me through Your Word how I can be useful and fruitful for You. I am willing, but I admit my hesitation and doubts. Encourage me through Your Spirit and Your truth. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The recipients of 2 Peter were gentile Christians in churches scattered throughout Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. Peter was known as the “apostle to the Jews” (Galatians 2:8), but he ministered to all Christians throughout the Roman Empire—from Antioch (2:11) to Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:12) to Rome (1 Peter 5:13). A member of Jesus’ inner circle of disciples, Peter knew Jesus like few others did. He was one of the “pillars of the church” (Galatians 2:9), whose authority and teaching were highly respected.

False teachers, however, had charmed their way into the churches. These crooks had lured the sheep away from Christ and led them into thickets of heresy and sin. Jesus had told Peter to “take care of my sheep” (John 21:16), and so, as a faithful shepherd, Peter gently guided the flock back into the fold of truth in the opening verses of 2 Peter.



Observation: Faith and Power, Promises and Virtues

Peter packed each word and phrase in 2 Peter 1:1–11 with spiritual treasures. Begin your search for meaning with careful observation, the first step in *Searching the Scriptures*. Read the passage slowly and aloud a couple of times, pausing often to let the words sink in.



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Our Foundation of Faith—2 Peter 1:1–2

The false teachers submitted to no one. Under what authority did Peter place himself in the first line of *2 Peter 1:1*? How did Peter identify himself?

In the second part of *1:1*, what did Peter, a Jewish believer, share with his gentile readers? What links all believers?

Don't miss how Peter referred to Jesus Christ. What truth did Peter affirm that false teachers often denied?



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To Be Useful and Fruitful, Here's How

2 Peter 1:1–11

What did Peter pray that God would give the believers, according to *2 Peter 1:2*?

In just two verses, Peter set his readers on a bedrock of truth. At the heart of our faith is Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. Through our faith in Jesus, God pours out His grace and peace in us to help us know Him. The more we know God, the more grace and peace He gives us—which draws us into even deeper knowledge of Him.

But that's not all God gives us through Christ. In *2 Peter 1:3–4*, Peter described even more.

We give our sinfulness to Christ, and He gives us His righteousness, hope, faith, and the assurance of eternal life. The reason this transfer is possible is the grace of God. Our purpose, usefulness, and fruitfulness begin with grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

God's Power and Promises—*2 Peter 1:3–4*

Observe the twice-repeated phrase “given us” in *2 Peter 1:3–4* (“granted to us,” NASB). What did Peter say God has granted to us? By what means?



To Be Useful and Fruitful, Here's How

2 Peter 1:1–11

Peter stated that God's power enables us to live "a godly life" (2 Peter 1:3). What do God's promises enable us to do, according to 2 Peter 1:4?

Here are a few of God's promises: forgiveness to the sinful, strength for the weary, rewards for the undeserving, blessing for the obedient, comfort in the struggle, power to the weak, hope to the dying, His presence in threatening situations, and resurrection at Christ's return. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Our Participation—2 Peter 1:5–11

What seven traits did Peter say we should cultivate to "supplement" our faith, according to 2 Peter 1:5–7?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____



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What is the benefit of growing in these qualities, according to *2 Peter 1:8*?

One thing leads to another, doesn't it? Faith in Christ taps into God's grace and peace, which help us know God. God supplies His power and promises, which enable us to develop godly virtues. The result: *a useful and fruitful life*.

Believers who don't follow these steps don't grow. They don't fulfill the reason Christ saved them in the first place—specifically, “to share [God's] divine nature and escape the world's corruption” (1:4). They are “shortsighted or blind” (1:9), unable to see the value of a relationship with Christ. With what exhortation did Peter conclude his teaching in *1:10–11*?

Do you ever wonder what to work on in your life? Here's a list of virtues worth developing. It's a list from God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Virtues Worth Developing

Defining key words aids our interpretation of a passage. Use the following chart to record the definitions of Peter's list of virtues in *2 Peter 1:5–7*. Click on the Greek word that links to the Greek dictionary at billmounce.com. If you don't have internet access, use a commentary on 2 Peter or even a dictionary to write down the meaning of the English words.

| Term | Definition |
|--|------------|
| “moral excellence” <i>(arete)</i> | |
| “knowledge” <i>(gnosis)</i> | |
| “self-control” <i>(enkrateia)</i> | |
| “patient endurance” <i>(hypomone)</i> | |
| “godliness” <i>(eusebeia)</i> | |
| “brotherly affection” <i>(philadelphia)</i> | |
| “love” <i>(agape)</i> | |



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Peter constructed these qualities like stairsteps, one leading to the next. Why did Peter list these steps in this order? In other words, why must moral excellence precede knowledge? Or, put another way, why is knowledge useless without moral excellence? Likewise, why must knowledge come before self-control? And so forth.

Peter was describing the steps of Christian maturity—the sanctification process that begins on the ground level of *faith* in Christ and leads to the top step of Christlike *love*. Through Christ, God makes available His power and promises. However, sanctification doesn't just happen. We must “make every effort” (2 Peter 1:5).

Explain the role of *effort* in sanctification.

God granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness. It's our basic equipment, but it requires our acting upon it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Our Model of Love

No one has embodied all the virtues in Peter's list like Jesus did. Jesus stands alone at the highest levels of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and, ultimately, love. How do the following verses describe the divine love of Jesus?

John 15:13: _____

Romans 5:8: _____

Ephesians 5:2: _____

Just as physical traits run in families, so also character traits run in God's family. We bear the closest family resemblance with Christ when we love as He loved.

*The best definition of Christian love is this: "seeking the highest good of another person."
It doesn't mean we always agree, but we do whatever is best for the other person.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Application: Moving Forward in Christlikeness

To develop the qualities in 2 Peter 1:5–7, we don't need a college education or a high IQ. We don't need a certain talent. But we do need diligence, which begins with *intention*.

Did Peter's staircase of Christian qualities stir in you a desire to take the next step? What decision might you need to make?



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Which trait in the list would you like to ask God to help you develop? Use the following space to write your request for His enablement.

The ancient Greek philosophers advocated virtues, but they could offer people no power to achieve them. Through faith in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit's power and God's promises that guarantee our relationship with Him.

What is one habit you can build into your daily routine to tap into the spiritual resources you have in Christ?

The more you display Christ's virtues, the sweeter your life's fruit becomes. You can be certain that God sees that fruit—even if you feel overlooked by others. Cling to God's promise of eternal reward: "He will not forget how . . . you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers" (Hebrews 6:10). Love God with all your heart. Let Christ's love spill over to others.

That's how to be useful and fruitful in God's kingdom.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I long to be useful and fruitful for You. Thank You that Peter showed me the steps. Now I need Your power as I claim Your promises. Transform me into the kind of person who loves as Christ loved. In His name, amen.



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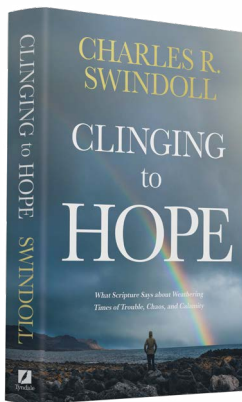
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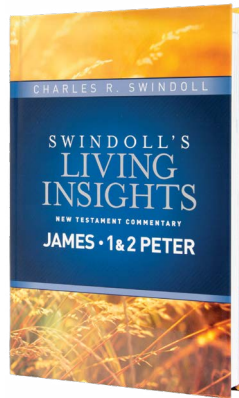
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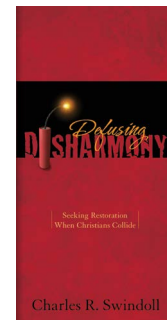
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2023 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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