



## 2 Peter 1:5-11 The Diligent Disciple

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
[www.calvarydcmetro.org](http://www.calvarydcmetro.org)

I would like to begin this morning by asking you a question. What will happen to you the moment after you die?

Do you believe you will disintegrate or be annihilated? That you came from nothing and are headed toward nothing? That you are just a particular intersection of time plus matter plus chance, propelled through life by a string of predetermined chemical reactions and neurological signals? That the universe began with a bang of which you're just a single spark, playing a part on a stage that whirls its way through an enormous expanse of space?

Or do you believe that you will go to hell? Is that even possible? Is there really such a place, or is that just for cartoons and heavy metal CD covers?

Do you believe that you will go to heaven? Isn't that where everybody goes? Everybody except for Osama Bin Laden, Hitler, mass murderers and people who have really hurt us personally?

ABC News did a poll in 2005 and found: "Among all Americans, 75 percent think they'll go to heaven. The rest include 5 percent who believe in heaven but don't think they'll get there; 9 percent who believe but aren't sure they'll get in; and 10 percent who don't believe in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Or do you believe, as Jesus taught in Matthew 7, that we must, [13](#) "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. [14](#) Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Do you believe Him when He says He is, "The way, the truth, and the life, and **that no one can come to the Father except by [Him]?**" (John 14:6)

Do you believe, as Paul writes in Romans 10:9-10, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. [10](#) For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Do you believe these things? Are you going to Heaven when you die?

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<sup>1</sup> Poll: Elbow Room No Problem in Heaven. Analysis By DALIA SUSSMAN, Dec. 20, 2005. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/Beliefs/story?id=1422658#.T9vjEvHnos4> Accessed June 15, 2012.

I hope that everyone in this room says yes. And if you don't, or if you have questions, I hope you'll come and see me or one of the other pastors after this is over – I would be happy to try to answer any question you might have.

Now think about that – what if your doctor said, “Now, after this check-up, I'll be right over there, and you can come ask any medical question you like – would you take him or her up on it? Here's a better one – what if your IT guy, the one who really knows how to fix problems, said, I'll be available to answer any questions you might be having about your laptop or your workstation. Would you take them up on it? Probably. Well, I don't claim to know everything, and I can't fix your computer, but if you have a theological or spiritual problem, I know where to look, and I'm willing to help you find some answers.

Going back to our original question though, if you believe that you are going to Heaven when you die, may I ask you, how does your believe in the after life affect your daily life?

According to what we will see this morning, it should have a dramatic effect. According to 2 Peter we should be working diligently to shape our lives here and now to reflect our beliefs about the hereafter.

Now, I think most of us desire to grow in our walk with God. In our better moments, our prouder moments, we would say, “Yes, that is what I want. My life isn't quite what I wish it was.” But how do we do it? How do we get from where we are to where we could be?

Read with me, if you will, starting in verse 3:

Peter begins verse 5 with “For this very reason,” so we need to know what reason he is talking about...

Because “His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, [4](#) by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.”

We must never grow tired of saying or hearing this: it is BECAUSE OF what God has ALREADY done for us that we do anything for Him or anyone else. God is ALWAYS the great initiator. But then we respond, so...

“for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, [6](#) to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, [7](#) to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. [8](#) For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9](#) For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

[10](#) Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; [11](#) for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Peter lays out a seven-step plan. Seven rings that should ripple outward from our lives: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and finally, love.

Now, that is WHAT we should pursue, but he also mentioned something about HOW we ought to pursue it. Did you notice it? He says we ought to do this diligently. Now, that’s a great word. Diligent. I wonder if you would categorize your devotional life, or your walk with God as diligent?

Peter uses the word twice here in six verses. I think he’s trying to make a point.

Godliness doesn’t come naturally or easily. Really, there isn’t much worth having in life that does, is there?

If you want to have savings, you have to keep from spending. If you want to be in great shape, you have to say no to Cinnabons – especially the caramel and pecan ones – more often than you want to. If you want to get a score on your SATs, MCAT, LSAT, or your GRE or your boards, you have to study, and study hard...study diligently, right?

Malcolm Gladwell has been popularizing the notion of the 10,000 hour rule lately - the principle that it takes around 10,000 hours of doing something to get freakishly good at it. And, it seems to take most people around 10 years to put in the hours of practice to reach that mark.

The bottom line is – you’re not going to excel at anything worth achieving unless you give yourself to it, unless you pursue it diligently.

So keep that in mind as we look at the seven steps and the foundation they are built on.

That foundation of course is our faith, faith that Peter calls in verse one, “like precious faith” which we obtained “by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” In short, you start by remembering the gospel – you were lost without Christ, an enemy of God, living for yourself. But He offered you salvation – He came to you when you were living life for yourself and offered to turn things around.

Now you have a new life in Christ, and the point of this new life isn’t just to give you a new “positive and uplifting” radio station to listen to, and a new bookstore in the mall - it’s meant to affect *everything* you say, think, do, and believe.

So you start there, with your faith, and then you begin to flesh that out a bit. **The first thing you do is add virtue.** Virtue is another cool word – a word that doesn’t get much use today. Some translations call it “moral excellence” which makes me think of Bill and

Ted, but that just shows my age. Moral excellence is a good way to put it – you have values, you have standards in your life, lines that you will not cross no matter what, or things *you will do* no matter what.

Virtue used to be an important concept cherished by philosophers, statesmen, and parents but it slipped out of favor because it's hard. We prefer to do what is easy, what is convenient, and to find a reason or an excuse for why that's OK.

Can I ask you: have you ever suffered because you took a stand for Jesus? Have you ever lost a friend, or a boyfriend or a girlfriend because you held on so tight to a virtue that He commanded? Have you ever lost face or lost a deal because you refused to budge on a matter of virtue? If not, you might want to ask yourself how much of a difference does God really make in my life? You aren't truly committed to something unless you are willing to suffer for it.

So, if you want to have a life of virtue, you need to say no to certain things. And point blank – that means you're going to have some uncomfortable situations and lose some relationships. In order to say yes to some things in this life, you're going to have to say no to others. The critical question is: what are you saying yes to and what are you saying no to? Are you holding on to godly virtues or making convenient compromises?

I would argue that this is the most significant step – it's the first one for a reason. It's a line in the sand. Are you, or are you not, committed to doing things God's way? Those who choose to do what is pleasing to God will make progress in their Christian walk – they will bear fruit, they will not be barren, they will be abundant.

But those who find ways or reasons not to change *when they know the change that God is calling them to make* will stagnate. Peter says in verse 9 they're in danger of becoming spiritually blind and forgetting that they were even saved in the first place. After all, what were they saved from? *Living life their way instead of God's*, but what are they doing now, each time they choose to ignore or postpone what God is commanding? They're living life their way again.

So, if you want to grow in your walk with God, the first place to start is with moral excellence – with virtue – with a commitment to do what is right simply because it is right and let what ever consequences come, come.

Then, to your commitment to take a stand for what God says, you need to **add knowledge** – you need to learn more of what He has to say about different things.

Because your heart has already said yes to Him in general, now you want to know more specifics: How do I please God in my relationships, with my finances, with my entertainment, with my service – what does God say about being a husband or a wife, or a daughter or a son? What does God say about *everything*? I want to know *so I can obey*.

Where do I get that kind of knowledge? Primarily, from His Word. Have you read the whole Bible yet? When was the last time you did it? There are all kinds of great reading plans that will help you get through it all. Or take just one book – take a short epistle or the gospel of John and read it over and over until you really understand it.

And find some pastor that you really enjoy and start listening to him more often – download sermons and listen while you work in the kitchen, while you drive or commute, or while you run or bike. Or get some books and start reading – biographies, theologies, books on Church History. If you need some help, let me know, I'd LOVE to help you find some good stuff that will help you grow.

And surround yourself with worship music – not just “family friendly” and “safe for the whole family” stuff – but worship music, stuff that will make you think about Jesus more often.

Now, let's stop here for a minute and ask the question – well, what if I'm not all that hungry for the Word? What if I'm not always curious about God's will for my life? What if I'm a little dry?

Well, the best thing to do then is to go back to the foundation – do you really appreciate the faith that has been given to you, do you really appreciate what God has done for you? Do you really understand His “exceedingly great and precious promises?” And do you desire to obey Him – do you have any virtue?

The truth is, we often dull our own appetites for God by stuffing ourselves on things that are ungodly. We develop a taste for sugar instead of meat and pretty soon the thought of eating meat, even though we know it's good for us, doesn't really sound all that appealing.

If you're having a hard time in your walk – take a look at your spiritual diet – what are you taking in? You're growing in your knowledge of something – is it the right thing? Which brings us to **step three – self control**.

You cherish the faith, you're doing your best to pursue virtue, you're learning more and more about God – now you need self-control because even though you *know* what God wants you to do, and even though your spirit says, “Yes, I want to do it!” That doesn't mean it will always be easy to do.

You will always struggle with temptations like doubt, anger, fear, anxiety, lust, and depression. Satan, your flesh, and the world around you will constantly attack you with these things – what you need is self-control so that you don't get spun out of your walk.

Now, fortunately, self-control is also a fruit of the spirit – so when you lack self-control, God has promised that you can always reach out to Him and He will provide you with more – that won't necessarily make it easy, but it will make it possible.

It might be important for some of you to know that the word for self-control here in the original Greek was used of someone who was in control of his or her sexual urges, someone who was more than just a servant to their body's desires. There's nothing new under the sun – sin may take slightly different forms, but the desires inside the hearts of human beings are the same as they have ever been.

Others of us need to think of anger – do you get angry at your kids, angry at your spouse, angry at your boss – do you angry at people when you don't get your way? You need self-control.

And self-control means getting your flesh on a tighter and tighter leash – so that you have less and less room to flesh out when you are provoked – as I said, you will never be able to free yourself from temptation – but if you keep the flesh on a tight leash, it won't have as much room to express itself or cause problems. Keep reeling it in closer and closer by asking God for forgiveness and renewed strength.

That's kind of another way of saying, ask for **step four – perseverance**. Don't grow weary in doing good. Don't be looking for the next thing all the time, or wishing that this season of life was over – persevere until the end, finish well.

And remember the key word here – be diligent! Don't think that just because something is hard you're doing it wrong. Things generally have to be hard for quite a while before they're going to become easy. So if you're struggling to be better in some area of your life and it's hard to do it, that doesn't mean you're doing it wrong – just maintain your commitment and keep relying on Christ – sooner or later it will, most likely, get easier, but not until you have also gotten stronger!

**Step five** – as you continue to do all of this – as you keep the faith that was entrusted to you and grow in your knowledge of and obedience to Christ, you will increase in godliness – the word means reverence, respect, piety *toward God*.

Living out your commitment to Him and His Word is well pleasing to Him and shows that you are fulfilling the Great Commandment to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Which makes **step six** come along a little more naturally which is, to show brotherly kindness; for those of you who know a little Greek, it's *philadelphia*. Kindness or love to those who are closest to you.

And finally **step seven** – love, or *agape* – towards all people.

You see how, as you move farther and farther up the ladder, things actually become easier and easier in a sense? The very first things are the hardest – putting into practice your commitment to Christ and not budging when you have the opportunity – saying no to yourself and others so you can say Yes to God. But when you start to grow strong in that area, the next steps seem elementary by comparison.

And now read with me vs [8](#) again, “For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

If you live this kind of life you *will* bear fruit – your life will have meaning and value that will last for all eternity, and it will affect the way you enter into Heaven and your experience there. Read with me again: [10](#) Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; [11](#) for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

When we started off this morning, you said you knew where you are headed in the afterlife. But what about your daily life? Where are you in this staircase? Maybe you have put it in place and you’re burning calories each day by running up and down it. Good for you – who are you helping to make it up with you?

Or are you struggling to move what feel like legs of lead up each individual step? If your legs feel like lead, if you feel like you’re not making much progress – then go back to the foundation – remember what you have in Christ Jesus and then ask Him for the strength to obey in something, anything, and start building from there.

Or, are you the one who isn’t really sure about all of this and still has some questions to ask? If so, please come see me after the service, or ask someone you came with. This stuff is too important to live without answers.

Remember Peter’s admonition as we close this morning - brothers and sisters, “be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.”

This is how you grow in your walk with God – are you doing it?

Let’s pray.