SESSION OBJECTIVE: 2 PETER 1:5-11
To understand how to remain fruitful and confirm your calling.

A Growing Market

We live in the age of supplements. Growing up, I remember multivitamins (hello, Flintstones) but beyond that, supplements didn't really have much of a market. Today? One study alone showed that the supplement industry grew by 23% in 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Supplements are not going anywhere, it appears. The appeal, of course, is pretty simple: you lack some essential vitamin or mineral, and the supplement fills that void. Whether it's protein, antioxidants, BCAA's, Omega-3's, or some other health flash word, there is likely a supplement for it to help you.

In 2 Peter 1:5, Peter tells us: "For this very reason, make every effort to *supplement* your faith." Why should we do this? Verse 8 tells us: "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is possible to live an ineffective or unfruitful life in Christ. We are called by Christ to know Him, and through that knowledge we become partakers in His divine nature through the power of the Holy Spirit, and this results in godly living. However, Peter tells us to take the initiative and work out this faith diligently. This week we will look at the attributes we are called to supplement our faith with.

Supplement With What?

Verse 5 begins with a command: "Make every effort to supplement your faith." The word supplement in the original language is the Greek word ἐπιχορηγέω (epichorēgeō), and it means, "to supply further." It

communicates the idea that faith is in and of itself supplied, but that we are to supply to it further. Peter's list begins with virtue, and thus sets the stage for the kind of supplemented faith we are to pursue: a *virtuous faith*, or a *virtuous life*. Below is a breakdown of the things Peter prescribes.

VIRTUE

Virtue means, "any good quality." Peter uses the same word in his first letter in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." You could think of virtue as, "moral excellence." There is a tendency to avoid using language like this so as to not appear too legalistic, but the Scripture is clear; we are called to live above reproach (Col. 1:22). Moral excellence is to be one of the defining marks of a Christian.

KNOWLEDGE

Second on the list is, "knowledge." Already in the first four verses, knowledge has played a significant role. It is knowledge that grace and peace are multiplied through (2 Pet. 1:2). It is also knowledge that His divine power works through to grant us what we need to live a godly life (2 Pet. 1:3). It makes sense, then, that Peter would include knowledge in the list of supplements.

SELF-CONTROL

Next is, "self-control." It's the Greek word ἐγκράτεια (enkrateia), and it is the same word that the apostle Paul uses in his list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. This raises an interesting point. While self-control is one of the virtues listed in the fruit of Spirit and therefore supplied by Him, it is also something that we ourselves are able to supplement. This speaks to the cooperation that takes place between our renewed mind and the Spirit of God in pursuit of living a virtuous life.

STEADFASTNESS

Next is, "steadfastness," or more commonly known as *patience*. There are several words in the New Testament that are translated as patience. In Galatians 5, one of the other attributes mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit is patience, from the Greek word μακροθυμία (makrothumia), which is a more general term. In 2 Peter, Peter employs the word ὑπομονή (hypomonē), which more accurately could be thought of as, "patient endurance." In other words, steadfastness is the ability to endure something with patience. In light of the theme of the letter with regard to correcting false teaching coupled with the aggressive usage of the word knowledge, it might be that Peter speaking to the value of enduring the battle against false teaching with patience, never giving up or back down.

GODLINESS

Next is, "godliness." Last week we discussed the reality that godliness is available to every Christian because His divine nature has granted to us everything we need to walk in it (2 Pet. 1:3). It makes sense, then, that we should also actively pursue it. This is a word that also could be understood as *piety*. In other words, the virtuous life is one that correctly orients itself in light of its ultimate authority.

BROTHERLY AFFECTION

In addition to correctly orienting oneself in light of God, Christians are also to correctly orient themselves in light of one another, and this is done through, "brotherly affection." As you might expect, it's the Greek word φιλαδελφία (philadelphia), from which we get the name of the well-known, "city of brotherly love," Philadelphia. This words speaks to the special commitment given to other believers in a family-like commitment within the Christian community (Rom. 12:10; 1 Th. 4:9; Heb. 13:1).

LOVE

Last, but certainly not least, is the simple and yet profoundly difficult command of, “love.” Love is the distinguishing mark of the Christian faith (Jn. 13:35), and it is vacant in the opponents of Christianity (2 Pet. 2:13-14). It is the ultimate aim of Christian formation (1 Tim. 1:5), as well as the, “perfect bond of unity” (Col. 3:14). There is no such thing as a virtuous life apart from love.

The Importance of Baptism

Peter, after listing the virtuous qualities that are to supplement our faith, warns us of what happens when we lack these things: “For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins” (2 Pet. 1:9). The intentional usage of the word, “cleansed” here is almost certainly a reference to baptism. This is not to say that baptism actually cleanses sin; only Christ can accomplish that. However, baptism in the early church served as a visible means of the invisible work God did through the cross. Baptism, then, was something that Christians could reflect back on in order to put their spiritual lives in the proper perspective. Peter is saying, those who do not pursue the virtuous life are like a blind person who has forgotten that God has redeemed them! This is why when someone is baptized, they often receive a certificate of some kind with the date. It’s a keepsake that allows them to accurately reflect back on that important step of obedience and remember the beautiful picture of Christ’s work that baptism paints for us.

Confirm Yourselves

Peter ends this section by telling us: "Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.” When you pursue the virtuous life, you are confirming the call of God on your life. Why? Because no unrepentant person can truly live these things out? Only by participation in His divine nature are we capable of this. It’s an added protection against sin as well: “For if you practice these qualities you will never fall.”

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read 2 Peter 1:5. What, "very reason,” is Peter speaking about? What are we to make every effort to accomplish? What two attributes are we to supplement our faith with?

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2. Read 2 Peter 1:6. What four attributes are listed here? According to the notes, what do each of them mean?

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Day Two

1. Read 2 Peter 1:7. What are the last two attributes listed here in this verse?

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2. Read 2 Peter 1:8. If you possess these qualities, what does it mean for you?

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Day Three

1. Read 2 Peter 1:9. If you lack these qualities, what does it mean for you?

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2. Read 2 Peter 1:10. What are we to be diligent to do?

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Day Four

1. Read 2 Peter 1:10. What will practicing these qualities prevent us from doing?

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2. Read 2 Peter 1:11. What will be provided to us if we live the virtuous way of life?

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Week 3 Discussion: Virtues

In 2 Peter 1:5-11, Peter tells us to, “supplement your faith with virtue.” Virtue is just another way of saying, “moral excellence.” In other words, Christians are to live with a high moral standard. It doesn’t mean a perfect life, at least not on this side of eternity. The virtuous life is one that strives for a standard of morality that is not found in the secular world, nor even recognizable apart from the Holy Spirit. Talk as a group about the importance of virtue, and how you can help one another better pursue it.

1. Icebreaker: What do you think of when you hear the word, “virtue?”
2. Which of these attributes in 2 Peter 1:5-11 do you believe is a strength for you?
3. Which of these attributes in 2 Peter 1:5-11 do you believe is a weakness for you?
4. Is morality important in the world today? Why or why not?
5. How do you balance having high moral standards with being imperfect and in need of grace?
6. How does pursuing virtue protect you from sin?

Takeaways:

1. We are called to supplement our faith with virtuous attributes.
2. The active pursuit of virtue prevents us from falling into sinful habits.

PRAYER REQUESTS: