

BECOMING LIKE JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

Do you know something? If you became like Jesus, all your problems would be solved because you could do things like He could do them. Jesus embodies all of the Old Testament heroes: Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, and Daniel, all of them together in one person. So, one of the most important things in life is to develop a character similar to that of Jesus himself. Most of our problems are because we come short of the glory of God. We don't have enough spiritual knowledge, spiritual insight, spiritual power, so those are things we need to concentrate on. There is a very specific passage in which Peter tells us that God has given us something very special, and He wants us to add to it. Then He promises, “If you will continually add to that, you will receive the character of Jesus.” I think that is exciting! We can escape all these worldly feelings and worldly troubles and have the mind of Jesus! This is a lecture to help you with developing some character traits. You know that to help you increase in successfulness as you study each of the New Life courses, there is a monthly calendar plan. On that monthly plan, you record a character trait that you want to develop each month while you are studying the course. If you do that faithfully, you will grow like an oak tree, strong and full of beauty. Later on you'll be a completely different person, one that is much more delightful. So, I want to ask you to please follow the instructions of your coach. Since many of you are going to be coaches and missionaries yourselves, you really need to practice diligently so that you can help others.

Let us read II Peter 1:2-8

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I. A “FAITH PLUS ...” LIFESTYLE

In this passage the apostle Peter suggests that you concentrate on adding several items to your character. So let us read again verses 2-4.

Vs. 2-4 “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

A. Abundant Grace Available

This is a very exciting passage to me. Look at verse 2. You will see that the apostle says that you will have an abundance of GRACE. An **abundance** of grace! Do any of you have enough grace to say, “Please, God don’t give me any more grace. I have enough.” I don’t know of any Christian who wouldn’t like to have more. Here he says, “You will have an abundance!” That means extra! When you have extra tomatoes, what do you do? You give them to other people. You have extra. He says, “You will have an abundance of grace.” How? Through a deeper knowledge of who Jesus really is. Through **knowledge**, not through weeping, or hoping, or being good. Where do we get our knowledge about Jesus? The most important book is the one written by God, and the most important theological doctrines are about that book, the Bible. If somebody doesn’t agree with divine inspiration or that the Bible is without error, he has nothing left at all. Nothing to teach him about the Truth. Nothing except for nature all around where he could see God the Creator. Yes, we could figure out that there is a Creator, but the creation doesn’t really show God the **Redeemer**. That comes almost exclusively through the specific revelation directly from God, called the Bible. So, you must know the Bible inside and out. If you want to have the character of Jesus, you must be constantly reading and thinking and being busy with the Bible. What is His character? What is the character of Jesus? More grace comes through knowing Jesus better.



B. Grace Comes Through Knowledge

In vs. 3 this apostle who knew Jesus better than almost any other human says, “Jesus wants to give you everything you need to live a holy life through our **knowledge** of Jesus.” That’s how He wants to give it to you. So, the ingredient is that you, the human being, must study to get this knowledge. Vs. 4 states that there are very special promises for you personally to partake in the character of Jesus. There are special promises. Some people don’t receive what is promised because they don’t know the promise! I can’t ask you for something unless I remember what you’ve promised. Did you bring the pen you promised, or did you bring the book you promised? If I don’t know what you promised I can’t ask for it: I can’t take it.

II. A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA

The apostle Peter had the revolutionary idea not only to have faith, but to have a high quality faith. Peter suggests adding several qualities to your faith. Here, in vs. 5-7, is a list of the apostles’ ideas to help you, “⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to **add** to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”

A. Faith — Goodness — Knowledge — Self-Control

Now each of these items could be studied for a sermon or a teaching topic. While you prepare for that message you will study it for yourself as well.

1. **Faith**

We recommend that you study about faith. What does the New Testament say about it? What are the concrete practical examples shown in the Old Testament?

2. **Goodness**

What is that? You, of course, know what goodness is. You don't need to study that. But just in case, study the word in the Bible and see what the Bible says about spiritual goodness. Maybe you discover some good things. The same is true for each one of these virtues. We have:

3. **Knowledge**

4. **Self-control**

Jonathan, the son of Saul, had self-control and said to his lieutenant, "Let's go up to the Philistines, at the top of those hills there and see what they are doing. To God it doesn't make any difference whether it is the whole army or just the two of us. It doesn't make any difference to God. Let's go and take a look." His faith gave him self-control. He went up there and the Philistines said, "Ha-ha, look at him!" "Okay, come here Philistines." And they obliterated all of them. Then the army said, "Look Jonathan is doing a good job. Let's go help him." You see, he had self-control. He had knowledge, he said, "With God it doesn't make any difference." That is knowledge. He had faith. He had self-control. He didn't fearfully say, "Oh, oh, oh!" Each of the traits listed here are demonstrated in the Old Testament.

Furthermore we find:

5. **Perseverance**

6. **Godliness**

7. **Brotherly kindness**

8. **Love**

It is very interesting, I think, that love is the last one. Perhaps it is the most difficult one to learn. It is also deeper than the others! On your love for God and your love for the people around you hang all your spiritual developments.



B. Evaluation Chart

Let's make a chart from the apostle's ideas in vs. 5–7 to help you. This chart will consist of these 8 items vertically below each other on the left side of your page. Behind each of these 8 items make 10 small columns to evaluate each trait. Above each column write a number from one to ten beginning on the left side, like in this example:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Faith										
2. Goodness										
3. Knowledge										
4. Self-control										
5. Perseverance										
6. Godliness										
7. Brotherly kindness										
8. Love										

C. How To Use Your Evaluation Tool

1. You analyze what your need is. Somebody is strong in faith and weak in love or some other thing like that. Evaluate each of the 8 ideas Peter gives you here and mark them down under one of the numbers. One is low; ten is high.
2. Be very careful to be honest, i.e. do not mark yourself too low. We know, God is perfect and we are sinners. There is nothing good about us, we all know that. But Genesis chapter 1 states that Jesus made everything good. Several times it's said there, "He looked and saw that it was good." When He created you, He also made someone very good. Jesus did not make a mistake when He made you. He didn't say, "Oh no, what did I do now?" No, He didn't. Because of that, it is important to mark yourself down properly. If you say bad things about yourself, it's like playing along with the devil. "Ha-ha (sarcastically), Jesus didn't do a good job." It's belittling Jesus. This is something we must learn, to spiritually evaluate ourselves, our ministry, and sometimes even other people—but especially ourselves—without pride or the other extreme of false humility. For instance, I believe I have the gift of faith. I don't think about it and I don't struggle with it. "Okay, let's try to do it!" That is how I feel, that is my reaction. But the Bible tells me, faith is also a gift of God. God has given that to me. I'm very thankful for it but it's not something to be proud about. I have other points that are not so very nice. Brotherly kindness maybe is hard for me. I love the brothers but it is hard for me to show that.
3. Now take one of the neediest areas and mark it down on the Monthly Course Planner under Character Goals. Now you have a whole month that you will concentrate on this particular characteristic. If you continually work on your weak traits like this for approximately eight months, you will see that your character will have changed greatly and you will be receiving more grace from God.
 - a) Every morning you ask your heavenly Father for an opportunity to practice this character trait. Perhaps it is godliness. You ask God to give you opportunity to practice it that day. Or maybe knowledge, you are working for that month on knowledge. You pray to God, "Give me an opportunity to practice knowledge today." Suppose you see someone coming, and you know he is not too smart. You could say, "You are so stupid. Listen to me, I'll give you some good information." Then in the evening pray, "Thank you, God, that you gave me the gift of knowledge to practice today." But let's hope you want to practice this in another way. Maybe you would say, "Okay, brother, that's one idea, but you know, yesterday when I was reading my Bible, I had an idea like this. What do you think of that? Would that be helpful to you?" If he buys your idea, if he takes your idea, then in the evening you can mark down an "E" for excellent. But if he says, "Yes, your idea is a good idea but that's because you are so very smart, and I'm not that smart so I won't be able to use your good idea and I'll just use my own stupid idea," you had better pray again tomorrow morning and ask for another opportunity.

That's the idea: pray to God to give you an opportunity to practice a particular trait.

- b) Every evening mark your experience down on the Monthly Course Planner with one of the following: N = needs improvement; S. = Satisfactory; G = good; E = Excellent. You have four different choices. It is better to have four choices than three choices. If you have three choices they will be "Bad", "Normal" and "Good". What do you want to write down? "Normal." But if you have four choices, you can't do that. So you have to be a little more accurate.
 - c) At the end of the month ask your mentor or coach to discuss the results with you. Then together you mark your average result for that month on the bottom with one of the above letters. Let's say I've been focusing on brotherly kindness. I worked very hard on that. But finally, at the end of the month. It was still an "N," then I probably would leave it until the eighth month after I've done the others. I would have experienced some success and some blessing from God with the others. I would say, "God, it's all working, except the most important one. Give me another chance. I want to be a rounded-out Christian. I would like to have the total character of Jesus." So, I will try it once more.
 - d) Each month select a new character trait from the list given here and follow the same procedure. There is a large variety of lists in the Bible that you can use for development. There is the **chapter of love**, there are the **Ten Commandments**, and the **Beatitudes** and many, many other groups of words that you can use for study. Doing so will change your character and simultaneously it will make you an expert on this particular Bible passage, because you have studied it in detail and applied it in detail and received blessings in detail.

III. INCREASINGLY INCREASING

Now let's read verse 8.

Vs. 8 *"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Vs. 8 states that if you **keep on developing these qualities** in your life you will become effective and productive. If you keep on developing these qualities, you will become **effective** and productive in knowing Jesus in an intimate way. It is as clear as a bell. The Bible says that effectiveness and productivity are based upon continuously developing these qualities. So you can begin on a rather low level and God will bless, but for continued blessing you will need to continue developing these eight qualities in your character. The possibilities are endless! Just imagine how good you will be after 20 or 30 years? That is why the Bible talks about the saints and the elders.

A. Why Jesus Came

What was the purpose of Jesus coming to earth in a human body, what was his purpose? "To find and save the lost." I thought you would say that. It's our standard answer, but he came to do something else. If all we knew about God was from the Old Testament, there would be many things we would not understand. We would have Creation and we would have a lot of revelation about God. But Jesus came to physically demonstrate all the qualities of God's holy character. I think that's one of the reasons why Jesus even demonstrated anger. Anger is a part of God's character. Holy anger. When He was tempted He said, "Get away from me, Satan." He retorted to Peter, "What are you talking about! Get behind me!" He cried, "You sons of thunder!" He yelled, "What are you doing in my House of prayer?! You are making it a dirty market!"

For a moment just think about all the things you've learned about God and about His character traits and all those things. Think about how much better you understand these character traits from God because He sent a human being to live like us, not an angel or someone supernatural. Hebrews 1:2-3 tells that in the past God had sent prophets but then He sent His Son as a human being. His Son is the exact representation of His divine being.

Jesus is God in human flesh. God is Spirit and there was Jesus the physical element to show us who God is. A big part of His ministry was to show to the people who He was. He did it in quiet areas where the weak believers and unbelievers lived. He wanted to have success with the weak believers and the unbelievers. That was in Galilee. He also came to Jerusalem where the whole world came for festivities. Arabs, Egyptians, they all came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Jesus was right there, in the middle, all the time, so that they would go home and would begin to gossip about Him, so they would talk about Him. Ten years later the apostles went to these very cities where some of the people had already seen or heard about Jesus—God in human form.

B. Keep On Developing

I think a giant spiritual nugget is given to us in a verse 8. **"Keep on developing these qualities."** He doesn't say, "When you are a weak believer," or "when you are a new believer," or "until you receive the laying on of hands." He said, "Keep on developing these qualities and **you will become effective and productive.**" It's wonderful. For the same amount of work, with the same number of years that you would otherwise minister, you can be more effective if you study these qualities. For the next twenty, thirty, forty or more years that you are going to minister you can be more effective by knowing Jesus more intimately. For the same amount of resources you will expend on all the activities in your lifetime, you can be more effective and more productive by continuing to study these qualities and growing in the knowledge of Jesus.

IV. AN ABUNDANCE OF GRACE, JUST FOR YOU

To conclude this lecture we jump back from verse 8 to verse 2. **You will receive this abundance of grace.** I get testimonies from people like that all the time. People tell me, "I went someplace, and God had already prepared people. I preached and people wanted to be saved." One of the "Seventy" came last week. He said he went to a church to lead the 'Basic Christian Life course' number two. There was a large group of people. They already had had course number one so he asked, "Who are all those people?" "Well, they are unbelievers."

“What are unbelievers doing here? We are studying *Basic Christian Life 2*. “Because in the first *Basic Christian Life* course we learned that an important part of the Christian life is witnessing. So, we were giving our testimonies and people said, “We never heard a good testimony like that. Who taught you so well? Where are you learning such good spiritual things?” “Well, we have a New Life man who teaches us every week.” “Well, we would like to hear that man too. Can we come and sit in your church and listen?” So there was a whole group of unbelievers and they came and listened to the second *Basic Christian Life* course. You see that’s what I’m talking about: **Being effective and productive, and experiencing an abundance of grace.**

I hope you are going to do this. You will enjoy it so much that later on in life you are going to keep on doing it with others as well. I believe God that you will be effective. I believe you will be productive. I believe that you will receive this abundance of grace. May the Lord’s blessing be upon you. Amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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Practical assignment

Completed

- Follow the practical assignment as outlined in the lecture.

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