“How to Be a Big Picture Christian”

2 Peter 1:9-18

We’re to keep progressing in our Christian life by continually adding godly character qualities

Stagnation and regression are not acceptable options

Indeed, a significant lack of these qualities can only lead to spiritual ineffectiveness and personal insecurity

Read text note, “The MacArthur Study Bible,” p. 1953

Self-evaluation is therefore very important in the Christian life

So If I’m claiming to be a Christian but yet I’m significantly lacking virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection and love, this is truly a cause for concern

“Shortsighted” = “unable to see things clearly unless they’re relatively close to the eyes”

If we’re shortsighted, we cannot see the big picture around us

Our view of reality has become miniscule

The end result is we will become far less knowledgeable to make the best choices

For instance, if a person has serious shortsightedness, they should not drive a car without prescription glasses

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Such a person suffers from not only shortsightedness but also spiritual amnesia – memory loss making it impossible to recall past information

They have essentially forgotten the basics of the Christian faith both in belief and practice

They have lost the significance of their salvation, what made it possible, what it is, and what it’s supposed to accomplish in their life both now and into eternity

They have become spiritually unaware how sin is no longer to have a place of prominence in a believer’s life

This has a connection to what a Christian is to add to their faith

What is the opposite vice of each of these qualities?

Virtue – perversion; knowledge – ignorance; self-control – unrestraint; perseverance – impatience; godliness – immorality; brotherly affection – dissension; love - selfishness

Rather, these godly character qualities should have prominence in an ever-increasing manifestation on a daily basis

“Therefore” introduces a concluding statement, calling for a decisive course of action

It is based upon everything Peter wrote in verses two through nine

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Even more earnest effort is to be given regarding making sure of one’s salvation

My eternal salvation is not dependent upon me, but its reality will be evidenced through the way I live my life

If I can’t see the clear evidence, how can I sure of it in my human experience?

Let’s say I believe myself to be an expert mountain climber

How can I reassure myself this is actually true?

Through having mountain climbing equipment, through having mountain climbing clothing, through having taken mountain climbing training and through having mountain videos or pictures of my mountain climbing achievements

Peter writes we should seek this certainty in practicality

Eternity is at stake

What can be possibly more important than having total confidence of our ultimate and final destiny?

How can I be sure of my salvation?

Scripture gives us the answer to this most important question

2 Corinthians 13:5: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless you are disqualified.”

How should I test myself?

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Through Bible knowledge, a past decision, Christian service within the church, or my family heritage?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Galatians 5:19-23 provide the answer

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.  Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.  But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.  Against such there is no law.”

Once you know with obvious certainty, anticipate your glorious future with joy

Keep the eternal big picture fully in view

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You will have a grand entrance into heaven, exceeding all your expectations

Read text note, “The MacArthur Study Bible,” p. 1953

Peter turns now in verses 12 -15 to sharing some very personal thoughts with his readers

Because what he has written thus far holds such high importance, he communicates in a much more direct way

He will not be negligent to fulfill his God-given responsibilities

“You may say you already know these things but I plan to continually keep reminding you of them”

Repetition is essential

Every year when a professional baseball team enters into spring training, the coaches remind them of the fundamentals

What kind of attitude are they expected to have toward this?

“I’m a highly paid professional athlete with lots of fans plus tremendous abilities, so I don’t need your reminders of how to play this game”

No, they are expected to go over the basics – listen, practice, implement

We’re to approach our Christian faith the same way

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Permit yourself to be challenged to return back to the basic, foundational truths of Christianity by those who are in spiritual leadership

This requires practicing humility

A pastor’s primary task is to repetitively, faithfully put those who are under his guidance in touch with eternal realities

I’m to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, all with an eternal big picture view in everything I communicate

This is what it is to stir up – to stimulate towards hope and obedience

His tenure may be brief but what he speaks from Scripture is eternally invaluable

Like the apostle Peter, we live in a temporary tent

A tent is never meant to be a permanent home

What kind of legacy will we leave after our earthly departure?

Will our life continue to inspire others?

How do we want the future generations to remember us?

Can I say with certainty I’m a Christian right now?

How am I living with a big picture view, investing in what will go beyond this present life in eternity?

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However, it’s not just one’s personal thoughts or opinions regarding eternal truths that makes them true

This is why Peter makes reference next to eyewitness testimony

“The present truth” (v. 12) is established in historical reality, not mythical stories

“Cunning” = “having or showing expertise in achieving one’s end by deceit”

There are many skeptics who believe the supernatural accounts connected with Christ’s earthly ministry were nothing more than fables, e.g. calming the storm, feeding the five thousand, walking upon the Sea of Galilee, healing lepers

Peter strongly refutes this notion by stating “we did not”

Notice his use of the plural term “we” (4X times in 4 verses)

He’s referring to himself and other disciples

This is a very significant point

It’s relatively easy to make something up, (i.e. create a fairy tale individually), without any other witnesses present to substantiate its authenticity

This is what the ancient prophet Mohammed did over a 23-year period to initiate Islam

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This is what Joseph Smith intentionally did when he was only a teenager to begin the Mormon religion

In beginning and propagating the Mormon faith, he most certainly comprised a cunningly devised fable

Some examples of this would be the golden plates, magic spectacles, the seer stone, plus making up fictional nations

How can you confidently trust someone’s claimed supernatural experiences with no one else present who can verify his claims?

I could tell you I walked out by myself into my backyard this morning and God opened up the sky and let me see into heaven itself and all of its incomparable grandeur

How can you know I actually had this incredible experience?

It’s subjective at best in that no one else was there to validate it

One of the great strengths of the authenticity of the Christian faith is that its foundational writings and beliefs centre around not one but various individuals

This is, in fact, Peter’s primary point of emphasis in verses 16 through 18

Let’s continue to unpack this together

Peter had written in his first epistle about Christ’s second coming

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Christ’s resurrection was a miraculous event, so was His ascension back up into heaven and so will be His supernatural return to the earth

These, according to Peter, are anything but made-up tales

He was an eyewitness, along with the apostles James and John to Christ’s divine, mighty, majestic, glorious transfiguration

Matthew records this in his gospel in chapter 17, verses 1 to 8

Peter’s words in this chapter verify the gospel account

“This is my beloved Son” = “this One is in essence with Me” (“The MacArthur Study Bible,” p. 1954)

One person can easily have a hallucination but it’s quite unlikely three otherwise sane individuals can have the exact same illusionary experience at the very same time

Concluding Points

We can have confidence in Scripture

We should follow it very closely since it is true

We need to communicate the gospel with others since believing it is the only possible way for one to have everlasting life