How to Be a Big Picture Christian

2 Peter 1:5-8

Reality – Regressing – Stagnating – Progressing

Which one of these stages are we in right now?

The truths of verses two to four should prompt us to continually grow spiritually

“Because this is true, now act like this”

Living out the Christian life calls for maximum effort

This is the divine human cooperative – Philippians 2:12-13

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Christianity fundamentally revolves around faith and practice

What we believe has a direct link to how we live

In other words, “regeneration” leads to “sanctification”

I cannot claim to be a Christian and never act like one

“Add to your faith” – read text note, “The MacArthur Study Bible,” p. 1952

 2

“Virtue” = “moral energy”

In the time this was written, virtue was used as a term to describe heroic deeds

It also referred to a person whose life stood out with excellence

This virtue was, of course, exemplified in Christ in the most stellar ways

1 John 2:6: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

A virtuous Christian will most certainly stand out in today’s society

 A lack of moral excellence is replete throughout our culture

There’s a prevalence of selfishness, lying, deceit and immoral behavior

To be virtuous is to be counterculture

How does my life give evidence to daily virtuous acts?

“Knowledge” = “truth correctly discerned”

What I know regarding the Lord Jesus Christ will directly inform how I live the Christian life

We need accurate biblical knowledge more than ever within the church

 3

There’s such an absence nowadays of biblical discernment

The internet and numerous social media platforms have only accelerated this sad reality

Far too many Christians are diving headlong into believing “Conspiracy Theories”

Often, this can be traced to a lack of true biblical knowledge, interpretation and application

Only around one-fifth of evangelical Canadian Christians read their Bibles on a daily basis

One in seven do not open a Bible ever to read from it

In any evangelical church environment there is always a far less percentage of people who engage in an Adult Sunday school class or a mid-week Bible study than who will attend a morning worship service

Why is this true?

Corporate Sunday worship isn’t seen to be as much of an option as is a group Bible study

This is truly a regrettable but firmly established pattern within our church environments

Where’s the diligence to add knowledge to our faith?

We must be rooted in God’s truths before we can expect to live for God with integrity, godliness, and faithful commitment

 4

Knowledge is vitally important but what I know must move toward transformational, godly living

This is clear through the remainder of Peter’s list

The remainder of these qualities goes beyond head knowledge to heart action

“Self-control” = “keep under proper restraint”

This is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit

In Peter’s time, self-control was frequently used of athletes who exhibited great self-discipline to give them a much greater chance of being victorious in their athletic pursuits

How is a lack of self-control manifested in one’s life?

Giving in easily to temptation, losing one’s temper, speaking critically and abusively, piling up debt through gambling or overspending or taking unnecessary risks in life

Practicing self-control must be an intentional objective

It just does not happen naturally without any effort

“Perseverance” = “spiritual staying power coupled with vibrant hope” (TMSB)

 5

If I’m persevering it means I have been refusing to give up under the weight of adverse circumstances

I’m literally staying under, shouldering the burdens and trials I’m presently experiencing but not with a fateful resignation

Rather, I’m optimistically trusting in God’s sovereignty, relying upon His divine promises while continuing to serve Him with willing obedience, fulfilling the tasks He has given to me

No one can be a genuine Christian and totally sidestep perseverance

We’re actually to purposefully add it to our spiritual resume

How am I adding perseverance to my faith right now?

“Godliness” = “Living reverently, loyally, and obediently before God” (TMSB)

This quality has a close relationship to virtue

What does a godly believer look like?

Stuffy? Serious? Somber? Strict?

No, you can actually be godly and have a great sense of humor

You can be godly and in fact really enjoy life

You can be godly and eagerly participate in a table game such as Monopoly or Scrabble

 6

So how does true godliness manifest itself?

Graciousness, humility, loyalty, purity, giving, encouragement

How am I evidently pursuing greater godliness in my life?

“Brotherly Kindness” = “Affection evidenced through mutual sacrifice”

As Christians, we won’t always share the same opinions regarding everything but a sweet, kind spirit should flow out from us in all relational scenarios

We sometimes reserve the right to be unkind, either to get our point across or because the other person has it coming to them

We seem to more easily add critical spirits and complaintive communication than brotherly kindness to interpersonal encounters

However, kindness through our words and actions should take precedence at all times

Am I becoming increasingly kind with others?

“Love” = “Acting in another person’s best interest no matter what the cost”

The culmination of adding all the previous qualities will result in the expression of true self-sacrifice toward others

 7

This is to be our most distinguishing, notable characteristic according to Christ’s own words in John 13:34-35

I should intentionally look for ways to practice self-sacrificial behavior as I have God-given opportunities

Am I progressively becoming a more loving Christian?

The next two verses are concluding statements of observation

The first one takes on a positive note while the second one is much more corrective in nature

When these qualities are not only present but are abounding in my life, I will be very effective in knowing and serving Christ

“Barren” = “useless to satisfy a present need”

“Unfruitful” = “Unproductive and ineffective”

We certainly don’t want our lives to be spiritually unproductive and not leave a lasting legacy to the glory of God

The continual growth of these qualities is the clear manifestation of God’s divine nature within us

Am I making the conscious effort to diligently add these qualities to my Christian life?

A significant lack of these qualities can only lead to insecurity

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

Self-evaluation is very important in the Christian life

Let’s take some time for this right now as we pray together