

Living an effective Christian Life

As Christians, **salvation** is the greatest promise we could ever receive. The fact that Jesus Christ stepped down from His heavenly throne to pay the penalty for our sins is a sacrifice beyond compare. However, the second greatest promise is that we can live an **effective Christian life** and never stumble or fall. In his 2nd letter (verses 3-8), Simon Peter, describes a nine-step process that will render you both effective and productive in the “true knowledge” of Jesus Christ. In other words, he promises that if you incorporate certain qualities into your life you can live a truly victorious life and avoid stumbling, fumbling and stumbling.

“As 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, 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. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith ‘virtue’, to virtue knowledge, to true knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The ‘foundation’ of this **effective life** is Jesus Christ, and the inspiration is the Holy Spirit. Apart from Jesus and the Holy Spirit the best quality of life cannot be attained.

The nine building blocks of the **effective Christian life** are:

1. **Diligence**
2. **Faith**
3. **Moral Goodness**
4. **True Knowledge**
5. **Self-Control**
6. **Perseverance**
7. **Godliness**
8. **Brotherly Kindness**
9. **Love**

These essential qualities are intertwined and therefore work together to produce the abundant life Jesus promised.

(1) **Diligence** describes the measure of effort necessary to attain the effective life. In order to attain the victorious life we must put out an earnest effort to make it happen. The Bible tells us that the diligent are “wise”. In the parable of the Ten Virgins both the wise and foolish virgins had the same knowledge, the same facts, and the same circumstances. The difference was that the wise virgins were ‘diligent’ in that they followed through on their ‘knowledge’ and took extra oil with them. Proverbs 4:23 says, *“Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it spring the issues of life.”*

(2) **Faith** is the assurance that what you cannot see actually exists. Faith is only worthwhile when placed in a position that is real and has the ability to assist you in your pursuit for the effective life. This type of faith includes putting your trust in yourself, others and of course **God first**. Faith is believing in what is true and absolute. Faith has two elements: 1) being convinced of the truth – being certain of the reality and possessing evidence of unseen things; and 2) believing, hoping in, embracing, and seizing this truth.

(3) **Moral excellence** (virtue) is an attitude precipitated by faith in God. When you place your full trust in God then regardless of whether you have the know-how you will want to live a life pleasing to God; you will want to live a holy and righteous life that brings honour to God. “Virtues” are always what is best in us. Here are some simple definitions of the virtues – those things that help to produce moral excellence:

- Compassion – Knowing that someone needs help, and wanting to help them.
- Respect – Treating others with courtesy and consideration, following rules and deferring to authority.
- Enthusiasm – Seeing what is good in a person or situation, and focusing on things that make you happy.
- Trust – Believing that the right thing will happen, and that people will do what they say they will. But mostly, believing that God will do what He said He’ll do!
- Friendliness – Being interested in other people and being hospitable.
- Responsibility – Others can count on you in any situation.
- Integrity – Doing what you know is right, and showing the values that are important to you.

- Cooperation – Working well with others and being obliging.
- Thankfulness – Seeing what you have and being grateful, instead of missing what you don't have.

(4) **True knowledge** is a second attitude precipitated by faith in God. Jesus Christ said, *“And this is eternal life to know God and His Son who He has sent.”* When you receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour you will want to ‘know’ Him so that you may know how to please Him. We learn about God by reading and studying His Word. To “know God” you must have experiential knowledge of Him. There are two scriptures that come to mind when I think of this subject. The first from the Beatitudes: *“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8); the second, *“When He appears, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure* (1 John 3:2-3). I equate “seeing” with “knowing.” Hence, in both of these verses the knowledge of God (“seeing God”) is tied to ‘purity of heart’. We can only ‘see’ or ‘know’ God when our hearts are pure. And when our hearts are pure our experience is also pure - leading to an effective Christian life.

(5) **Self-control** is winning over the temptations that are inherent within you. It is difficult to live a life pleasing to God by practicing self-control if you do not know God's requirements. Gaining true knowledge of God and His ways through sound biblical teaching will give you more tools to practice personal discipline and live the effective Christian life. Consistently practicing self-control by subduing your natural appetites will give you the spiritual muscle to overcome other obstacles thrown at you by the world and the evil one. We all face temptations in our lives. When confronted with temptation, we must strive, as far as possible, to get away from it - to flee! Even if you think you have a lot of self-control, don't put it to the test unnecessarily. Consider some of the things we are told to flee: “Flee” from a “stranger”, “flee sexual immorality” (as Joseph had to literally flee, Genesis 39:12), “flee from idolatry,” flee “all kinds of evil,” “flee also youthful lusts” (John 10:5; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:10-11; 2 Timothy 2:22). We need self-control to avoid not only outright evil but also too much of the good things. Proverbs 25:16 cautions: *“Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit.”* People often lack the self-restraint to stop when they should. People overeat, over-drink, overspend and overindulge in lots of things. We must rule over our appetites rather than letting our appetites rule us. Overindulgence can lead to intoxication and/or addiction. In either case, the person is then truly out of control! You cannot lead an effective Christian life if you're out of control.

(6) **Perseverance** is the ability to consistently overcome all the temptations hurled at you by both the world and the devil. Practicing self-control and perseverance affords you the opportunity to live a life fully dedicated to God and His kingdom. Constant defeat will bring guilt and shame and an inability to focus your energies on achieving the best life God wants for you. The Christian life is like a race in which perseverance is necessary to reach the finish line. Sadly, many have abandoned this race due to lack of perseverance. Many have stumbled and decided not to get back up. Many have become discouraged and have just stopped running. But those who are very conscious of the great importance of perseverance, in the midst of difficulties and temptation, are able to finish the race. You will never be an effective Christian if you choose to drop out and never finish your race!

(7) **Godliness** is a sincere devoutness to God and His causes. When you give your all through self-control and perseverance then you will develop an unyielding devotion and commitment to God and His Kingdom. You will possess a spiritual and personal confidence bolstered by the Holy Spirit that will draw others to want to know and honour God and His Son Jesus Christ as well. True godliness is to be like God. God is rich in every area. He has great wisdom and abundant wealth. Godliness is to be like God. When we strive to be godly, we are striving to improve ourselves to be better and better. This means we are working towards having greater wisdom, better health, more wealth, healthier minds and improve in every area in our lives where we may be lacking. Therefore, true godliness means a continuous process of self-improvements. And ongoing self-improvement guarantees an effective Christian life.

(8) **Brotherly kindness** is: loving others because you truly value them. When we give our whole lives to God in faithful devotion to Him then we will be completely concerned about what God is concerned about. A Christian who does not love others is dysfunctional (as is a Christian who does not smile). God is most concerned about people. When you put your faith in God to live the abundant life he intended for you, then you will be concerned for all people from every place on the planet. In Jesus Christ there is no social class system. There is no favouritism. Every human being who ever lived is welcome to join God's house, to be adopted into God's family. Your best life experience is done so when lived in conjunction with others. You cannot live the effective Christian life alone by yourself.

(9) **Unconditional love** is the culmination of a life lived in loving fellowship with God, yourself and others. When asked about the greatest commandment Jesus replied, *“To love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. The second is to love your neighbour as you love yourself.”* Living the previous eight qualities

will lead you to possess the most important quality: love. "Agape" love is described as being patient, kind, truthful, unselfish, trusting, believing, hopeful, and enduring. It is not jealous, boastful, arrogant, rude, selfish, or angry. True love never fails! The description perfectly fits God's love toward us, and should be the way we love each other and God. However, I have never met any person who perfectly fulfills this biblical definition of love. The Bible says that this 'unconditional love' is more important than everything else (a partial list includes preaching, prophecy, knowledge, faith, philanthropy and hope). All of these things, which are "good" things, will pass away. Only love is eternal, since love will be the basis of eternal life. Of everything we can do to become an effective Christian, love is the most powerful. Love never ever fails!

These are nine building blocks of the **effective Christian life**. If you live by them you will be victorious every single day of your life. Unfortunately, we are not perfect and even the best Christians on the planet stumble over temptation once in a while. Thanks be to God that He has given us a remedy for when we do fall. The Bible tells us that when we fall that we only need to confess or agree with God that we have sinned and the Lord will cleanse us from all unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**).

This cleansing is based not on our personal merit but on the blood Jesus shed on the cross. So if you fall don't moan and groan about it. Get right back up, agree with God that it was a stupid move and walk on in God's loving ways. The road ahead is straight and narrow but it is lit brightly by God's Word.

God wants you to win! Put these nine qualities to work for you and you will live an **effective Christian life** and gain a rich reward (here on earth).