

Growing In Your Faith

Eight Building Blocks For Effective, Productive & Lasting Life

Pastor George M Stahnke, 05/19/2005

Over the next six weeks we will be taking an in depth look at 2 Peter 1:5-7. Growing in our faith is an ongoing process of partaking of God's divine nature and making a continuous effort to add to our faith in ever increasing measure virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, love for the family of God and all of mankind. Each aspect builds upon the other and all must be present if we are to be spiritually fulfilled and profitable in God's kingdom. (*Refer to diagram on last page*)

2 Peter 1:3 - 11 (NLT) ³By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. ⁵In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. ⁸The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. ¹⁰So, dear brothers and sisters, ⁸work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. ¹¹Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Adding to Your Faith Virtue

2 Peter 1:5 (NASB) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 1:5 (TMNT) So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character.

2 Peter 1:5 (KJV) And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge.

2 Peter 1:5 (Amp.) For this reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort on exercising your faith to develop virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence).

Thayer Definition: G703 ἀρετή *aretē* [*ar-et'-ay*] (1) a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action (1a) virtue, moral goodness (2) any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity

Virtue is the same word used in v. 3 in reference to Christ's character. We cannot produce virtue ourselves; but we can choose to obey the virtuous promptings of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

—The Nelson Study Bible

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The Life of Joseph

Strengths and accomplishments:

- Rose in power from slave to ruler of Egypt
- Was known for his personal integrity
- Was a man of spiritual sensitivity
- Prepared a nation to survive a famine

VITAL STATISTICS

- Where: Canaan, Egypt
- Occupation: Shepherd, slave, convict, ruler
- Relatives: Parents: Jacob and Rachel. Eleven brothers and one sister named in the Bible.
Wife: Asenath. Sons: Manasseh and Ephraim

Hated by brothers and sold into slavery:

Genesis 37:4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Genesis 37:20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

Genesis 37:28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

Because of the excellent moral character (virtue) that Joseph exhibited he had favor with God and was exalted from a slave to a place of trust.

Tempted by his masters wife:

Genesis 39:7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

Falsely accused and bound in chains:

Genesis 39:16-20 (NLT) She kept the shirt with her, and when her husband came home that night, ¹⁷she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've had around here tried to make a fool of me," she said. ¹⁸"I was saved only by my screams. He ran out, leaving his shirt behind!"¹⁹After hearing his wife's story, Potiphar was furious! ²⁰He took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held.

You can't keep a virtuous man down! In the face of lies, betrayal and injustice Joseph refuses to compromise his virtuous course of thought, feeling and action. Again God raises him up to a position of honor and authority.

Genesis 39:20-23 (NIV) Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²²So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Pharaoh's Baker a cup bearer, one saved and the other lost:

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Genesis 40:1-4 (NIV) ¹Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ²Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time,

Exalted after suffering:

Genesis 41:38 "So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?' "

Genesis 41:41-43 (NIV) So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." ⁴²Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

What men intended for harm God turned to good:

Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Romans 8:28 (NASB) And we know that ^εGod causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Adding to Your Faith Knowledge

2 Peter 1:5 (NIV) For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge

Thayer Definition: G1108 γνῶσις *gnōsis* [*gno'-sis*] (1) knowledge signifies in general intelligence, understanding (1a) the general knowledge of Christian religion (1b) the deeper more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion, such as belongs to the more advanced (1c) especially of things lawful and unlawful for Christians (1d) moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living.

Solomon's strengths and accomplishments:

- Third king of Israel, David's chosen heir
- The wisest man who ever lived
- Author of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, as well as many of the proverbs and a couple of the psalms
- Built God's temple in Jerusalem
- Diplomat, trader, collector, patron of the arts

1 Kings 3:9 (NASB) "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

2 Chronicles 1:10 (NIV) Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

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Wisdom is only effective when it is put into action. By the time Solomon asked for wisdom to rule his kingdom, he had already started a habit that would make his wisdom ineffective for his own life--he sealed a pact with Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter.

1 Kings 3:1 (NIV) Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem.

She was the first of hundreds of wives married for political reasons. In doing this, Solomon went against not only his father's last words, but also God's direct commands. Solomon allowed his wives to affect his loyalty to God.

1 Kings 2:1 (NIV) When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.²“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said. “So be strong, show yourself a man,³ and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.

1 Kings 11:2-6 (NIV) They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.” Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.³He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray.⁴As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.⁵He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites.⁶So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

Nehemiah 13:26 (NIV) Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women.

1 Kings 11:9-11 (NIV) The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.¹⁰Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD’S command.¹¹So the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

His action reminds us of how easy it is to know what is right and yet not do it.

What happens when we fail to put on knowledge:

- Effective leadership can be nullified because of an ineffective personal life.
- Knowing what actions are required of us means little without the will to do those actions.

2 Peter 1:5 (TMNT) So don’t lose a minute in building on what you’ve been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding,

2 Peter 1:10 (NLT) So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Doing this, you will never stumble or fall away.

Adding to Your Faith Self-Control

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2 Peter 1:3-6 (NIV) 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. ⁴Through 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. ⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

Thayer Definition: G1466 ἐγκράτεια egkrateia [*eng-krat'-i-ah*] (1) self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites)

Titus 2:11 (NLT) For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. ¹²And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God.

Sirach 18:30-33 Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites. ³¹If you allow your soul to take pleasure in base desire, it will make you the laughingstock of your enemies. ³²Do not revel in great luxury, or you may become impoverished by its expense. ³³Do not become a beggar by feasting with borrowed money, when you have nothing in your purse. —The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible with Apocrypha

You have not mastered self-control if you can not control what you say.

If we exercise self-control in what we say, we can control ourselves in every other way!

James 3:2-6 (NLT) We all make many mistakes, but those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way. ³We can make a large horse turn around and go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. ⁴And a tiny rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot wants it to go, even though the winds are strong. ⁵So also, the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. ⁶And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

If you want to be self-controlled, begin with your tongue. Stop and think before you react or speak. If you can control this small but powerful member, you can control the rest of your body.

Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

Proverbs 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

The apostle Paul was a man who understood the importance of self-control.

Acts 24:24-25 (NIV) Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

Romans 6:11-14 (NIV) In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

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1 Corinthians 6:12 (NIV) “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything.

The apostle Paul who . . .

- Was transformed by God from a persecutor of Christians to a preacher for Christ
- Preached for Christ throughout the Roman empire on three missionary journeys
- Wrote letters to various churches, which make up a vast portion of the New Testament
- Was never afraid to face an issue head-on and deal with it
- Was sensitive to God's leading and despite his strong personality, always did as God directed

This is the same Paul who said I exercise self-control over my desires, passions and appetites so that having done all this in service to God I do not become disqualified and forfeit the prize myself.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (TMNT) I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself.

Here is the result of little or no self-control.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT) When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, ²⁰idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, ²¹envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

We are in partnership, working with the Holy Spirit.

Like the other qualities we have discussed, self-control is both something we “make every effort” that it continues to increase and a fruit produced by the Holy Spirit in us.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

Let's work as though it all depends on us and pray as though it all depends on the Holy Spirit. Let's not debate what percentage is the Holy Spirit's and what part is the ours. We should act as if the responsibility were all ours, knowing that the development of this fruit is all His.

Add to Your Faith Perseverance

2 Peter 1:5-6 (ISV) For this very reason, you must make every effort to supplement your faith with moral character, your moral character with knowledge, ⁶your knowledge with self-control, your self-control with endurance, your endurance with godliness,

NLT = patient endurance; **ISV** = endurance

NASB = perseverance; **KJV** = patience

The Message = passionate patience

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Thayer Definition: G5281 ὑπομονή hupomonē [*hoo-p-om-on-ay'*] (1) steadfastness, constancy, endurance (1a) in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings (1b) patiently, and steadfastly (2) a patient, steadfast waiting for (3) a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance

Perseverance, patient endurance, is forged in the furnace of suffering.

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV) Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:3 (TMNT) We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!

2 Corinthians 6:3-4 (NLT) We try to live in such a way that no one will be hindered from finding the Lord by the way we act, and so no one can find fault with our ministry. ⁴In everything we do we try to show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind.

Not just passive endurance but active persistence.

Patience is not merely endurance of the inevitable, for Christ could have ended his sufferings; but the heroic, brave patience with which a Christian not only *bears* but *contends*.

Matthew 26:53 (NIV) Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Hebrews 12:2-3 (NIV) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The example of a farmer:

James 5:7 (NIV) Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

The example of the prophets:

James 5:10 (NIV) Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

James 5:10 (TMNT) Take the old prophets as your mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything, and never once quit, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course!

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The example of Job:

James 5:11 (TMNT) You've heard, of course, of Job's staying power, and you know how God brought it all together for him at the end. That's because God cares, cares right down to the last detail.

Add to Your Faith Godliness

2 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV) and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;
and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

Thayer Definition: G2150 εὐσέβεια eusebeia [yoo-seb'-i-ah](1) reverence, respect (2) piety towards God, godliness.

Amplified Bible = piety; Young's Literal translation = piety

Piety defined: Deep devotion and reverence to God.

Concordant Literal New Testament = devoutness

Devoutness defined: Displaying reverence or piety

"Godliness. This Greek word for piety suggests a constant awareness of God and a commitment to doing things that are appropriate to one devoted to Him." —365 Day Devotional Bible

"Godliness—the right worship and devotion to God." —Wilmington's Guide to the Bible

"This word means "right worship" or a dependence on God that reveals itself in a devoted life."
—Wiersbe's Expository Outline of the New Testament

"Godliness, as denoting character and conduct determined by the principle of love or fear of God in the heart, is the summing up of genuine religion." —International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

"The whole of practical piety. "It supposes knowledge, veneration, affection, dependence, submission, gratitude, and obedience." —Easton's Bible Dictionary

"Godliness is the spirit of reverence, the holy fear of God. The godly man sets God always before him; the thought of God controls his whole life; his effort is to do all things in the names of the Lord Jesus, to live unto the Lord, to seek his glory only. This holy reverence for the felt presence of God can only be maintained in the life of faith and self-control; in the worldly life of mere pleasure and business it can not flourish." —The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 22

1 Timothy 4:8 (NASB) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

The example of a Roman soldier, Cornelius:

Cornelius held the rank of 'centurion,' a commander of 100 soldiers, in the Roman army. Though an officer in the occupying army, he was generous and well-respected by the Jews.

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Acts 10:1-2 (TMNT) There was a man named Cornelius who lived in Caesarea, captain of the Italian Guard stationed there. He was a thoroughly good man. He had led everyone in his house to live worshipfully before God, was always helping people in need, and had the habit of prayer.

Acts 10:1-2 (NIV) At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

The traditions that separate man are torn down as God calls Peter to respond go to this Gentile. If you want to use God to tear down the walls of prejudice, add to your faith Godliness!

Acts 10:9-16 (NIV) About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."¹⁴"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."¹⁵The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."¹⁶This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

Acts 10:22 (NIV) The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."

Cornelius's example Godliness (devotion and reverence for God) helped the church to realize that the Good News was for all people, both Jews and Gentiles.

Acts 10:34 (NIV) Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism

As we look at the life of Cornelius we see that God seeks out and blesses those who add to their faith Godliness.

Acts 10:44-48 (NIV) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

So often we are torn between the call of the world and the call of God. Paul urges all of us avoid the temptation to gain riches and instead to pursue God with a passion for His presence and a dedication to His service.

1 Timothy 6:311 (NIV) If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Add to Your Faith Brotherly Kindness & Love

2 Peter 1:7 (NLT) Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone.

Thayer Definition: G5360 φιλαδελφία philadelphia [*fil-ad-el-fee'-ah*] (1) love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love (2) in the NT the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren

If we say that we love God the Father then we must also love His children.

“tender affection to all fellow Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travelers to the same country, heirs of the same inheritance.”
—Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary of the New Testament

1 John 5:1 (NIV) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Romans 12:10 (NASB) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Romans 12:10 (ISV) Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel in showing respect for each other.

Romans 12:10 (NIV) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

“Love of the brotherhood—the strongest attachment to Christ’s flock; feeling each as a member of your own body.” —Adam Clark’s Commentary

“No man can be of God’s family, unless his love extends to all its members.”
—International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Sin always complicates relationships. We can only love others and live in harmony with them to the degree that we have received forgiveness and dealt with the issues.

1 Peter 1:21-22 (NLT) Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And because God raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory, your faith and hope can be placed confidently in God. ²²Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts.

1 Peter 3:8 (NIV) Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Hebrews 13:1 (TMNT) Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love.

Supposing that we have added to our faith love for fellow Christians, is that enough?
Can we stop there?

“There is to be a special affection for Christians as of the same family; there is to be a true and warm love, however, for all the race.” —Barne’s Notes on the New testament

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“Love to the whole human race, even to your persecutors: love to God and the brethren they had; love to all mankind they must also have. True religion is neither selfish nor insulated; where the love of God is, bigotry cannot exist.” —Adam Clark’s Commentary

“*Charity*, or a love of good-will to all mankind, must be added to the love of delight which we have for those who are the children of God. God has made of one blood all nations, and all the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, are all capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions, and therefore, though upon a spiritual account Christians are distinguished and dignified above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities, and relieve their necessities, and promote their welfare both in body and soul, as they have opportunity: thus must all believers in Christ evidence that they are the children of God, who is good to all, but is especially good to Israel. —Mathew Henry’s Commentary on the New Testament

Charity: 1 Corinthians 13:1 (NIV) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

It is Christ’s example of benevolent love that compels us to share our faith with the world.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Strong’s: G25 ἀγαπάω *agapaō* [*ag-ap-ah’-o*] to *love* (in a social or moral sense):

1 Peter 4:8 (NIV) Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Proverbs 10:12 (NIV) Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

As leaders we are to model and teach this love. As Christians we are to eagerly pursue and add it to our faith.

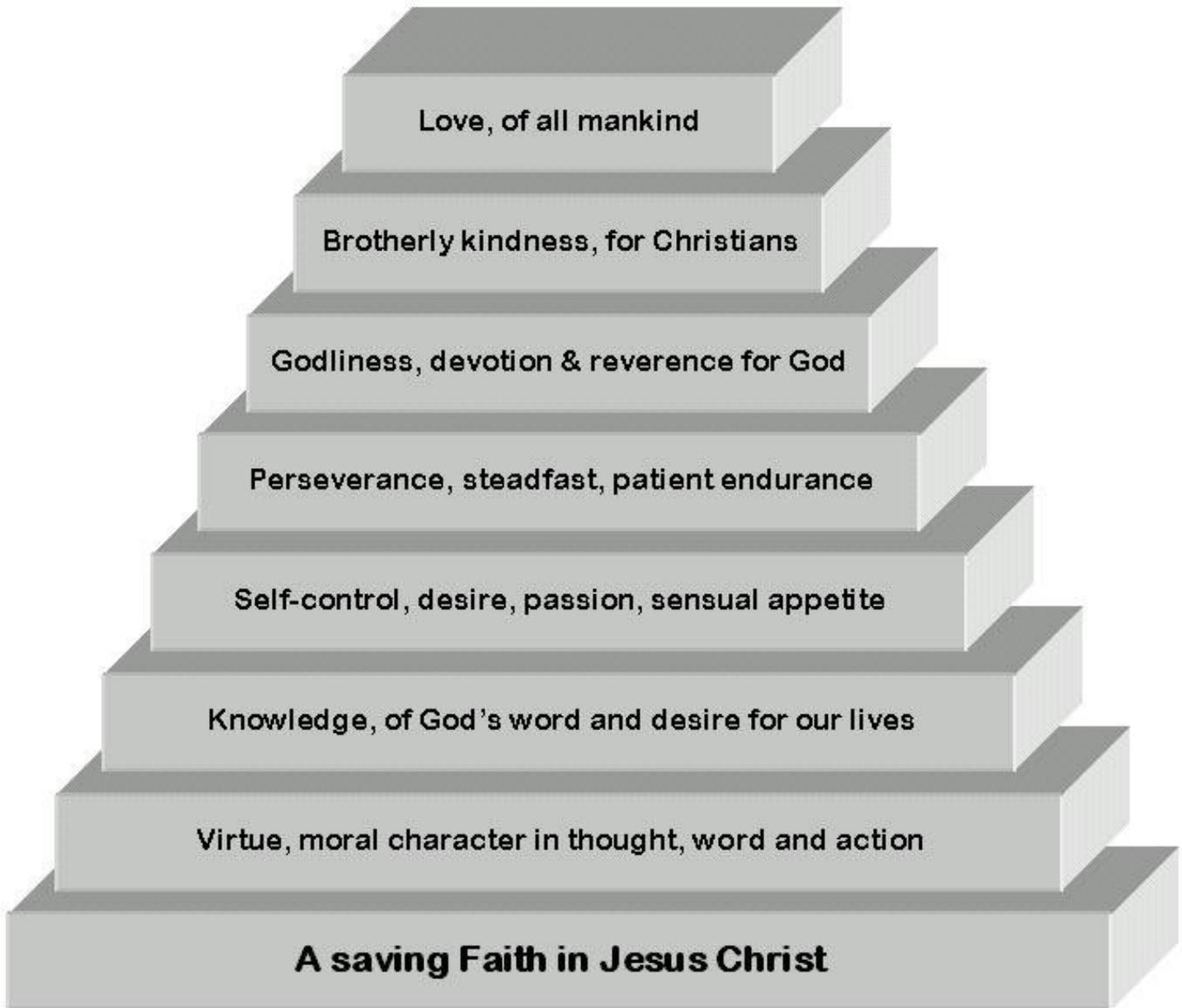
1 Tim. 4:12 (NIV) Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Titus 2:2 (NIV) Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

2 Tim. 2:22 (NIV) Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

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2 Peter 1:8 - 11 (NASB) ⁸For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

2 Peter 1:12 - 13 (TMSG) ¹²Because the stakes are so high, even though you're up-to-date on all this truth and practice it inside and out, I'm not going to let up for a minute in calling you to attention before it.