

2 Peter 1:5-7

A PRECIOUS GEM

study #1

the gem's many facets

(2 Pet. 1:5-7)

1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; **1:6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; **1:7** And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

the gem's great value

(2 Pet. 1:8-11)

1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **1:9** But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. **1:10** Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: **1:11** For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

the gem's four studies

(a survey study)

Many quickly read through 2 Pet. 1:5-7 without giving these few verses much thought. This is like overlooking a spectacular diamond by wrongly assuming that it is just common glass.

This is the first of four great studies on 2 Peter 1:5-7. It covers the basics of the eight facets / virtues, their relationship to one another, and some of the virtues in other well-known Bible passages. If necessary, this first study can be used by itself, without the other three.

It usually takes some effort to find a real diamond, but the thought-provoking worksheet below will help you do the hard work with others. It is designed to promote discussion and even disagreement at times. Therefore some of the lines are challenging, like the passage (2 Pet. 1:5-7) itself.

PETER'S GEM is precious but challenging.

Mark the lines (as completed) below as either correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A	() THE VIRTUES should be meditated upon.
A-1	() It is good to think about the meaning of each term.
A-2	() It is good to think about the significance of the order.
A-3	() One of the most difficult terms is the second one, 'virtue.'
A-4	() The virtue order is mostly logical rather than chronological.
A-5	() It is good to think about how the virtues can be grouped.
A-6	() The ancient Greeks thought about virtue more than we do.
A-7	() It is helpful to think about what virtues are not included.
A-8	() It is good to think about the unity and completeness.
B	() EACH VIRTUE IMPLIES ACTION.
B-1	() FAITH implies trusting and loving the Lord Jesus.
B-2	() VIRTUE implies courageously doing good based on faith in God.
B-3	() KNOWLEDGE implies Bible study (1:16-21) in order to do good things.
B-4	() SELF-CONTROL implies fleeing lust and avoiding sin, through knowledge.
B-5	() ENDURANCE implies overcoming persecution by placing one's hope in the Lord.
B-6	() GODLINESS implies loving and worshiping the Lord, including through prayer.
B-7	() BROTHERLY LOVE implies loving and helping other believers and friends.
B-8	() AGAPE LOVE implies loving and helping others like God loves us.
C	() PETER'S SET OF VIRTUES is in line with other Scripture.
C-1	() Each term in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) also implies action.
C-2	() Peter's order is like the order of 'faith, hope, and love' in 1 Cor. 13:13.
C-3	() Peter's virtues are somewhat like Paul's many commands in Rom. 12:9-18.
C-4	() The ancient Greeks made similar virtue sets emphasizing faith, knowledge, and love.
C-5	() The virtues in Second Peter chapter one should be contrasted with the vices in chapter two.

Much of the difficulty is overcome by correctly thinking of the virtues as actions rather than as inactive nouns. For comments on the lines above, see the discussion on the following pages.

The following discussion was overheard in [a Hermeneutics \(Bible interpretation\) Class](#) at fictional Quest Bible College. The worksheet on the previous page was being discussed.

Dr. Quest (on opening comments on diamonds and tools)

Diamonds are difficult to work with but well worth the effort. Various tools, some special and others rather ordinary, are used. In line with this, today's worksheet suggests a number of tools to use on 2 Pet. 1:5-7. What are they and what do you think of them?

Ichiro (on meditation and Buddhism)

How is meditation a Bible study tool (A)? In Japan, it is usually associated with Buddhism rather than Christianity. Buddhists meditate in an attempt to empty their minds and gain peace.

Dr. Quest (on research and meditation)

For us, peace comes through prayer (Phil. 4:6-7), but did you notice how many times thinking is mentioned in a positive way in the worksheet A section? Christian meditation involves asking questions and thinking about the answers rather than vainly trying to totally switch off the mind. In the early stages of our meditation, we can even use of concordances, lexicons, websites, and software, though I like to separate my research time and my meditation time somewhat. I do most of my research at my desk, but I like to think deeply about the things I find, in other places.

Theo (on the ancient Greeks and the good)

The two lines about the ancient Greeks' view of virtue (A-6, C-4) got me thinking. Greek philosophers thought about 'the good' more than most people do now (A-6), but, if nothing else, 2 Pet. 1:5-11 shows that we need to think deeply about and act upon (B) the virtues.

Dr. Quest (on ancient virtue sets and why not knowledge is not first)

That's for sure. By the way, how did you mark line C-4? It can be taken various ways, but the orderly sets of virtue, called *sortes*, that the ancient Greeks made emphasized knowledge rather than faith or love. They also left out humility, which was not included by Peter either. Why do you think that is (A-7)? Actually, I believe humility is present in *every* virtue that Peter mentioned. Obviously, faith involves humility. So too does brotherly love (B-7). Did you notice that Paul spoke of both brotherly love and humility in Rom. 12:9-18 (C-3). Pride becomes a big problem in the lives of everyone who give knowledge first place (1 Cor. 8:1, A-2).

Frank (on the meaning of 'virtue')

I tried to figure out the meaning of 'virtue' by searched on line and elsewhere, and I discovered that apparently Peter's term means moral excellence or courage (B-2). That's great, but, frankly, I'm still confused. If each of the eight term in Peter's set is a virtue, how could he also use 'virtue' as one of the eight? Virtue is a simple word but difficult to understand (A-3).

Dr. Quest (on associating the virtues with their corresponding verbs)

That is why connecting the virtue nouns to their corresponding verbs is so helpful (B). As shown in line B-2, Peter's term, virtue, is associated with courageously doing good based on faith. Moreover this is exactly what we see in the great 'by faith' chapter, Hebrews chapter 11. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others courageously did good things by faith. Their desire to do good was central in this, but God also gave the patriarchs knowledge on what to do. Thus, faith, virtue, and knowledge came together wonderfully! — In addition, did you notice that Peter wrote about the contrasting evil deeds of Old Testament villains and the false teachers in chapter two (C-5)?

The following discussion was overheard in [a Christian Literature Class](#) at Quest Bible College. Those present were discussing the points on the worksheet on the first page of this study.

Dr. Penwell (on the completeness of literary gems)

Today, we are looking at one of the great literary gems of the New Testament, one of Peter's diamonds. [There is another one in 1 Pet. 2:17.] A biblical literary diamond is a *passage that contains profound truth but is also orderly, short, and complete*. Second Peter 1:5-7 is just such a gem.

There is nothing lacking, but let's do a thought experiment by trying to add some other virtue terms that Peter did not mention. Since there are no flaws in Peter's diamond, our efforts will surely fail, but in the process we will come to appreciate these wonderful verses all the more.

Joyce (on joy in Peter's set of virtues)

How about trying to put joy next to *agape*, in place of brotherly love, since joy is next to *agape* in Paul's fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). There is joy in the church and the family when brotherly love is present. So joy seem to fit in a way. Yet, there is a problem. Joy is a result of brotherly love not the virtue itself. So I don't think it can not really be substituted for it.

Frank (on Lot and the results listed in 1:8-11)

Speaking of results, salvation brings joy, and Peter wrote about results in 1:8-11. Yet, these results come from exercising *all* the virtues not just from being justified by faith. Frankly, Lot was a saved man (2:7-8), but he did not have much joy because he lacked most of the other virtues.

Joyce (on joy as a aspect of endurance)

I have another idea. Paul taught that rejoicing in the Lord is the safe thing for us to do, instead of rejoicing in circumstances or citizenship (Phil. 3:1,20, 4:6). Circumstances can change quickly as businesses fail and nations fall, but the Lord does not change and is coming again. Knowing this and rejoicing in Him helps us endure persecution. So joy or rejoicing are part of endurance.

Dr. Penwell (on peace and gentleness, and a question)

Good points. We could also talk about *peace* and *gentleness* (Gal. 5:22), but it is easy to see that gentleness (or kindness) is part of brotherly love and that having peace may be thought of as a result of faith or an aspect of godliness because it involves prayer. Peter's set is complete (A-8).

Before we run out of time, I have a question. Have you enjoyed Peter's diamond (2 Pet. 1:5-7)? Perhaps you would find the list of commands in Rom. 12:9-18 (C-3) easier to understand and remember. It probably depends on the person.

Theo (on Peter's virtues and Paul's commands)

Frank probably prefers commands, but I love 2 Pet. 1:5-7. I appreciate how it forced me to think deeply (A) about meaning, order, and applications (B). At first it was difficult, but now I can remember Peter's virtues far more easily than all Paul's commands in Romans chapter 12.

Dr. Penwell (on the need to spend time in 2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Peter wrote much about the need to remember (1:12-15), and Peter's gem is a great memory device *if you put in the time* needed to appreciate the structure. It remind me of poetry, because it is so beautiful and thought provoking. Yet, is also a clear call to serious action and growth in Christ. "...*giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; ...*" (1:5-7, 3:18)

The following discussion was overheard in a Christian Life Class at Quest Bible College. Those present were discussing the points on the worksheet found on the first page of this study.

Dr. Ed (opening comments on applications)

Let's think about personal applications based on today's worksheet. Who wants to go first?

Amanda (on the three loves in Peter's set)

It's good to think about the order of the virtues (A-2) and how they can be grouped (A-5). So I thought about the relationship between godliness and brotherly love. I never realized before that godliness is an outward expression of love toward God, but once I saw that in line B-6, it was easy to appreciate the connection between godliness, brotherly love, and agape (A-4, B-7).

Dr. Ed (calling for the application)

Great! You are totally correct, but what practical application did your discovery lead you to?

Amanda (on the need to spend more time with God)

Most of you know that I love to talk about being kind to others. That's fine, of course, since sisterly and brotherly love are really important. My problem is. . . [after a short pause and a few tears] I do not spend enough time with the Lord in personal devotion and prayer. He loves me so much, but I pray and talk to Him so little! I finally realized through this study that my weak devotional life has made it difficult for me to show love to others. I want to change that.

Red (on the need to be more clear regarding purpose)

Well, I got convicted too. Since I love to read, knowledge has always been important to me, but I have a hard time connecting the knowledge that I gain with doing good things for God and others (i.e. virtue). Often I read just because I like to read, but I now see that the connection between doing good (virtue) and knowledge is really important. If I were clear on what I believe the Lord wants me to do, I should be able to study and read with a better sense of purpose.

Tim (on how hope fits in Peter's virtue set)

I thought about the connection with faith, hope, and love in 1 Cor. 13:13 (C-2). For there to be a parallel, Peter's set must include hope (A-7), but how? Well, Peter wrote a lot about the Day of the Lord in chapter three. So his understanding of *knowledge* included eschatology and the hope that comes with it. Future-oriented knowledge and hope promotes self-control, endurance, and godliness, according to 3:11-15. — As for my personal application, from now on, I want to focus more on the practical implications of what we know about the end of the age, like Peter did.

Dr. Ed (on personalizing the applications of others)

As a Christian educator, I love to talk about the virtues and, of course, I read a lot as well. So your applications help me. Before we close, let's all write out our personal bottom lines and share.

my application
