

2 Peter 1:5-7
LOVE IS THE GOAL, BUT...
study #4

Love is last but not least.

(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 [*agape* love].

Love produces lasting results.

(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.

Love stands, but not alone.

In First Corinthians chapter 13, Paul shows that love has many aspects, and in Second Peter chapter one, Peter shows that love has many prerequisites. The teaching is somewhat similar. The great love chapter is well known, and this study shows why Peter's great hierarchy of love in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 should be as well.

At the end, a bonus, fourth page of discussion is added, with a graphical summary of the passage message **as a pyramid** which is stable and long lasting, if all the virtues are included. Negatively speaking, *no virtue can be skipped*, but positively speaking, *each lower-level virtue helps support the ones above*.

At first reading, the set of virtues in **2 Pet. 1:5-7** which ends with love does not seem particularly interesting, but the call to add one virtue to another in a specific order places more emphasis on each virtue than is done in ordinary lists. It also shows that Christian love does not stand alone.

Christian LOVE can not stand alone.

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

A	() Christian Love is enabled by God (1:3-4).
A-1	() It is not natural like worldly lust (1:4).
A-2	() It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22-23).
A-3	() It involves spiritual gift use (1 Cor. 14:1, 1 Pet. 4:8-11).
A-4	() It requires human effort (1:5, 10) as well as God's enabling (1:4).
A-5	() God's enabling is stressed more than human responsibility in 1:1-11.
B	() Christian Love has multiple prerequisites and aspects (1:5-7).
B-1	() Salvation is required (1:1-7). So false teachers do not show love (2:1-3).
B-2	() It involves the desire to do good (virtue) and learning how to do it.
B-3	() It involves inward self-control and outward endurance.
B-4	() It involves loving and worshipping the Lord (godliness).
B-5	() It involves loving other believers (brotherly love).
C	() Christian Love can be manifest in multiple ways.
C-1	() It should lead to evangelism (3:9, 15).
C-2	() It is often not manifest through words (2:18-19).
C-3	() It is the opposite of the love of money (2:14-15).
C-4	() Various manifestations are described in 1 Cor. 13:4-7.
C-5	() Various manifestations are described in 1 Pet. 4:8-11.
C-6	() It was only fully displayed by Christ Himself (1 John 4:10).
D	() Christian Love can be rightly compared to multiple things.
D-1	() It is like the peak of a stable pyramid with a firm faith foundation.
D-2	() It is like the beautiful and luxurious top floor of a multistory building.
D-3	() It is like a flower with an easily broken stem (self-control and endurance).

The assumption in most lines about is that love in 2 Pet. 1:7 is closely related to the other linked virtues in the previous verses. For comments on the lines above, see the discussion on the following pages.

The following discussion was overheard in [a Bible Study Methods class](#) at fictional Quest Bible College. Those present were discussing the points on the worksheet on the previous page.

Dr. Quest (an opening question about the worksheet)

Today's worksheet is typical of many that we use here at Quest Bible College. As you know, it is somewhat different from those used elsewhere. Does anyone wonder where it came from?

Frank (questioning the 'partly correct' category)

Yes, I do! I understand correct and incorrect, but frankly, *partly correct* has always seemed really strange. Why do our Quest worksheets have this third possibility?

Dr. Quest (explaining the meaning of partly correct)

The third category comes from my years of teaching in Japan. It is common there to use a triangle to show that a line is correct in part or from one point of view but not from another. For instance, it is partly correct to say that Christian love and 2 Pet. 1:5-7 are like a flower with a stem that can be easily broken (D-3). Self-control and endurance, in the middle of Peter's set of virtues, are often the point at which people fail. That's the source of this analogy. That said, it does not follow perfectly, because many flowers have strong stems which are able to bend rather than break. Thus line D-3 is partly correct. Lines A-3, C-3, D-1, and D-2 are somewhat questionable as well.

Frank (questioning how love can be part of the other virtues)

Ok, I get the triangle, but frankly I'm still confused by the six B lines. Are the various virtues in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 prerequisites for biblical love or are they actually aspects of Christian love (B)? The worksheet seems to assume that they are both, but how can that be, since love is the final virtue in the set? It seems to be set apart from the others to some extent.

Dr. Quest (on the flower-like use of love in 2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Flowers help explain this. Often the term flower refers to the blossom at the top. Yet *flower* also may refer to the plant. The whole plant is a flower, even though the blossom is a flower in a special sense. That is like the two-fold way which I understand love in 2 Pet. 1:5-7. It is everywhere; yet it is also at the top or the end in a special way (B).

Red (on the significance of order in 2 Pet. 1:5-7)

I've read in commentaries that 2 Pet. 1:5-7 is a *sorites*, which is the Greek word for 'a heap.' They point out that our passage is an orderly set of virtues, put together in a special order to show what comes first, what comes last, and how it all fits together logically. It doesn't surprise me a bit that faith comes first (B-1) and that *agape* love is the goal, but I am shocked to see that there is nothing on today's worksheet about the order.

Dr. Quest (on the order significance being stressed later)

Thanks, Red. You are mostly correct about the worksheet. Nevertheless, lines B-1, B-2, and D-3 all indirectly say something about the significance of the order. This important subject has been dealt with more on other worksheets in earlier studies.

One of the key points on Peter's order mentioned earlier is the fact that knowledge comes third rather than first (as the foundation of everything) or last (as the ultimate goal). *Agape* love, of course, is the ultimate goal.

The following lively discussion was overheard in [a Christian Life Bible Study](#) at Quest Bible College. Those present were discussing the points on the worksheet for this study on an earlier page.

Dr. Quest (on the connection between chapter one and chapter two)

Second Peter shows that God's primary defense against false teaching coming into the church is maturity and right living on the part of those in the church who truly know the Lord. That's why there is so much about the Christian life and love in chapter one, before the false teachers are described in detail in chapter two. This contrast is pointed out in three worksheet lines (B-1, C-2, C-3). What do you think about the various points? Are there any lines with which you disagreed?

Amanda (on love's close relationship to the other virtues)

The only line that turned me off is the one comparing love to a top-floor luxury apartment (D-2). Peter linked *agape* love closely with the other virtues. So it is not so different from the others. Therefore there would not be any eighth-floor *agape* without the third-floor knowledge (B-2), the fourth-floor self-control (B-3) and the sixth-floor godliness (B-4), etc. All the floors are important.

Cal (on human effort and divine enabling)

Even though it may be technically correct, the line about love requiring human effort (1:5, 10) as well as divine enabling (1:4, A-4) is not my favorite. It could easily be misunderstood and does not fit well with the other lines in the A section. The next line (A-5) is much better, since divine enabling is stressed in 1:2-4 before the command to add virtue to faith is given in 1:5.

Wes (on commands and human responsibility)

Line A-5 is obviously wrong, since there is far more written about human responsibility in 1:5-11 than there is about divine enabling. The commands in 1:5 and 1:10 show this.

Cal (on faith and election)

Not so fast! What about faith being a given in 1:5? Peter did not command his readers to believe, since they already had been born again. Moreover verse ten says that they are the elect. It is very unfair to stress the commands in these two verses but skip over God-enabled faith (1:5) and divine election (1:10).

Wes (on faith and foreknowledge)

Who's unfair? Peter taught that our faith is Bible based. Though the Scriptures are, of course, inspired by God (1:20-21) we are responsible for how we respond to them (1:19). The false teachers willfully twisted God's word (3:16), and I believe Calvinists do so as well, especially about faith and foreknowledge. To me, these are basic errors, because faith is the foundation of Peter's orderly set of virtues in 2 Pet. 1:5-7, and foreknowing is the first action in Paul's orderly set of verbs regarding salvation in Rom. 8:29-30.

Dr. Quest (on the Scriptures being balanced)

There is no doubt that Christian love is God enabled (A), because it is a fruit of the Spirit (A-2). Yet, there is also human responsibility. As for line A-5, I too marked it incorrect, but my reasoning was not the same as Wes'. I believe there is balance in the Scriptures, including in Second Peter, regarding divine enabling and human responsibility. So is it wrong to say there is more of one than of the other? Yes, sometimes it is.

The following discussion was overheard in a Homiletics (preaching) Class at Quest Bible College. The same worksheet was used as last time, but the focus and purpose of the class was quite different.

Dr. Quest (on preparing a sermon on love)

Your homework assignment for today was to develop a sermon outline covering 2 Pet. 1:1-11 or, if you preferred, a portion of the passage. How did it go?

Pete (on turning the worksheet into a sermon outline)

My outline is based on the points on the worksheet. The A lines cover 1:1-4 and God's provision. The B lines cover the seven prerequisites of love as presented in 1:5-7. And the C lines are about the various ways that love is shown. I concluded with 1 Pet. 4:8-11, line C-5, to show what we all can do and what depends on our spiritual gifts.

Dr. Quest (on the many subpoints and needing an analogy)

That sounds good, Pete, but I am wondering what you did with so many worksheet subpoints. Perhaps there are too many, and two of them (A-4, A-5) are controversial. Also, if you did not use one of the analogies mentioned in the D points, I wonder if you added an illustration of your own. I'll look for things like that on your written outline.

Red (on putting the eight virtues into three groups)

I tried to make a sermon on 1:5-7, but eight points are too many. Then I remembered reading that Augustine said that all the classical Roman virtues are aspect of love. With that and the flower analogy (D-3) in mind, I got down to three points. 1.) Faith, virtue, and knowledge are love's foundation. 2.) Self-control and endurance are love's weak points or stem. And 3.) Godliness, brotherly love, and agape are love's blossom.

Dr. Quest (on analogies leading to applications)

That's fantastic, Red. I love the way you combined the virtues and made use of the flower analogy. Analogies help us understand and make appropriate applications. So I wonder if you had a point of application to go with each of your three points.

Wes (on responsibility and the results in 1:8-11)

I decided to do something with 1:8-11, since the emphasis on human responsibility and rewards in these four verses is barely mentioned on the worksheet (A-5). These four verses give us four reasons why we should be willing to put in the necessary effort.

Dr. Quest (on 1:8-11 as motivation)

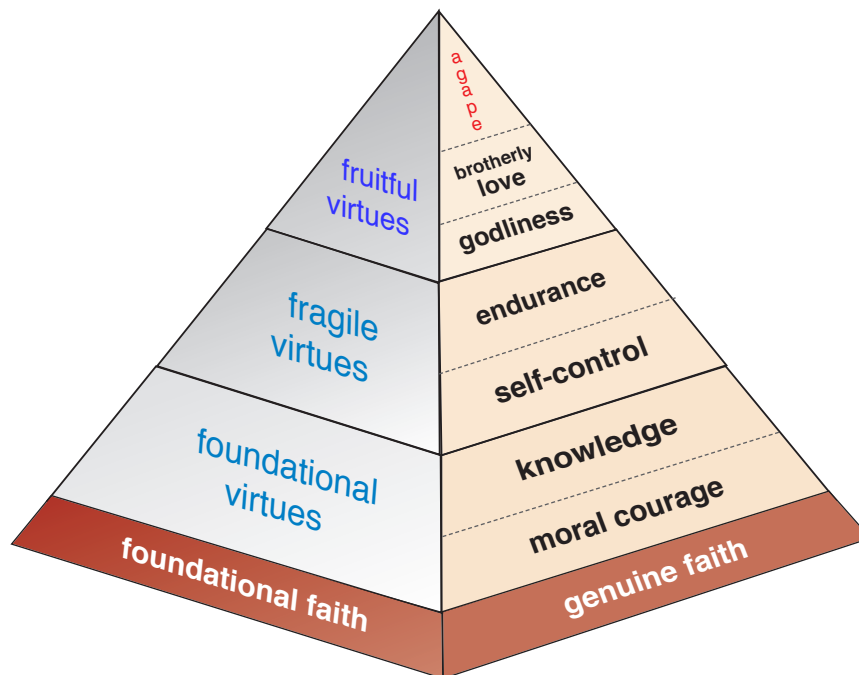
Good points, Wes. I'll look forward to reading your outline to get the details. Speaking of good points, the four verses and reasons that you focused on in 1:8-11 could be compared to the four sides of a pyramid's base (D-1). Pyramids are very stable, and knowing why things must be done adds to our stability and energy in doing them.

my application

The following was overheard in the same [Homiletics \(preaching\) Class](#) as last time. This time, however, Dr. Quest presents his own sermon ideas which includes using a pyramid analogy and diagram.

Dr. Quest (on grouping the virtues)

You may be wondering what kind of sermon I would give on 2 Pet. 1:1-11 and how my points might be different from yours. Well, there is not much difference! Like Red, I tried to group the eight virtues to cut down on the number of sermon points. Also like Red, I pointed out the fragility of self-control and endurance and the fruitfulness of godliness, brotherly love, and *agape*.



Red (questioning how faith is treated)

It's encouraging to see the similarities, but I was surprised to read that you treated faith differently. Why didn't you include it as one of three foundational virtues?

Dr. Quest (on faith as a foundational given)

In a way I did, since I referred to saving faith as 'foundational faith' in parallel to the 'foundational virtues' label that I put on the next two items. Faith, virtue (moral courage), and knowledge all are foundational. However, saving faith was already present and did not need to be added. Therefore, I showed that it is different from the other seven virtues in an important way.

Evan (on the need to be evangelistic)

Isn't there a problem if faith is only a given? How would the message be evangelistic?

Dr. Quest (on the need to grow in Christ)

It could be a problem, but I will stress the importance of having genuine faith as one's foundation. You can not build a pyramid or a life without a solid foundation (Mat. 7:24-27). I also intend to talk about the result verses (1:8-11). The Savior and eternity are important topics in 1:11.

In closing, don't forget that 2 Pet. 1:1-11 is a warning to believers. Even though one may be saved, failing to grow in the Lord and become a complete and loving person in Christ has eternal consequences. I believe that is the main point in our passage. — How is your life shaping up?