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2 Peter 1:1-11

*Know where
you're going*

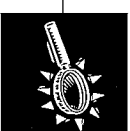
Being a Christian is more like hopping into a railway carriage than getting behind the wheel of a car. The train goes in a particular direction, guided by the tracks. Its destination and its stops along the way are clear. A car, on the other hand, can go anywhere you wish—your destination is yours to control.

In the first chapter of his letter, Peter talks about where the Christian's life is going and what we can expect to happen along the way. Peter shows us the goals and ambitions appropriate to those who "have received a faith as precious as ours" (1:1).

Investigate

Read 2 Peter 1:1-4

1. What privileges do we enjoy as Christians?
2. What do these verses say about how we obtain these privileges?



3. What things does the world think you need to be equipped for life? What does Peter think you need?

4. What do you think it means to participate in the divine nature? How does this relate to escaping from the corruption of the world? (These verses might help: 2 Cor 3:17-18; 1 Pet 5:1; 1 Jn 3:1-2.)

The Christian start

We have only gone four verses into the epistle, but already Peter is saying earth-shattering things. Peter is sharing how unimaginably important it is to have a knowledge of Jesus. In knowing Jesus you have everything you need for life. Through a knowledge of Jesus we become enmeshed with the God of all the universe who helps us “escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires”. In other words, it is by knowing Jesus that we enter such an intimate relationship with God that his Spirit dwells in us and transforms us.

Notice in all this that God gives us all we *need* through a knowledge of Jesus (1:3). He doesn't give us all that we might *want*. In our sinful state, there is much that we want in the world but which God in his wisdom considers that we are better off without.

However, all this is really only the beginning. It's not a matter of simply receiving these privileges offered to us in Jesus and then sitting back with our feet up. We have to work out our knowledge of Jesus in our daily behaviour. Peter, therefore, offers direction about how we should live given that we start with all the privileges that come through a knowledge of Jesus Christ.



Investigate

Read 2 Peter 1:5-9

1. List the things that Peter says we should build into our Christian lives. How is each of these qualities important?

2. What is the end result of adding the above things to our lives?

3. What might it mean to be effective and productive in our Lord Jesus Christ? (See also Col 1:9-12; Jas 2:14-17)

The Christian life

In verses 5-7, Peter catalogues seven important aspects of Christian living. Roll them all up and Peter is telling us to be working hard at our Christian life. We are not just to fill our heads with knowledge of Jesus. We are to live out that knowledge in our behaviour. There is no point in just reading verses 5-7. We must act on them, and if we don't we are being slack Christians. We are blind to what Jesus has done for us and we are unfruitful for God.



Investigate

Read 2 Peter 1:10-11

1. If we do the things Peter suggests in verses 5-7, what will we have to look forward to?
2. What does it mean “to make your calling sure”? (You may need to come back to this question after reading more of the letter.)

The Christian finish.

Picture the scene at the Olympics when the marathon event is coming to an end and the leader first runs into the stadium. We’ve all seen—at least on television—the crowd rise to its feet and heard that deafening cheer which fills the arena. What an adrenalin rush that would be—to be that runner and to hear the crowd!

Peter says that we will be like that runner if we make every effort to supplement our faith. Heaven will rise to its feet as we enter. We will have finished the race with honour. We will have lived fruitful lives for Jesus and we will have been effective and productive in our knowledge of Jesus. 2 Peter is revolutionary in the way that, through images such as these, it stretches our horizons to God’s horizons. Sometimes we get caught in our own little corridor of life and petty things grow out of all perspective. Life becomes dominated by the TV guide or the house and garden or our sport or career.

God is concerned with bigger things than those. God is concerned about eternity and heaven and hell. When you take that big picture into consideration, many of the things that we think are important actually aren’t important at all. In fact, some of the

things that we might be a bit too causal and flippant about, like knowledge of Jesus, turn into the most important things of all! Peter, therefore, does us a great service as he opens his letter. He reminds us of the importance of a knowledge of Jesus. Knowledge of Jesus gives us everything we need for life, and therefore we should be working hard at living that knowledge out in actions so that we can enjoy a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



Think it through

1. Think of the things you consider most important in your life. How important are they from the perspective of eternity?
2. List three areas in your life where you would consider yourself to be an effective and productive Christian.
3. Look down the list Peter gives in verses 5-7 and pick at least one area which you think needs specific work in your own life. What are some ways that you can ‘increase your measure’ of that quality during this week?

4. Why is it so easy to be distracted from our heavenly goal?

5. Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-34. Where are you storing treasure?

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2 Peter 1:12-21

The importance of being right

Sometimes, there is no substitute for being right.

The surgeon has to be certain that the correct blood vessel is clamped before cutting with the scalpel. The engineer must have done the correct calculations for the bridge to carry the traffic load. The accountant has to be certain that the books are accurate in order to have the money to pay the expenses. The skydiver has to know the parachute is folded correctly and will open smoothly.

There are some things in life where you just have to be sure, because the consequences of being wrong are so serious. Christianity is like that. Strangely enough the question "Who is Jesus?" is one many people never bother with, but it's a question which requires careful and clear thinking. It's one which we have to get right.

We discovered in Study 2 that knowledge of Jesus gives us everything we need for life and godliness. It equips a person to negotiate life wisely. It's through a knowledge of Jesus that we participate in the divine nature as God's own Spirit resides in us, changing us and leading us to become more like Jesus.

Such knowledge is no small thing and so it's critical that we gain a *correct* knowledge of Jesus. A wrong knowledge will leave you up an eternal river without a paddle.

In this next section of his letter, Peter explains how we can have confidence that our knowledge of Jesus is right.