

## Studies in Christianity Spiritual Maturity #3

S#1.

### First Steps Toward Maturity

S#2.

Text : **II Pet. 1: 2-11** ; **Eph. 4: 7-16**

#### A. We are discussing the fundamentals of Christianity.

S#3.

1. Regardless of age or background we all start our walk with Christ as babes.
  - a. Eph. 2: 10 ... Created in Christ
  - b. II Cor. 5: 17 ... New Creature
  - c. John 3: 3, 5 ... Born Again
2. God does not just assume that the babes will grow and all will be okay.
  - a. Eph. 4 ... has a plan to prevent infant mortality.
  - b. II Pet. 3: 18 ... God requires that all of His spiritual children grow.
  - c. Heb. 5 ... The Father monitors the progress of all His children.

#### B. There are practical steps we can take to grow and to encourage others.

S#4.

1. The first step to achieving any goal is to commit one's self to accomplishing it.
  - a. I John 2: 15-16 ... Fall OUT of love with the world.
  - b. Col. 3: 2 ... We must focus our efforts, we must set our minds on things above.
  - c. Matt. 6: 33 ... Once our mind is set on the kingdom, we makes it our top priority.
  - d. Eph. 5: 11 ... Isolate ourselves from all evil practices.
  - e. Rom. 12: 2 ... We consciously lives out of conformity to cultural values.  
**I Pet. 1: 5** – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence,  
in your faith supply moral excellence.
  - f. II Tim 3: 12 ... We accept the adversity that being different brings.
  - g. John 15: 18-19 ... The closer we walk to God, the more the world hates us.
2. Spiritual growth requires personal diligence, but it is not a solo endeavor.
  - a. Acts 2 / I Cor. 12: 18 .. God personally adds all saved people to His body / church.
  - b. Eph. 4 ... God's church is organized to nurture new born Christians to maturity.
  - c. Eph. 4 ... Every Christian has a responsibility to participate in nurturing others.
3. All spiritual growth is founded on knowledge.
  - a. Rom. 10: 17 ... Faith comes in response to hearing the word.
  - b. Heb. 4: 2 ... Receiving the word is only of value when received with faith.

c. I Pet. 2: 2 ... One must long for the word to facilitate his growth.

**II Pet. 1: 5b** – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge.

C. This week we will advance the narrative to cover the following : S#5.

1. What does it mean when it says, “applying all diligence” ?

**II Pet. 1: 5a** – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge.

2. The mature Christian is always under control.

**II Pet. 1: 6a** – and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness.

3. We’ll observe some practical ways to develop self-control.

**I. Spiritual growth is accomplished as a result of diligent efforts.** S#6.

A. Spiritual growth is a personal thing; YOU must work at it. S#7.

1. Some set back and wait for God to change them.

a. They pray for God to miraculously take away the desire to sin.

b. *ILL- Man was convinced that he was not saved because he still desired to smoke.*

2. Our instruction from God is to mature while “applying all diligence.”

3. We are to work at it, not wait for it to be done for us.

S#8.

B. This concept is so important that the Apostle mentions it twice in this context.

1. At the beginning of the context the Spirit says :

**II Pet. 1: 5a** – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith

2. As the context draws to an end, the Spirit adds :

**II Pet. 1: 10** – Therefore, 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;

C. In the final section of the book Peter again urges Christians to be diligent. S#9.

**II Pet. 3: 13** – But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. **14** Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, **15** and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation;

D. Diligence is always referred to as a Christian virtue. S#10.

1. **II Cor. 8: 22** – We have sent with them our brother ( *Titus* ) , whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, ....

2. **Rom. 12: 11** – give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
3. **II Tim. 2: 15** – Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

## II. The mature Christian leads a life that is always under control.

S#11.

### A. Adolescents or adults all come into the family of God as newborn babes. S#12.

1. They are old enough so they have friends and established lifestyles.
2. They live in a similar manner to their friends and adhere to social norms.

**Eph. 2: 1** – And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. S#13.

- a. A life lived with a goal to make one happy is lived in the lust ( *desires* ) of the flesh
- b. The Apostle included himself in those who formerly walked to fulfill his desires.
3. Our former lifestyle made us enemies of God and objects of wrath. ( **Rom 5:9-10** )

**Phil. 3: 18** – For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. S#14.

- a. One's "god" is that which he reveres and desires.
- b. When one values earthly things above God, those things are his god.
- c. One's appetites are the things that make him happy, which give his body pleasure.

### B. The lack of self-control is one of the great obstacles to Christian maturity.

1. **II Pet. 1: 6a** – and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness. S#15.
2. Once we have learned what we should do, it is hard to do it.
3. Self-control / self-discipline is essential for success in any endeavor.
  - a. **I Cor. 9: 24** – Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.
  - b. No one remains competitive in anything until he learns self-control.
  - c. ILL - *In baseball I was the best hitter and a good catcher, but would throw wild.*

**C. There are many areas of life in which we need self-control.****S#16.**

1. Personally, I need self-control at the dinner table. ( *obesity crises* )
2. Self-control is vital in the use of one's tongue. **Jas 3** ( *hurtful, gossip, swearing* )
3. Control over anger ... ( works of flesh ... **Gal. 5: 20** – outburst of anger )
4. Self-control in spending ... ( *Average carried credit card debt is \$9.333* )
5. Drinking alcohol, drugs, etc. ( **Eph. 5: 18** )
6. **Time**, TV watching, computer games, surfing the web, U-tube ( **pornography** )
7. Self-control in what we think about. ( **Phil. 4: 8** .. We can focus our thoughts. ) **S#17.**

a. *“Well, that’s just the way I feel and I can’t help it.”*

That’s a lie of the devil; God gives power to control and to change.

b. **II Cor. 10: 5** – We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

c. **Matt. 5: 28** – But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

**D. There are obstacles to self-control.****S#18.**

1. Most people are not comfortable with radical change in their life.
  - a. **Rom. 12: 2** – do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the ( Prove = dokimazō ) **renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, (= try to learn ) **that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**
  - b. To be transformed is to be radically changed ... **“Born again”** completely new
2. Basically, people don’t like surrendering their will to be subservient to another. **S#19.**
3. Deep inside we like our pet sins. ( *We hate the guilt we feel, but still want the sin.* )
4. We tried and failed so we just gave up and try to justify ourselves. ( *gave it best shot* )
5. We really don’t want to EXERCISE self-control.
  - a. We want self-control, but don’t want the exercise required to achieve it.  
*I want to be thin, but don’t stay on a diet.*
  - b. We want self-control in pill form - - no personal effort.
  - c. Self-control is fine, but not at the cost of giving up something we love.
  - d. We want to have it sometime, but not right now.
  - e. Yes, I want it, but I’m waiting for God to remove the craving.
6. **Prov. 25:28** – Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.

**III. How does one successfully exercise self-control ?****S#20.****A. One must really want self-control and to have his life changed.****S#21.**

1. Want it enough to pray for it daily.
2. Want it enough to expend diligent effort to accomplish it. ( *Talk is cheap!* )

**B. Honestly evaluate your life to identify areas one which you need to gain control.**

1. It is hard to be blatantly honest with one's self. ( *Have to really want it.* )
2. The desire to be what God wants you to be has to consume your soul.

**C. There must be a turning point.**

1. We must each pass through the valley of decision. ( Joel 3 ) *Valley of Megiddo*
2. There must be the genuine desire for God to be in control of your life.

**D. We must change our appetites, our desires.**

1. Must decide, "I want treasure in Heaven more than I want treasure on earth."
2. Must be convinced that God's ways will make me happy.

**E. Changed desires will only occur when we change our value system.**

1. These changed desires must become our core beliefs.
2. We must be convinced within ourselves, **God called me to a life under control.**

**F. Our conviction will deepen as our goals are clarified.****S#22.**

1. **I Cor. 9: 24** – Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. **25** Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ... **27** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.
2. Every successful athlete has clearly defined goals which lead to the winner's circle.
3. Set down with pencil and paper and prayerfully list the areas you need to master.

**G. I must reach a point when I am angry at all that sin has robbed me of.****S#23.**

1. Sin robs one of the JOY he should be experiencing from a dedicated life.
2. The confident expectation of Heaven,

**D. Self-control grows more attainable as we draw closer to God.**

1. The more one experiences closeness with God, the more he wants to be closer.
2. **Matt. 6: 24** – Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

#### IV. Whoever will have self-control must approach it constructively.

S#24.

##### A. A man who is in control must have walls.

S#25.

1. **Prov. 25:28** – Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.
2. His faith and love for God must motivate him to draw lines which he will not cross.

##### B. He must have a plan, a strategy.

S#26.

1. Self-control will never just happen.
2. The body wants what it wants so the wanting is hard to stop. **It must be controlled.**

##### C. Make your plan known to others. ( *Each should have a prayer partner* )

1. James teaches us that we need to talk about our struggles and pray together. **Jas 5**
2. We all need someone to hold us accountable. ( *commitment vs emotional response* )

##### D. Our commitment to gain self-control must be an outgrowth of our faith. S#27.

**II Pet. 1: 5** – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance,

#### CONCLUSION :

##### A. What fruit has your faith produced in your life.

S#28.

1. Has it motivated you to DILIGENTLY strive for moral excellence ?
2. Has it motivated you to seek more knowledge to direct you to moral excellence?
3. Has your faith motivated you to strive for mastery over your body ... self-control?

##### B. Self-control is a fruit of the spirit so it must be a goal for each of us.

S#29.

1. **Gal. 5: 22** – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
2. What does this mean to us ? **If the Spirit of God has sway in our life, He should produce self-control within us.**

#### INVITATION :

S#30. ... Communion slide

**Lesson Text :****II Peter 1: 2-11**

**2** A Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; **3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. **4** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **5** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. **10** Therefore, 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; **11** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

**Ephesians 4: 11-16**

**11** And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. **14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.