



The Process of Sanctification | how to grow

Prepared by Tim Allchin & Matthew Black

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence... 2 PETER 1:3

Are you discouraged about your Christian growth? Do you feel dry and numb in your walk with God? Realize you are not the only one. There is a way forward that will restore vitality to your Christian life. Second Peter 1:3-4 proclaims the sufficiency of Scripture; we have everything we need to live a godly life the Holy Spirit living in us with divine power, and the written Word that teaches us how to be like Christ and to escape sinful lifestyles.

The next three verses give us eight qualities to grow and change into the image of Christ as we pursue maturity. Verse 10 promises that if we practice these eight qualities, we will never fall back into our former sinful way of life. These qualities are to be blended or chorused together, moving progressively like a stairway toward Christlikeness. If these qualities are ours and are increasing, they keep us from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we lack these qualities, we forget that we have been cleansed from our past. So, what are these eight qualities?

The Foundation

The first three qualities: faith, virtue and knowledge, lay a foundation for change. Without a faith commitment to Christ and a desire to please Him, we cannot change.

1 – Faith | Faith as presented in the Bible is not just hoping or wishing, but it is putting your full trust in the Person and work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, no matter how I feel, because God promises a good result. We need faith both for salvation (Ro 1:16,17) and for obedient living (Heb 11). Faith is foundational to a godly life. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Faith is a commitment to trust and surrender to Christ, no matter how I feel and no matter how impossible and chaotic the situation may be.

2 – Virtue | Virtue is the foundation of moral excellence that makes us want to be more like Jesus. Aristotle defines moral virtue as a disposition to behave in the right manner. To be virtuous is to have a firm and habitual desire to please God in all circumstances, no matter what. It is not perfection but the sincere desire to do all that the Lord asks of you (Ruth 3:11).

3 – Knowledge | Knowledge completes the foundation, for without knowing God through His Word, we wouldn't know how to obey Christ even if we had the desire to obey! We must have knowledge to have mind-renewal (Eph. 4:22-26). It is impossible to gain transformational knowledge from the Bible without knowing its Author. Knowledge comes from knowing the Bible through the revelation of the Holy Spirit of God. We also gain knowledge through fellowship with other Christians, church attendance where the Bible is taught, prayer for more insight, and even reading Christian books and biographies. These first three qualities must work together to provide a strong foundation for our growth and maturity in Christ.

The Hard Work

Once the foundation is laid, there is a lot of hard work to build the next two qualities of self-control and perseverance.

4 – Self-control | Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) that results from surrender to Christ. Self control is choosing to do God's will which is found God's Word, no matter what I feel like. Self control is gained when we submit ourselves to God to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. We can't do it alone - it requires cooperation!

5 – Perseverance | Perseverance is choosing to obey God (self-control) over and over and over again. This steadfastness helps us develop a habit of self-control (1 Co 15:58). We might define perseverance as clinging to Jesus with all your might and hanging on as long as it takes to be victorious. Self-control and perseverance are the hard work of the sanctification process. They work together to conform us to the image of Christ.

The Payoff

Once the foundation is laid and applying the daily hard work of spiritual disciplines to your life, there is a payoff that results in three qualities: godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

6 – Godliness | Godliness in habitually responding in a Christlike way (1Ti 4:7-16). It is the fruit of laying the strong foundation of faith, virtue, and knowledge and then doing the hard work of self-control and perseverance. As we learn and grow in the Lord, and persist in forming new and godly habits, we respond more consistently and automatically in a way that reflects God’s character. Godliness is acting like Jesus as He lives in and through us.

7 – Brotherly Kindness | Brotherly kindness (*philadelphias*) is the idea of being loving and useful to your brother and sister in Christ. We might call it “Christian service.” We must remember that love is a verb! Christlike character and godly habits always affect the way we treat each other. All Christians should be characterized by actively loving and serving one another (Jn. 13:35). There should be kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness (Eph. 4:31). We are to act toward others as Christ would.

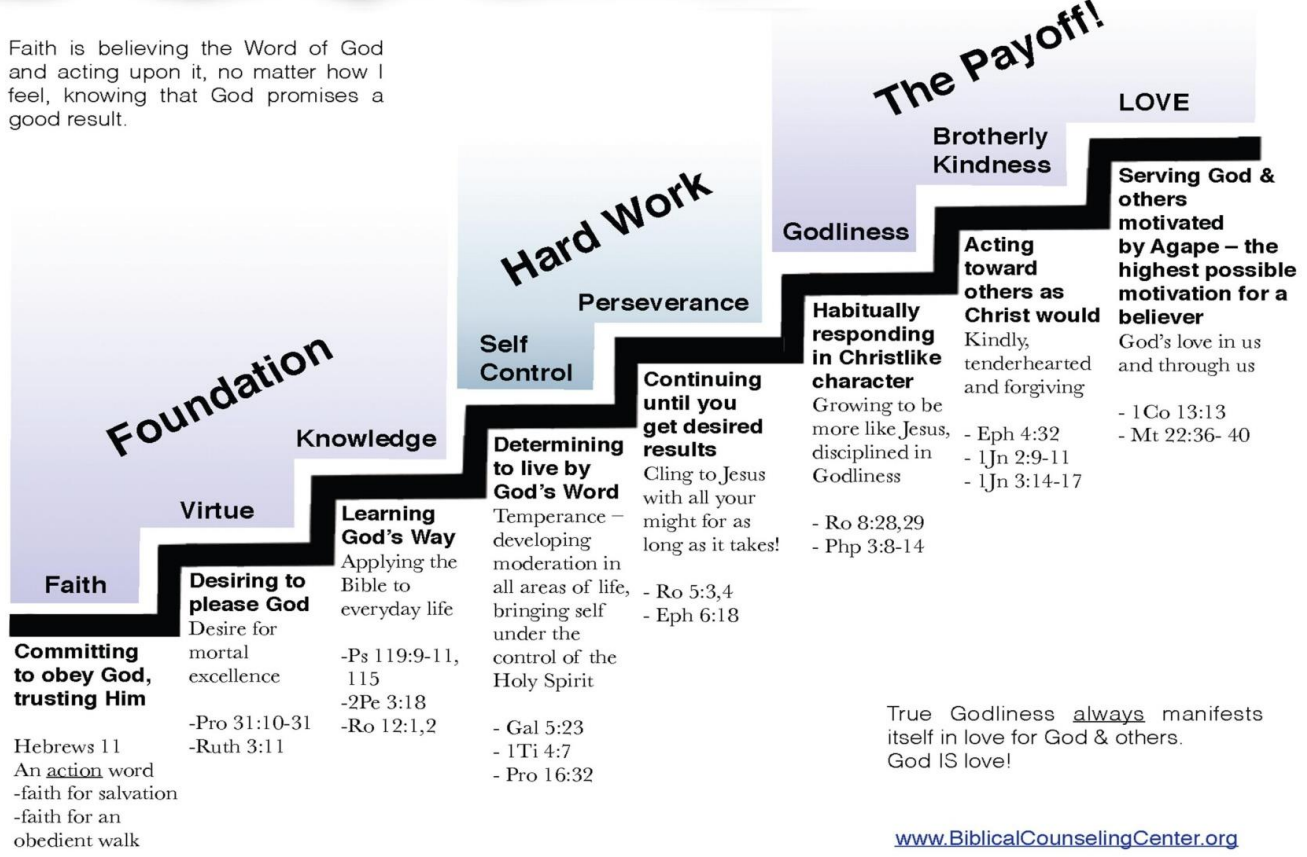
8 – Love | Love (*agape*) is the evidence of maturity in Christ. Love toward God and others is our ultimate goal, and it marks us as true believers (Jn 15:12-13; 1Jn 3:14-18). This proves God’s love is really in us and that we have truly become like He is, for He is love (1Jn 4:8). We love God by loving one another.

If we lay the right foundation (faith, virtue, and knowledge) and then continue in the hard work required to become godly (self-control and perseverance), the pay off (godliness, brotherly kindness, and love) will surely come. We are to not become weary in doing what is right (Gal 6:9). He promises us in 2 Peter 1:10 that if we diligently live out these eight qualities we will never stumble! Let us be diligent to make progress on this stairway for sanctification.

THINK ABOUT IT – Look at the chart¹ below, and list the areas you struggle with. Where do you think you are in the process of progressive sanctification?

Sanctification Process - 2Pet 1:3-10

Faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, no matter how I feel, knowing that God promises a good result.



¹ © Tim Allchin, Biblical Counseling Center of Arlington Heights, Illinois.