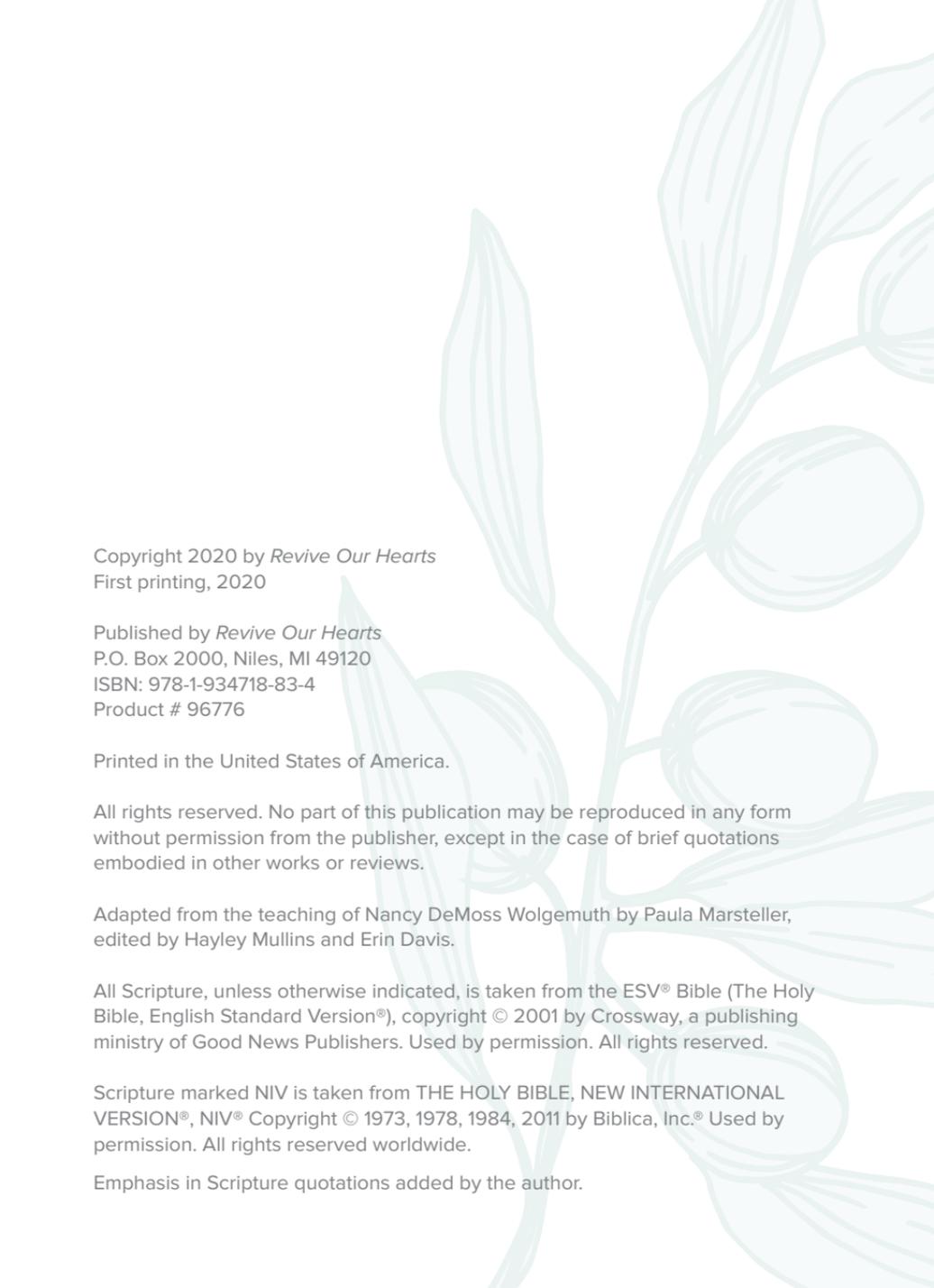


*Strengthen*

YOUR FAITH



NANCY DEMOSS WOLGEMUTH



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## Introduction

**F**lourish. I love that term. Don't you? It suggests not just surviving but *thriving*. Isn't that what we all long for? Thankfully, that's what God wants for us as well.

Jesus came that we might “have *life* and have it *abundantly*”—not only in the future but here and now (John 10:10). How do we walk in the abundant life God created for us?

In the first fifteen verses of 2 Peter 1, we find important insights about how to flourish spiritually. This passage begins with an amazing promise: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (v. 3). **What a gift. What more could we possibly need?**

**Peter knew firsthand the life and vitality Jesus has to offer.** Peter was at the transfiguration; he was at the crucifixion; he talked with the resurrected Christ.

**But Peter understood that this promise of abundant life does *not* mean we can kick back and take it easy.** When Peter wrote these words, he had been serving God faithfully for many years, and the Lord had shown him he was near the end of his earthly life (v. 14). Peter was mindful of the legacy he desired to leave as he penned this letter.

In light of all God has granted us, he urged believers:

- Push!
- Make every effort!
- Don't drift!
- Resist passivity!

He essentially says, “I know you already know these things, but I want to be sure you never forget them, even after I'm gone.” This passage reminds us who we are in Christ and how He has called us to live.

We need to be reminded and re-reminded of what it means to live the Christian life, because we easily forget.

As you meditate on these verses—among the apostle's final words—I pray that regardless of the circumstances you find yourself in, your faith will flourish.

**Are you serious about pressing on in your walk with God? Me too. May God infuse us with grace as we make every effort, in the power of His Spirit, to live the abundant lives to which He has called us.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PS: In addition to this Flourish kit, our team has assembled a collection of biblical resources to help you grow in Christ. You can find them at [ReviveOurHearts.com/Flourish](https://ReviveOurHearts.com/Flourish).

## God's Part in Our Spiritual Vitality

**I**n 2 Peter 1, the apostle exhorts believers about their responsibilities in the Christian life. But that's not where he starts. He doesn't start with what we are supposed to *do*. He starts by encouraging us with what God has *already done* for us.

As we consider areas of our own lives where we want to see growth and revitalization, let's start by considering what resources God has already given us. As you read verses 1–4, look for these key words: He “has granted to us ...” This will give you important clues into what He has done for you.

1. God has given you a faith of equal standing with the apostles.

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,  
To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing  
with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior  
Jesus Christ. (v. 1)

Sometimes we think of others as more spiritually blessed or privileged than we are. The apostles, for example, were with Jesus. They had something we don't have, right?

Wrong. Amazing as this claim may sound, you have a faith “of equal standing” with the apostles. **There are not different classes of believers.** I don’t have something you don’t have. The apostles didn’t have access to some mysterious gift that we don’t have. If God has placed faith in your heart, your faith is of equal value to that of Peter and the other disciples who walked with Jesus. It’s a faith of equal standing with every other pastor, spiritual leader, and believer you know and admire.

## 2. He has made His abundant grace and peace available to you.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (v. 2)

Do you want more grace and peace in your life? The key that unlocks all the grace and peace you need is *knowing God*. The greater and deeper your knowledge of Him, the more grace and peace you will have. Ultimately, at the heart of every problem we have is a failure to know God. Conversely, knowing God is the key to experiencing every blessing of God in our lives. As you increase in your knowledge of Him, you will find there is no limit to His grace and peace.

## 3. By His supernatural power, God has given you everything you need to flourish spiritually.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (v. 3)

God alone has the power to grant you “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” And . . . He has! If you’re in Christ, **God has *already* provided all you need to make it successfully from here to heaven through His power.**

#### 4. God has called you to His glory and excellence.

Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. (v. 3)

You have been called by God for His holy, eternal purposes. In His sovereign mercy and grace, **He chose you and set you apart to belong to Him, to share in His life, and to reflect His glory to others.**

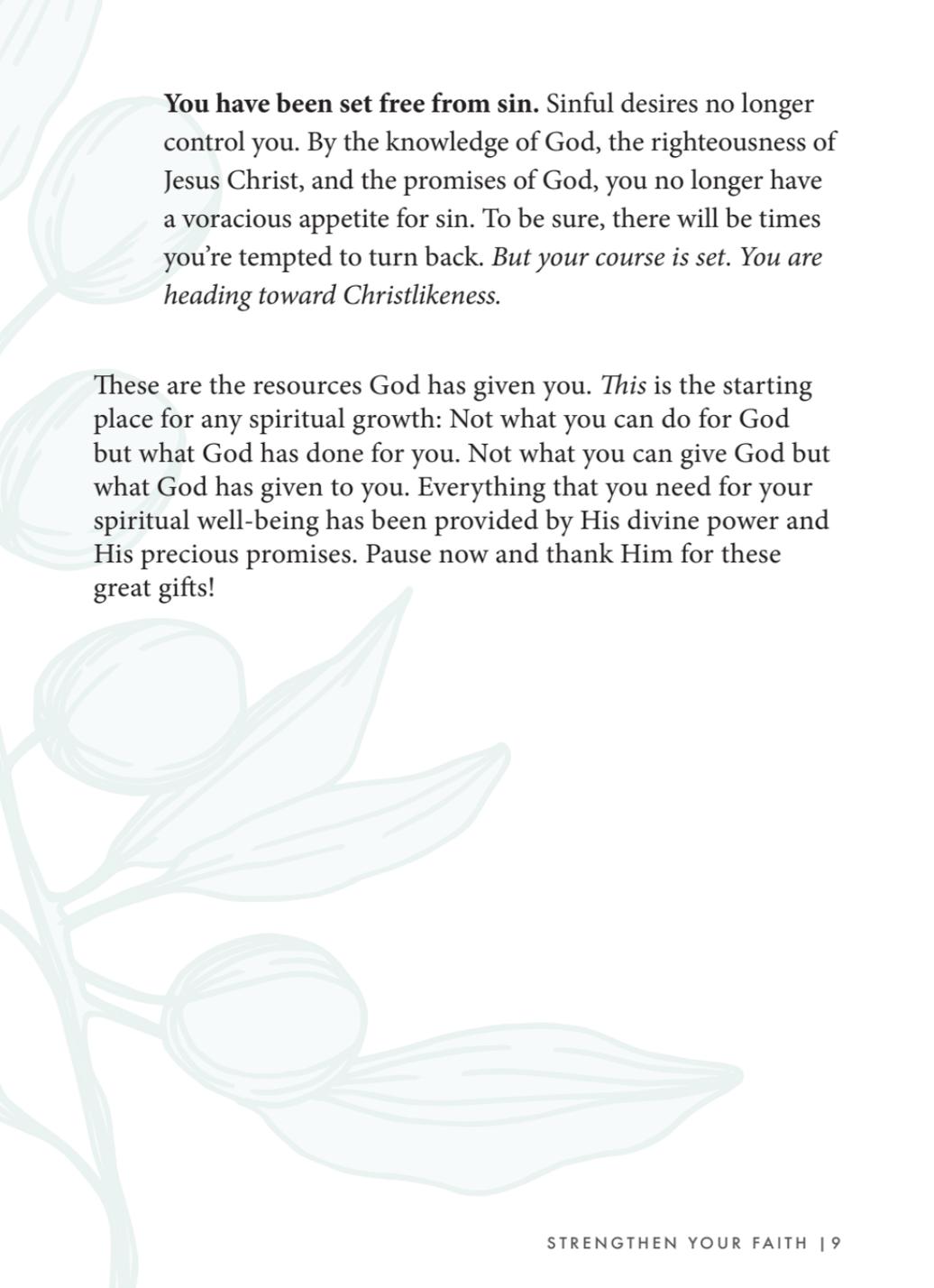
#### 5. God has given you powerful promises to enable you to fulfill His calling and become like Jesus.

He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature. (v. 4)

Your old nature doesn’t have dominion over you anymore. God inclines your heart toward Him and gives you the desire to please Him. Through the life of Christ within you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, **you have become a partaker of God’s nature!**

#### 6. God has set you free from the power of sin and worldly desires.

Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (v. 4)



**You have been set free from sin.** Sinful desires no longer control you. By the knowledge of God, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the promises of God, you no longer have a voracious appetite for sin. To be sure, there will be times you're tempted to turn back. *But your course is set. You are heading toward Christlikeness.*

These are the resources God has given you. *This* is the starting place for any spiritual growth: Not what you can do for God but what God has done for you. Not what you can give God but what God has given to you. Everything that you need for your spiritual well-being has been provided by His divine power and His precious promises. Pause now and thank Him for these great gifts!

# Our Part in Our Spiritual Vitality

**S**o, if God has given us everything we need to flourish spiritually, why don't we experience greater fullness of grace and peace? Why don't we experience more of our inheritance in Christ? Why is our spiritual life so often weak and anemic? Why do we so often struggle, fail, doubt, and live in spiritual poverty?

Let me suggest that it comes down to one or more of the following. Either:

- We don't *know* what God has done for us and provided for us . . . or we don't *trust* what He has done for us . . . OR . . .
- We don't know what God wants *us* to do . . . or we aren't doing what we know God wants us to do.

Yes, God has given us His divine power and His precious promises to enable us to flourish spiritually. But there are some things God will not do for us. Having God's resources at our disposal doesn't mean we automatically become spiritual giants.

Peter goes on to talk about our responsibility in the Christian life—what we are to do as a result of what God has done for us. If a key phrase in the first four verses of 2 Peter 1 is “He has granted us,” a key phrase in verses 5–7 is “make every effort” (or in some translations, “be diligent”).

*Make every effort* to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. (vv. 5–7)

There you have it. In the first part of this passage, we saw *God's* part—the resources He has given us. Now we see *our* part—our responsibility, what we are to do, as a result of and in response to what God has done for us.

Peter makes clear that **we cannot flourish spiritually without intense effort.**

Spiritual vitality requires intentional, disciplined effort to add essential graces to our lives. This is something we have to *work* at—and not just for a little while. **Spiritual growth is a lifelong pursuit.**

Faith is foundational to this whole process; it is the starting place—that which undergirds the whole structure. You can't go on to build a flourishing Christian life if you don't have genuine faith in Christ.

But, says Peter, faith is only the starting place. Once that is in place, you need to build upon your faith. In this passage he lays out seven graces we are to add to our faith. Think of these seven qualities as bricks being added to a building's foundation. It would be foolish to try to build a house without first setting a

foundation. But can you imagine someone building a foundation for a house and letting it sit for years without ever building on top of it?

**Faith is your foundation, Peter says. Now build on that.** One by one, add to your faith the blocks of virtue, knowledge, self-control. And don't stop there. Press on to add steadfastness, godliness, and brotherly affection. And to top it all off, be sure to add the supreme virtue of love—love for God and for others.

Each of these qualities is built on the others. Like floors in a building, you can't build the top floors without the lower ones.

In light of all God has done for you, the apostle says, be purposeful about your spiritual growth; be diligent about adding these seven qualities to your faith. This is what a flourishing heart and life looks like. This is what Christ-likeness looks like on you!

### **Make it Personal:**

- Are you consistently, diligently seeking to grow spiritually?
- Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus?
- What are you doing to nurture and cultivate your walk with God?
- Do you have genuine faith in Christ? Who/what are you trusting for your eternal salvation? What evidence is there that you have true faith?

# Seven Graces to Add to Your Faith

**L**et's explore the seven virtues the apostle Peter tells us to add to our faith. Following each brief description are a few questions to consider as you seek to cultivate these qualities in your life.

## 1. **Virtue:** moral excellence + moral energy

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies [virtue] of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Does “virtue” sound boring? Biblical writers use it to describe something strong and dynamic, like spiritual muscle. It's the energy and strength to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. **God first called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3), and now God urges us to become virtuous, to reflect His excellent character.** (The Greek word translated “excellencies” in 1 Peter 2:9 and “excellence” in 2 Peter 1:3 is the same word translated “virtue” in 2 Peter 1:5.) We are to add *His* moral excellence to the faith He has given us.

- Do you have a heart and appetite for things that are excellent, good, and pure?
- Do you have an energetic, vigorous faith? Is it active, alive, and growing?
- Are you fulfilling your created purpose? How well does your life reflect the character and nature of God?

## 2. **Knowledge:** moral discernment; the ability to discern right from wrong

You yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. (Rom. 15:14)

**In order to flourish spiritually, we need wisdom and understanding to know how to live out our faith in real-life, everyday circumstances.** This comes from the diligent study of God's Word—not just knowing it academically but using it as the basis to act in a wise and godly way in each circumstance and situation of life. Adding knowledge to our faith will give us the ability to use His Word to minister to our own needs and to the needs of others.

- Are you growing in your knowledge of God's Word and His ways?
- Are you able to apply the Word to your life circumstances?
- Do you find yourself using the Word to minister to the needs of others?

### 3. Self-Control: mastery over yourself

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)

Instead of living excessively and intemperately, remain under the Holy Spirit's control in every area of your life. **He empowers you to say “no” to your flesh and “yes” to God.** We're not talking about sheer human effort or willpower but drawing on the supernatural power of the Spirit to control our natural passions, drives, and desires.

- Is there any area of your life where you frequently give in to sinful or fleshly desires and passions?
- Do you exercise self-control
  - With your words?
  - In your moods and emotions?
  - With your time?
  - In your spending?
  - Sexually?

### 4. Steadfastness: staying power/perseverance

Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1–2)

A steadfast person does not crater under stressful circumstances or give up in the face of trials. He/she can't be swayed from confidence in God and commitment to His purposes. **Going through trials is the only way to develop steadfastness.** There are no shortcuts. Steadfastness isn't simply passively surviving difficulties; it's actively overcoming them by responding to them with faith and joy. How? By keeping our eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross for us.

- What trials are you experiencing at this time? Are you enduring them steadfastly, or have you grown weary and fainthearted?
- Do you keep trusting, loving, and obeying God even when His choices are not what you would choose?

## 5. **Godliness:** a God-centered life

Train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 Tim. 4:7–8)

Godliness is an attitude of reverence and devotion toward God, a desire to please Him in every area of our lives. It is orienting our whole life around Him. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul highlights the *price* of godliness (“train yourself”) and the *promise* of godliness (it's valuable both in this life and in the life to come). **Godliness doesn't just happen magically or by some mystical experience. We will be spiritually flabby unless we develop spiritual muscles through continual, purposeful training.**

- Is your heart inclined toward God and what He loves?
- Is the essential orientation of your life God-ward or self-centered? Temporal or eternal?
- What are you doing to train for godliness?

## 6. **Brotherly Affection:** devotion to other believers

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Rom. 12:9–10)

Godliness is not an end in itself. It is lived out in our human relationships. Brotherly affection means to be “fond of one’s brethren”—to genuinely care about our brothers and sisters in Christ. This kind of friendship creates a climate in the Body of Christ where people feel safe enough to get honest with each other about their spiritual struggles and needs. **If there were more true friendship between believers, there would also be more victory over sin. We need each other!** Don’t wait for others to show you brotherly affection; give that kind of concern and friendship to others.

- Do you genuinely care for the people of God? Are you cultivating warm, healthy friendships with other believers?
- Are you kind to and considerate of your fellow believers? Do you assume the best of them? Do you look for ways to encourage and bless them? Do you speak well of them? Do you look for opportunities to minister to their needs?

## 7. **Love:** other-centered, selfless, sacrificial, serving concern for God and others

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience . . . *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.* (Col. 3:12–14)

This kind of love—God's love—is the fruit and pinnacle of diligently adding all these other qualities to your faith. **Your growth in the Christian life isn't so you can be an amazing Christian; it's so you can become more loving.** In order to show true love to God and others, we must first appropriate His love for us.

- Is your life characterized by genuine love?
- Do you seek the interests of God and others above your own?

# Motivation for Pursuing Spiritual Vitality

**W**hat will motivate us to make the effort to continually grow and increase in these seven graces? In 2 Peter 1, Peter speaks to the blessings and benefits we will experience if we are progressing and practicing these qualities, as well as the consequences we can expect if we are not cultivating these crucial virtues.

*“If these qualities are yours and are increasing ...”*

## 1. You will be spiritually effective and fruitful.

If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 8)

If you're not increasing in these qualities, you will “idle out” spiritually. But if these qualities are developing in your life, you will bear much fruit for God's glory.

## 2. You will have sharpened spiritual vision.

Whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind. (v. 9)

If you lack these qualities, you will have a great close-up

view of what is earthly and temporal, but you will barely be able to see things that are heavenly and eternal. However, if you practice these graces, you will increasingly hone your senses of insight and discernment. You'll be able to see the things that matter most in time and eternity.

### 3. You will have assurance of your salvation.

Whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, *having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.* (v. 9)

This verse doesn't mean you *haven't* been cleansed from your former sins. But if you lack these qualities, you will have *doubts* about God's forgiveness. If you are progressing in these graces, you can be assured that you are in fact a child of God.

### 4. You will never fall.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (v. 10)

*You will never fall.* What an amazing promise this is. Every time someone falls into doctrinal error or sin as a pattern of life, you can be sure it's because they've not been diligently cultivating their faith. Pursuing spiritual growth protects you from wrong doctrine and wrong living. This doesn't mean you will never sin. But it does mean you will persevere to the end, held and sustained by His grace.

## 5. You will receive a rich welcome into heaven.

For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (v. 11)

Another translation says, “You will receive a rich welcome” (NIV). This suggests that some may have a more lavish entrance into heaven than others. Scripture indicates elsewhere that there are degrees of rewards for believers in heaven, which challenges us to live each day in light of eternity rather than for the immediate moment. During your days on earth, you’re not just marking days, weeks, and years off the calendar; you are making choices that will affect you forever.

# Pressing On Toward Spiritual Vitality

The Scripture we've been exploring urges us to . . .

- Push!
- Make every effort!
- Don't drift!
- Resist passivity!

As you seek to increase in the seven qualities of spiritual maturity Peter spells out, remember that it is God who provides the power you need to put all of this into practice:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

Will you live out these qualities perfectly? Far from it. You will experience sin and setbacks. Some days you may take one step forward and three steps back. But remember that you are building on the unshakeable foundation of faith in *Christ's* perfect work on your behalf.

Don't ever stop growing. This is a lifelong pursuit. It will be worth it all when you see Jesus. Press on by His grace and in the power of His Spirit!

*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24–25)*



*Spiritual growth* doesn't happen by accident. It is a lifelong pursuit that requires careful planning and intentional effort.

Walk step by step through 2 Peter 1 and discover how you can flourish spiritually. How you can experience the abundant life Christ promised you.



Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth has touched the lives of millions of women through *Revive Our Hearts* and the True Woman movement, calling them to heart revival and biblical womanhood. Her love for Christ and His Word is infectious and permeates her online outreaches, conference messages, books, and two daily nationally syndicated radio programs—*Revive Our Hearts* and *Seeking Him*. Her books have sold more than four million copies and are reaching the hearts of women around the world. Nancy and her husband, Robert, live in Michigan.



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