

Journey Into Becoming An Authentic Christian

LESSON 1 . . . Being an Authentic Christian (2 Peter 1:1-4)

NOTES

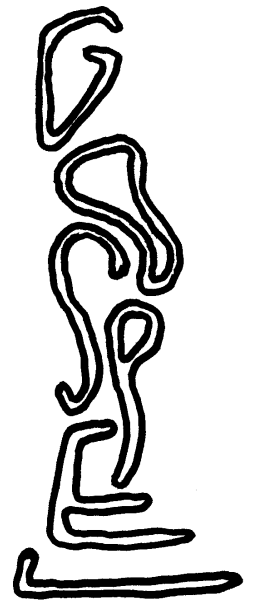
Are you an authentic Christian? A study of *2 Peter* and *Jude* is essential to answering this question because there is so much deception today about what it means to be a Christian. Christianity has been and is still being perverted into a Gospel that spiritualizes selfishness and greed. In this study, we will learn how to become authentic Christians. The key verse is 2 Peter 3:18a. Write it below:

Growing in the *grace and knowledge* of Jesus Christ is authentic Christianity. **Being an authentic Christian** has at least **three** requirements.

Believe exclusively (1:1).

We must exclusively believe the original, authentic Gospel. This is very important because cults and other false teachers are adding to the original Gospel. Where do we find out about the authentic Gospel? From the inspired writing of the New Testament! That's why the author of this epistle is so important. It is *Peter* (1:1a), one of Jesus' original twelve disciples. We know he was the leader of the Twelve because his name always appears first in the lists of the disciples. This is the last epistle this great saint wrote, for soon after writing it, he was martyred. As Peter writes this letter, he knows his time is short (1:13-14). Peter introduces himself as *Simeon Peter*. *Simeon* [Simon] is his Jewish name. But where did he get the name *Peter*? Read Mark 3:16 and explain. (See also Matthew 16:17-18.)

The word translated *Peter* (PETROS, pet'-ros) means "a stone or rock." "Cephas" is the Aramaic equivalent. He is called by four names in the New Testament: Simon, Cephas, Peter, and Simon Peter. Before becoming a disciple, Peter was a fisherman who lived in Capernaum. We know he had a wife because he had a *mother-in-law* (Mk 1:30). Also, he sometimes took his wife with him on teaching tours (1 Cor. 9:5).



Simon Peter calls himself *a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ* (1:1b-c). The word translated *servant* (DOULOS, doo'-los) literally means "slave" and refers to total subjection to Christ. The word order reveals Peter considers himself a *servant* first and an *apostle* second.

He writes: *To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours* (1:1d). The word *ours* refers to Peter and the other apostles. This means their *faith* was the same kind of faith as that of the apostles. In other words, it was authentic. The phrase *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ* (1:1e) reveals Peter and the apostles believe God and Jesus are one, not two. Jesus is God who came to earth in flesh and blood. That's why Jesus said, "*I and the Father are one*" (Jn 10:30). Authentic Christians, unlike cult followers today, declare Jesus **is** God in flesh and blood and not just a creation **of** God. Authentic Christians also know Jesus is God's final Word to the world (Heb. 1:2).

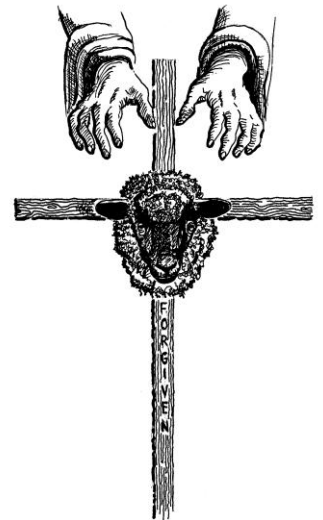
Our salvation is only available because the *righteousness* of God was made accessible through the death on the cross of our *Savior Jesus Christ*. How does 2 Corinthians 5:21 explain this truth?

That is the original Gospel. To be an authentic Christian, **believe exclusively** the original *faith*, or Gospel. But also . . .

Perceive properly (1:2).

Peter knows our *faith* can only remain sound and steadfast if we have a proper perception of God's grace and peace. Therefore, he writes: *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord* (1:2). A biblical perception of God's *grace and peace* can only be accomplished through the *knowledge* of who Jesus Christ is. We can only know God's *peace* if we have first experienced His *grace*. How does Romans 5:1 express this fact?

In verse two, *grace* refers to more than God's unmerited favor (which is saving grace) because Peter's readers have already experienced that once and for all. There are at least five kinds of grace in the New Testament: saving grace (Eph. 2:8), empowering/strengthening grace (Acts 4:33, 1 Cor. 3:10), equipping/gifting grace (Rom. 12:6), sustaining grace (2 Cor. 12:9), and refining grace (Col. 4:6).



The word translated *knowledge* refers to knowing from personal experience. This *knowledge* not only imparts information into our lives but also leads to transformation, which is the result of knowing Jesus personally. This kind of *knowledge* lets us experience God's *grace* and *peace* in abundance, or *multiplied*.

To be an authentic Christian, **believe exclusively** the original Gospel. Then, **perceive properly** God's *grace* and *peace* that come only through *the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*. Next . . .

Achieve divinely (1:3-4).

Our ability to live an authentic Christian life can only be achieved by *His divine power* (1:3a). People who are considering becoming Christians often hesitate because they think or say, "I can't live the Christian life." That's true because living the Christian life under our own power is not difficult; it is impossible. That's the bad news. However, the good news is we don't have to live the Christian life on our own; we live it by God's *divine power*. How does Ephesians 1:19a describe this *divine power*?

Although we cannot adequately describe God's *power*, it is only through this incomparable *power* that we can live the Christian life. This is because He *has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness* (1:3b). God gives us everything we need to live the Christian life. The word *godliness* means we devote ourselves to doing only what is pleasing to God. God has given us *all things* we need to please Him. This includes the Bible (which enlightens us so we know what to do), the church (which encourages us to do it), and the Holy Spirit (who empowers us to do what pleases God). That's everything we need!

As Christians, we should never doubt God's ability to give us everything we need to live for Him. The problem with many Christians today is found in 2 Timothy 3:5a-b. Explain below:

There are many once strong, missionary-minded denominations in America that today are dwindling and dying. The reason is they no longer have a *godliness* they believe has the *power* to win and change the world. Therefore, they are lowering their standards of morality, specifically sexual morality. They don't believe the *godliness* contained in the Gospel has the

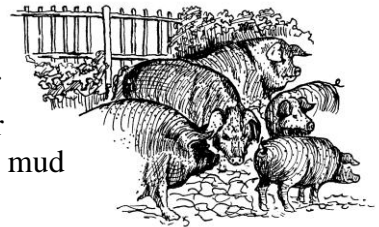
power to bring people up to God’s standards. So, we see many churches preaching and teaching what has *the appearance of godliness, but denying its power*.

Peter continues: *through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence* (1:3c). The word translated *glory* (DOXA, dox´-ah) is the word from which we get the word “doxology,” which means “to ascribe praise and honor.” God wants us to share in His *glory* in heaven.

God also calls us to His *excellence*, or “virtue,” which refers to moral *excellence*. We can’t achieve moral *excellence* on our own, but we can with God’s *divine power*. This is because of what truth found in 1 John 4:4c?

The One who is in us is the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). The one who is in the world is Satan (Jn 12:31; 1 Jn 5:19).

Christ has also given us *precious and very great promises* (2 Pet. 1:4a), which include the promise of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:14-17a). The fulfillment of these *promises* makes it possible for us to *become partakers of Christ’s divine nature* (1:4b). Therefore, we can participate in Christ’s moral *excellence*, or victory over sin. In Christ, we have *escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire* (1:4c). This is true because our *nature* determines our desires, or appetites. For example, a hog has a *desire* to wallow in mud and mire. How does Proverbs 26:11 express this principle?



Our *nature* determines our behavior. If we have a new, *divine nature* in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), we will become more and more like Him. That is what it means to be an authentic Christian.

To be an authentic Christian, **believe exclusively** the original Gospel. Next, **perceive properly** God’s *grace* and *peace* that come only through *the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*. Then, you can **achieve divinely** through God’s awesome, indwelling power—the Holy Spirit.