

Building Blocks of Christian Character

2 Peter 1:1-15 (text vs. 5-7)

We are living in unsettling times. [As I grow older, I'm *physically* less stable than when I was younger.]

Our lives must not be defined by the days in which we live, but by the God we believe in. He is settled. He is stable. Therefore, our lives must be marked by **stability**. Colossians 1:23 says, "...continue in the faith **grounded and settled**, and be **not moved** away from the hope of the gospel..."

Christian character starts with FAITH (v. 1)

- ➔ Faith is only the beginning. There are things we must **ADD** to faith (vs. 5-7).
- ➔ Notice this phrase: "*these things*" (vs. 8, 9, 10, 12, 15).
- ➔ What "*things*?" The things mentioned in verses 5-7.
- ➔ These are the "**building blocks**" that will stabilize and build character into a Christian's life. Let's call them "**Growth supplements**."

I. The **EXHORTATION** (v. 5).

- A. **Responsibility to develop.** Not automatic. You must develop "these things" on your own.
- B. **Requirement of diligence.** Diligence means "given priority; focused, careful." An ALL-OUT EFFORT.
 - The **opposite** of diligence is lazy, casual, careless, sloppy.

Going to the hospital for surgery – How diligent do you want the surgeon to be when he begins to cut on you? You want him to give ALL DILIGENCE! You want him to give his most earnest attention. You want him to be laser focused and undistracted! You do NOT want him cutting on you in a casual, haphazard way!

- A problem with too many Christians is they are too casual in Christian living. (Casual in giving; church attendance; witnessing).

II. The **ELEMENTS** (vs. 5-7).

- ➔ **Progressive order** – A **Divine sequence**. These “building blocks” are **built one upon the one before it**.

CHARITY
BROTHERLY KINDNESS
GODLINESS
PATIENCE
TEMPERANCE
KNOWLEDGE
VIRTUE
FAITH

- ➔ Each “building block” is illustrated by a Bible character.
- ➔ The **order** of building a house – What comes first, second, third, etc. (Isa. 28:13, “*precept upon precept... line upon line*”).

- A. ❶ “*Virtue*” – **DETERMINATION** to do right. The **FIRST** thing you should add to your faith is a determination to do right.
 - Example: **Joseph** – Gen. 39:6-12
 - Once you determine to do right – You need **discernment** about what is right.
- B. ❷ “*Knowledge*” – **DISCERNMENT** of God’s will in ethical matters. Knowledge comes **AFTER** virtue. If a man has knowledge without virtue, he’ll be crook!
 - Example: **Solomon** – 1 Kings 3:5-9
 - As you discern what is right, you need **discipline** to say “no” to what is not right.
- C. ❸ “*Temperance*” – **DISCIPLINE** to say “no” to the devil and the flesh. Temperance must be added to knowledge because “*knowledge puffeth up*” (1 Cor. 8:1).
 - Example: **Paul** – 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

- The devil will not quit tempting you, so you need to be **durable** under pressure.
- D. ④ *“Patience”* – **DURABILITY** under pressure.
- Example: **Job** – James 5:10-11
 - As Job, we stay faithful to God (never give up).
- E. ⑤ *“Godliness”* – **DEDICATION** unto God
- Example: **Timothy** – 1 Tim. 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3-6.
- F. ⑥ *“Brotherly kindness”* – **Unselfish DEVOTION** toward the brethren. By love serve one another.
- Example: **Jonathan; Barnabas**.
- G. ⑦ *“Charity”* [capstone] – **Loving DEEDS** towards others.¹
- Example: **John**.

III. The **EFFECTS** (vs. 8-5). Christian character will show:

- A. You will **no longer be BARREN** (v. 8). You’ll be **productive**.
- ➔ A baker can never expect to get any better cake than the ingredients he puts into it!

A Sad Recipe

I didn’t have potatoes, so I substituted rice.

I didn’t have paprika, I used another spice.

I didn’t have tomato sauce, I used tomato paste...

A whole can, not a half can, I don’t believe in waste.

A friend gave me the recipe, she said you couldn’t beat it.

There must be something wrong with her, I couldn’t even eat it!

- B. You will **no longer be BLIND** (v. 9). You will know where you are going and where you came from. You will be thankful for what God has done for you.

¹ Every modern translation changes *“charity”* to love. The word *“charity”* occurs 29 times in the KJV. Each time it is in the context of fellow believers (brethren). It is never used in the context of the unsaved (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1; 14:1; 16:14; Col. 3:14; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:8; 5:14 etc.) *“Charity”* is a word God reserves to the realm of Christianity, whereas "love" may be used towards the lost or believers.

"Love" is often **mistaken as a feeling**. You do not “fall in love”—You fall down stairs. However, *“charity”* is associated with conduct, not emotions. *“Charity”* is **love in action**, especially as it related to those in the body of Christ.

C. You will **no longer be BEWILDERED** (vs. 10, 12, 15).

SUMMATION: Character is like the foundation of a house – most of it is below the surface. It's not the fancy decor. Character is what is below the surface. The strength of the house is not the siding or the window dressing. These things may improve the appearance, but the strength lies underneath.

Christian character is the *superstructure* of the Christian life. It's not a person's good looks, talent, and ability that make him/her a good Christian. It is the character that they have built their life upon.