

September 1st 2013: Father's Day: "7 Supplements For A Father's Faith" 2Peter 1:1-11

The other day I was walking through the Whitford's shopping centre and I passed one of those shopping booths that they place directly in the centre of the walk through corridor. And I was intrigued to note that the whole booth was given over to selling health supplements. Vitamins to give a boost to this or that part of your anatomy. Additions to your daily diet that the advertisers tell you that you must take if you want to be the best you can be in life, and achieve the most possible in the easiest way.

And as I continued away from that booth selling health supplements I started to think about a verse of Scripture that I had read just a couple of days before as part of my daily devotion. It was from 2 Peter 1:5 and in the English Standard Version it reads like this:

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,.....

That even as there are supplements for our physical health and well being, there are supplements for our spiritual health and well being, and today, being Father's Day, I want to talk about the supplements that Peter mentions here as "7 Supplements For A Father's Faith".

Of course these 7 supplements are just as important for every Christian and this chapter is not just addressed to men, but Peter does mention 'brothers' in verse 10 as though he wanted to stress the need for men to lead by example in this area of Christian living.

Now these 7 supplements are listed in v5-7, but to understand them we must first unpack the verses that precede them beginning at verse 1.

(Talk through verses 1 through to beginning of verse 5)

One writer says at this point(Gil Rugh in Seven Virtues Of Christian Growth):-

In simple terms Peter is saying NOW IT'S YOUR TURN! Yes, God has given us all the necessary spiritual resources, but now we are responsible to use them. Remember, beloved, that spiritual growth occurs when doing follows hearing!

And then he goes on to add, and this is so important:-

Now it is not that I reach down into the resources of myself to pull myself up to accomplish what I should. No! I reach down into the resources of almighty God, who has made me new within, and I draw upon His power, the One who is my sufficiency, and apply myself to the pursuit of the development of His character in every aspect of my life.

This is where the 7 Supplements come into play, and they do for a specific reason that Peter mentions in v8.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm sure that there is not one Christian man amongst us who does not yearn to be effective and productive for Jesus, especially when it comes to the influence we have on those around us. And particular for those of us who are fathers, the continuing influence we want to have for Christ on our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. The Good news is that these 7 supplements are part of that secret to being effective, and if we set out to incorporate them into our behavior, then the triune God will enable us to show these qualities in an ever increasing measure.

Indeed, thinking about these 7 supplements reminded me of the time when, as a 17 year old, I turned up for my first full-time job. It was in a rather prestigious English Bank, The National Provincial. And I remember that on the day I commenced I was summoned by the bank manager to his office with the other young man who was starting with me. He then spoke to us about the privilege we had been given by this great bank to work for them and the responsibility that now lay upon us to succeed. They had graciously done their part by giving us employment. Now we must add to that our best effort. He then listed certain things we should do if we must succeed:

- Aim to be good at our job...aim to be excellent
- Attend night school in order to study banking procedures
- Always act in a controlled fashion
- Make sure we finish every task given us.
- Behave satisfactory at all times and dress well
- Respect and treat well other employees and customers

- Give more than our best always

The major point of his talk was to make sure that we understood that if we didn't gradually improve in every aspect of our work we would soon be looking for another job.

But the thing is that his list of 7 expectations mirrors the 7 supplements that Peter mentions that we need to add to our faith:-

Be good at the job	Goodness
Study banking	Knowledge
Act in a controlled way	Self-control
Finish every task	Perseverance
Behave satisfactory	Godliness
Respect other employees	Brotherly kindness
Give more than your best	Love

The main differences being of course, that Peter is talking about living our whole lives effectively for the Kingdom of God; that the Triune God will enable us to add these supplements when we yearn for Him to do so; and that as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, it is the love of Christ that compels us to be the most effective Ambassadors we can ever be for Him.

So let's quickly look at each of these supplements that we are to add to our faith, and the first is **Goodness**.

A word that speaks of gracious acts that we do. Effort made to promote goodness because we are children of God who is good to all.

There's a secular story about a guy called Brodie Thoene who became a script writer for John Wayne. He tells how John Wayne had initially heard of him when he was just 19 and then when, as a young married 23 year old he was trying to commence a career, John Wayne sought him out and offered him employment. Thoene writes:-

"We were awestruck. Here was this man who had been in film for fifty years and he takes a young couple under his wing! Once I asked him, 'Why are you doing this? You're so good to us.' He replied, 'Because somebody did it for me.'"

And we are to supplement our Faith with goodness every day to whomever we can because of the goodness Christ has poured out on us.

Knowledge is the second and we can understand how important it is to keep adding to our knowledge of God and His ways. But we need to remember that, as someone once said:-

Whoever requires a knowledge and does not use it is like one who ploughs but does not sow.

Self-control is so important for the Christian because it covers so many areas. The way we react to others or to circumstances. The overcoming of bad habits and behaviours. The spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, giving, and forgiving all require self-control that is beyond our human resources. God requires us to supplement our lives with it and promises to grow it in us as a fruit of the spirit, if we are willing to ask for it.

Perseverance. Samuel Johnson said, "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance." "By perseverance the snail reached the ark"—Charles Spurgeon.

"I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything."—William Carey

Godliness. Although it may sound simplistic, to me godliness is to be like Jesus. To encourage in ourselves the habit of asking the question, What would Jesus do.

Brotherly kindness is the translation of the Greek word Philadelphia or brotherly love. A concern for one another within the fellowship that expresses itself in acts of kindness. To supplement our Faith with this is I believe, to ask God to both motivate us and make us conscious of the times when He calls us to reach out in a practical way to another believer. This week I had the joy of taking a gift to someone in the church that had been placed in the offering for them. I have no idea who put it there and neither does the person to whom I gave it. They opened the envelope in front of me

and pulled out some bank notes. Then I watched with joy as they lifted their eyes to the heavens and said to God, "You do listen". Then they told me that they had a desperate financial need that they had no idea how they would ever meet it. And the unexpected gift was exactly what they needed. And as I saw it I prayed, Lord let me be as in tune with you when it comes to acts of brotherly kindness, as that person obviously is.

Love. It's the pinnacle of all supplements and the most needed. It's the acts of love we do towards the enemy. To them we do not like. It's the forgiveness that grates against our humanness. The help we think is undeserved and unappreciated. The love that God first showed us.

When I think of these supplements I tend to feel that although every Christian, man, woman, child, needs to add them to their daily Christian walk, it is the men who will find a few of them very difficult. I was talking to a strong Christian man the other day about an aspect of his behavior that can be off putting to others. And he said to me, but that's the way I am. I have always been like that. You get me you get that attitude. That's me. But, I said to him, as a Christian you can't hide behind that anymore. What you can't change in your own strength you now have all the mighty provision of God to do it in. And the change He wants in you is so that you won't be ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge or knowing of Jesus.

God needs Christian fathers to not just know that they are Christians and faithfully worship Him because of that, but who are prepared to actively supplement their Faith in these 7 practical ways. To make every effort to do so.

And God's expectation is that we set ourselves to gradually improve in every area. That we set ourselves small goals in areas like our self-control, our godliness, our perseverance, and depend upon God to enable us to advance slowly but surely in those areas.

I was shown this diagram this week that I want to leave with us all in closing



