

HEAVEN'S HEALTH GUIDELINES
(Part One)
"Cultivating A Christian Character"

Adapted from Warren Wiersbe in *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines On The New Testament*.
Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992 (p.p. 756 - 758).

Text: 2 Peter 1.3 - 11 (in pew Bible p. 1204 / in large print Bible p. 1872)

Intro: **-Canadian Health Reference Guide:** the only tool reaching every healthcare facility across Canada. *Consulted by more than 12000 decision makers.*

- blessing of good health based on proper diet & exercise.
- **contra** fad diets = 500 calories / day (**cf.** 1200 to 1400 calorie / day minimum).

-begin a 3 part sermon series on *Heaven's Health Guidelines* in 2 Peter.

- Peter's 1st letter / epistle deals with problems from the outside (i.e. *persecution*).
- Peter's 2nd letter / epistle deals with problems from the inside (i.e. *false teachings & false practices*).

-Peter has a strong desire to promote healthy followers of Jesus:

I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends. Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen (2 Peter 3.17, 18).

-this letter was written just before Peter's martyrdom:

And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, (2 Peter 1.13, 14).

-Peter's martyrdom was foretold by Jesus before He returned to Heaven:

- **cf.** church tradition about Peter's inverted crucifixion.

I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go (John 21.18).

-today's text challenges us to develop godliness by getting to know Jesus better (v. 3).

- "exceedingly great and precious promises" enable us to be partakers of God's divine nature and escape corrupting lust (v. 4).
- "diligently add to your faith" 7 virtues (v. 5).
 - moral excellence (v. 5), increasing knowledge of God (v. 5), self-control (v. 6), patient endurance (v. 6), godliness (v. 6), love for other Christians (v. 7), genuine love for everyone (v. 7).

Take Home Point:

-followers of Jesus have sound spiritual health *when they grow in their knowledge of Jesus and Christian character.*

- **illust.** Alexander Whyte.

1. THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE (v.v. 1 – 4)

-key word in 2 Peter = “*knowledge*”:

- danger = false teaching.
 - only weapon to fight false teaching = *word of God / spiritual knowledge*.
 - “precious **faith**” (v. 1) & “precious **promises**” (v. 4).

Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we **go**? You have the words that give eternal life (John 6.68).

-salvation = personal experience – **coming** to know Jesus **via faith**.

And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth (John 17.3).

-not enough to know about Christ – *must know Christ **personally***.

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (Philippians 3.10).

-when we put our **faith** in Him, He gives us His righteous and *He becomes our Saviour*.

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5.21).

-so the Bible contains Heaven’s Health Guidelines *for developing a Christian character*:

- all things that pertain to life & godliness (v. 3).
- partakers of the divine nature (v. 4).
 - **a true Christian** is a follower of Jesus who has been born into God’s family and has God’s nature within.
 - **a false Christian** according to 2 Peter 2.20 – 22 has:
 - temporarily escaped worldly pollution *but not corruption*.
 - external reformation not internal regeneration.
 - head knowledge but lacks a heart of faith.
 - flawed hope for they eventually go back to the old life, *like a washed pig will wallow in the mire or a fed dog returns to his own vomit*.

-**illust.** Divine Assistance

2. THE GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE (v.v. 5 - 11)

-“for this **very** reason make **every** effort to add to your faith” (v. 5).

- there is something beyond the New Birth = *there is growth*.
- not enough to be born – *you must grow!!!*
 - demands diligence and earnestness *from those who truly follow Jesus*.
 - lazy and careless professors of faith *do not grow*.
- **illust.** my new grandson Gus Dewdney Cressman b. Wednesday Sept. 6.

-“diligently add to your faith” 7 virtues (v. 5).

- moral excellence (v. 5), increasing knowledge of God (v. 5), self-control (v. 6), patient endurance (v. 6), godliness (v. 6), love for other Christians (v. 7), genuine love for everyone (v. 7).
- the final virtue of love “wraps” *all the virtues together into one*.

-characteristics of professing Christians *who are not growing*:

- barren / idle = they will not work for Christ (v. 8).
- meager knowledge of, not about, Christ *restricts the growth of fruit* (v. 8).
- spiritual blindness = forgetting what God has done for them in Christ (v. 9).

-challenge is to get on the spiritual tread-mill *in order to develop our faith*:

- be sure you are saved / be sure *you are a follower of Jesus*.
 - we cannot initiate or maintain *salvation*.
 - but we must be sure that we have the marks *of a true believer*.
 - **illust.** Ignatius of Antioch.
 - **illust.** David Livingstone.

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-you to have sound spiritual health by growing in your knowledge of Jesus and Christian character.

-you to confirm your election *to salvation*.

- make your call and election *sure* (v. 10).
- followers of Jesus steadily advance *in the 7 virtues* (v. v. 5 – 7).
 - you will never stumble (v. 10).

-give you an abundant entrance / rich welcome *into His everlasting kingdom* (v. 11).

- don't just barely make it – being saved ... *only as one who escapes the flames* (1 Corinthians 3.15).
- finish as a champion who wins gold *at the Olympics*.

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-be balanced in your assessment of your spiritual health:

- do not neglect self-examination.
- do not overdo self-examination.
- do not procrastinate by waiting for some big experience / manifestation.
 - **illust.** Pressure On Your Sponge.

-don't look at your own heart but look at the Son of God who died for your sins.

- our human hearts are too fickle.
- surely He will spur you on to growth.

-don't just sit in contemplation of Christ.

- go out and practice the Christian life.
- rule for followers of Jesus = believe & do / act & practice.
 - this will make your calling and election sure.

-Since I started for the Kingdom, Since my life He controls,
Since I gave my heart to Jesus, The longer I serve him, the sweeter He grows.

3. Know that you will do it.

-Closing Hymn: #518 The Longer I Serve Him (all verses).

Dear Heavenly Father, your Word says,

"May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord (2 Peter 1.2)."

Therefore we pray:

"GIVE ME GRACE TO FEEL THE NEED OF THY GRACE; GIVE ME GRACE TO ASK FOR THY GRACE; AND WHEN IN THY GRACE THOU HAST GIVEN ME GRACE GIVE ME GRACE TO USE THY GRACE."

Amen.

Alexander Whyte

Dr. Alexander Whyte, a great lover and student of John Bunyan's writings, such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, has this to say about character ..., "Character comes up out of the heart. There are more good minds in the world than good people; character, high spotless, saintly character, is a far rarer thing in this world than talent or even genius. And yet so true is it that the world loves its own, that all men worship talent, and even bodily strength and bodily beauty, while only one here and one there either understands or values or pursues moral character, though it is the strength and the beauty and the sweetness of the soul" (cited in Ernest W. Bacon's *John Bunyan Pilgrim and Dreamer*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983, p. 177).

Divine Assistance

My child, I am the Lord, Who gives strength on the day of distress (Nahum 1.7). Come to Me when all is not well with you. What hinders you most of all from receiving heavenly consolation is your slowness in turning to Me in prayer. Before you pray earnestly to Me, you first seek other comforts, trying to find distraction ... [i.e. relief] ... in outward things.

Hence it is that all these things are of little benefit to you until you realize that I alone am the One Who delivers those who trust in Me. [Other things can provide] ... no effectual help nor worthwhile counsel nor lasting remedy.

But now, having recovered your breath after the storm, gather your strength again in the light of My mercies, for I am near you to restore all, not only to their former state, but even to increase them abundantly and beyond measure (Thomas A Kempis in *The Imitation Of Christ*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 1993, p. 160).

Ignatius of Antioch

It is not that I want merely to be called a Christian, but actually to be one. Yes, if I prove to **be** one, then I can have the name (Ignatius of Antioch / Church Father and Martyr 35 - 107 in Craig Brian Larson & Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations that Connect*. Zondervan, 2009, p. 104).

David Livingstone

All that I am I owe to Jesus Christ, revealed to me in his divine book (David Livingstone / Scottish Missionary To Africa 1813 - 1873 in Craig Brian Larson & Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations that Connect*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, p. 108).

Pressure On Your Sponge

The Bible often exhorts us to be filled with various godly virtues – which means what? How do we know if we are “full of goodness” (Romans 15.14), for example?

Think a moment about a water-saturated sponge. If we push down with our finger even slightly, water runs out onto the table. We immediately know what fills the interior pockets of the sponge.

The same is true of ourselves. We can tell what fills us on the inside by what comes out under pressure (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 49).