

5. Christians Grow by Participating in the Divine Nature

This lesson is the fifth and final lesson in this series on Christian growth: *Christians Grow by Participating in the Divine Nature*.

The first four steps showed how Christians grow stronger spiritually by following the steps given to them in the scriptures:

1. *Christians Grow by Attending the Worship Services*
2. *Christians Grow by Edifying and Building Up One Another*
3. *Christians Grow by Visiting*
4. *Christians Grow by Seeking Every Opportunity*

It is through God's promises that we attain to the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world: according to 2 Peter 1:4:

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Participating in the Divine Nature Comes Only with Effort

Peter follows the above statement on the divine nature by asserting that we must make every effort in 2 Peter 1:5-9:

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 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. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

One cannot expect to grow spiritually and attain the divine nature without making every effort. The elements of the divine nature are attainable by all Christians, beginning with faith and obedience to the gospel. Christians can strive to be good, to achieve knowledge through the scriptures, to control themselves, to persevere, to act godly, to be kind to one another, and to love. Since we can do all these, as the commercial says: "just do it."

The end makes the effort worthwhile: "8 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."

Participating in the Divine Nature Comes with Exercise

In order to participate in the divine nature, Christians must exercise in order to be godly, according to 1 Tim 4:7-8:

7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. 8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Godliness has value now on earth and in the life to come. Christians hear many theories about religion – godless myths and old wives' tales – as men make up and speculate about religious

matters and doctrine. Have nothing to do with these, but seek the divine nature with godly exercise.

Participating in the Divine Nature Comes through Faith and Knowledge

In order to attain the divine nature, Christians must seek knowledge through the word of God as Paul wrote in Tit 1:1-3:

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – 2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, 3 and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

Not just any knowledge will do; this knowledge depends on the word that God brought to light. This knowledge leads to godliness and a participation in the divine nature.

Participating in the Divine Nature Brings Benefits in This Present Life

As amply illustrated, participation in the divine nature secures heaven according to the text in 1 Tim 4:7-8, and it also holds promise for the present life:

7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. 8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the **present life and the life to come**. [Emphasis added.]

Christians by attaining the divine nature receive promises for the present life.

Contentment

The first present day promise is contentment. Paul wrote 1 Tim 6:6-10:

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

In godliness (the divine nature) is contentment. Those who refuse this contentment for transient earthly gain pierce themselves with attendant griefs.

Peaceful and Quiet Lives

Godliness and holiness (the divine nature) allow Christians to lead peaceful and tranquil lives, according to 1 Tim 2:2:

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Spirituality

The qualities of the divine nature are invisible, yet clearly seen, understood through his creation. Paul writes in Rom 1:20:

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Christians have character and power endowed upon them with the divine nature. Their weapons are not weapons of the world, but spiritual weapons. They actually have divine power, according to 2 Cor 10:3-5:

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The spirituality of Christian brings with it everything that we need. 2 Peter 1:3, "3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

Present day ideas of spirituality lean upon mechanisms other than the knowledge of God: some look to secular writings and pronouncements of modern-day gurus; others look inward to one's own perceptions of truth. However, divine power comes only from the knowledge of God.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 2 Peter 1:4: What has God given us? In what do we participate?
2. 2 Peter 1:5-9: What are we to add to our faith? What do these things make us?
3. 1 Tim 4:7-8: With what are we to have nothing to do? What must we train ourselves to be?
4. Tit 1:3: What leads to godliness? How did God bring his truth to light?
5. 1 Tim 4:7-8: With what are Christians to have nothing to do? In what two lives do we have promise?
6. 1 Tim 6:6: What brings great gain? With what do wandering Christians pierce themselves?
7. Tim 2:2: Why must we pray for the kings and rulers? What characterizes the Christian life?
8. 1:20: What do we see through the things that are made?
9. 2 Cor 10:3-5: With what weapons do we fight? What power do they have?
10. 2 Peter 1:3: What does God's power give us?