

4. Make a short list of people whom you want to tell about Jesus. Pray specifically for them and ask for opportunities to share the gospel with them before Jesus comes back!

6

2 Peter 3:11-18

Go ahead, make God's day

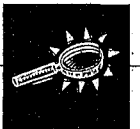
A few years ago, Queen Elizabeth II came to visit the country town where I live. It was the second time she had come to the town and a huge fuss was made. Flowers suddenly appeared along the route she was to take. Trees were pruned to look all nice and neat. Lawns were mown, streets resurfaced, buildings were cleaned and painted. A lot of people went to a lot of trouble so that the town was ready for the Queen's second visit.

How will we get ready for Jesus' return on his second visit? It will be a day when the entire fabric of creation will be dissolved and a whole new order of creation, a new heaven and a new earth will be ushered in. What do we need to do to get ready for that? How can we be prepared?

Investigate

Read 2 Peter 3:11-18

1. What should we be doing to get ready for Jesus' return?



2. What do you think it means to "live holy and godly lives" (v. 11)? (These cross references may help: 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pet 2:9-12; 1 Thess 4:1-7.)

3. In verse 14 we are told to "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" and in verse 18 to "grow in the grace and knowledge" of Jesus. In chapter 1, Peter told us to make every effort to work out our salvation. How are these commands related?

Be holy!

When Jesus returns he will see us for who we really are. Being ready for Jesus, therefore, is a matter of working at our holiness.

Notice that Peter calls on us to be "holy", not "busy". We might be very busy doing many things around our church or fellowship group, but are we actually making the effort to be holy in all our activities?

But how do we become holy? What can we be doing in practical terms to grow in holiness? Peter gives some wise advice.

Investigate

1. What does Peter suggest his readers do in 3:1-2? How might this help them to grow in godliness?

2. Why do you think Peter suddenly starts talking about the apostle Paul in verses 15-16? What is Peter's main point in these verses?

3. Given what Peter has already said about Scripture (1:20-21), why is it significant that he refers to Paul's writings as Scripture?

4. Even Peter could see that some of Paul's writings were hard to understand! How can we approach difficult Bible passages in such a way that we don't distort them?

How to be holy

The final chapter of 2 Peter sets out some helpful advice about how we can live holy lives.

Recall Scripture

Peter's first advice about growing in holiness recalls verses 1-2. Peter urges us to have wholesome thinking by recalling Scripture.

One reason we all have problems trying to be holy is because we can't be bothered reading the Bible. We buy a newspaper or our favourite magazine and we read it from cover to cover, but the Bible just sits by our bedside. No wonder we find it difficult to be blameless in our lives. We fill our minds with trivia and it comes out in our lives. We fill our heads with magazines and novels and television, but not with the Word of God. The end result is that we crave the world and not the Word.

If we're serious about getting ready for Jesus, we'll be training our minds in wholesome thinking by recalling and reading and thinking over Scripture.

Guard against error

Peter's second piece of practical advice about how to live a holy life is that we should be on our guard against errors. Peter has already spent the entire second chapter on this topic. In chapter 3, Peter talks to his readers about this in terms of Paul's letters (vv.15-16).

He points out that some people are distorting Paul's words. Some of what Paul says is hard to understand and so we need to be careful. We need to treat the Bible with respect and not embrace ideas too quickly, especially when the Bible itself doesn't seem to be black and white on an issue.

This is yet another reason for knowing the Scriptures. If we are not well acquainted with what the Bible says, we will be easily fooled by false teachers. More to the point, if we don't know what's in the Bible we'll be incapable of living holy and godly lives simply because we won't know what a holy and godly life involves.

Grow

Thirdly, Peter says that holy living will involve growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (v.18). The key word in the verse is "grow". We should never think that we've 'arrived' as Christians. The Christian life is a developing life consisting of getting to know, at ever greater depth, an inexhaustible Lord and Saviour. We must always be striving to know Jesus more fully.

Knowledge of Jesus

We've now reached the end of our journey through 2 Peter. It's a challenging and comforting letter. It's also no accident that the final verse in the letter takes us full circle back to the start.

Knowledge of Jesus is Peter's opening (1:2-3) and closing emphasis (3:18). It is the issue around which the whole letter revolves. Knowledge of Jesus gives us everything we need for life and godliness (1:3) and it is therefore critical in helping us grow in godliness so that we might be ready for Jesus' return (3:11). Furthermore, because knowledge of Jesus is so important, people who promote false knowledge must not be tolerated (2:1-22).

From start to finish, 2 Peter is all about Jesus and how crucial it is to accurately know him. No wonder Peter wants to spend his last dying day telling people about Jesus (1:12-15).

Think it through

1. Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ? If not, how does 2 Peter 3 help you to do so? If so, how can you ensure that the growth continues?
2. Think back over all of 2 Peter. What are the things that have comforted you the most?
3. What are the things that have challenged you the most?

