

The Big Picture of God's Plan for You

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What to Expect on Your Journey with God – Part 4

Your journey through life with God will be a learning journey, as it was with Abraham, but that is only one aspect of your life's journey. God has much, much more for you. He has plans to bless you in remarkable, tangible ways in the areas of your spiritual life and growth, your relationships, your health, your finances, your work, and every area of your life!

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”—Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB)

“The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].”—John 10:10 (AMP)

The Apostle Peter gives us a glimpse into the big picture of God's plan for our lives in 2 Peter chapter 1. In this chapter, we can see an overview of God's plan as He led Abraham on his journey through life, and it gives us some great insight into God's plan for each of us.

Some of the apostles' letters were written to particular groups of people, like the letter to the Romans or the letters to Timothy, but 2 Peter was written to “those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1 NASB). In other words, this letter applies to all believers in Jesus.

Peter begins his letter with a blessing for all of us:

“Grace and peace [that special sense of spiritual well-being] be multiplied to you in the [true, intimate] knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”—2 Peter 1:2 (AMP)

He blesses us with two of the most important things that God can give us for our journey: grace and peace.

Grace is our superpower. Grace from God gives us the desire, the power, and the ability to complete the journey. Grace gives us what we will need to fulfill our purposes in life. I wrote more about the importance of grace in a two-part series called, *The Most Important Thing to Ask God For*.

Peace is the antidote to anxiety. God's peace will calm any fears, anxieties, or worries that might try to creep into our thoughts and hinder our journeys with God.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”—Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

After his blessing, Peter assures us that God has already provided everything that we will need in life; and everything that we will need to be successful on our journey with God.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the full knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence.”—2 Peter 1:3 (ISV)

Then Peter tells us *how* we will be able to tap into God's power to become everything that we were born to be.

“And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.”—2 Peter 1:4 (NLT)

It is the *promises* of God, found in Scripture, that enable us, by faith, to tap into the power of God to overcome sinful desires and become everything that we were born to be.

When we truly believe the promises of God, then our faith causes those promises to become reality for us, as Jesus said to people during His ministry on earth, “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34; Mark 10:52; Luke 8:48; Luke 17:19 KJV).

Abram's journey with God was motivated by a promise. Your journey with God will also be motivated and fueled by the promises of God and hope for a better life through the fulfillment of those promises.

Becoming the Person You Were Born to Be

People often believe that life is all about what we *do*, but from God's point of view, it is much more important for you to *become* the person you were born to *be*. Life is not as much about *doing something* as it is about *becoming someone*.

One of God's primary goals for your life is for you to reach full maturity—to reach your full potential—to become everything that you were born to be.

In Peter's letter, he next gives us an overview of the path to maturity that lays out the big picture of God's plan for your life. This path to maturity is laid out for us in stages of character development.

True maturity is maturity of character. True maturity is transformation into the image of Jesus Christ. God's goal for each of us is to grow into mature sons and daughters of God by being transformed into people with the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren.”—Romans 8:29 (AMPC)

Peter lays out the steps in this progression toward true maturity as a son or daughter of God. This is so important that he exhorts us to give focused diligence (not just casual acknowledgement) to pursuing spiritual maturity.

1. Faith

We begin our journey with faith in God. That is where it all starts. Faith in God must be demonstrated. It must be evidenced by our lives. Faith without works is dead, as James tells us.

Abram demonstrated his faith in God by obeying God's voice and leaving his hometown, not knowing where the journey would take him.

2. Moral Excellence

Peter exhorts us to add virtue—moral excellence—to our faith. This is the next step.

“This is why you must make every effort to add moral excellence to your faith”—2 Peter 1:5

Abram was tested in this very soon after he started his journey. He stumbled in this test by lying to Pharaoh. But stumbling does not mean complete failure. God will bring this test back around again, giving us multiple chances to pass and move forward!

“Good people might fall again and again, but they always get up. It is the wicked who are defeated by their troubles.”—Proverbs 24:16 (ERV)

Like Abram, you will also be tested in the area of moral character. Your integrity will be tested. Will you endure temptation even when it costs you something? If you endure and overcome temptation, God will richly reward you!

“How blessed is the man who endures temptation! When he has passed the test, he will receive the victor’s crown of life that God has promised to those who keep on loving him.”—James 1:12 (ISV)

3. Knowledge

Knowledge is the third building block of spiritual maturity. This is not just ordinary knowledge. This is knowledge about the truth of God and of life.

“This is why you must make every effort to add moral excellence to your faith; and to moral excellence, knowledge”—2 Peter 1:5 (CEB)

The order here is important. You must add moral excellence *before* knowledge because knowledge without the foundation of strong moral character makes a person proud. God resists and opposes proud people. (See 1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6.)

People who go to Bible school without having integrity of character come out of that learning experience as proud people who know a lot, but God cannot use them.

4. Self-Control

“And in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control”—2 Peter 1:6 (AMPC)

Self-Control is the next major quality to focus on developing after you begin gaining knowledge. This is actually the basis for discipleship. The very word “disciple” has the same root as “discipline.” Another word for self-control is self-discipline. This is all about choosing higher, long-term goals over temporary, short-term gratification. Self-discipline means learning to rule over your appetites, instead of letting them rule over you.

“Everything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything [and brought under its power, allowing it to control me].”—1 Corinthians 6:12 (AMP)

“But [like a boxer] I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached [the gospel] to others, I myself will not somehow be disqualified [as unfit for service].”—1 Corinthians 9:27 (AMP)

5. Patient Endurance

The next step in the spiritual maturity process is to develop patient endurance.

“and with self-control, patient endurance”—2 Peter 1:6 (LEB)

The word translated “patient endurance” is sometimes translated “steadfastness” or “perseverance.” Strong’s Concordance defines this as “the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.”

This quality empowers a mature believer to continue on in life even in the face of the greatest trials, sufferings, and disappointments. It was this quality that empowered Jesus to die for all of us on the cross.

“fixing our attention on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith, who, in view of the joy set before him, **endured** the cross, disregarding its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”— Hebrews 12:2 (ISV)

It is through patient endurance that we eventually enter into the fulness of everything that God has promised us.

“And we desire for each one of you to show the same diligence [all the way through] so as to realize and enjoy the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be [spiritually] sluggish, but [will instead be] imitators of those who through faith [lean on God with absolute trust and confidence in Him and in His power] and **by patient endurance** [even when suffering] are [now] inheriting the promises.”— Hebrews 6:11-12 (AMP)

6. Godliness

“Your endurance too must always be accompanied by devotion to God”—2 Peter 1:6 (PHILLIPS)

As we mature, our focus, our aim, our underlying motivation, should be to please God in all of our actions, attitudes, words, and thoughts. This devotion to God is called “godliness.”

As we grow in this quality of godliness, we live more and more for God and less for ourselves.

“For to me, to live is Christ [He is my source of joy, my reason to live] and to die is gain [for I will be with Him in eternity].”—Philippians 1:21 (AMP)

7. Kindness

Godliness should lead us next to become people who treat others always with kindness as if they were much beloved family members.

“And in [exercising] godliness [develop] brotherly affection”—2 Peter 1:7 (AMPC)

The word used here for “brotherly affection” in the original language is “philadelphia.” This word is only used five times in the Bible. When it is used, it speaks of “the love which Christians cherish for each other” as brothers and sisters (Strong’s concordance).

“Be devoted to one another with [authentic] brotherly affection [as members of one family], give preference to one another in honor”—Romans 12:10 (AMP)

“Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a sincere love of the believers, [see that you] love one another from the heart [always unselfishly seeking the best for one another],”—1 Peter 1:22 (AMP)

In writing about the characteristics of unconditional love, Paul wrote first that “Love is always patient; **love is always kind**” (1 Corinthians 13:4 ISV).

8. Love

God’s ultimate goal for each of us is to be a person who exemplifies the pure love of God. When we are fully mature, we will have been transformed into His likeness. When we reach that level of full maturity, we will become people who love as God loves.

Love exemplifies God’s character to such an extent that He describes Himself as perfect love. Love is what God is. God is love.

“He who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for **God is love.**”—1 John 4:8 (AMPC)

“We have come to know and rely on the love that God has for us. **God is love,** and the person who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”—1 John 4:16 (ISV)

God’s goal is for each of us to become a living embodiment of His love here on earth, loving people as He loves them.

“But the love of God is truly perfected in whoever keeps his word. This is how we know we are in him.”—1 John 2:5 (CEB)

“No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us. If we love each other, God’s love has reached its goal—it is made perfect in us.”—1 John 4:12 (ERV)