



# abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on **March 8-9, 2008**

**Part Six of a Seven Part  
Sermon Series**

## **"Spiritual Proficiency"**

### **this week's coreverse**

*"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..."*

**2 Peter 1.8 NIV**

### **usingabclinks**

#### **Personal Bible Studies** (inside pages)

- Personal studies explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days, you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage from scripture. Other days, you'll be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying and answering questions.

#### **Small Group Discussion** (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions acts as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members for more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabible.org](http://adabible.org)>ministries>small groups.

See [adabible.org](http://adabible.org) for abclinks archives.



Having a daughter at Northern Michigan University in Marquette has led our family to spend much of our vacation time in the UP, even in the hearty winter months. Each time I'm there, I'm amazed how the people of the North seem to thrive in their frozen tundra. In February, people around here are either reaching for their Paxal or getting flights out to Florida. But in the UP, they are getting their snowmobiles and skis tuned just the way they want them.

On a recent trip, I experienced one of the most refreshing human interest stories that I've encountered in a long time. My daughter informed us that we were going sliding behind someone's house. "Somebody you know?" I asked. "No, some dude just lets anybody come and slide down his hill. It's really cool. Trust me," she continued.

From the time we arrived I was amazed. At the driveway was a sign that stated, "Yes, we're open." We pulled into a very large makeshift parking lot that must have been created by some large snow movers. We pulled on snow gear and wandered toward the lights that donned the hill. This was more than a sliding hill, it was a handmade luge run. The run was cut into the snow with carefully formed banks on each side, some as high as six feet tall on the curves. The run itself was sheer ice, smooth as glass. From the top of the run you couldn't see the bottom. It was over 700 feet long with a major bend half way down. Our sled choices were plastic saucers, pieces of tarp, cardboard squares or for a slower but more comfortable ride, a seat cushion wrapped in a heavy duty garbage bag. Simply put, we had a riot. This thing rocked!

Greeting us at the hill was a very friendly man who gave us a few safety instructions and invited us to enjoy the bonfire and some hot chocolate when the hill or the cold air wore us out. During a break in the action, I took the time to talk to him. I wondered how this had come about and why there is no charge. His answers refreshed my soul. "Yeah, this is my 18th year on the hill. The guy who owns this place... this is his 29th year. He started this for his kids and friends but they grew up. We add something new every year just to make it a little better. Yeah, we could charge for each person but we decided a long time ago that we just want to do it for the smiles." Mission accomplished. Everyone I saw that night smiled the entire time.

I think a lot can be learned from our friends in the North. That wonderful place wasn't built in a day. They wanted something fun for their kids and neighbors, but over time it has touched countless people. The guest book had names from all over the country. They built this over time and committed to making it better every year. The fruit of their labor was smiles and joy from perfect strangers. Imagine if we treated our spiritual growth with such time and diligence! What could God do with us over time, when we grow every year?



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# personal bible studies

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What happens when we passionately dedicate ourselves to building something good in our lives? Like most things in life, spiritual growth is incremental, it happens over time when diligence and passion are applied. This week, we'll be exploring Peter's words, "***For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure...***" What if we dedicate ourselves each day, month and year to increasing in the seven core areas? First, let's find out how we do this and then we'll explore what will happen when we do.

## dayone

Take a few minutes today to jot down some thoughts about each of the seven qualities we've explored over the past few weeks. What have you learned? Which needs your attention? Where have you seen growth recently? What are your next steps in each?

**Goodness:** *the pursuit of moral excellence; doing what is right.*

**Knowledge:** *more than information; practical wisdom in living God's way.*

**Self-control:** *the ability to consistently say "NO" to things that cause harm or stunt our growth.*

**Perseverance:** *training to run the whole distance, even through adversity.*

**Godliness:** *giving God every part of your life rather than just a few slices.*

**Brotherly kindness:** *loving and serving other Jesus followers.*

**Love:** *loving and forgiving people who have caused you harm, and those who are hard to naturally love.*

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# daytwo

In his book, *A Resilient Life*, Gordon McDonald quotes author Martin Babor,

*If you stand in front of a tree and watch it incessantly to see how it grows and to see how much it has grown, you will see nothing at all. But tend to it at all times, prune the runners, and keep the vermin from it, and- all in good time- it will come to its growth. It is the same with man: all that is necessary is for him to overcome his obstacles, and he will thrive and grow. But it is not right to examine him every hour to see how much has been added to his growth.* (published source unknown)

Thinking of a tree when reading the qualities listed in 2 Peter 1, what are some practical ways of **tending at all times** to each of these?

What does it mean to **prune the branches** in these areas of growth?

What are the **vermin** that desire to destroy your ability to produce spiritual fruit?

Read 2 Peter 1.3-8 again. How does Babor's statement connect with this passage? Are they complimentary? Do they contradict? What new thoughts do you have about this passage and how we grow?

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# daythree

***"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."***

**2 Peter 1.8**

Growth in the seven areas happens through time and passion but it also requires the discipline of exercising your spiritual muscles. Below is a list of disciplines you could adopt to help you grow. Spend some time thinking about each in regard to the seven qualities in 2 Peter 1 - **goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.**

**Discipline of fasting:** *giving up something, such as food, for a period of time to draw your heart toward God and prayer.*

**Discipline of daily Bible study:** *systematic reading of God's word to learn about God, His story and plan for the world.*

**Discipline of daily prayer and meditation:** *having a personal dialogue with God for worship and seeking God's will and purpose in life.*

**Discipline of exercise:** *physical activity that brings health and renewal to the body and mind God gave you.*

**Discipline of rest and reflection:** *finding regular times of inactivity to restore and recharge physically, emotionally and spiritually.*

**Discipline of silence:** *removing the noise and distractions of life in order to hear and experience the presence of God.*

**Discipline of giving:** *regularly giving away a portion of your resources (time, talents, treasures) for the betterment of others and the expansion of the Kingdom of God.*



# small group discussion



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## lean in

Who is the most disciplined person you know? What disciplines have they adopted and how do they apply them?

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## lookdown

Have someone read **2 Peter 1:5-7**

Review each quality by going around the room and sharing the basic definitions that you learned from the sermons or the studies. Share what God has been prompting you to do over the past few weeks with these character traits.

Have someone read **2 Peter 1:8**

Describe how we grow, based on this verse.

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## lookout

Have someone read the Gordon McDonald quote from DayTwo.

What does Buber teach us about how people grow? Is this quote consistent with 2 Peter 1?

How does our society view discipline? Would you say our culture is disciplined or undisciplined? Why or why not? What are indicators of each?

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## lookin

Have someone read the list of disciplines from DayThree.

Discuss how applying these disciplines could impact your growth in the seven qualities. What disciplines would you connect with each quality?

Choose a discipline that you would say you are currently strong in. Tell the group how that discipline has had a positive impact on your life. How long have you been pursuing it? What obstacles have you had to overcome? What quality or qualities is this producing?

Choose a discipline that you've struggled with or ignored. How has this negatively impacted your growth? What obstacles do you see that you will need to overcome in order to pursue this with diligence?

What will be your first steps?

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## lookup

Spend some time praying for each other's growth. Split up into smaller groups of three to four and pray for each person's pursuit of a new or renewed discipline in their spiritual life. Acknowledge in your prayers that the fruit produced in us is the fruit of the Spirit working in us. Thank God in advance for the wonderful things that He will be doing in your lives.

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discover  
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The quote in the inside page was taken from **Gordon McDonald's book, *A Resilient Life***. McDonald believes that resilience is a key to growth. His book chronicles his quest to make the second half of life his most spiritually productive. Unfortunately, many people finish their lives tired, bored, angry and filled with complaint and regret.

As we walk with God for many years, it makes sense that the second half of our life would be filled with wisdom and opportunity to better our world and build the Kingdom. Pick up this great read; it will encourage you toward the rewards of a life of spiritual discipline and productivity.