

# LWML Texas District

February 2023

Bible Study

## Supplements

Nutrition is a key component to a healthy lifestyle. Nutritionists tell us we should get the majority of our daily nutrients from whole foods. However, we are often deficient in one thing or another requiring a daily supplement. Our spiritual life is the same way. Faith in Christ is the foundation, the whole foods part of our nutrition, but what are our supplements? Read 2 Peter 1:3–11.

Verse 5 points out that we should supplement our faith with various things. What are those things we should be supplementing our faith with?

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Let's do a little word study on each of the things we should be doing to supplement our faith. First of all, virtue. According to *Strong's Concordance* virtue in this context means "goodness, a gracious act, uprightness. From the same as *arrhen*; properly, manliness, i.e., excellence." The word *arrhen* is used five times in the New Testament — three of those times in this passage, and then once in Philippians 4:8 and once in 1 Peter 2:9. Read those two passages. How is the word virtue or excellence used there?

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Philippians 4 has been referred to as the "whatever passage." It tells us what we should be thinking about. *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think** about these things* (Philippians 4:8) [emphases added].

I have heard it said that whatever you see and hear impacts what you think about. Your thoughts impact your words and actions. Then your words and actions impact your reputation and perceived character. Your words and actions become habits. Ultimately, your testimony is impacted by your actions, which in turn are impacted by your thoughts. What kinds of things do you find yourself thinking about? Are you hard pressed to find joy in this season of life? Are you in the midst of a season of great celebration and peace?

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I recently read that we should romanticize our lives. Take pleasure in the little things. View our commute to work or while running errands as cute and fun, imagine every cup of coffee is the

best one we've ever had, and see even the smallest and most mundane things and moments as exciting and new. Then we will find joy in the little things.

I want to take it one step further. What if we praise God for each of these things? What if we see them as the blessings they are from God? An arduous trip to the pharmacy as a blessing from God for medicine and trained pharmacists to help us heal. An expensive trip to the grocery store as a blessing that we live in a place where food is plentiful, and our tummies can be filled with delicious things from around the world regardless of growing seasons. Traffic lights as a blessing of rules being followed and instituted for our safety.

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9). The word for excellencies is the same as virtue in the Greek. We proclaim the *virtues* of him who called us out of darkness, the *moral excellence* of God. We proclaim God's holiness!

So, after supplementing our faith with virtue, now we add to that knowledge. It seems straight forward enough. How do we gain knowledge, though? I would suggest we gain it in several ways: personal study, teachings of others, and experience. Knowledge takes effort and time. Thankfully, we have the Creator of time as our heavenly Father, and even more still, we have His Word to learn from. Both of those are things to praise God for! Looking at the Greek we see this word *gnosie*. According to *Strong's Concordance* it means knowledge, doctrine, wisdom. We can find it 29 times in the New Testament (remember the Old Testament wasn't written in Greek, so we won't find any Greek there). Other tenses of the word knowledge can be found 59 times. There seems to be a trend of importance with knowledge in the Christian life.

Following faith, supplemented by virtue/moral excellence, then adding knowledge, now we have self-control. Whew, self-control you say? This one has been a struggle for many of us for many years, or maybe I am alone in that. Self-control was a pit fall of sweet Eve in the garden of Eden even. We know what is right, but do we do it? *Egkrateia* occurs four times in this tense in the New Testament: Acts 24:25, Galatians 5:23, and then twice in 2 Peter 1. Look up Acts 24:25, what is the context of that use of self-control? How about Galatians 5:23?

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In Acts 24, Felix has a great knowledge of the Way, and keeps putting off a trial of Paul. Finally, Paul is allowed to have a conversation with Felix about his faith in Christ, righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgement. When we consider what we know about Roman culture at the time of the New Testament, we know that debauchery was commonplace, which is in fact the opposite of self-control. You want it, you do it. This was especially true of political officials such as Felix. Desiring a bribe from Paul, Felix leaves him in jail. It's almost as if Felix wasn't listening to Paul at all, or his heart was completely hardened.

Galatians 5:16–26 pinpoints all the ways that the flesh is contrary to the Spirit. Seeing as how Paul also wrote Galatians, we could assume this may have been similar to the discussion Paul had with Felix. When we see what Galatians 5:22–23 says about self-control, we become wiser,

learning that self-control is a gift of the Spirit. We on our own cannot have self-control, but with the Spirit all things are possible.

To the quality of self-control, we are to add steadfastness. To be steadfast is to endure. To have steadfastness is to have endurance and perseverance. Endurance is frequently a theme in the Epistles regardless of the author. As Christians we are to endure various things. What are some of the things we have been called to endure that enter your mind?

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Here is a short list of a few: persecution (Matthew 13, Mark 4, 2 Timothy 3), suffering (2 Corinthians 1, 2 Timothy 4, Hebrews 10, 1 Peter 2), sickness (Proverbs 18), temptations (1 Corinthians 10), and sorrows (1 Peter 2). Yet, we also have the assurance that God's love will endure forever, as promised in many of the Psalms. We also know God cannot let injustice endure forever (Jeremiah 10, Joel 2). Having enduring faith to the end of our lives in the Gospel of Christ results in reaching our reward of heaven (Mark 13:13).

Endurance and steadfastness lead to godliness. Godliness is piety towards God, holiness, devotion, and reverent expression towards God through daily living. It is a heart response to what God has done for us. Godliness shows up in our actions towards others. How we conduct ourselves with our neighbors, coworkers, strangers, family, and friends can all be a result of godliness. When you receive an incredible gift, you want to share that same type of joy with others. The same goes for our growing and maturing faith. As we realize the incredible gift of God we have daily, we want to share that gift with those around us. We demonstrate our faith through godly living. Holiness is a life set apart for God's purposes. We deny our flesh like the passage in Galatians points out and seek after things that glorify God.

The final two supplements to our faith are brotherly affection and love. How do you treat those you love? Is it just lip service? Or do you go out of your way to make their lives better?

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My brother and I had a bit of a power struggle growing up. Who would get to be in charge today? However, we still loved each other deeply, and as the saying goes, "I can mess with my brother, but nobody else better mess with my brother." A brotherly affection for one another can mean things such as defending them in public and rebuking them in private, desiring the best for them when they seem to stray from the Gospel, and calling them to repentance. God is love. God is perfect love. The Greek word here may seem a little familiar, *agapen*, or agape love. As we add these other characteristics to our faith, the last one is ultimately our greatest hope and desire: a love like God's, an unconditional love for others that continues beyond good times into difficult and challenging ones.

As we head towards 2 Peter 1:8, we see that as our faith increases and grows in the forementioned areas, we will not be ineffective or unfruitful in our faith! We will be sharing God's deep love with others, our faith will be strengthened, our calling reaffirmed, and our hope reached. Verse 10 reminds us, *if you practice these qualities, you will never fall* (1 Peter 10b). WOW!

God will richly provide for us, and our entrance into heaven will be secured through Christ. Now we should also remember that we are not the ones doing these things. It is the Spirit of God within us that enables us to have faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Apart from God we can do nothing.

Praise be to God for His good gifts! His enduring love! His promise of salvation through Jesus! And the opportunities to share His love in our daily lives with the world around us for His sake.

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*Published by Lutheran Women's Missionary League Texas District  
Christian Life Committee, 2023*