Living a worthwhile life – that’s a life worth living. Most people want to live a worthwhile life. In fact, we get discouraged when it seems like we’re not living a worthwhile life. And we are filled with joy when we see God bring something special out of what we sacrificed for before.

This is also true of fathers. Today is Father’s Day – a time where we can honor and remember something positive about our dads. For some, it is simply the gift of life itself – 50% of their DNA and the chance to experience life. For others, it is positives that came out of negatives of being abandoned or misused by their father. But for most of us, our dads were a combination of good and bad, just like we are. Today is the day to honor the positives of our dads!

Dads usually start out wanting to be good fathers – they know that being a good dad is part of living a worthwhile life. But our own selfish desires, false cultural claims and deceptive demonic influence can get fathers off track so that what we think we are doing for the good of our wife and kids actually is about what we want. We Dads can elevate wrong values, goals or virtues. Because this usually is a slow drift, we don’t notice. So it is good to have a “positive” tune-up – like guitars need. One cannot regularly play a guitar without needing to tune it up. Nothing major, just a readjustment of the tension of the strings – or for humans, refocusing of what is really important so we are back on track. That is far easier than the drastic change needed when one gets hooked on drugs or alcohol, video games or spending. While today’s message is for everyone here, I want to make sure all dads know this is meant as a positive guitar tuning rather than the drastic changes needed when one is addicted.

Last fall, we spent a lot of time looking into 2 Peter chapter 1 – in fact we attempted to memorize that and those who did sent $1,500 to various local ministries and missionaries. Hopefully, you have been reviewing those verses so they remain in your heart & mind BUT human nature & our distracting American way of life realistically says that hasn’t been happening. (I had to review my verses a bunch this week, so don’t picture me as some exception or super disciplined person). Numerous times over the past 6 weeks, I have heard people being discouraged with themselves or how they were going through situations when God was probably encouraged or at worse neutral. Almost every time, one of the aspects of this teaching in 2 Peter 1 would have helped! But the main points here didn’t seem to trigger the person’s memory. In fact, some of you may now wonder why we did those verses since you haven’t regularly applied them to life the last few months. So I want to do what Peter said was important for every Christ-centered leader to do. READ v 12a. Only this time I am going to tackle the three main points in reverse order because the final truth is the one our achievement oriented society seems to miss the most.

PROPOSITION: Living a worthwhile life is a process where we grow in Christ-like character personally which positively impacts our relationships with others based on using God’s power and resources as we face everyday life.
I. **Progress** is key

If we are going to live a worthwhile life, then **progress** is the key rather than achievements. (repeat!) Now that is NOT how we are brought up as Americans. We are all about achievements.

A. Growing in knowledge & character is first (godly life) 2 Pet 1:8

**READ 2 Peter 1:8-11.** Notice how v 8 starts — "For if you possess these qualities" — what qualities — faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection and love. What are these? These are all virtues — they deal with our character rather than our situation in life, how much we have or how important we are. A primarily focus every Christian is to have — especially dads — is our character. Now character is who we are when no one is looking or things get really tough. These characteristics keep our best desires moving forward and take power away from our sinful desires.

**Now these virtues aren’t goals which we can achieve in our lifetime.** We can develop greater self-control, but we will never hit a point where we have achieved self-control and can retire from doing it. In fact, every one of these virtues can be misused when people make it an achievement rather than a path in life we are steadily progressing in. This passage reminds us that the value of these virtues goes far beyond themselves — they unleash more of a **knowledge of God** that is transforming.

- v 2 — We receive God’s grace & peace abundantly through our knowledge of God
- v 3 — God’s divine power is unleashed so we can live a more godly life through our **knowledge of God**
- v 4 — it’s through our knowledge of God’s goodness and grace that we receive God’s awesome great & precious promises so they lead to us participating in the divine nature & escaping the corruption the world caused by evil desires — again neither of these is an accomplishment but a path.
- v 8 — our knowledge of God is key in living a worthwhile life
- v 10 — our knowledge of our calling and election spurs us on so we will live a worthwhile life

The word “**knowledge**” in these verses is different than the word **knowledge** in verse 5 and 6. It is also different from the way we use the word **knowledge** in our culture. This knowledge is a souped-up or enhanced knowledge. It does not just know facts about God but it is **knowing God** in a deeper and more personal way. This growing knowledge of God refers to our personal relationship with God. Lord willing you don’t just know about your kids, or parents or spouse or friends, but you are continually getting to know them in a deeper relational way.

Let me illustrate it this way. In our culture, a judge is one who pronounces a verdict, the police are ones who confront those potentially doing wrong and a waitress is one
who helps us when we are dining out. That is the knowledge (gnosis) referred to in verse 5 and 6. That knowledge is important, but it’s not transformational. In fact some of you still instinctively take your foot off the car accelerator when you see a police car even though you are NOT speeding or you get less loud & goofy when authority figures show up even though you aren’t doing anything wrong. At that moment, we have a knowledge of what they do (gnosis) but we don’t see them in the context of a relationship (epignosis). So in our country some people just see God as a judge who will pronounce a verdict on what they have done, some just see God as a police officer, watching to see if they do something wrong and some see God as a waiter who is just there to serve them and make their life easier. But growing Christians see God deeper. While God will judge, the HS will challenge our wrong thoughts & deeds and Jesus will help us in our need, God is more than that – He is God - Almighty yet our Father, just yet merciful, holy yet loving, Lord yet Savior, all wrapped up together.

Or take your father or a father-like male figure in your life. You may have seen him mostly as judge – the one who punished you when he got home. You may have seen your dad mostly as an impossible-to-please boss – always telling you to do more or do it different. You may have seen you Dad as a vending machine – one who provided the stuff you wanted. But life becomes very different when you saw your dad – or a dad-like male figure – as more than any of those. The way we do that is through relationship. At that point, you weren’t like an employee just on a performance basis – do everything right or I give up on you. No, your Dad – someone you want to obey, learn from and please; someone who expects a lot from you, someone who does corrective discipline – all wrapped in one that is so much more. That is the relational knowledge (epignosis) we are talking about here that transforms. When that happens, there is no end to that relationship even when they are gone. My dad died 7 years ago, but my appreciation and knowledge of him continues to grow as I experience more of life, read through what he left behind and reflect on lessons I learned from him – directly or indirectly. Now my dad wasn’t perfect – I don’t think he really hugged me or told me he loved me until I had already lived a quarter century. My dad didn’t tell me how proud he was of certain things I did until our wedding rehearsal dinner. But I see how much he regularly sacrificed for me, wanted me to do well and supported me in more ways than I can describe.

B. Progress rather than achievements

When we see this supped or enhanced knowledge as that deeper understanding we have through relationship, then we see why progress is the key to living a worthwhile life rather than achievements. READ v 8. Notice it doesn’t say if you have achieved some level or award, but have you progressed. It doesn’t say a certain level of progression or how fast the progression is to be or condemn the 2 steps forward and one step back we usually go through in life. If you possess these qualities – that means these virtues are important to us - they are something we put effort into, value and sacrifice for. Take the top one – love – are you more selfish or loving today than you
were 5 years ago? This is dynamic – it is a direction we are going & need to keep going. Achievements on the other hand successfully complete a goal.
- I learned to walk, but late because I had casts on my feet for the first 5 months
- I learned to talk, but not until I was 3 years old – before that I just pointed, grunted & got what I wanted – I know I haven’t stopped talking since!
- I learned to read, but that was after almost failing first grade because I’m one of the small group of kids that doesn’t understand phonics. Which is why, I still can’t pronounce anything beyond 3 syllables unless I memorize it!

Did the speed really matter in the long run of my life – not at all! Even in achievements progress was more important! What about awards?
- I earned my Eagle scout award but what has mainly come from that is I get extra fund raising letters from the Boy Scouts.
- I graduated 27th out of 750 in my HS graduating class but I was ineligible for National Honor Society because of my Ds in foreign language
- I got my teaching certificate, then moved to a state that wouldn’t honor it.
- I graduated the University of Illinois magna cum laude and Seminary cum laude, but no one has ever asked for my grades.

Those were achievements I worked long and hard for, yet in the long run progressing on the path was far more important. I was in higher Greek classes than Bill Wick & got better grades – but Bill Wick knows Greek far better than I do. Bill kept progressing on his Greek. The only “C” I got in seminary was in church history. Yet I know church history better than most pastors. I kept on the path of learning in that area.

I belabor this point because whether we are talking about the Christian life, our character, Fathers or what is important in life, progress is more important than our culture says. Slow and steady can win the race. In fact, the most important things we are putting effort in to in this life won’t be finished or reach final achievement until heaven.

C. Goal isn’t reached on earth

**2 Pet 1:10b-11**

**READ v 10b-11.** Notice we don’t reach these goals on this earth. We can’t know if we don’t stumble until heaven and we can’t know the rich welcome that comes from living a worthwhile life until we get to heaven. Can a Father really know they have reached “best dad” or “great dad” in this lifetime? We could start out weak and come back strong – we could start strong and then squander it all. The path we are following in life and the progress we are making on that path just comparing ourselves to ourselves, is what our goals should be!

D. Shortfalls remind us to get back on track

**2 Pet 1:9**

**READ v 9.** Shortfalls remind us to get back on the path! If you have ever done a lot of hiking in unknown areas, you know that there is always some time where you will get off track – you suddenly realize you are not on the right path. Usually that is because
your mind is somewhere else and sometimes because the path isn’t clearly marked. Shortfalls are not ultimate defeats – they are a reminder that we need to get back on track. If we aren’t PROGRESSING in these virtues, no matter how many achievements we have or how comfortable we are, we will not live a worthwhile life.

II. **Process** is clear but not appreciated today 2 Peter 1:5-7

A. Effort necessary “make every effort”

So how do we make sure we are on the path to a worthwhile life? **What is the process?** The process is actually clear in these verses, but it is not appreciated in our culture today which values temporary achievements above all. **READ** v 5-7. Notice the process requires effort on our part – **make every effort**. There are no short-cuts, winning the lottery won’t help and other people can’t do it for us. If you are just putting your time & effort into what you want to do, when you want to do it and how you want to do it – you are not on the path of a worthwhile life. **We START** the path by repenting of our sins, believing in Jesus and then surrendering to God’s way instead of our own. But then we need to put our effort into staying on and making progress on God’s path.

B. Strengthen & add to virtues “to add to”

Now our perspective about this effort is to be different than when we are trying to diet or get into an exercise routine. This “every effort” is not an impossible or herculean effort. Only 6% of those who diet in America are successful for the long run. It is not Dads going back and radically trying to change everything in their life. That is achievement oriented, not progress oriented. God’s way will allow all of us to be successful. Go back to v 5 … **Make every effort … to add to**. We are to put effort into and build on that which is already going good – it is already an area we’ve seen God help us with in our life.

This week someone called me to give them a different perspective. Their fellow employees were recently reminded not to leave before a certain time. But that day all but a couple others had left early anyways. The unfairness was bugging them and they didn’t want to be enslaved to that. It was not their responsibility to watch over their fellow employees. So I encouraged them to look at their situation different. They were obeying what was asked. They were honoring Jesus in their behavior. So they were progressing on God’s path, growing in one or more of these virtues. They were heading for a life well-lived. One of the things that can knock us off God’s path is bitterness or becoming judgmental towards others. Recognize and encourage the positive efforts you are making for Jesus rather than fixate on the injustices we go through. The process is to strengthen and add to virtues!

C. Key virtues

(faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, love)
What virtues are important that will lead to a worthwhile life when we prioritize and put effort into these? **Faith** (where we act on the basis of God’s revelation & promises rather than our immediate feelings or desires), **goodness** (is moral excellence – it is doing the right thing regardless of the consequences), **knowledge** (this is just gnosis not epignosis so it is seeking to understand Jesus & His truths in the Bible more), **self-control** (being able to reign in our desires for a higher or long term purpose), **perseverance** (continuing under adversity without giving up or giving in), **godliness** (is a godly life – it has two parts: strong devotion to God and a sense of duty to others), **mutual affection** (caring for others and responding to their affection) and **love** (seeking the best for another person for the long run). Pursue these – put prime effort into these areas and it unleashes more of God in our life – His person, promises, & power. It is not how much you have but are you progressing!

Notice how different the list in v 5-7 is that what our culture or our heart says should be highest – having lots of things, being happy now or getting what you want. We are counter-cultural as Bible-believing Christians.

III. **Power** is from God

A. Resources from God

   a. Finally remember the power to live a worthwhile life is from God, **but that power comes in a different way than we expect**. We tend to want to feel some super-power within us, so we can act like a superhero. Super heroes discover powers already within them – Christians discover the power of God through and around them. **READ v 3 (stop at “Him”)**. This power is from God. This divine power gives us everything we need to live a godly life. But this power comes through **THAT KNOWLEDGE** or relationship with God that epignosis we spoke about. As we draw closer to Jesus, we find more encouragement to love, more reason to hope and more confidence to step out in faith. God empowers dads, not by making them superdads who never do anything wrong, but by opening our eyes and hearts more as we come to know God deeper in relationship.

B. Calling by God

   The power of God also comes through His own calling of us. **“Who called us by His own glory and goodness.”** God called us to be on His team – we aren’t trying to earn a spot on the team by our actions. God called us to this different path in life by His goodness – His moral excellence. Our lives will be worthwhile. And God also called us to put effort into progressing on His path by His own glory. That makes this path more valuable, important and exulted than anything else we can do. If you did anything in obedience to Jesus yesterday, that small action God can make more glorious than if we won the NBA championship over Lebron James & the Cleveland Cavaliers. Fathers – we have a calling from God that He Himself models. He is our heavenly father. That is a special privilege worth devoting time and energy to!
C. Promises from God

The power of God also comes through His promises. **READ v 4a.** Last week Pastor Mark challenged the High School graduates to “**seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.**” That is a promise for all of us. And when we put effort into doing just that – **progressing on that path** – we see God do so much more than would come from our human efforts alone.

D. Deepness from God

Finally the power of God comes from a deepness God brings into our lives as we progress on His path – as we continue making a priority of going towards God’s goals. **“so that through them** (God’s promises) **you may participate in the divine nature** (how is that for a close personal relationship with God) **having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”** It is not that we aren’t enticed by temptation, it is not that we never give in to temptation – but through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and bodily resurrection from the dead, we are no longer in slavery to the world & heading down a path of life that leads to ultimate destruction & a wasted life.

Dads enjoy your day – don’t beat yourself up for your shortcomings, but commit to following Jesus and put effort into eternal virtues like trusting God more, caring for your kids, and seeking the best for them for the long run. We are going to be tempted to hear this as another thing we must accomplish – don’t go there. Instead build on what God is already doing in your life.

If you look at your bulletin you will notice that three words are in bold and underlined – **progress, process and power** – that is an alliteration because each of the main points starts with the same letter – “P” in this case. When I was in seminary, we were led to believe that a sermon with good alliteration was way above any other type sermon. I am not good at alliteration. This is an achievement for me – I can only do it once or twice a year. Don’t look at a life well lived like that – while I am still amazed at the pastors who can do that effectively, I don’t remember a single alliteration they made. But I do remember testimonies and messages from people who go through a deep experience with God – even if they struggle to describe that. Stay on God’s path, make some progress on God’s path, keep God’s virtues ahead of feelings and make adjustments to get back on the path when needed then you will live a worthwhile life!