

Sermon: Make Every Effort
Text: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Discussion Questions:

One of life's greatest sources of frustration has to be being asked or required to do something that you lack all resource and capacity to accomplish. A great example of this is found in Exodus 5:6-19—

Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies."

Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw. Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.'" So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." And Pharaoh's slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, "Why haven't you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?"

Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."

Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks." The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day."

Calling this situation "frustrating" doesn't even come close to what this must have been like. This is the height of what we would consider "unfair."

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were being asked to do something that you simply could not do?
- Where is the "line" between pushing a person to be the very best they can be—and requiring from them something they simply can't produce? How do you find out where that line is?
- When someone says, "I can't"—how do you know when to believe them? How often are the words "I can't" simply a cop-out, because the person just doesn't believe they are capable of doing what they think is impossible?
- I once heard this description of a coach: "Helping a team or an individual accomplish more than they ever thought possible"? Do you agree?
- Can you think of a situation in your own life when you had to summon up the power to accomplish a task that at first you truly believed was impossible? How did you feel when you did what you believed you couldn't do?
- What role does faith play in accomplishing seemingly impossible tasks?
- Do you believe God ever puts you in situations that REQUIRE you to exercise faith in order to accomplish them? Can you think of an example from your past?
- What has God promised to give us when we face seemingly impossible tasks or situations? How much does our KNOWLEDGE of these promises matter?
- Do you believe that God actually WANTS us to be in situations that lie beyond our power to personally accomplish? Any passages of Scripture that come to mind?

Examination:

- Read **2 Peter 1:1-4**
 - Peter described himself using two words (v. 1): “Servant”; and “Apostle.” What do these two words tell you about him? If you were writing the introduction to this letter, what two words would you use to describe yourself and why?
 - Who does Peter address this letter to? What do you think it means to “receive a faith”? Is faith something that we generate on our own—not something given?
 - According to verse 3, where do grace and peace come from? How does our KNOWLEDGE of God produce an abundance of grace and peace?
 - I just read the Facebook post of someone experiencing deep disappointment and frustration. Things weren’t going the way they wanted them to go. There wasn’t an ounce of peace in their cry for help and prayers. How is it possible to experience the grace and peace that Peter mentions here when you’re in the midst of trials and disappointments? What role does knowledge play?
 - Peter is calling us to live a “godly life.” (v. 3) But unlike the previous discussion questions (being asked to do something we’re incapable of doing), God has given us “everything we need” to live a godly life. Do you believe that? How do we access this power?
 - Verse 4 states, “Through these...”. What are the “these”?
 - What do God’s promises empower us to do? (v. 4)

- Read **2 Peter 1:5-11**
 - What is the reason that we are to add goodness to our faith? (v. 5)
 - Why might some Christians struggle with Peter’s admonition to “make every effort”? Does this smack of salvation by works?
 - A well-known theologian once said: *“Grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action.”* What do you think he meant by this? Do you agree?
 - Discuss Peter’s progression of the qualities we are to add to our faith: goodness; knowledge; self-control; perseverance; godliness; mutual affection; and love.
 - Why do you think they come in this order?
 - Do you think we are to pursue them in this order?
 - What’s the difference between mutual affection and love?
 - What do you think it means to be “productive in our knowledge” of Jesus?
 - What happens to the person who doesn’t have or pursue these qualities?
 - For the second time in this short passage, Peter reiterates the call to “make every effort.” (v. 10) The first time, it was a call to add certain qualities to our faith. What is he calling us to do here in verse 10? Are the two related?
 - Is Peter saying that we can somehow achieve perfection in our Christian walk?
 - Discuss what you think it means (or will be like!) to receive a “rich welcome” into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Application:

Write the 8 qualities in vv. 5-7 on a 3x5 card: faith; goodness; knowledge; self-control; perseverance; godliness; mutual affection; and love. Tape them in a place you’ll see them every day. Pursue them.