



2 Peter 1:1-11
Undistracted: 2 Peter
“Confirmation”

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April 7th, 2024

This morning we dive into a new series called “Undistracted” that will take us through the book of 2 Peter over the course of several weeks. We looked at a good chunk of 1 Peter in the fall of 2022 when we launched our new vision of “leading people toward Jesus where we live, work, and play.” Since then, we have also gone through several of the other smaller books of the New Testament, including 1 John and then our 5 Guys series through 2 and 3 John, Jude, Titus, and Philemon. So, in keeping with that theme of the last year-and-a-half, we’re going through another relatively overlooked book of the New Testament, and go through 2 Peter.

The “undistracted” theme comes from a specific verse in this letter, but it really is the theme of the whole thing. In chapter 3:1, Peter writes, “**This is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking**” (2 Peter 3:1). In one translation of this verse, the word “undistracted” is used. I love how it conveys that we are to have thinking that is focused on Jesus and the gospel message; that’s what wholesome thinking is in this letter. And as you’ll see, this “thinking” is not just a mental exercise, but our very living. We are to live a life undistracted from knowing and living for Jesus.

There is a lot in this world that seeks to distract us from Jesus. Some of it is, by nature, ungodly and fairly evident that it distracts us from Jesus. **But much of what distracts us is morally and spiritually neutral.** Things like power, money, our phones, politics, our careers, our hobbies, the NCAA Basketball tournaments. They aren’t bad in and of themselves, but they can become distractions to knowing Jesus. We had a major distraction from a morally and spiritually neutral thing this last week in our household.

My daughter, Brooke, is a Senior in High School, and she was admitted to the University of Washington a couple weeks ago, but hadn’t committed when the events of this past week took place. And one evening this last week while she and Elliott were hanging out together in her room, and Gwen and I were in the living room, we heard her scream, and cry out in this painful,

anguished voice, “What? No?” and then began sobbing. No parent wants to hear that kind of pain and anguish from their child. I ran down the hallway with Gwen right behind me, burst into her room and cried out, “Brooke, what’s wrong?” She was on the floor of her room with her laptop open, and tears in her eyes.

“I got rejected by the UW” “What?” I asked. “What happened?” “I got an email from the UW saying they’ve rejected me because they detected that my admissions essay was aided by using Chat GPT!” At that moment I honestly couldn’t remember her essay writing process, and I didn’t recall her using Artificial Intelligence to write her essay, but maybe she had for editing purposes or something like that, and I just wasn’t aware? I got down on the floor next to her and hugged her and told her I was so sorry to hear this. I grieved for my daughter right then. And then she rolled out of my hug onto her back and cried out “April Fool’s!” There was much laughter and gloating on her part about how I bit hook, line, and sinker. To make up for it, however, she did commit to the UW two days ago.

The point is: she took a morally and spiritually neutral thing – April Fool’s Day...it’s all fun and games – and she used it for *clearly* sinful purposes against her father and mother. 😂 I could have died from a heart attack or something! And Elliott was part of the scheme, so he’s guilty, too. But it was a very distracting thing in our evening; it was emotionally disturbing...and honestly, it took me a few hours to recover. Much the same, there are a lot of things that in and of themselves are not bad or wrong, but they distract us from our faith in Jesus; they can distract us from finding our primary identity in Jesus (we do have other identities: son/daughter, spouse, sibling, employee, athlete, musician, etc...but they need to remain below our primary identity in Jesus); and distract us from living flourishing lives for him.

So, this letter is written to encourage a group of believers (we don’t know who, exactly) in his day to stay focused on the gospel message of Jesus. And now we get this same letter of encouragement here in 2024. Let’s read **2 Peter 1:1-4** to begin with. This is God’s Word to you and me this morning...

He writes in verse 3, **“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3)**. This statement is a reminder about the pure, unbridled, unearned, grace of God. And in a world that is all about pulling ourselves up by our boot-straps and has more self-help books than you can shake a stick at...this is a contrasting word. God has given us everything we need for a godly life through knowledge of him. And what he provides is what we are to stay centered on.

If we did that, and found our identity and our purpose and sense of self-worth in what God has provided, we would need a whole lot less of those self-help books. You and I were made to be in relationship with the God who created us. What we really need for living is knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. This is God’s doing. His initiative. We haven’t earned it, bought it, or done anything to deserve it. It is by the grace of God, which we access through knowing Jesus Christ. Following Jesus, staying focused on him, is what keeps us out of the snares and corruption of the world as he writes in verse 4. Let’s read **verse 5-11**.

What we see here is that: **Our response to the grace of God is active and growing**. There is nothing stagnant about the Christian life. Peter writes in verse 5: “For this very reason, make every effort to support your faith...” and then he lists several characteristics, that are similar to, even overlapping some with, the fruit of the Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians. There’s a progression, and a sense of growth in this list. Then he concludes it with these words in verse 8, **“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)**.

What we see here is that our “knowledge” of Jesus is to be effective and productive. How is knowledge effective and productive? There’s only one way I can think of, and that’s if knowledge is put to use...acted upon, lived out, moves from the head to the heart and the hands and feet and mouth. For instance, you can know that $5-3=2$; but if you go to a store, buy something that costs \$3, hand over a \$5 bill, get only \$1 in return, and you don’t say anything about being short-changed, then your knowledge is not effective;

you're losing money as your knowledge remains in your head.

Here, it's shown in living with these characteristics he lists such as goodness, self-control, kindness, and love, and so forth. You see, the Christian faith is not just about knowing Jesus intellectually – like memorizing bible verses, and studying theology and understanding the doctrines of the faith. We do want to know these things; they're good. But if all that knowledge just sits in our brains, like we're playing a Christian version of Trivial Pursuit, and never impacts our living, then we will not be effective or productive for Jesus. Our knowledge is to be effective and productive, and that means we have to live out our faith.

And that's what Peter continues to communicate when he writes in verses 10 and 11: **“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11).**

“Make every effort.” It's the second time he's used this phrase. And some of us are thinking, “Wait a minute, we just read in the earlier verses that everything we need for godly living, for living rightly with our Creator, is given to us by him. It's all grace. He provides it. What do you mean ‘make every effort to confirm your calling and election?’” Let me share with you something that happened this past week that might help us understand. As some of you know, Honda of Kirkland has leased part of our parking lot for over a decade. It started before I came as pastor in the fall of 2012. It's been a great relationship, and a win-win situation – though we'd love to be so full on Sundays that we need the lot for ourselves. Well, about 6 weeks ago or so, I got a call from the manager there, letting me know they recently bought some land, and so as of May 1, they were not going to need to lease part of our parking lot anymore.

So, our Elder board asked me to get things rolling with a commercial real estate guy who is a friend of the church to see what our options might be. I called him on Tuesday, March 26th. The next Monday (April Fools' Day, before my traumatic experience that evening) I got a message from Mary, our

office admin, that a guy named Scott up at Lee Johnson Chevrolet had called over the weekend and left a v-mail.

So, I called him back. Turns out, Lee Johnson needs more space for cars and Scott wondered if we might have any parking lot space to lease. I told him, “It’s interesting you’d call right now. We’ve leased to Honda of Kirkland for over 10 years. I’m kind of curious: Did you know that they just cancelled their lease with us a few weeks ago?” He replied, “No, I didn’t realize that.” “We’re working with a commercial real estate guy...Has anyone contacted you about our property to let you know we might be open to leasing it?” “No, no one’s contacted me. I have at times come and sat in my car in your lot because it’s peaceful with the trees and the water nearby, so I knew you had a good-sized lot. I just made a cold call to see if there might be anything worth pursuing.”

And, while no agreement has been formally signed yet, it should be in a couple weeks or so, so they can start using the lot literally the day after Honda’s lease is terminated. Now, you tell me: Did God provide everything we need? Absolutely. Most people call that a coincidence. I call it a “God-incidence.” Did I still need to make every effort to confirm what God was providing? Absolutely. I had to pick up the phone and call him back. The effort was STRENUOUS! 😂 Ok...that’s not much effort. And it took a little more than that, in all honesty. For instance, I had to go and count how many parking spots are in that part of the lot, because he wanted to know. So, pray for me with all this hard work, ok? 😂 Look, obviously it wasn’t difficult work or significant effort...*but I still had to do something*. God provided, and I had to make an effort to live into what he was providing. And there’s some work to do that others will take on at this point, because you don’t want me making the contract. But without that effort, God’s provision would have gone unrecognized and unknown.

So: God has given us everything we need for godly living, but we have to make the effort to actually live into it...to live as God calls us.

It takes effort. Confirm your calling and your election as a child of God through faith in Jesus through *every effort* possible as you live for Jesus, so your life is marked by these characteristics in verses 5 and 6. Knowing Jesus

isn't about answering Bible trivia questions. It's about putting it into practice, so we'd be effective and productive for him., living with goodness and kindness and love and so forth.

And that's our aim here at Rose Hill. **Our vision is to be a church where we are leading people toward Jesus where we live, work, and play. In other words, where we confirm what we believe every moment of every day.**

Our faith is not confined to Sunday mornings, but is an every day, every moment thing. It takes every effort to live into the calling that God has for us, to shine the light of Jesus wherever we go. To help us in that regard, one thing we are each to do here at Rose Hill is to be praying for 5 people or 5 households – neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and others who are in our different circles of relationship. Not just praying for them to be healed from and illnesses or whatever...those are fine prayers to pray of course...but also praying about how God might work through us to minister to them, and give us opportunities to lead them toward Jesus.

So, we want to be praying: “Lord, help me be a better neighbor/co-worker/business partner to these people. Give me opportunities to be loving and kind and generous toward them just as you are. Give me opportunities to pray with them. Give me opportunities to answer deeper questions about life where I can share glimpses of my faith. Lord, make me an answer to their prayers. Lord, give me the courage to invite them over for coffee or a meal.”

Those are the kinds of prayers we want to be praying. And then when God gives us opportunities to talk about our faith – could be a casual comment about attending church over the weekend, or one of the ways you spend your time is in a weekly Bible study, or maybe there's an opportunity to share how God has gotten you through a difficult time that's similar to something they're going through...maybe you have the chance to pray for them right there in the midst of a conversation over a cup of coffee or after watching an NCAA tournament game because you invited them to your house....when God gives us those opportunities, let's take them. Step into them. Trust God more to work through you and minister to people in your life, so they might be led toward Jesus.

Because God has given you everything you need for that kind of godly life, right? We just read that...we all love that and I suspect most of us agree with that. And part of the godly life is helping others to know Jesus as well. It's not just for pastors or church leaders...it's part of being a disciple of Jesus. God has provided what you need to do that. So, let's stay undistracted in our following of Jesus and make every effort to confirm our faith...to confirm our calling and election...not so much for our sake, but for others...So they would see Jesus in us, and be drawn to him and know God's provision in their own lives as well. Let's pray...Amen.