

“CAN DR. PHIL PROVIDE ALL THE HELP WE REALLY NEED?”2 Peter 1:1-12”**THEME:** **Becoming all God wants us to be with the help he has provided.****DATE:** **02/11/07**

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How many of you have watched at least a part of a Dr. Phil show on television? May I see your hands? If you have not heard of Dr. Phil, you have been in a coma for at least 5 years. Most Americans have probably seen at least a segment of his television show since it debuted in September of 2002.

Dr. Phil isn't my cup of tea. But for the past few weeks I've been checking him out—mostly on the internet. It's actually one of the better shows on television. He's at the opposite end of the spectrum from media muck-mongers like Howard Stern and Jerry Springer.

- Dr. Phillip McGraw is a clinical psychologist from Texas who offers advice in the form of life strategies. He has become a cultural icon.

His show also airs in Canada, the U.K., Europe—all the Scandinavian Countries, Australia, New Zealand, and Saudi Arabia.

Even the children's television program “Sesame Street” has a Muppet called “Dr. Feel” who asks guests to share their feelings

Why is Dr. Phil show so popular? Viewers love his no-nonsense advice.

A lot of viewers swear by him; I've not heard of any who swear at him.

He cuts through pretense and excuses and gets people to admit their failures. Sometimes he even calls people idiots.

He deals with human-interest issues like weight loss, managing your finances, family conflicts, and marriage problems. He offers strategies to make life work.

Most of what he says makes a lot of sense. It's practical.

I came across a Dr. Phil quote that I think has a lot of merit: *‘Sometimes you make the right decision, sometimes you make the decision right.’*

Dr. Phil wants to help you to be your “authentic self”—all you're meant to be.

- Can Dr. Phil provide all we really need for a full life?

Those who pin all their hopes on Dr. Phil's strategies will most assuredly be disappointed. He gives some good help, but it's not all we need.

Relying on Dr. Phil to make your life work is like building a house on sand. To make the most of Dr. Phil's counsel, you need a foundation that Dr. Phil doesn't provide.

Jesus said, *“But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”* (Matthew 7:26-27)

Are you struggling to hold your life together? Does it feel that everything around you is about to collapse?

Jesus Christ really is the only sure foundation for your life.

- The Apostle Peter wrote this letter to Christians in Asia Minor whose faith was being attacked by false teachers. Peter said, *‘These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. . . They promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity.’* (2 Peter 2:17, 19)

Peter was passionate about helping the Asian Christians break out of a pathetic Christians existence and become all God meant them to be.

According to the Word of God, you can become all you're meant to be by following the **strategies** explained in 2 Peter 1:1-12.

I. ESTABLISH YOUR IDENTITY (1:1-4)

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and believed in him, you are a child of God (John 1:12). By faith in Jesus Christ, you have become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). That's your identity.

The Apostle Peter wanted the believers in Asia Minor to get this straight. They had received a precious faith as a gift from God.

There are no “self-made” people in life. We've all proved that left to ourselves we make a mess of life.

- Dr. Phil says you need to define your *“authentic self.” . . . The authentic self is the you that can be found at your absolute core. . . . It’s the composite of all your skills, talents and wisdom.”*

But he doesn’t address the basic problem with the “you” that is found at your absolute core.

He doesn’t deal with the truth that what we all need most is something only God can provide—and has provided for us in Jesus Christ.

- Dr Phil says, *‘When you’re not living faithfully to your authentic self, you find yourself feeling incomplete, as if there is a hole in your soul.’*

That’s right. But his idea of a hole in your soul is not the same as what Pascal in the 17th century called the “God-shaped void”—something inside you that only God can satisfy.

You can’t fill that hole by trying to be authentic. Only God can provide what you need most of all.

¹ *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:*

² *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

³ *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

According to verse 3, every Christian has received the complete package from God with all its potency to be all you’re meant to be.

I know how weak I am on my own, but God’s divine power has given me all I need to live a full, godly life. I rely on his divine power.

We need immense power that only God can give us to be all God created us to be.

My friend Pete Hammond said, *‘A Bunny Rabbit faith won’t cut it in a Roaring Lion world.’*

When you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you became a child of God, and God gave you everything you need for life and godliness.

It’s wrapped up in Jesus Christ. There is no excuse for being a miserable Christian.

- The apostle Peter wanted to make certain the believers in Asia Minor understood this.

If your life has been transformed by faith in Christ, God has given you everything you need to live a full and productive life. No other Christian has received more of what you need than you do, or less.

⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

If your Christian life is disappointing, it’s not God’s fault.

If you have put your faith completely in Jesus Christ, God promises that you will become all he intended when he created mankind in his image and likeness. You *‘participate in the divine nature.’* (v.4).

- What a bold claim to make—that we participate in the divine nature!

That’s exactly what God intended when he created mankind in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). But sin caused a cataclysmic fall in the human race. Along with the whole world we all came under a curse.

All who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior are born again, or regenerated. The divine nature is restored. They have the Spirit of Christ in them (Romans 8:9), they become children of God (John 1:12).

The corruption of a sinful world does not have power to destroy them. Christ’s power has given them everything they need.

- In his first letter Peter wrote that God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3), and he said, *‘You have been born again . . . through the living and enduring word of God.’* (1:23)

You are a child of God. You share in the divine nature.

- You must establish your identity as a child of God. If you don’t, then none of Dr. Phil’s life strategies will help you in the long run.

[2nd strategy for becoming all you’re meant to be]

II. EXERCISE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY (1:5-8)

The strategy in Dr. Phil’s Life Law #2 is: “Acknowledge and accept accountability for your life. Understand your role in creating results.” He says you cannot dodge responsibility for how and why your life is the way it is.

That’s good stuff. You have to take responsibility for your life now, instead of fixating on what happened in the past.

- In his 7th Life Law Dr. Phil says, “Life is managed; it is not cured. . . Learn to take charge of your life and hold on. This is a long ride, and you are the driver every single day.”

He is both right and wrong. It’s true that you don’t have the ability to cure your life.

The Prophet Jeremiah said, *‘The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?’* (Jeremiah 17:9) The Apostle Paul confessed, *‘I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.’* (Romans 7:18)

Life cannot be cured. Dr. Phil is right. But we can’t manage it well either. If we rely completely on ourselves we manage life abysmally.

That’s why Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God the Father, *‘Thy kingdom come (may your reign come fully to this earth). . . Give us this day our daily bread (we cannot manage our lives for one day without the necessities that only God can provide).’*

- Even when you have been cleansed from sin and renewed within by faith in Jesus Christ, you still have a huge responsibility for your life.

Peter says you must *make every effort*. Literally, you must bring in all diligence. It is your highest responsibility in life.

⁵ *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;*

⁶ *and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

⁷ *and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

Good works won’t save anyone, but hard work is essential in the Christian life.

John Calvin, theologian/reformer said, *‘While it is faith alone that justifies, the faith that justifies is never alone.’*

We contribute nothing toward our salvation. It’s all God’s doing—by his grace. But once we have this salvation, there’s a lot we must add to our life in Christ.

- Peter explains our responsibility to add to our faith.

It’s a stack of eight virtues, starting with faith (which is a gift of God).

These godly virtues don’t suddenly appear full-blown in your life. It’s your responsibility to add them—and it demands “every effort.”

- a. Goodness: This is what we mean by being virtuous. It’s a quality attributed to God in verse 3.
- b. Knowledge: This is the knowledge of God’s will and purpose.
- c. Self-control: In contrast to self-indulgence.
- d. Perseverance: You don’t quit when it gets tough.
- e. Godliness: This is devotion to God in every aspect of life.
- f. Brotherly-kindness: Jesus said his followers should be known by their love for one another (John 13:35).
- g. Agape love: This is the queen of the virtues; self-giving love.

All these are our responsibility. But remember, they all depend on faith at the start—faith in Jesus Christ.

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.*

To be all God created you to be, you have to apply yourself.

It’s your responsibility. You must add these virtues to your faith.

[3rd strategy for becoming all you’re meant to be]

III. ERASE ANY UNCERTAINTY (1:9-12)

Nagging uncertainties will drain the vitality out of your life. Anxiety is born in uncertainty.

During the time between medical tests and the doctor’s report your life gets squeezed into a knotted ball of nightmarish imaginations. Doesn’t it?

Uncertainty feeds our fears and makes them into giants!

Dr. Phil’s 10th Life Law states: “You have to name it before you can claim it. . . Be bold enough to reach for what will truly fill you up, without being unrealistic.”

He says, *‘Work on gaining confidence—low self-esteem and pent-up guilt gives you an excuse to sit on the sidelines. It gives you an excuse to be less than you can be.’*

That’s a good, practical kick in the pants that a lot of people need. Be bold! Be confident! Be sure!

- But can you produce the confidence you need to be all God created you to be? ‘Fraid not!
- Our confidence as Christians does not rest on our own gumption. Our confidence rests fully on what God has done for us.

Confidence is a hallmark of the Christian faith. The Apostle John wrote, ‘*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.*’ (1 John 3:21)

The Apostle Paul made it clear that people who glory in Christ Jesus put no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

Those who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior have the assurance that their sins are all forgiven and that they have received the gift of eternal life. That is the gospel!

⁹ *But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

To a nearsighted person distant objects are blurred and indistinguishable. That person can see clearly only what is close at hand.

Peter uses this figuratively to describe a Christian who *has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins!* You’ve got a problem if you remember the sin but not God’s forgiveness.

Too many Christians are still hauling along a heavy load of guilt of past sins.

Carrying the load of past sins paralyzes your spirit.

- Dr. Phil doesn’t deal with this key problem of sin. We must.

To be all God created you to be it is absolutely essential to have no doubt that all your sins have been forgiven.

¹⁰ *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,*

Peter says, make sure that you are a true Christian—that you are one of God’s called, or elect ones. The Apostle Paul appealed, ‘*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test?*’ (2 Corinthians 13:5)

- Have you ever asked someone, *Are you a Christian?* And the answer was, ‘*I think so. I hope so.*’

“Hope so” won’t do. It must be “know so.” The word *sure* in v. 10 is *bebaios*, meaning *firm, reliable, dependable*. If you see clear evidence of spiritual growth in your life; if you see the Christ-like virtues developing in you, then you can have an unshakable confidence and you won’t fall in defeat.

¹¹ *and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Peter’s readers would have pictured a victor in the Greek games being welcomed home, ushered into the city with great fanfare—like a ticker-tape parade today.

You won’t just barely make it into heaven by the skin of your teeth. It will be a grand celebration.

¹² *So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.*

The apostle knew the tendency we have to apathy.

He pledged to keep on reminding them to live up to their identity

- This is the kind of certainty you must have as a Christian to be all God created you to be.

Can Dr. Phil help you? Is it worthwhile to watch his show or buy his books? From what I have seen and read, he makes a lot of sense. He’s probably helped a lot of people get through a tough patch in their lives.

But Dr. Phil cannot give you all the help you really need. I doubt very much that he would claim he can do that.

I have not seen any evidence that he deals with the realities of fallen human nature that define our human predicament. Dr. Phil seems to argue that you can find the help you need inside yourself. You’re the one in the driver’s seat, so it’s all up to you.

But each of us has a fallen, sinful self that doesn’t have the strength and stability to turn our lives around.

We need God’s help, God’s power: ‘*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness . . .*’ (v.3).

- How long has it been since you reviewed the core Christian truths which are the basis of Christian faith?