

A. The first assurance that we receive as we exert ourselves toward spiritual maturity is that of effectiveness and productiveness in the Christian life.

Peter tells us that if we add the qualities enumerated in verses 5-7 – moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, godliness, brotherly love, and AGAPE love – and if we possess them in increasing measure, then we will not be ineffective and unproductive in our relationship to Jesus Christ.

1. What is an effective person? Let me suggest four ideas that unpack the concept "effective person."

An effective person is one who achieves his or her goals, who does what he or she sets out to do.

An effective person is one who is useful, whose life is characterized by purpose and meaning and value.

An effective person is one who embodies those qualities we consider admirable in human beings.

An effective person is one who has learned how to cope with the changing fortunes of life.

Which of these meanings does Peter intend? Perhaps all of them! As a matter of fact, if we add the qualities Peter enumerates, and if we possess them in increasing measure, then we will be achieving the goals God has set out for us; we will live useful, purposeful, meaningful lives; we will embody qualities we consider admirable; and we will be better able to cope with the changing fortunes of life! Exerting ourselves toward spiritual maturity assures us that we will not be ineffective or useless in our relationship to Jesus Christ.

2. What is a productive person? Peter says that exertion toward spiritual maturity assures us that we will not be unproductive or fruitless in the Christian life.

Productiveness embodies the ability or power to produce readily or abundantly. A productive soil or a productive plant is one that is fertile, fruitful, capable of generating or producing abundantly.

A productive person is one who turns out a substantial amount of work. An unproductive person is one who turns out little work, or whose work is so sub-standard that it has to be done over or thrown away.

Some years ago, when I was the owner of a Gestetner mimeograph machine (at that time the Cadillac of mimeographs!), and was turning out many thousands of pages of class notes to use in my courses, the happy thought