



WORD OF FAITH CHURCH

*Developing*  
**GOD'S**  
*Character*

*WOMEN OF VIRTUE CONSECRATION*  
*AUGUST 23 - SEPTEMBER 3, 2021*

# WOMEN OF VIRTUE CONSECRATION

## The Importance of Fasting

Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason, and others have utterly disregarded it. A lot of Christians think fasting belongs to the Old Covenant, and neglect the practice. They do not see the need for or the benefit of a Christian fast. The assumption is that faith and belief are sufficient enough to get things done. Thus, fasting is confined to the occasional, whenever. In the pages of the New Testament, you will find that there is more teaching on fasting than repentance. Jesus taught more on fasting than He did teaching on Baptism or the Lord's Supper!!! Fasting joined with prayer and confession will accomplish things which normal faith may not!!!! "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:20-21) "...So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting", (Mark 9:29). Jesus concluded that there is a higher level of operation, which demands the combined tools of prayer and fasting.

In other words, some demonic problems can only be resolved when we fast and pray. Adam and Eve fell from the Grace of God through eating; we can conquer through fasting and prayer. A very direct way of attacking the devil is to show your devotion to God by denying your flesh of whatever food is needed. If the devil cannot use food to tempt you, he has lost control over your life. Fasting, therefore, becomes a tool to fight the flesh and the devil. It is a very potent weapon of both attack and defense. You can unleash on the enemy of your soul. Food is always an area the devil will tempt you. He did that to Jesus. It was not surprising that the devil tempted Him in three areas: The lust of the flesh (eating), the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

## Fasting is Sacrificial

Most sacrifices performed under the Old Covenant required the burning of fat. To appease God, the blood of the sacrifice and the fat were forbidden to be eaten by anyone. The fat belongs to God:

"And the Priest shall sprinkle the blood on the Altar, of the Lord, at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting, and burn the fat, for a sweet aroma, unto the Lord." (Leviticus 17:6)

"And the Priest shall burn them, of the Altar as food, an offering made by the fire for a sweet aroma." All the fat is the Lord's. "This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generation in all your dwellings; you shall eat neither fat nor blood."

It is a known scientific and medical fact that once the body has used up its reserve of glucose, it burns fat for energy. So, when we fast, we are burning fat as a sacrifice unto God. When we fast, we become fragile and feeble, especially with our knees. This is awesome; we truly do

become the sacrificial lambs. Fasting is powerful, Glory to God. “My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness.” (Psalms 109:24)

### The Actual Meaning of Fasting

Biblical fasting is going without food. The noun “fast” translates to “tsom” in the Hebrew and “nesteia” in the Greek. It means to volunteer to abstain from food and to cover your mouth!! In the Greek it means to abstain. The Spiritual meaning is “to do without food.”

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three nights or days. My maids and I will go to the king, which is against the law; if I perish, I perish.” (Esther 4:16) Fasting relates only to food. Many people have recommended a fast from sex, cigarettes, television, social media, etc. This refrain is defined as self-denial and works very well with fasting. It is a definite aid in blocking voices other than God. Cutting these activities and other activities to focus on God will only assist, but will not take the place of fasting from food. When you fast from food, it will have a noticeable effect on your body, putting your soul under subjection. Fasting this way allows you to align your spirit with the Spirit of God, so that His Omnipotence can overshadow your impotence.

“But those who wait upon the Lord (who accept, look for and hope in Him), shall renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up close to God. As eagles (mount up to the sun); they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired.” (Isa 40:31).

Fasting/Consecration is not a requirement. It is a choice. Fasting/Consecration brings you closer to God. Whenever a Believer chooses to begin a spiritual fast for one day or for several days, he or she makes a choice to break out of the routine, desiring to draw closer to God.

### You Will See Results

When you take time for Fasting/Consecration and Prayer, you will see amazing results in your life. Fasting/Consecration gives you back your sharpness and spiritual sensitivity. The first thing you need to do is to make up your mind that you are going to regain your edge. Fasting/Consecration gives you an opportunity to get the toxins out of the body, to become renewed and restored. Many medical doctors support the healing benefits of fasting. However, Fasting/Consecration without prayer is just dieting. Fasting/Consecration makes you sensitive to the trash that tries to invade your life. Fasting/Consecration is the “Drano” of the soul. Seasons of Fasting/Consecration and Prayer helps you get the sensitivity of the Spirit back for the things of God. When you become dull by the constant bombardment of ungodly influences all around you, Fasting/Consecration helps you regain the edge: “Glorify God in your Body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

### Fasting/Consecration Builds Confidence

Time spent in Fasting/Consecration and Prayer builds confidence and helps you develop the determination necessary to run your race with endurance. Fasting/Consecration and Prayer prepares and conditions your spirit to go the distance in life's battles. Remember, Fasting/Consecration is not a requirement – again, it is a choice. Fasting/Consecration does not guarantee your salvation. Choosing to Fast/Consecrate is choosing to come away from the routine and wait upon the Lord with greater intensity, seeking His Face and His Presence in a deeper way. You must have a made-up mind. Hebrews 3:6,14; 10:35; Philippians 3:3-4; 1 John 2:28, 3:21, 5:14; Proverbs 3:26; 14:26; Psalm 71:5.

### Do Not Compromise

Don't compromise. Stick to the Fasting/Consecration Plan given to you by the Pastor. As you set your mind that you will not compromise during a fast, you build confidence and endurance that can carry you through the trials and battles that come. Keep a journal. The moment you determine you have come too far with God on a fast to turn back, you will see the hand of God working in your life. At the completion of the fast, begin to make Prayer and Fasting/Consecration a regular part of your life. If Fasting/Consecration is the gateway through which God releases His supernatural power into our lives, why is it such an overlooked opportunity? All the greats of the Bible fasted: Moses, David, Nehemiah, Daniel, Elijah, Paul, Peter, even Jesus Himself. Fasting/Consecration is feeding your spirit by neglecting your flesh. Fasting/Consecration will stir-up the Power of God within you. 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Matthew 6:24; 1 Samuel 15:9 (compromised obedience, incomplete faithfulness to God); 1 Kings 22:43 (doing right before God); 2 Chronicles 19:2 (calling evil good); Isaiah 5:20 (desire to be like others); Ezekiel 20:32-38.

### Fasting in the Old Testament/Fast for Affliction and Mercy

- Lev 29:7            "...You shall afflict you souls." Afflicting one's soul in the Bible refers to chastening one's soul, to strike.
- Psalms 69:10       "...When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach."
- 2 Sam 15:15-23    David sought Mercy from Sin.

### Protection Against A More Powerful Enemy

"...And Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." (2 Chronicles 20:3) Three powerful nations gathered against God's people. But King Jehoshaphat decided to seek God. He proclaimed a fast. The fast only lasted a single day, but the effects were amazing. The gathering of the spoil lasted three days. There are three elements to this story: Fasting, Prayer, and Praise. When we turn to God in Fasting, He will move. Another very important point we must focus on and understand is that the people praised God before the Victory. That is Faith speaking. 2 Chronicles 20:1-25.

### The First Order of Business for Jesus Was to Fast/His Teaching on Fasting

There is nowhere in the Scripture that Jesus commands people to fast, but He expects men everywhere to fast. There were three exercises that were very traditional to Jews: giving (Matt 6:3); praying (Matt 6:6); fasting (Matt 6:18-19). Jesus did not have to command fasting, because it was standard practice everywhere. He only corrected the practice and motive behind the fasting.

#### Benefits

Earthly reward versus Heavenly Reward – Father will reward you. The word reward in Greek means wages, a gift.

Fasting should not be hypocritical, but to fast in secret, private and personal, God will reward you openly.

Before Jesus began His earthly Ministry, He fasted (Matthew 4:1-3). Fasting/Consecration and Prayer were the biggest parts of the Life of Jesus Christ. Fasting/Consecration gives you a deep thirst for God (Psalm 63:1, "... early will I seek thee, my flesh longeth for thee..."). Notice, while in the desert, David thirsted for God rather than water. God is saying to us today, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me, with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13-14)

There is a price that must be paid for hearing from God and walking in His Will. There is a work going on in us right now that we may not be fully aware of, but without Fasting/Consecration, prayer and wilderness experiences, you will never be qualified to handle what God has for you in the future. Fasting/Consecration prepares you for what is yet to come!!! Deuteronomy 9:11-18 (during national crisis); 2 Samuel 1:12 (humbled); Psalms 35:13; Joel 1:13-14; Luke 4:1-2; Mark 8:1-3 (four thousand people fasted three days), Jonah 3:7 (Animals and people fasting together).

#### Fasting/Consecration Brings Brokenness

Fasting/Consecration bring brokenness. Brokenness is so precious in the eyes of the Lord (1 Samuel 16:7). God sent Samuel to anoint a new king to replace Saul as leader of Israel. He guided Samuel past all the older, stronger, more experienced sons of Jesse, young men who by all appearances seemed well-suited to be King. But God told Samuel not to look at the boys' outer appearance or their physical strength. Brokenness makes room for God to release His strength through our weakness, in order to accomplish His plans. Psalm 51:17; Proverbs 15:13; 17:22.

#### Fasting/Consecration Restores

There is nothing that has been wasted in your life (i.e., drugs, alcohol, troubled episodes, abuse, etc.). Fasting/Consecration can restore and break the yoke of the waster (Satan). Through Fasting/Consecration, God will remove the burden and repair what seemingly has been wasted. God will pick up all the fragments of your life. (John 6:12, He said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing will be lost.") He is a "Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets

to Dwell In.” (Isaiah 58:12) Regular Fasting/Consecrating will keep your spirit strong. Joshua 14:11-12.

“Then Will I Hear from Heaven...”

“If my people who are called by My Name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Fasting/Consecration is self-humbling. “He who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14). Fasting/Consecration is our body language to God. When we Fast/Consecrate, we are expressing our hunger for Him. We always ask from a place of humility.

Unforgiveness

Fasting/Consecration will loosen the grip of unforgiveness. (Matthew 18:32-33, 35; Luke 6:37; 7:45-50; Mark 11:25-26). If these scriptures pertain to you, the Spirit will identify the individuals in question.

No Expiration Date on Prayers – Persistence Breaks Resistance

As soon as you pray, God hears you, as in Daniel 10:12-14. Daniel fasted and prayed for weeks. Satan does everything in his power to stop you from receiving your answer. Your prayers will not be discarded. Believe God!!!!!!!! Stack up your prayers as you are Fasting/Consecrating. Pray, Pray, Pray!!!!!!!! Pray all night as Jesus did. “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

God Needs a Clean Vessel

God needs empty vessels, not ones so full of themselves that He cannot pour Himself out through or into them. Fasting/Consecration can cleanse the DIRT and prepare us for God’s use!!!

- D** Disobedience
- I** Ignorance (zeal without knowledge)
- R** Rebellion
- T** The Tongue (words of doubt and unbelief)

Spending time in Fasting/Consecration and prayer, regardless of your circumstance, will help you to be rooted and grounded in your faith, ready to weather any storm, the economy, your health, your family, or your job, etc... These are Satan’s attention-getters. NOTE: Remember, the focus of the enemy is always to cause the Work of God to cease!!!!

There are several elements we can glean from and be strengthened by during the Consecration:

- Assemble – Unity, Buddy System, Find a Friend
- Separate – Turn off the TV, computer and entertainment!!!
- Confess – Nehemiah 9:1-2, Repent!! God will bring things to your mind!!!
- The Word – Hear and Read the Word. Nehemiah 9:1-3

- Worship – Nehemiah 9:1-3

### Fasting/Consecration Brings the Glory of God

His Glory is upon the earth through you as you fast before Him (Habakkuk 2:14). “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the Glory of the Lord is thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shall cry, and He shall say, Here I Am ... The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought ... then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father, for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” (Isaiah 58:8-14).

### No-Quit Option/The Power of a Made-Up Mind

Never make decisions based on temporary circumstances. 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. Quitting is not an option!!!! When you think about quitting, you talk about quitting. Be assured, you will then quit!! Hebrews 10:39, “We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” Jesus never quit!!!! Remove the quit option!!! When you do that the battle is won!!! Hebrews 10:35-36, “Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the Will of God, you may receive the promise.” “We are more than Conquerors.” (Romans 8:37-39)

### Duration of Fasts

No restriction. An acceptable fast is not determined by length, but by its quality and motive. A long fast is not more acceptable, if the heart of the individual is impure, than a short fast that reverses God. God inspired - If God calls a fast, He will determine its length.

Examples:

ONE NIGHT: The idea of missing dinner. Daniel 6:18

UNTIL EVENING: 2 Samuel 1:12

ONE DAY: 2 Samuel 3:35; Judges 20:26

TWICE IN A WEEK: Luke 18:12

THREE DAYS: Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9

SEVEN DAYS: 2 Samuel 31:31; 1 Chronicles 10:11-12; 12:17-18

FOURTEEN DAYS: Acts 27:9-10, 33

DANIEL FAST: No set time. Daniel 10:2-3

FORTY DAYS: Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2

Or:

A FASTED LIFE: Can be done nightly, daily, weekly, etc. It is a powerful tool. Luke 2:36-37

## FASTING AND SEXUAL INTIMACY

Paul stated in unequivocal terms the incompatibility of sex, prayer, and fasting. It is fair to say that, as a married man or woman, fasting gives you time to concentrate only on God, giving Him your undivided and your wholehearted attention. 1 Cor 7:5, When you fast, fast no longer than your spouse would allow you!!!

### Points on the Daniel Fast

1. Daniel Fast: Daniel, Ch. 10. Daniel fasted for 21 days; he was at that time praying for as long as it took for God to move!!
2. Listed below are some of the **Blessings** we will receive during this fast:
  - PERSONAL, DIVINE REVELATION – A personal Word from God to you
  - A TOUCH FROM HEAVEN- Healing, deliverance etc., whatever you need
  - HEAVEN’S ATTENTION – God said, “He heard Daniel as soon as he prayed.”
  - HEAVENLY REINFORCEMENT – God sent warring Angel Michael
  - ANGELIC VISITATION – Assurance Ch 10:5-9
  - PROPHETIC INSIGHT – Answer for you concerning job, family, Ministry, America, etc...
  - PEACE OF MIND AND RENEWED STRENGTH- As stated
  - DANIEL FAST TIPS:
    - (a) Go the 30 days and as many additional days as you need to get answers
    - (b) Keep confessing God’s Word – “Your words were heard” (v.12)
    - (c) Pray for Humility (v.12)

### Some Examples of Powerful Fasting

#### **1. FASTING WHEN FACED WITH A POSSIBLE IMPENDING DANGER OR A DIFFICULT SITUATION.**

This strategy was adopted by Nehemiah in the Book that bears his name. Like Esther, Nehemiah took a significant risk in seeking the help of King Artaxerxes, so he could rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Knowing it would be a dangerous move, seeking God’s help first, with Prayer and fasting was inevitable. “...I was fasting and praying before the God of Heaven.” (Nehemiah 1:4; Ezra 10:6)

#### **2. FASTING TO INQUIRE OF THE LORD**

When Israel was set in a battle array against the Benjamites, they asked God which tribe to go first, God said “Judah.” However, they lost. The second time going up, they lost. But the third time, they fasted from morning until evening. God not only gave them assurance of their victory, but the timing as well. Fasting shows a demonstration of our seriousness on the matter. (Judges 20:26-28)

### **3. FASTING FOR REPENTANCE AND REDEDICATION**

The fight against Israel defeated Israel, captured the Ark (Presence of God), killing Eli's two sons. They knew their defeat was a result of sin. They were captured for seven months before they were able to beat the enemy. But before they faced the Philistines (typology of Satan), they had to fast. In a similar case the entire people of Israel separated themselves to fast for repentances for ignoring and disobeying God. (1 Sam 7:5-13; Neh 9:1-3)

### **4. FASTING TO AVERT THE WRATH OF GOD**

When God was going to kill Ahab for supporting Jezebel, his wife, in the murder of Naboth, and for following after strange gods, Ahab decided to humble himself with fasting and God changed His mind. (1 Kings 21:25-29).

### **5. TURNING AWAY GOD'S JUDGEMENT**

When the people of Nineveh cried out to God in fasting and repentance, God changed His mind and did not destroy them as previously planned. In intercessory prayers, it is legitimate for someone to stand in the gap and ask God to pardon the sins of another, more so if the intercessor is a spiritual leader or a servant of God. Moses and Daniel stood in the gap in repentance for the sins of Israel. (Jonah 3:4-5, 9-10; Deut 9:15-18; Daniel 9:3-5)

### **6. RESTORATION OF GLORY**

Some of us have been wrongfully imprisoned or our glory has been destroyed. Fasting, prayer and genuine repentance will restore our glory and set us free. The Book of Joel shows that God will hear and restore His people back to their former Glory. (Joel 1:14; Joel 2:12-17; 3:18-21)

### **7. FASTING ON NATIONAL CALAMITIES**

There are four significant events in the history of the Jews which necessitated regular or annual fasts. These fasts were observed as Memorials of the calamities that had befallen them at the time:

- a. The Burning of the Temple: The fast of the tenth day of the fifth month (Jer 52:12-13)
- b. The Murder of Gedaliah: The fast of the second day of the seventh month (2 King 25:23-95; Jer 41:1)
- c. The Beginning of the Siege of Jerusalem: The fast of the tenth day of tenth month (2 Kings 25:1).
- d. The Fall of Jerusalem: The fast of the ninth day of the fourth month (2 Kings 25:3-4)

# THE CONSECRATED FAST

## ***How long is the consecration?***

Two weeks. We will begin Monday, August 23, 2021 and conclude Friday, September 3, 2021.

## ***What is the Scripture Reading?***

Please see attached articles.

## ***What about medications?***

Please continue to take all medications as prescribed. It is vitally important that you do not stop taking your medications.

## ***May I take vitamins and sports drinks (protein drinks)?***

Yes, you may take a good multivitamin and a meal substitute drink. We discourage sports drinks due to the high sugar and sodium contents.

## ***What is the key to a successful consecration or fast?***

Prayer and study of the Scriptures. You are encouraged to spend time in private devotion (Prayer and Bible reading). You may also want to share in a time of corporate prayer with your spouse, family members or other believers, and NO TV.

## ***What are the dietary restrictions being observed?***

### **ONE MEAL PER DAY**

#### ***Foods Allowed***

- All Vegetables
- All Fruits (Can be eaten throughout the day)
- Nuts (Pecans, Walnuts, Macadamias, Peanuts, Almonds, Cashews, etc...)
- Almond, Coconut or Rice Milk
- Lots of Water
- Grains

#### ***Restricted Foods***

- No Meats (fish, poultry, pork, beef)
- No Coffee or teas (except Decaffeinated herbal or green teas)

#### ***Seasonings***

- Please use various herbs (cinnamon, red pepper, curry, ginger, peppermint, oil, sage, cumin, turmeric, oregano, rosemary)
- Garlic
- White pepper
- Vinegar
- Light olive oils (*use as a sauté vs. frying*)

## **What's for Dessert?**

Fruit!

## **What are some healthy Drink choices?**

- **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER** You can try flavored with lemon or lime. This serves as an excellent cleanser.
- A herbal tea (hot or cold) with lemon and a small amount of honey or sugar substitute is very refreshing.
  - **Healthy Teas You Could Be Drinking:**
    - Oolong: activates enzymes that cut down triglycerides, a type of fat found in the blood...
    - Black/Green
    - White
    - Chamomile
    - Echinacea
    - Lemon
    - Ginger
    - Dandelion
    - Turmeric
    - Mint
- Non-Dairy Milks (i.e., Almond, Coconut, Soy, Cashew, etc.)
- Fresh Pressed Fruit or Vegetable Juice

## **When may I eat?**

You are encouraged to eat fruits and vegetables at least 2-3 times daily. The portions should be moderate and not heavy. You are encouraged to eat your one meal before 8pm.

## **What about Unmarried or Pre-Marital Physical Intimacy?**

If this question is being considered, stop the activity and schedule an appointment with the Pastor.

## **What are the Corporate Prayer Days and Times?**

- Morning Prayer: Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 5:00 a.m.
- Noon Prayer: Tuesdays at 12:00 p.m.
- Evening Prayer: Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

### **THE CONSECRATED FAST**

***"I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, Will of God."* (Romans 12:1-2)**

# UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER

Whereas our words represent our person, our character is our very person. A person's usefulness, the things that can be entrusted to him, the responsibilities he can bear, and the things he is able to accomplish altogether depend on his character. A carpenter determines the use of a piece of wood based on its quality. Laziness ruins one's usefulness. Accordingly, character has very much to do with the Lord's service. Consider those persons in the Bible whom God used. They were used by God because they possessed a character that was fit for His use. Their character was simply their person. They became persons useful to God because their character could be used by Him. Since Abraham, Moses, and Paul all had an excellent character, God greatly used them. The destiny of our usefulness to the Lord hinges on our character. Whether we are useful before God depends upon the suitability of our human character.

## THE CONSTITUTION OF CHARACTER

Our character is constituted of our inborn nature plus our acquired habits. Whereas disposition is inborn, character is cultivated. A person's character is thirty percent nature and seventy percent habit. For this reason a young person must pay full attention to character building. A person over the age of fifty has a set personality with a definite pattern that has been developed over his lifetime. In a young person more inborn nature than acquired habit is manifested. As he grows older, he displays less of his nature and more of his habits. Consequently, acquired habits are more important than inborn nature. Generally, the character of a person over the age of twenty already contains more habit than nature. Never neglect your daily living, for it builds up your habits. For example, if a child is placed in a Chinese home, he will be cast into a Chinese mold. The same child placed in a family of another nationality will resemble a person of that nationality when he grows up. In considering the matter of character, we must give heed to our daily life, which is able to mold our character. The suitability of our character to God determines our usefulness to God.

## THE CHARACTER ESSENTIAL FOR THE LORD'S SERVICE

### **Genuine—Being the Same Within and Without**

What is genuineness? It denotes a consistency within and without. In many instances no lying is involved, but there certainly is an absence of genuineness. A person who is not genuine is useless in the Lord's hand. Moses was a most genuine person. When he came down from Mount Sinai, he broke the two tablets in anger. He was the same within and without. It is impossible to find a case in the Bible where Moses was not consistent through and through. A genuine person is solid and trustworthy. This does not mean, however, that a person should be free to lose his temper. To behave in a pleasant way when you are actually irate is to pretend and to be false. Some people speak on a subject to two people in two different ways. While they may not have the intention to deceive, they do not speak genuinely. Those who serve the Lord must cultivate a genuine character. In confronting certain matters, we may refrain from speaking anything because of our fear of God. However, if we do speak, we must be genuine.

### **Exact—Being Absolutely Accurate**

It is very difficult to be exact with respect to time, words, and numbers. Many things are done in a “just-to-get-by” manner. This “more-or-less” attitude is most damaging. A person must not be “more or less”; he must be accurate. Accomplishing ninety-nine percent of a task, leaving one percent undone, is the same as not having done it at all. We should develop a character that is not sloppy but absolutely accurate. We must be exact both in word and in deed.

### **Strict—Taking Matters Seriously**

Genuineness makes one solid, and exactness makes one strong. Strictness is the practice of genuineness and exactness. Genuineness and exactness can never be practiced by a loose person. To do everything genuinely and exactly requires a strict character. Whatever passes through the hands of a loose person becomes somewhat inaccurate and lacking in genuineness. Because a loose person is not strict, whatever he says must be discounted. Even his study of the Bible is sloppy. Those who are strict receive light while studying the Bible. They never let things go. When problems arise, they proceed to solve them, always tracing to the root of the matter. A loose person, who usually is curious and lives in his imagination, can never solve problems. A strict person never meddles in matters that do not concern him, nor does he entertain idle thoughts. He performs his task seriously and accurately.

### **Diligent – Not Slothful; Fine—Not Careless or Negligent**

Although we should not be narrow, we should be fine. In the last two thousand years those who were greatly used by the Lord were both broad and fine. Those who were narrow and coarse were invariably of little use. The Lord leads us according to the grace that God gives us. Too often, however, His leading is dependent on our character. Some brothers and sisters can study the Bible and pray, but they cannot bear responsibilities. Because of their character, we dare not entrust the Lord's business to them. They receive much grace and know how to pray, but they have not built up the proper character that enables them to accomplish things. Although they may be placed in some areas of service, they cannot be entrusted with the service. The service of the Lord requires a broad and fine person. To study the Bible well, one must find the scriptural basis of any matter with a broad and fine eye.

### **Stable—Steady, Not Easily Moved or Changed, and Not Panicky**

To be stable is to be steady, immovable, and unchangeable. What a stable life the Lord lived on the earth! He was not stirred by His brothers' suggestion that He go up to Jerusalem to gain recognition, and when His opposers tried to stone Him, He walked past them straightly. Had we been in that situation, we either would have been stoned or would have quickly fled. Once the Lord knew that Lazarus was sick, He remained in the same place for two days more. Our Lord never wavered. He was stable. Those who know God's will do not panic. An unstable person is like a reed in the wilderness blown by the wind. Never steady or stable, he leans west when blown by the east wind and east when blown by the west wind. A person who fluctuates can never understand the will of God. He can neither work with others nor serve the church.

However, to be stable is not to be slow. Stability includes not speaking uncertainly or doing things about which one is unsure. A stable person is not easily changed by his environment. He controls his time well and takes action only after he has waited and is sure of God's will. To be stable is not to be stubborn, stiff-necked, or obstinate, but to have an inner quality that is immovable and unchangeable. Luther was a stable and strong person; therefore, God could use him. Stability is an important qualification in serving the Lord and in selecting a co-worker. Time works, but only with a stable person. Once a stable person realizes God's will, he will act immediately, regardless of the cost. But until God's time comes, no one is able to influence him. Hence, we need to learn to be stable. Panicking does not help. We must remain steady through the storm, knowing that when it is over, the difficulties also will cease. Those riding in a boat well understand the importance of stability. When riding in a small boat on a stormy sea, one simply cannot afford to panic.

### **Deep—Searching Downward and Digging Deeper, Not Being Superficial**

The book of Proverbs says that a foolish person is a shallow person. The observation of a shallow person is not accurate. His understanding of the church, people, matters, and things is superficial. Being deep is closely related to being thorough and serious. A shallow person always makes superficial observations, whereas a deep person always searches and digs when he looks at things. To a shallow person it may seem that there is nothing to do, even if a church is committed to him. While others have much to speak in a message, he has nothing to

say. While others labor to obtain light in studying the Bible, he is satisfied with merely a literal understanding. In listening to people, a deep person does not easily believe others and listens beyond superficial remarks. However, a shallow person readily believes others' words, and his relaying of information is often inconsistent and incomplete. As a result, gossip is created. Those who serve the Lord must be deep in truth, in experience, and in leading others. A shallow person cannot serve the Lord, because he will make God's work shallow. Those who like to represent others are shallow people. One who is deep is neither complicated nor shallow. Such a person is three-dimensional, always investigating and researching.

### **Patient—Being Able to Wait and Not Being Anxious**

According to James 5, the farmer who wishes to obtain the fruit of the earth cannot be anxious (v. 7); he must wait for the appointed time. A patient person can wait. Contrary to the common understanding, patience is different from endurance. To be patient is not to be slothful and sloppy but to work diligently without anxiety. Everything we do takes time. The amount of effort put forth will determine how much one can accomplish. No work can be done cheaply. Those who hope for instant accomplishments can never do the work of God. To do God's work a person must work daily yet without anxiety. A patient person is not distracted by anything temporary, since he knows his commission. This is like the farmer, to whom waiting is normal: on one hand, he works in the fields; on the other hand, he waits. In leading others, one may often be disappointed, but those who are patient never give up hope. When our work suffers a setback, we must be patient. Time will prove and time will tell. Time will vindicate and manifest the truth. The manifestation of the glory of God may be only half a minute away.

One should be aggressive but not anxious. This requires practice. A character produced out of patience is invaluable. We should not draw conclusions quickly concerning people or matters. After only a few more days of waiting, the real situation will emerge. We must learn to be patient when we are in need. If we are patient when in need, we will never have to borrow. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, though he felt heavy and pressed, he was nonetheless patient. Those who serve the Lord must possess such a quality. Many people make a clamor over minor hardships, make known their smallest problem, and make an instant judgment concerning any matter that comes their way. Such are useless people. To be patient is to wait. It is different from being slow. Whether one has a quick or a slow disposition, one must learn to be patient. To be slow is to fail to grasp opportunities; this must be dealt with. A patient person is prompt and nimble. We should be patient before opportunity arises and should grasp it immediately when it does. As we serve the church daily, we should wait patiently concerning all the situations that confront us and concerning the results of our work. Before the harvest season arrives, we should not be anxious; neither should we relax and be lazy. We should be full of feelings toward people and things. We should be sensitive and concerned and should have proper foresight. We must finish whatever work we have to do and leave the rest to time. In many ways time represents God. Those who would be proper persons, and especially be weighty in the hand of the Lord, must possess all the preceding nine characteristics. Without these nine qualities, we will not be enlightened in our study of the Bible; neither will we meet the requirements of the spiritual life in our dealings with people, things, and the Lord's work. Also, it is very unlikely that we will have much spiritual growth. Our being must correspond with the work we wish to accomplish, and our character must match the business we plan to do. In a character that is fit for the Lord's use, acquired habits are much more important than inborn nature. This all depends on the building up of a character that is suitable to the Lord.

## **EXAMPLES OF A PROPER CHARACTER**

**Scripture Reading: Mark 1:35; 3:20-21; 6:30-31, 34; 8:1-10**

In this chapter we will consider what kind of character the Lord Jesus had while He was on the earth. We may think that those of us who serve the Lord need to have a proper character, but that the Lord Jesus had no such

need. However, if we read the four Gospels carefully, we can see that while the Lord was on the earth, His service before God depended greatly on His character.

### **THE EXAMPLE OF THE LORD'S CHARACTER**

Among the four Gospels, the Gospel of Mark especially shows how the Lord Jesus served God. All those who study the Bible can perceive in this Gospel the character of the Servant of God. In reading the Gospel of John, we can realize the life that was in Jesus Christ—the life of the Son of God. By studying the Gospel of Luke, we can see the perfect disposition within that perfect man. If we study the Gospel of Matthew, we can witness how the King of the kingdom of the heavens conducted Himself. When we read the Gospel of Mark, we can notice the character of the Servant of God. In the Gospel of John the Lord showed us by His living on the earth the life that was within Him. In the Gospel of Luke the Lord revealed His human disposition by living as a man on the earth. As a man, His disposition was perfect and beautiful. In the Gospel of Mark, however, the Lord is seen as a servant. There He did not display His life or His disposition but His character.

In seeking for a friend, you would often look for a pleasing disposition, not necessarily a proper character, in the other party. Usually, your only concern is his disposition and not his character. For example, a person does not have to be an early riser to qualify to be your friend. He may regularly get up and go to bed on time, but if his disposition is not pleasant, you will not want to make friends with him. Therefore, in making friends, you first pay attention to a person's disposition. However, when you hire someone to do housework, do you care only for his personality? Certainly not. He may be very gentle, patient, loving, and moderate, but if he is also very lazy, sloppy, slow, and forgetful, would you hire him? When we consider employing someone, we should consider not only his disposition but also his character. Gentleness and kindness may be in his disposition, but he still must be diligent, girded in his work, and always in his place, all of which are needed in his character.

If you are able to distinguish between disposition and character, you will find the matter of disposition in the Gospel of Luke and the matter of character in the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Luke reveals the disposition of a perfect man. The Gospel of Mark unveils the character of the Servant of God. I say this with good reason. For example, Mark indicates on at least two occasions that the Lord Jesus did not even have time to eat. This is not recorded in Luke, John, or Matthew. Matthew speaks of the Lord as the King of the kingdom of the heavens; whether the King ate or not is unimportant. This matter was recorded only by Mark. In the Gospel of Mark there are these words: “Rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed” (1:35). The Lord was so busy serving others that He did not care to eat, giving people the impression that He was crazy. When He saw the crowd, He did not have the heart to send them away, fearing that they would faint on the way. So He gave them bread and fish to satisfy them. He even asked the disciples to gather the leftovers. Then, after He sent the people away, He left. Is it not significant that the Holy Spirit recorded these things? The book of Mark shows that God had found a person on the earth whose character was fit for God's service. In other words, this book demonstrates the character of the Lord Jesus as the Servant of God. Because He had such a character, He was useful in the hand of God in His service to God and to man.

One can observe the character of the Lord Jesus as God's Servant in every chapter and every paragraph of the book of Mark. Although on a certain day He healed many sick ones, cast out many demons, did much work, and went to sleep late, He still rose very early the next morning to pray. Such was His diligence. When He was busy, He cared only for others' needs and not for His own hunger. This is the character that one who serves the Lord should possess. When the multitudes gathered in the wilderness and it was late, He could not bear to send them away for fear that they would be exhausted from lack of food. Whereas this incident was recorded in a brief way in the other Gospels, it was recounted in the Gospel of Mark in great detail. That record shows that He not only cared for the crowd, but He also thoroughly discerned and understood the whole situation. Furthermore, He knew how to arrange things. He calmly charged the people to sit down row by row, took the

bread and the fish, blessed them, and distributed them row by row. After the people were filled, the disciples gathered the fragments in baskets. Then He sent the people away and brought the disciples to another place. Does this record describe a miracle of the Lord? Does it unveil the life of the Lord? Does it reveal the disposition of the Lord? No. This shows us His character. He was diligent, considerate, perceptive, sympathetic, and concerned for others, and He never shirked responsibility. Without the character recorded in the Gospel of Mark, the life in the Gospel of John could not be dispensed. In order to be dispensed, the life recorded in the book of John needed the character in the book of Mark. The life in John is the food; the character in Mark is the container.

We lack this kind of character today. I have observed that some of the brothers are often wasteful in their service. To be wasteful is a small matter. But I am afraid that when these brothers serve the Lord, souls will be lost. This is a serious problem. Do you think the Lord treasured the twelve baskets of fragments? No, the Lord wanted to show the disciples that one who works for God in service to Him must do things in this manner. The Lord trained the disciples and led them so that they also might have this kind of character. We must see that in the matter of serving the Lord and being a servant of God, the one thing that is indispensable is a proper character. We cannot serve God without a good character.

## **EXAMPLES OF THE APOSTLES' CHARACTER**

In the apostle Paul's writings in his Epistles concerning the Lord Jesus, we can actually see the writer himself. Though all of Paul's Epistles concern Christ, they allow us to see Paul. I do not think that the Epistles of Peter need to be designated as such. By reading them, one can immediately recognize their writer. The same is true of Paul's writings. We can see the apostles from the Epistles they wrote, because it was Christ whom they bore, and it was Christ who lived through them. Moses saw the vision of fire burning on the thorn bush. All the Epistles by the apostles were written according to this principle. On the one hand, Christ used Paul as His upholder, putting Himself on Paul. On the other hand, Paul lived out Christ. Because of these two points, each time they spoke concerning Christ, the apostles could not avoid being seen.

There are two lines in the Bible. One line concerns the upholding of Christ, and the other, the living out of Christ. To live out Christ is a matter of life, whereas to uphold Christ is a matter of character. With every apostle there are the matters of character and life. With regard to Paul's character, he was used by Christ; he bore Christ, and Christ was upheld by him. As to life, Paul took Christ as his life; he lived in Christ, and Christ lived in him. Thus, when we read the Epistles of Paul, it is not difficult to see that some matters in them are related to character and some to life. For example, Paul says, "What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. 4:21); he also says, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?" (2 Cor. 11:29); and, "When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). These words reflect a certain character. On the other hand, Paul says, "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor. 4:10), and also, "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (3:18). These words refer to life. In certain parts of the Epistles of Paul we find his character as a servant of God: strong, responsible, serious, intolerant of errors, honest, willing to rebuke others to their face. In other places we see the very life that he lived. We should not have only life without a proper character; neither can we have only a good character without life.

One day in Manila, during a car ride with some brothers to the countryside, we saw an elegant Catholic cathedral situated on a small hill. The brothers brought me into the place for a visit. When I entered, I saw several nuns dressed in white, kneeling. They were motionless and appeared unreal until I looked carefully. They were so adept in the practice that they did not move even a little. We watched them for a long time before

one stood up. We were transfixed as we observed the way she walked. Such serenity and composure would be impossible to imitate. As she went forward to get a Bible, her stride, posture, and movements commanded our utmost respect and admiration. What marvelous conduct! If I had not known the Lord, I would have resolved that day to join Catholicism. I believe that if some unbelievers were to see those nuns and us, they would surely conclude that we Christians are not as respectable as the Catholics. However, those who know Christ would realize that such conduct was not life; it was a developed character at best. A good character devoid of life is of no value. But life without a proper character is equally useless. Regardless of how much we know about Christ, we cannot minister Christ without a proper character.

### **THE NECESSITY OF CHARACTER BUILDING FOR THE LORD'S SERVICE**

What kind of work are we planning to do? Do we expect to do a work that is valuable and weighty or a work that is shallow? In the Lord's service there is the need not only of the knowledge of the Lord but also of a character that upholds the Lord. The Bible requires that the elders be grave. Is this a matter of character or of life? It is too clear that this is a matter of character and not of life. One person may be clearly saved but still frivolous. Another may oppose the Lord Jesus yet be serious in his character. If these two people were to stand up and speak to a crowd, which one would gain the confidence of the people? It would be the opposer. Why? Because he is sober. We can immediately realize from this illustration that our usefulness in the Lord's hand is based on our character and that it takes our character to minister life. Obviously, without life nothing is ministered, but without a proper character, life still cannot be dispensed.

Admittedly, we are short in life, but I feel strongly that there is a severe, even desperate, lack in our character. For example, according to my observation, some young brothers are totally unlearned in manners. In their contact with people they seem to have no sense of who is older and who is younger. They consider showing respect as shameful and politeness as undemocratic. They care little whether the person in their presence is a school principal or a dean. Be assured that such people are finished; they cannot serve the Lord.

Young brothers, in the dormitory where you live, are you polite toward your schoolmates? Although I did not visit you every day, based on my limited observations, I know how you live. Please forgive me for saying that you do not have the proper character at all. I admit that you may not fight or quarrel; I also dare say that your character has not been built up. To build up your character, you must keep the rules governing which bed you should sleep in, where you should hang your clothes, and where you should store your suitcase. You must abide by the rules of the school. You may think that these are small matters, but if you are not exercised in these things in your daily life, you will be absolutely useless to God. You will lack the character of rule keeping. You may freely throw your shoes under another's bed and hang your shirt on his bedpost, and his vest may somehow turn up in your area. Believe me, this kind of person can never do a work.

Rule keeping is on the passive side. Positively, we need to be polite. We should rush to do the unpleasant jobs and let others do the easy ones. This is not life; it is merely the sign of a good character. But if such a character is not built up in us, we cannot hope to serve the Lord properly. If you are not a regulated person, your preaching will likewise be undisciplined. If you are disorderly, what you preach will also be disorganized. Brothers, in serving the Lord, character is no less important than life. Without a proper character, you have no way to do a work. Life is your material, and character is your technique. A carpenter cannot make anything without wood; but this does not mean that he can make something as long as there is wood. The saw may be useful in the hand of another but not in yours. The ax is useful to others, but in your hand it only ruins the wood. You do not have a particular character simply because you have never practiced. As a rule, if you are about to go through a door and a younger brother wants to do the same, you should let him go first. If you are carrying a basin and some water happens to spill on your roommate's bed, you must wipe the water drops quickly and look for an opportunity to apologize to him. I do not recognize this as life, yet if you desire to serve the Lord, you

must be particular about your character. The character within you enables you to be disciplined in your service to the Lord.

### **THE DIFFERENCE AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARACTER AND LIFE**

Let me further illustrate the difference between character and life. Consider a sister who loves to gossip, talks a great deal, and is always unhappy with others. Such a condition indicates a shortage in life, not in character. Another sister may rarely speak or become angry, because both her tongue and her flesh have received the dealing of the cross. However, she is sloppy in her living and inconveniences those around her. When others murmur, she is not angry and does not blame them. This sister may be excellent in life, but she lacks one thing—a proper character. This example shows the difference between the aspect of life and the aspect of character.

Nevertheless, we must realize that life and character are not independent of each other. Life can influence our character, and on many occasions it can even replace our character. But character cannot affect life or substitute for life. Often the spirituality of a spiritual person becomes his character and replaces his character. This was the case with the Lord Jesus. The character of the Lord Jesus was almost an expression of His life. We may say that the aspects of the Lord's character, as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, were the expression of His life. In other words, much of His life was also His character.

However, we cannot say that character is life, for even an unbeliever has his character. For example, the sobriety of a certain person is part of his character, not his life. The spirituality of a spiritual person, which issues from his abiding in the Lord, can make him sober. The character of a Christian should not merely be character. We should not only display outward sobriety, thoroughness, and consideration for others, with no life inwardly. We must have both life and character. In fact, we should go one step further: our life and our character should be blended as one. Although character does not equal life, life can become a great part of our character. I am polite because I live in Christ; I am also sober because I live in Christ. I can be careful because Christ is my carefulness, and I can be regulated because Christ is my regulation. Life and character have become one in me.

In the beginning the person who loves the Lord often seeks after life. Gradually, he realizes that it is his character that limits his dispensing of the Lord to others. Then he changes the way he conducts himself; that is, he begins to develop his character. At first this kind of character building is mostly man-made. As he grows in the Lord and the life in him becomes strengthened, his character is slowly brought into life. Eventually, the life within him is mingled with his outward character. At this point his outward sobriety comes from his inward life. His outward politeness and orderliness are also issues of the life within him. His character is constituted predominantly with the inward element of life. This was true of our Lord when He was on the earth, and it must have been true of Paul. Today our need before the Lord is to pay attention to the fact that in serving the Lord, without life we have nothing to minister to others. Likewise, if we only have life but lack the proper character, we have no way to minister. In the Lord's service there is the need for life as well as the proper character. Therefore, we must thoroughly build up our character and our human conduct.

## **CHARACTER BUILDING**

### **Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:5-6; 4:2-3**

In this chapter we will cover the things that a serving one should build up before the Lord. In order to be useful in the Lord's hand, one who serves Him must first be properly built up.

## **THE TWO ASPECTS OF BEING USED BY THE LORD**

We have said that if a person desires to be used by the Lord, he must realize that his natural life is unusable in the Lord's hand and that he himself is totally corrupt before the Lord. The natural life is nothing but a thornbush, and the self is nothing but leprosy. However, every truth in the Bible is twofold, showing us something in one aspect and then something else in another aspect. Both aspects are true. Any doctrine that is not two-sided is defective. Concerning our being useful in the Lord's hand, there are two aspects. One aspect about which we have heard much is the tearing down of the self. Formerly, you may have felt that you were talented and very capable or that you were better than others. But now you have seen a vision that your natural life is nothing but a thorn bush and yourself, nothing but leprosy. Once you realize this, you will spontaneously fall down and collapse. To collapse is to be broken. Actually, God always shines upon us and leads us in the principle of breaking. On one hand, the Bible shows us that a person who serves God must be adequately broken. It is true that his natural life, self, temperament, and disposition need to be touched by the Lord, broken, and torn down. On the other hand, the Bible shows us that something must be built up in a person who serves the Lord. This building up refers not only to the inward constitution of the Lord's life but also to the development of his character. What does this mean? We must cover this in more detail.

First, we need to see that God would never use what is of us for the work that He wants us to do, just as the flame of fire burned upon the thornbush without consuming it. We cannot add anything to God's work. However, when God does use us, we must be fit for His use. Although the thornbush was not the material that fueled the fire, it nevertheless upheld and showed forth the flames. Brothers and sisters, please remember that when God uses you to accomplish His work, you cannot add anything of your own, since all that you have does not avail in God's work. Yet on the other hand, it may be questionable whether you can be used by the Lord and whether His work can be carried out through you.

For example, when I put a Bible, a hymnal, and a cup of water on a table, the table will never add a drop of water to my cup, a verse or a chapter to my Bible, or a hymn to my hymnal. But here is a problem: if the table is tilted, I will not be able to put a cup on it. In one sense I do not use the table at all, because it does not add anything to my Bible, my cup, or my hymnal. However, there is the question of whether I am able to place my Bible, cup, or hymnal steadily on the table.

So never assume that you are clear about the Lord's teaching and say, "Well, we are just thornbushes; we have no function in God's work, and we cannot add glow to His fire. We are just persons upon whom God's flame can burn as brightly as He desires. Anyway, He does not use us as fuel. We are merely bushes with no responsibility." I am afraid that many saints hold such a concept. If you do, you are wrong. It is true that the table does not add anything to the contents of the Bible, hymnal, or cup when I put them on top of it. However, if the table is not set properly, so that it is level and stable, I will not be able to use it at all. On one hand, I do not utilize anything of the table, yet on the other hand, I must use it. Similarly, even though God does not use what is of us, our proper condition and situation qualify us to be used by Him.

Remember, whether the flames of God will burn upon a particular thornbush is a conditional matter. Do not assume that God will burn upon any thornbush. This is not so. God's fire can burn upon Moses but not necessarily upon you. Although God did not use Moses as the fuel, He could burn upon him. However, He may not be able to burn upon you.

We should acknowledge that we can contribute absolutely nothing to what God wants to produce in us. Paul says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God, who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:5-6). This means that whatever Paul had could never be added into God's holy fire. He also says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us" (4:7). This power comes entirely from the treasure and not at all from us. On the other hand, Paul also says,

“Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy...we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God” (vv. 1-2). While Paul confessed to his own insufficiency, he also told us that he bore much responsibility. We can readily see here that God used Paul, though not the things of Paul.

Having seen the principle, we will now consider a few practical matters. For example, if we are doing the Lord's work among the Chinese-speaking people in Taiwan, can we be illiterate in Chinese? Surely we cannot. “Why not?” you may ask. “If the fire that burned upon the bush had no need of the bush as its fuel, why do I need to know Chinese? Literate or not, I am still a bush. What difference does literacy make?”

This illustrates that although the fire burning upon the bush does not use the bush as its fuel, there still is the need to pay attention to the bush itself. For God to give His complete and detailed set of laws to the Israelites, He needed a servant like Moses. Every student of law considers the Roman law a requirement in his studies, and the Roman law derived its principles from the Old Testament. Even until now, no law is more complete or more lofty than the law of Moses, because the law written by Moses was from God. The question is this: had Moses not been educated with the knowledge of that time but rather had been an unlearned peasant, do you think God could have used him? I absolutely believe not.

When I was first saved, I met some people who had the idea that education was unnecessary. They thought that if we have God's love, all is well; it is completely useless to be educated. This is a wrong concept. Undoubtedly, it is the fire that burns upon the bush, but still the bush must be qualified in order for God to ignite this fire upon it. Some thornbushes meet the requirements, whereas others do not. The flame of God's deliverance of the Israelites and the giving of the law could burn only upon Moses, and on no one else, because there was no other person who was qualified.

In this chapter we are considering the need for character building in order that some could meet the requirements. God does not need you as the fuel, but when He uses you, you must have the proper qualifications. To be usable, a table must be level and stable. A carpenter must work on it, attach four legs, and polish the surface. This is the building work of a carpenter to make it a suitable piece of furniture. According to our continuous observation, we must conclude that many brothers and sisters are of little use to God because they are ill-qualified for His use. They are like a table that is not quite straight, upright, level, or stable. God's fire could burn upon Moses but not upon them, because Moses was qualified for God's burning, whereas they are not.

I would like to give another example. Suppose there is a downpour today, and you have put several basins under the building's eaves to collect rainwater. All the basins will be filled within a short time. However, if some of the basins are cracked and full of holes, could any water stay in them? No. The leaking simply offsets the filling, and regardless of how much it rains, all the water that comes into the basins will eventually run out. It is easy to see that these containers are inadequate. Suppose some other basins are not merely broken and leaking but are almost flat. Surely all the water will run out despite the continuous rain. Such basins do not meet the requirements for holding water. We need water to bathe, wash clothes, and water the plants. It is true that the basins themselves cannot produce water, and it is true that what we actually use is the water and not the basins. We use the water all year long. We do not use anything from the basins except the water that falls into them. Nevertheless, from another viewpoint, the ability of the basins to hold water depends on whether they meet the requirements. Some are able to hold water, whereas others are not.

Brothers and sisters, are you a basin with holes, a broken basin, or a flat one? There must be a certain building up in a person who serves God. The dimension of depth must be added to the flat surface, and all the leaks and

cracks must be patched. Furthermore, your capacity must be enlarged. As a basin, you may be able to hold four gallons of water on the first day. After four days you may hold eight gallons, and then twenty gallons in another ten days. Originally, you may be only three inches tall. Two days later you may extend to one foot. Brothers and sisters, remember that the extent of our usefulness to God depends on the extent of His building work in us. The amount of building up in us determines the measure of our usefulness to Him. If God does not find us built up, He cannot use us.

Now let us discuss a few matters that need to be built up in us. They are all essential. We will not be useful to God if we lack even one of them.

## **LAZINESS**

Many in the Lord's service have a big problem in their character—laziness. I have several points to cover concerning this matter. This is by no means a great doctrine, yet it has much to do with our usefulness to the Lord. The first characteristic of one who serves the Lord must be diligence. A lazy person is useless to God. Can you find a verse in the Bible which tells us that God spoke to Moses in the evening? On the contrary, in a number of instances God called Moses early and told him to go in the morning to a certain place to meet Pharaoh. Dear brothers and sisters, a slothful person can never be useful to God. Diligence must be built into our blood.

I do not wish to find fault with you, but I feel that I have a responsibility before the Lord to say this to you: some of you impress me as being lazy. There are many proofs of this. Forgive me for telling you that you are lazy. O brothers! O sisters! Allow me the liberty to say this, and believe what I say. I was once your age. I have also passed through what you are now learning and pursuing regarding the Lord's service. I am clear by watching you from the sidelines. I realize that you are not intentionally lazy but are so because there is not the element of diligence in your character. Because your past living, circumstances, and habits did not help to build diligence into your character, you now are short of it.

At this point I must ask all of you, even the Chinese people, to forgive me. Today our country is not strong enough; it is not what it should be. We are making progress too slowly in politics, the economy, social condition, and education. Why is this? Rather than criticizing the leaders of the government, we must put the blame on our national character. We need to realize that the Chinese have a poor character. We are irresponsible, frivolous, and lazy; we pass the buck. With this kind of character, how can we succeed in building up a nation? I believe that our country would be strong if all those of average education were diligent. My point is that since we Chinese are born in such a situation, when we serve God, we encounter many problems. As we have been raised in such an environment, if we are not completely revolutionized within and if we bring our national character into the Lord's service, our service will never be successful. Such is an improper character. How deeply I am grieved concerning this matter. In our present condition we would probably make a great work small and a small work disappear. This has everything to do with our character.

## **NOT BEING EARNEST**

Another common condition is that most of you do not do things earnestly; you lack aggressiveness and simply try to get by. You always begin something without finishing it. Your belongings are disorderly. And when you say that you are short of time, it is because you are loose and waste time. If this is how you brothers and sisters do things, could your Bible study be any different? If you do things sloppily, how can you be careful in your Bible study? Your character will be the same in everything you do.

I have often criticized the way you dress. I do not refer to the quality of your clothing. I realize from the way you dress that there is a shortage in your character. Your carelessness and sloppiness are seen in the way you

dress. If you are careless in dressing, could you be fine in studying the Bible? Could you do your work well? Could your work be prevailing, and could it produce valuable results? I do not believe so. What you do always reflects your character. I say again, unless this character is replaced and a new one is built up, you will be useless in God's hand. O brothers, you must exercise yourself in these daily matters to build up something in yourself so that the divine fire can burn upon you.

Do not think that I am stressing outward things. Also, do not assume that to emphasize character is unspiritual. Are you genuinely spiritual with such a faulty character? Brothers and sisters, I say again, you must build up a proper character. Unless this is built up in you, your usefulness to the Lord will be limited.

I hope that from now on especially the young people will begin to build up a character that is useful to the Lord so that every aspect of their living will be fit for the Lord's use.

The Lord Jesus said that one who is faithful in the least will be faithful in much (Luke 16:10). If your dress, your home, and the things you do reveal that you are a careless and passive person, how can your service to the Lord be aggressive? It is hardly possible. If you have not built up a proper character, you can give only an ordinary message, not a prevailing one. Your prayers also will be ordinary, not prevailing. They will be the same today as they were two years ago, showing no progress at all. Brothers, we must improve our character; otherwise, we will accomplish nothing. Even if we receive grace, we will not be able to minister that grace in spirit, because we are simply not qualified.

I realize that my speaking has been somewhat fragmented, but I hope that from now on you will seize every occasion, large and small, to build up your character so that you will be suitable for God's use. Because of your character, you do not receive any great light in reading the Bible, as others do. You would merely gloss over chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew, which speaks of Christ's genealogy. Why did Matthew speak of Christ's genealogy, whereas John did not? A person with a seeking character will definitely ask questions when he comes to this passage. May the Lord have mercy on us. I cannot speak too much in detail; I can only lay down a principle here. Just remember, our usefulness to God will be manifested only when we have a character suitable for His use.

## **A CHARACTER USEFUL TO THE LORD**

### **Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 2:20-21**

In this chapter we will again consider the character of one who serves the Lord. In 2 Timothy 2:20-21 the apostle indicates that to be a servant of the Lord, one must be "useful to the master." Literally, this means making one's service to the Lord both bountiful and practical. It is not a matter merely of being used or not used, but of how practical and how ample is the service. In other words, we should be those who serve practically and bountifully. This is what it means to be useful to the Master.

### **THE LORD NOT USING THE THINGS OF MAN**

I would like to repeat: the Lord never uses what we have. This is the significance of the fire burning upon the bush without consuming the bush. The fire burned upon the bush but did not use the elements of the bush as fuel. Do not assume that your cleverness, wisdom, talent, and virtues can be the material for God to use. There is no such thing. Nothing of ours can contribute to our usefulness to the Lord. The Lord wants us to serve Him but not to minister what we have. Rather, He wants us to minister what He has. Ministering to others what we have in ourselves is most offensive to the Lord. As Paul indicates in 2 Corinthians 4, this is to preach ourselves, to minister ourselves, not the Lord, and it is condemned by Him.

In 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 Paul says that we are made sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of ourselves but of God. Then in chapter 4 he shows us not only that he was not made sufficient of himself but also that he did not preach himself; he preached Christ Jesus as Lord. Paul did not preach himself to others, nor did he minister himself to others. Paul preached and ministered Christ.

It was the same with Moses. Moses did not rely on his own ways to deal with Pharaoh; rather, it was God's authority manifested through Moses that dealt with Pharaoh. Pharaoh did not confront Moses' ability, talent, or wisdom, but he encountered in Moses something other than Moses, that is, the fire burning upon the bush. The same principle applies to all those who served the Lord in both the Old and New Testaments. None of the prophets in the Old Testament, whether Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, or any other, could bring his own cleverness, wisdom, or ability into the Lord's work. In other words, what those prophets preached was not their own ability, wisdom, or cleverness, but Jehovah, who came upon them, and the words of Jehovah. It is more so in the New Testament. Peter, James, John, and Paul could not add anything of themselves to the Lord's service. What they ministered to the saints and the churches was altogether Christ Himself. This point must be made very clear.

The cross works on us to deal exactly with this matter; it breaks us and kills us in order to deal with this very issue. It deals with our own wisdom and overthrows our capable person. Why? Because if our cleverness, wisdom, and ability are not subdued by the Lord, what we do will definitely be of ourselves, not of the Lord. For example, if God had used Moses at age forty to save Israel, his service would have been full of his own ability, cleverness, wisdom, and knowledge. Therefore, God allowed him to run up against a wall. That was the cross breaking his talent, ability, wisdom, and cleverness. He was a prince in the palace and a captain in the army. Yet he was dealt with and became a wanderer and a shepherd in the wilderness. God used all these experiences to break him.

We must see that when we serve in the church and participate in the Lord's work, we absolutely cannot minister what we have in ourselves. Whenever we mix what we have into the Lord's service, the cross will come to us. This is very difficult, because God wants us for His work, but He does not want what we have.

Let us look at the other side of this matter. Although the Lord does not want what we have, He wants us to be useful to Him. After much consideration before the Lord, I believe that the matter of being "useful to the master" has much to do with a man's character. Our talent and ability must not be mixed into the service of the Lord. However, our character can determine whether we are suitable for the Lord's use. The character of some people is useful to the Lord, but that of others is not. Even though those who serve the Lord must not bring in what they have, their character must be suitable for the Lord's use. For this reason I have been repeating that to be useful to the Master, we must build up a character that is useful to Him. Brothers and sisters, we bear a tremendous responsibility in this matter.

#### **FOUR ASPECTS OF BEING USEFUL TO THE MASTER**

What kind of person is useful to the Lord? There are at least four aspects. First, he must love and desire the Lord. Do not even talk about being used by the Lord if you do not love and desire Him. We do not need to cover this basic matter here. Second, he must have a vision of the Lord and an encounter with Him. He needs to have a revelation that God's eternal purpose is to work Christ into us and to express Christ through us. This is a great point. I have met many saints who love the Lord but have not seen this Christ of God. They have seen only Jesus their Savior, not the Christ of God. These may be zealous and full of love, yet in their service they do not minister the Lord to others, because they have not seen this Christ and have not received this revelation. In order to be useful in the Lord's hand, one must see the revelation concerning Christ. Third, his self, his person, must have been dealt with by the cross. He must realize that whatever he has and whatever comes out of him cannot be brought into the Lord's service. His natural being must have been terminated on the cross. Only those who have seen their flesh and their natural man realize how precious the cross is. Only when you have seen that

you are fleshly and nothing but a thorn bush, a leper, and a natural man will you treasure the experience of the cross. This can be called the revelation of the natural man or the revelation of the cross. After you have a heart to love the Lord, you must have at least two revelations, one concerning Christ and the other concerning the self, which also concerns the cross. You cannot lack any of these three aspects.

However, these three aspects are not sufficient. With these you can do something valuable but nothing extensive. You will surely dispense Christ and minister Christ, though perhaps only once a year, or to one person in six months.

Suppose there is a brother who sincerely loves the Lord and is not occupied with the world. He has been enlightened, he has seen the Christ of God, and he sees that the purpose of God in this universe is Christ, and that it is to work Christ into men and then to work Christ out from within men. He truly has the revelation of Christ. He also sees that what hinders Christ the most is his self, his flesh, and his natural life, and seeing this, he has fallen down. He has the knowledge of his natural life, which is the revelation of the cross. When you meet this one, you always sense that the Lord is so sweet, so lovely, and so great. However, you see some peculiarity in this brother. For example, if you ask him if he could find time to assist certain brothers who need help, he will answer, "Fine, fine." But when he goes home, he will soon forget about it. Such a thing actually happened. This brother really loves the Lord, receives mercy, and sees himself and the way of the cross; however, there is something lacking in him that renders him useless to the Master.

Later, the same one may become an elder. A brother may come to him saying, "A certain sister has a serious problem related to marriage. She was engaged to someone, but now she is engaged to someone else. What do you think we should do?" He may say, "Well, let us look to the Lord." Then another brother may come, saying, "A certain brother's family is having a difficult time; he lost his job. What should we do?" To this he may reply, "Well, let us pray. If the Lord does not do anything, what can we do?" Do not think that such brothers do not exist. I am afraid to handle business with such brothers and sisters. When I do, I inevitably become frustrated. What is the problem with them? Are they short of love toward the Lord, or do they lack the knowledge of Christ? Or is it that they do not sufficiently know the cross? It is none of these; the problem is entirely with their character.

In all these years we have been studying the matter of service. Through our continuous probing and research, we have reached the conclusion that all the above four aspects are indispensable. Surprisingly, however, the fourth aspect, the aspect of character, is often easily rejected or neglected. Many assume that as long as they love the Lord, see Christ, and know the way of the cross, they have reached the peak. However, the fact remains that the first three aspects are inadequate. A cook must take four steps to prepare a meal: first, he must go shopping at the market; second, he has to remove many things, such as leaves of bamboo shoots, fish scales, and vegetable roots; third, he needs to cook the food; and fourth, he must prepare the chairs, plates, chopsticks, and spoons. Why is this fourth step necessary? Is the cook serving chopsticks and the table as food? Certainly not. However, without chopsticks, spoons, plates, and a table, the dinner cannot be properly served. These eating utensils illustrate the character of us who serve the Lord. Without them the food will stay in the cookware. One could still eat it but would not enjoy it. No one would eat the chopsticks and spoons along with the food; that would be terrible. We serve people a meal so that they may eat the food and not the utensils. Similarly, we do not minister our character to others, but we bear Christ to them by our character. For example, a certain brother may be absent-minded and forgetful. Can his forgetful character replace the Christ whom he knows inwardly? Not at all. But his character greatly affects his service. He must make up this lack if he wants to be suitable for the Lord's use. He must learn to remember things. He should carry a pocket notebook to record things that need to be done. This is just a small example.

# THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD'S SERVANTS IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Let us now consider the character of those who served the Lord in both the Old and New Testaments. It would actually be very worthwhile for you to study the character of persons from Abraham in the Old Testament to John in the New Testament. We can select only a few of those individuals for our discussion here.

Moses' character was nearly perfect, as we see in the Old Testament. First, he received the knowledge of God from his parents when he was young. This is a factor that contributed to the development of his character. Second, God prepared an environment, bringing him to the Egyptian palace to learn the culture of that age. This also was a factor in the cultivation of his character. Third, God sent him to the wilderness for forty years for character training. Once a prince in the Egyptian palace, he now shepherded a flock, learning patience and humility and spontaneously acquiring a lowly character. For forty years, in the freezing cold and the scorching heat, he took care of his sheep. The ordeals and suffering that he went through were all for the development of his character, to make him humble, accommodating, enduring, patient, and sensitive.

Furthermore, a shepherd must have a sense of responsibility and a caring heart; he must be fine and thorough. A shepherd must lead his flock according to the sheep's need to drink, to graze, to rest, and to move. Later, because of his forty years of training in the wilderness, Moses was able to lead the Israelites for forty years. He learned his lessons for forty years, so he was able to lead for forty years. This shows us that the extent to which God could use him depended on how much his character had been developed before the Lord. There is no doubt that the God who filled Moses was unlimited; however, Moses' ability to testify and minister the God who filled him was based upon the character he had developed during his shepherding years.

It is clear that later, when Moses became God's greatest servant, his character was very strong and capable, as well as fine, thorough, and sympathetic. The law of Moses is very high and very detailed. When he spoke of offerings, he even gave instructions for handling dung. He discussed very thoroughly the way to deal with the problems a woman might face before she is engaged, after she is engaged but before she is married, and after she is married. When you read Moses' Pentateuch again, notice that his character was strong and transparent; at the same time it was also fine, thorough, and accommodating. This is the reason that the fire of Jehovah could burn and be manifested upon him.

In Deuteronomy he recounted events from the time the Israelites received the law until his dying days. How detailed was his memory! His compassion toward the Israelites was many times deeper than a mother's. With such a character it was no wonder that God's fire could burn upon him. Did all this pertain to Moses' spiritual life? Those who do not know God may say so; actually, it was a matter of his character. Since God was manifested through him, God must have been the life, but Moses needed such a character to uphold God's manifestation.

I mention this repeatedly because through the ages those who serve the Lord have neglected the matter of character. Rising early in the morning is not an aspect of the spiritual life; neither is remembering what people entrusted to you. These are matters of character. The spiritual life is the Christ constituted in you, the Christ seen by you, the Christ known by you, the Christ with whom you are filled. The point here is that as Christ has been seen by you and is being ministered to others through you, what kind of character should you have in order to be useful?

Now we come to Paul in the New Testament. Do you not sense that you touch a special character in Paul's fourteen Epistles? Do you not sense here a man who is tender, helpful, accommodating, and frank? He was full

of Christ, and the fire of Christ was burning within him and upon him. However, what people sensed was a diligent character, a mind to work, a readiness to speak frankly, a care for others, and a willingness to accommodate others. These points of character constitute the person of Paul. At times he could be extremely severe. Once he asked, "Should I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. 4:21). At other times he was full of gentleness. He also asked, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?" (2 Cor. 11:29). What a responsible and conscientious person he was!

## **SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR CHARACTER**

Now let us come back to consider ourselves. I have mentioned that laziness is a major shortcoming in our character. Especially with regard to the young brothers and sisters, if you do not build up a diligent character, your work will have no future. At most you can be only a pretty flower for people to admire; you can hardly be a vessel to supply God's children. Even though you may know the cross, Christ, and the natural man, if you are not diligent enough, it will be difficult for you to minister Christ to others. Christ will be nullified by your laziness. If you do not believe my word now, you will twenty years from now. You do not know how many things you will spoil because of a lack of diligence in your character.

Many people are willing to take on grand tasks but not small ones. This also is a shortcoming in character. If you desire to do only the big things and not the trivial, you are through. Whoever is useful in the hands of the Lord must be utterly broad on one hand, and extremely fine on the other. Such was Moses' law. You should do minor jobs well, and you should also be able to carry out major assignments. Your character needs to be dealt with on this point. If you take pleasure only in preaching the all-inclusive Christ and His all-inclusive death on the cross, yet you are not willing to engage in trivial duties in your daily life, there is a shortage in your character.

Then, there are those people who are careless in everything; this characteristic makes them unsuitable for God's use. You should be accommodating to others, but you should not tolerate sloppiness. If you gave a poor message last night, you cannot excuse yourself and let it go carelessly. You should condemn yourself, realizing that it was not acceptable. This may be called a progressive attitude. Some people do not have this item in their character and are thus of no use to the Lord.

Some people are irresponsible. Moreover, their irresponsibility is spontaneous and not intentional. If you ask one of them to be an elder, he may agree, albeit with a shallow sense of responsibility. He would not put upon his shoulders the people, things, or matters of the church. It seems that whatever matter you entrust to him becomes lost or disappears. He takes care only of those things that he happens to come across. This is because he lacks a sense of responsibility. The unconscientious person who serves the Lord cannot expect to be able to render help to others. We should not only love and care for people but also learn and practice before the Lord to be conscientious. Once certain matters of the church are entrusted to us, our heart should be in them. We should carry on our heart those whom we prayed for. Learn to have a sense of responsibility.

There is no need to illustrate further. If you check with yourself, you will see that there are still many areas of your character that are unfit for the Lord. As one who lacks the many qualities that are useful to the Lord, you must spend sufficient time to exercise to build up your character. Only then will you be useful to Him.

Never think that it is easier to oversee the church, to preach the gospel, or to save people's souls than to do worldly business. This is absolutely not true. When I was first saved, although I had not yet received the Lord's calling, by His grace I already enjoyed Bible reading, going to meetings, and, at times, gospel preaching. I met a classmate who had lost his job because of his temperament and personality. He came to see me and said, "You

are associated with a certain denomination; now that I have lost my job, would you please recommend me to them as a preacher?" When I heard this, I was speechless. Today the common assumption is that it is easier to preach the gospel and serve the church than to do anything else; it seems that there is no need for a proper character and that such work can be done in a heedless way. I was told that anyone who has been a preacher for three years is not able to do anything else. We should feel shameful about these things.

We must realize that for serving the Lord, preaching the gospel, overseeing the church, and saving souls, a proper human character is the topmost requirement. To do these things, more than any other kind of work, requires diligence, earnestness, endurance, boldness, self-sacrifice, self-denial, thoughtfulness, considerateness, and progressiveness with daily improvement. If these qualities are not in your character, it makes little difference whether you are available for the Lord's service or not.

Therefore, in order to serve the Lord, to preach the gospel, and to establish churches, you must build up a character that is useful to the Lord. In your daily life you need to attend to and diligently learn everything related to character, whether it is great or small. You should not place your clothes or books sloppily; all your belongings must be put in their proper place. This will help you to build up an exact character so that you will not do things in an unclear and careless way. You need to practice to be exact, never speaking carelessly or inaccurately, even remembering precisely the words of the Bible and their references. You need to cultivate your sense of responsibility and to work it into your character. Then, when you administrate the church, you will do nothing carelessly, since a certain conscientiousness will already be in you. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we may realize what kind of character is useful to Him.

# Developing Godly Character

## **Romans 12:9-12, 2 Peter 1:5-8.**

The saying “charisma without character will end up in catastrophe” looks as if it’s just a slang among Christians but if one will look at it deeply, one will know that it’s a true saying. It takes charisma to provoke a miracle, but to maintain, sustain, and retain that miracle depends on one’s character. Many Christians today (Pastor’s inclusive) have gifts and talents in them that make them achievers but these achievements do not last because they lack the good character to uphold them.

It is generally accepted that no one makes it in isolation. Whatever one wants to become in life depends on how he’s able to work with people, and the major key that sustains your good relationship with people is your character. This is because “the attraction of your action determines people’s reaction to your contribution to the organization”. In the place of Christian service, it is generally said that we are serving God not men but the truth of the matter is that we serve God among men. And men look at the outward appearance, it is only God that sees the heart. And you don’t say that your heart is right when your actions are wrong (Matt. 5:16).

Every scriptural principle starts and ends with human character. The Ten Commandments are laws guiding human character (Exo. 20:1ff). The fruits of the Spirit are the manifestation of good human character (Gal 5:22). Jesus took the time to teach his disciple that if their work will last and be fruitful among men, it should be supported by good character (Matthew 5).

Men who are effectively used by God in the scripture are men of good character and reputation. The difference between a man of success and a man of failure in the bible is the same major thing: character. History has given us the chronicles of men in this world who serve God in their lifetime, the propelling factor that determines their success or failure is their character.

Every organization that desires progress always have a code of conduct, the purpose of the code of conduct is to form an ideal character that will propel an effective service in every member. Every man is limited by his character because you can only operate where your character positions you. Your walk with God and also with men is determined by the quality of your character.

According to John Maxwell, “the greatest threat to your talent is not lack of opportunity but lack of character”. So Maxwell further explained this as he said:

“Many people with talent make it into the limelight, but the ones who have neglected to develop strong character rarely stay there long. The absence of character eventually topples talent. Why? Because people cannot climb beyond the limitations of their character, talented people feel superior and expect special privileges. Character helps them to know better. Talented people are praised for what others see them build, character builds what’s inside them. Talented people have the potential to be difference makers; character makes a difference in them. Talented people are often a gift to the world, character protects a gift”.

This write-up is to focus on character development. How effective is it in our Christian service? How do we improve our character to propel an improvement in our Christian service? Since the largest room in the world is the room for improvement (this room can accommodate everybody). How do we correct our bad characters and inculcate good ones? All these questions will be attended to, as we depend on God to work in us to become what he wants us to be through the study of the scripture.

# The Terms Defined

## Character

This is the sum of all qualities that makes you what you are: it is your value, your thoughts, your words, your action, etc. In other words, it is you. Your character is your person.

## Development

This is the gradual growth or formation of something. It is the process or result of making a basic design gradually better and more advanced. It is making something or more useful or profitable. To develop is to grow, to change over some time, to build upon, to expound, to increase, to become more successful, etc.

## Component of Your Character

To deal with your character, you must know those things that make up your character, those things that combine to form your character and they include:

### Your Thought

This is the idea you have in your mind. It controls your word and your world. It has a great effect on your actions because they are the practices of your thought

### Your Imagination/World View

This is the ability that you have to form a picture or idea in your mind of things that are new and existing or things that you have not experienced. It is your mental picture, meditations, etc. Your world view is the way you see and understand things happening around you

### Your Temperament

There is nothing more fascinating about people than their inherent temperament. It is the temperament that provides each human being with the qualities that make each person unique from another. Temperament is the unseen force underlying human actions, a force that can destroy a normal and productive human being unless it is disciplined and directed. It provides both our strengths and weakness.

According to Collins Co-build Advanced learner, English Dictionary' "Temperament is your basic nature, especially as it is shown in the way you react to situations or other people".

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines temperament as the emotional part of someone's character, especially how likely they are happy, angry, etc.

Ole Hallesby said, "We receive our natural tendencies for the good and bad from our temperament".

Tim Lahaye defines temperament as the combination of inborn traits that subconsciously affects all our behavior.

## There are Four Major Temperaments

- Sanguine – a super extrovert
- Choleric – an extrovert

- Melancholy – an introvert
- Phlegmatic – a super introvert

## Your Attitude

Your attitude is the way you think and feel about particular events or situations. It shows in your words, your looks, and in your actions. Attitude is an inward feeling expressed by behavior.

James Allen said, “A person cannot travel within and stand still without”. What is happening within us will affect what is happening without.

According to John Maxwell, “a hardened attitude is a dreaded disease. It causes a closed mind and a dark future but when the attitude is positive and conducive for growth, the mind expands and the progress begins”.

So Maxwell explains attitude as follows:

- It is the advance man of our true self
- Its roots are inward but its fruit is outwards
- It is either our best friend or our worst enemy.
- It is more honest and more consistent than our words
- It is an outward look based on past experiences.
- It is a thing that draws people to us or sends them away from us.
- It is never content until it is expressed.
- It is a Liberator of our past.
- It is the speaker of our present
- It is the prophet of our future

He also explained some things about the attitude that one needs to note:

- Your attitude determines your approach to life.
- Your attitude determines your relationship with people.
- Often your attitude is the only difference between success and failure.
- Your attitude at the beginning of a task will affect its outcome more than anything else.
- Your attitude can turn your problems into blessings.
- Your attitude determines how far you will go in life.

## Your Actions

Your actions are something that you do for a particular purpose and on a particular occasion.

### Things to note about your action

- Your action speaks more about you.
- Your action speaks louder than your voice
- Your action attracts people’s reaction

## Other attributes that contribute to individual character.

### Awareness

This means knowing what is going on around you. It involves all kinds of things like weather, sports activities, or a friend who is going through some tough times.

## **Caring**

This means being interested or concerned about someone or something

## **Optimism**

This means having a positive outlook on things. It means thinking that things are going to turn out well. Optimistic people usually planned and prepare for things they are about to do and sometimes that helps things turn well.

## **Patience**

Patience is the ability to wait for things without whining or complaining. It is a quality that many people do not have and it takes a long time to develop.

## **Politeness**

This means speaking and acting civilly and using a good manner. It's a lot like courtesy and kindness. Another way to put it is by being "not rude". Being polite means you know how to act in an open place

## **Resourcefulness**

This is the ability to find a way of getting things done. It means you can figure things out even if the answers are not there in front of you. If you have resourceful, you will be more resourceful in your career.

## **Respect**

This means showing regard to other people's feelings and possessions. It is an attitude that you display every day. Showing respect for others is very important in the way you relate to people and it is a huge part of your character.

## **Responsibility**

This is what you are showing when you own up to something. When you are responsible, you take control of your actions and obligations. It might also mean taking the blame for something that is your fault rather than pointing accusing fingers on someone else

## **Sincerity**

This means being real and genuine- not fake. It means speaking or acting from the heart and meaning it. Sincerity is often the basis of very strong friendship because you know that the person is being real with you.

## **Teamwork**

Teamwork means working together to achieve a common goal. Teamwork can lead to great things but everyone has to do their share.

## **Tolerance**

This is your ability to accept values, practices, or beliefs that differ from your own it also means accepting people who come from different places and have different backgrounds.

## **Trustworthiness**

This means you are worthy of someone's trust. People know they can trust you and believe in you because of the kind of person you are.

## **How to Develop Godly Character**

### **It Requires Desire and Determination.**

The starting point of character development is your desire and determination. It will be difficult to develop what you don't desire and if you want to get it, you must be determined to go for it. It is naturally believed that people go for what they want, what they have passion for. So, to develop a godly character, you must desire it and be determined to go for it.

### **Study the Word and Meditate in it**

Psalms 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8

All the forms of godly characters are found in the scripture. Jesus said in Matthew 22:29 that you are in error because you don't know the scripture and the power of God. God told Joshua to read, meditate, and observe what is in the scripture, so by doing what is writing in it, he will be successful and Prosperous. Paul told Timothy that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". 2Tm:3:16-17. So, if you want to develop a godly character, you must know the mind of God in his word.

### **Connect Help from the Holy Spirit**

One of the passages that challenged me in the Bible is Romans 8:7-8: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God". This shows that developing godly character is impossible without the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit gives enabling to bear the fruits of the spirit and also gives the power for godly living. So, for anybody to develop godly character he must be connected to the Holy Spirit.

### **Keep Wise Company**

David, out of his wealth of experience said in Psalms 1:1 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful". Solomon also said he that walk with the wise shall be wise." James said: evil communication corrupt good manners". So to develop a godly character you must check the company you keep.

### **Practice The Word.**

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

The best way to develop godly character is to actively practice what the word of God says. Jesus said to Satan in Matthew 4:4 that "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Practicing the word of God is to develop godly character.

## **Develop Moral Excellence**

Genesis 37:2; 39:8-9; Dan. 1:8

To develop a godly character one must be able to develop moral excellence. You must be self-disciplined, maintain high moral value. Let your yes be yes and let your no be no. You must have self-control and always go for what is right and morally acceptable in line with the word of God.

## **Watch your Outward Appearance.**

Matthew 5:16

The appearance they say shows the manner. Even God told Prophet Samuel that man looks at the outward appearance while God looks at the heart. And Jesus told his disciples to let their good work be seen by all men. So, signs that you are developing Godly character is that you watch your life, what you wear, what you say, and how you comport yourself wherever you go.

## **Benefits of Developing a Godly Character**

### **Godly Character Makes your Christian Service More Effective and Rewarding**

The dictionary defines character as moral excellence and firmness. The highest standard of character is outlined in the scripture and exemplified in Christ. 1 Tim 4:7. In all, a godly character comes and makes your service rewarding through resisting every evil influence and impulse to the body of Christ, striving hard to meet up the platform of God's standard. Heb 12:28-29, James 1:21-22

### **Godly Character Gives You Access to God's Promises (Deut. 28:1-14)**

The application of God's promises cannot come into existence in our lives except based on godly character. When God gives us promises, we can be sure he will do what he has said, but this likely to come into reality as a matter of demonstrating his character and nature to us. Joseph is a good example, if he had allowed fornication, he would have been subjected and the access to God's promises would have been shut down.

### **Godly Character Guarantees Your Success in Life (Josh. 1:8)**

In life, there are certain characters which attract favour naturally and also vice versa. The development of integrity places us on a high scale level because that God is involved. No one is just found at the top, he must first start from the bottom in regards to humility which enables us even ahead of imagination. Your character defines you.

### **Godly Character Gives You Ground in God's Kingdom (Psalm 24:2-4)**

No matter who you are, if sin is involved in your character, it means you have no place before God. Character is who you are and making relevance, it has you indebted to your God's given responsibility, Heb 12:6-9. If your character is based on the pleasure of yourself, that means you are not yet on the right track. Many are involved in eye-service of which cannot place you and even if it does, it is meant for your doom.

## **Godly Character, Makes You Fruitful and Productive (2Pet. 1:8)**

If you desire to be fruitful and productive, and you are involved in cheating, scamming, and making fortune out of other peoples misfortune and sweat, then you are not exhibiting godly character. responsibility is a key factor to make you fruitful, gives you ideas to new things, expose you to more and better opportunities as which your character is placed on

## **Conclusion**

Have you seen a man who fell from the top and blames the Devil for it? The instrument the Devil used was his character. Have you seen a man who rises to the top and we thank God for it? The instrument God used was his character. Character is the first key to greatness. Your character determines your influence. Character provides the opportunity for longevity in any career, any relationship, and any worthwhile goal. The beauty of humanity is expressed in character. So if your Christian life and service will be fruitful and productive, one area needs special attention: that is your **character**.