



**BUILDING**

**STRONGER**

**CHARACTER**

**2019**

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# CHARACTER

Character is the result of the impression made by God's word on a tender heart, as the impressions made in soft moist clay. Like the clay is soft enough to receive the impression, the tender heart is capable of being "impressed" by or influenced by God. It feels and responds naturally. The tender heart can be touched. It is moved to be responsive to God and receptive to His word (WordPoints – May 12 – Tender Hearts).

We must maintain this tender heart, not allowing it to become hardened, past feeling. "They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity, Ephesians 4:19. If we allow the trails of life to deaden our sensitivity a hard heart will result and we will not be sensitive or touchable by God's word.

**"But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of your hand."**

Take a moment to consider- do you really mean this?

**Isaiah 64:8 (NAS95)**

We were created for a purpose by the God of Heaven, remember it is not about us – we must be a lump of soft clay, ready to be shaped and influenced by the word of God.

**"For we are His workmanship, crate in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in the."**

**Ephesian 2:10 (NAS95)**

"Character is distilled out of our daily confrontation with temptations, out of our regular response to the call of duty. It is formed as we learn to cherish principles and to submit to self-discipline. Character is the sum total of all the little decisions, the small deeds, the daily reactions to the choices that confront us" (Sidney Greenburg).

The natural simplicity of godliness is that it amounts to the peaceful managements of individual moments that come to us one at a time. No single moment asks of us anything impossible. Our tests come in single file and if taken as they come, we can learn to manage more effectively.

Whether we are moved by God's word is a question of character and demands our complete and sober attention. The whole issue of spiritual growth is determined by the daily decisions that are determined by the responsiveness and the sensitivity of our hearts.



# ATTITUDE

The word attitude is not found in the scriptures, yet the principles of a proper attitude are found throughout God's word. A proper attitude is a learned thing and is not issued or given at birth or at baptism. It is defined as posture, position assumed or studied for a purpose. It is a way of thinking and affects our actions in so many ways. Disposition, outlook and the way we approach a subject or problem is attitude in action.



Look for these influences in the record of conversions in Acts 2:42, 24:25 & 26, 28 & 29. Look for a proper attitude in those who obeyed and then examine the attitude of those who did not. These are examples of the great value in cultivating a proper attitude that is in harmony with God's word. Our acceptance or rejection of any truth depends upon our attitude toward it and our understanding of the truth.

**“and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore, God send them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”**

**II Thessalonians 2:10-12**

We can NEVER experience the “joy inexpressible and full of glory,” (I Peter 1:8) without a proper attitude that matches God's will. Titus 2:11 & 12 teaches us to, “deny worldly desires and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.” Indifference, murmuring and lack of joy exhibit the result of a poor attitude.

It is impossible to be “faithful until death” (Revelation 2:10) without developing a proper attitude toward living and dying. Study Paul's examples given in Acts 20:24, Philippians 1:21-23, II Timothy 1:12, and 4:7 & 8.

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Never allows **ANTYTHING** to hinder our desire to know and practice the truth. **Romans 1:21**

Places obedience to God's revealed word as a priority. **Matthew 10:37-38, 15:8 & 9**

Obeys God, rather than man. **Acts 5:29, Galatians 1:10**

Understands the scriptures as God's answer to everything pertaining to life and godliness.

**II Peter 1:3, II Timothy 3:16 & 17, Luke 10:26**

“Attitude is more important than the past, education, money, than what people say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill.” Charles Swindoll

## **ATTITUDE AFFECTS EVERY RELATIONSHIP IN OUR LIVES**

### **Attitude Toward God**

1. LOVE – the right kind of love, complete, with all your heart, mind and soul. Matthew 22:37
2. FAITH and TRUST – a strong conviction and trust in things you cannot see. Hebrews 1:1
3. THANKSFULNESS – an attitude of gratitude. God's righteous indignation fell on those who were not thankful, Romans 1:18-21. An attitude of thankfulness for the many blessings we have helps us keep a spirit of unity within the physical family as well as God's spiritual family, Colossians 3:17, Ephesians 5:20.

### **Attitude Toward Ourselves**

1. HUMILITY – a humble attitude is the beginning of understanding, Romans 12:3. It is this type of approach that allows us to serve others even in the lowest situations. John 13 demonstrates the foot washing principle. A humble attitude allows us to take care of the small things in this life so we can be trusted with greater things, Matthew 25:21.
2. TEACHABLE – regardless of the academic level we have acquired, the wise will be open to additional learning, Proverbs 15:31-33. We should desire knowledge with eagerness and embrace corrective and constructive criticism.
3. HONESTY – toward our mistakes, willingness to admit our mistakes, James 5:16. Possess a willingness to correct mistakes, the sooner the better.

As we develop attitudes of humility, a learning nature and honesty, we will be equipped to improve the relationships with others in the local congregation.

## Attitude Toward Our Brethren

1. LOVE – a major ingredient in successful relationships, John 13:34 & 35. I Peter 1:22 & 23 teaches we are to have a sincere love and fervent love. The word “fever” originates from the same root word as fervent, meaning burning up, intense: a pure heart that provides the basis for a working relationship.
2. COOPERATION – Paul uses the human body in I Corinthians 12:12-27 to illustrate how the working relationship of Christians should be in all things. No schism, the oil of love and cooperation reduces the friction between moving parts. This allows us to help each other accomplish a common goal.
3. APPRECIATION – for others and their work. Paul, in his letters, repeatedly expresses his appreciation for the work of his brethren, I Corinthians 16:17 & 18. Expressing true appreciation for dedicated work is like the grease on the gears of a machine, reducing the friction often caused by undue criticism and any divisiveness.
4. SUBMISSIVENESS – submitting to others creates a conducive working relationship, Ephesians 5:21. Submitting to those in leadership roles places emphasis on the work to be accomplished, rather than the individuals involved, Hebrews 13:17.
5. WARMTH – friendliness and openness. These attitudes were present when the early church was experiencing extreme growth, Acts 2:44-47. A welcoming atmosphere, to visitors as well as members, produces a comfortable and safe environment.

## Attitude Toward Work

1. GRATITUDE – for opportunities. We should count it an honor to offer service in the kingdom of God, I Timothy 1:12 & I Corinthians 15:9 & 10.
2. ENTHUSIASM – combined with eagerness. This should characterize our approach to spiritual service, Romans 12: 1 & 2.
3. INDUSTRIOUS – diligent, energetic, positive, persistent: attitudes that help us reach the goal of Ephesians 4:15. Speak the truth in love, grow up in all things into Him who is the Head – Christ. Strive to be Christ-like.

A long list of proper attitudes can be found in Ephesians 4:2, 32: meekness, forgiving, forbearing, patient, and longsuffering. We can use these attitudes to improve our relationship with God, ourselves, our brethren and our work. This will make us more useful in His service.

**“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”**

**II Timothy 2:21 (NAS95)**



1. List 3 passages that show Paul's Christian attitude.
2. List the ingredients that produce a proper attitude.
3. Explain how a proper attitude affects our relationship with fellow Christians.
4. How can I profit from a proper attitude?

Articles – topic – Attitude

[mightyisthelord.com](http://mightyisthelord.com)

4/2/17 “Improving Discipleship”

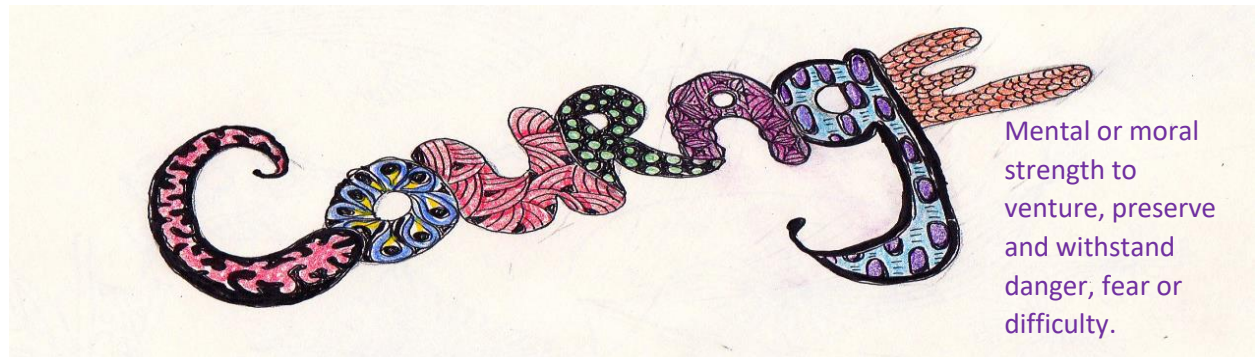
11/26/17 “Are you an Asses?”

12:30/18 “Everyone is Doing It”

12/30/18 “Ditch Digging Work”

# COURAGE

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MUSCLE!



Courage is described, defined and illustrated in many ways both in scripture and in secular writings. Synonyms for courage, such as valor and virtue, create mental images of those who have demonstrated great courage in scriptures and in recorded history. We are not born with courage or a lack of it, it is a learned skill that is honed, shaped and cultivated by the day-to-day decisions of life.

Another definition of courage is *the mental and emotional preparedness and ability to deal with difficulty, challenging, and sometimes seemingly impossible circumstances. It is the ability to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, intimidation and other threats.* (Essential/Life Skills)

“Jesus came walking on the water” Matthew 14:22-33. “But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, ‘Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid’” Matthew 14:27 (NAS95). Peter then walked on the water because he took courage from Jesus but soon lost that courage. “Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him and said to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’” Matthew 14:31.

The disciples of Jesus showed great fear in the record of His arrest, mock trails and crucifixion. The disciples had not learned how to show courage; they ran. We most often think of Peter because Jesus foretold the events of his cowardness but remember ALL forsook Him because of fear. Peter had only enough courage to follow along behind yet not enough to stand up for his Savior. Peter demonstrated valor and bravery when he drew his sword, but Jesus taught him a different lesson.

Courage is not the opposite of fear but the resolve and determination to overcome the fears that find their way into our lives. “Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he **gathered up courage** and went in before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus” Mark 15: 43 (NAS95). Joseph had been a secret disciple, not having the courage to declare his faith openly for fear of the Jews. To prevent the Jewish custom of burying those crucified in a common grave being applied to Jesus, Joseph **gathered up his courage** to approach Pilate and request the lifeless body.



The scriptures are filled with passages instructing people to be encouraged. In Deuteronomy 1 & 3 God instructed Moses to encourage Joshua as he was given the leadership of Israel. In the Gospels Jesus stated, “Take courage,” and at times He combined this with, “do not be afraid.” Fear causes us to make bad decisions but when we use courage to overcome fear we look to God for strength and courage to make proper decisions (Acts 5:19).

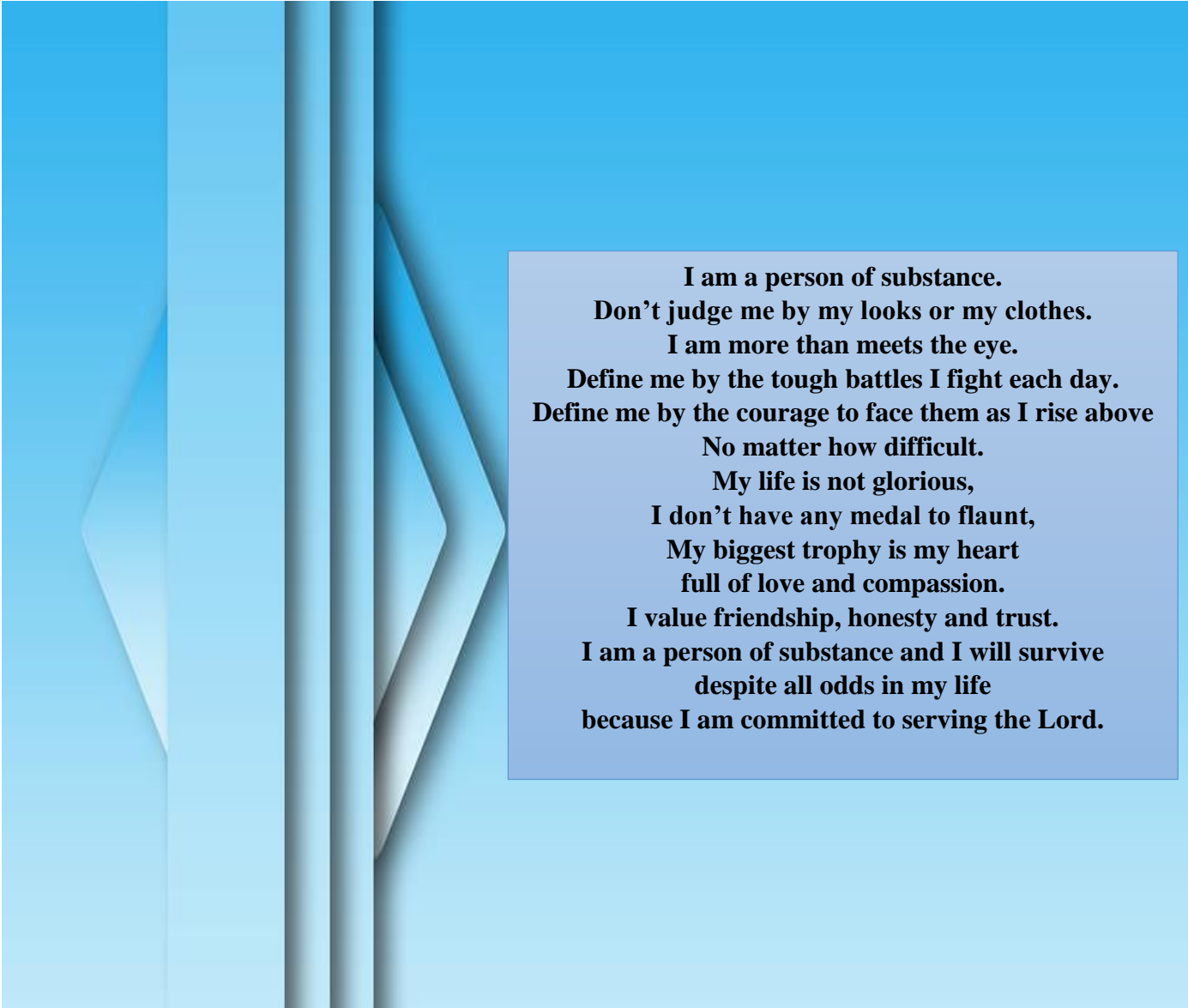
### **How do we develop or improve our courage?**

1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTAND - courage is not the absence of fear. Satan will use fear against us to create havoc in our lives. Fear of failure is one of his many weapons to prevent us from spreading the gospel however, building greater courage will replace that fear and we will become more useful in working God’s kingdom (II Timothy 2:2).
2. DETERMINATION TO IMPROVE – Before you can develop a habit that becomes a character trait, you **MUST** have a strong desire to improve (II Peter 1:5). Consider the alternative, living in fear.
3. START SMALL – Imitate those who have demonstrated courage by taking a stand for their beliefs. Acts 11:23 records that Barnabas arrived in Antioch and he began to encourage them all with a resolute heart to remain true to the Lord. Here is an example of how a person who has developed courage can greatly help those who are progressing toward strong courage. Make your goal to be a “Courage Mentor.”
4. STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH IN GOD – Participate in studies of men like Barnabas, Paul and Peter. In I Thessalonians 3:3 Paul sends Timothy to strengthen and encourage the faith of brethren. In I Thessalonians 5:11 & 14 Paul instructs them to encourage one another, build up one another, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all.

There are many “Courage Mentors” in the scriptures to draw strength from: Noah, Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Esther, Stephen, the church at Philippi, John and others.

### **Commitments Required for Improving Your Courage**

1. I AM RESPONSIBLE – for self. There will be times when you must stand alone – no parents, mentors, or fellow Christians. Integrity is present when no one is looking, except God.
2. I MUST NEVER FORGET – the day you became a Christian. Taking on the name of Christ, which you wear 24/7, should be an honor, one that we must never tarnish (I Peter 4:16).
3. REMEMBER, JESUS SETS THE STANDARD – not the world, business associates or friends. When you give your life to Christ, you give Him control (II Corinthians 5:14).



**I am a person of substance.  
Don't judge me by my looks or my clothes.  
I am more than meets the eye.  
Define me by the tough battles I fight each day.  
Define me by the courage to face them as I rise above  
No matter how difficult.  
My life is not glorious,  
I don't have any medal to flaunt,  
My biggest trophy is my heart  
full of love and compassion.  
I value friendship, honesty and trust.  
I am a person of substance and I will survive  
despite all odds in my life  
because I am committed to serving the Lord.**

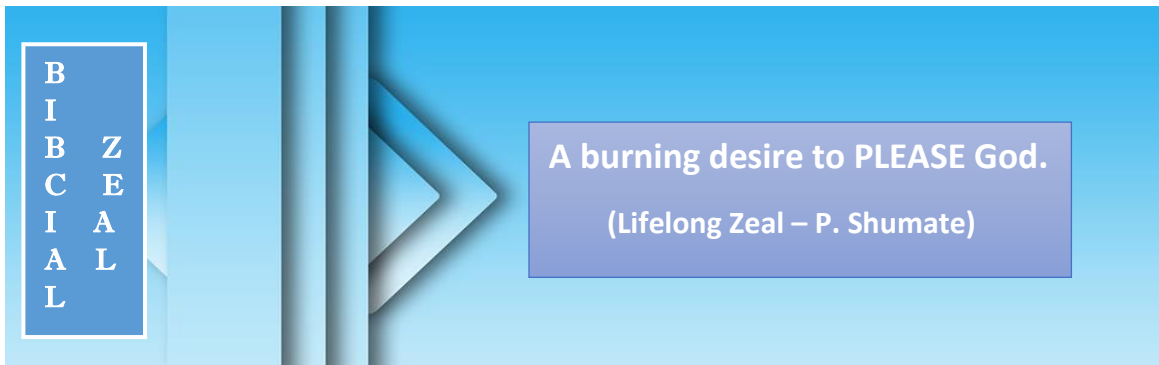


1. Give your best description of courage.
2. Compare Isaiah 35:2 with Colossians 4:8.
3. Discuss the progressive nature described in I Thessalonians (passages used in this lesson).
4. Examine Matthew 14: 22-33 and describe the correlation between fear, doubt and courage.
5. List examples of Bible characters who demonstrated courage (remember those mentioned in this lesson).
6. List examples of Christians you know, or have known, who have demonstrated courage.
7. How often should we encourage one another? Hebrews 3:13

# ZEAL

The original Greek word contains the idea of fire or fever and from that we often say that a person has a burning desire to be a \_\_\_\_\_. Other descriptive words could be strong passion, ardent follower, full of enthusiasm. Webster dictionary defines zeal as eagerness or ardent interest in pursuing something – intense emotional compelling action.

Zeal, like other character traits, must be acquired, developed, shaped, sharpened, and cultivated. Paul was born a Jew, advancing beyond others because he was extremely zealous (Galatians 1:14).



There are five essential qualities that set a Christian apart from raw enthusiasm. The Bible directly links these traits to the concept of zeal.

1. Courage – I Peter 3:13
2. Wisdom – Romans 10:2
3. Energy – John 4:3
4. Diligence – Ezra 7:2
5. Loving Service – Romans 12:11

For the purpose of this study, a good working definition is, *the courage to exercise great wisdom, great energy, and great diligence in loving service to God*. This definition gives us a standard for measuring our progress (I Timothy 4:15). Examine I Kings 10: 10 & 14 – What standard was used here?

There are several passages in the Old Testament that contain the thought, “the zeal of the Lord will perform or accomplish this,” (II Kings 19:31, Isaiah 9:6). In each of these passages the Lord is going to accomplish something for the benefit of His people. God’s desire is always for their benefit, God’s motivation is righteousness, His actions are powered by zeal. What lesson can we learn from this?

God wrapped Himself in a mantle of zeal as He protected the children of Israel (Isaiah 50:17).

**“Look down from heaven and see from Your hold and glorious habitation; Where are Your zeal and Your mighty deeds? The strings of Your heart and Your compassion are restrained toward me” Isaiah 63:15 (NAS95).**

In John 2:13-17 we see an example of Jesus showing great zeal for the work He came to do, “The zeal for your house will consume me.” Jesus speaks about His extraordinary concern for the temple of God, His intense desire that worship should be pure and approved by God the Father. His zeal was so strong it engaged His entire attention and affection beyond all other feelings. His zeal was so strong the wicked men fled from His presence, unable to withstand the power of fiery zeal. Here is a lesson for all preachers and teachers who must aim to purify God’s church with the proclamation of the gospel with a strong zeal that will cause the wicked, slothful and misinformed to shrink before the power of the Gospel of Christ. Great care must be taken to follow ALL God’s word, or the power will be lost. “For I testify about them that they have a **zeal for God**, but not in accordance with knowledge” Romans 10:2 (NAS95).

Paul gives them credit for being zealous, but their application of God’s word was misplaced as Saul had previously been. He had shown tremendous zeal for the Lord’s work as he understood at that time. His zeal was the power behind his work as a persecutor, he was totally sincere, living with a good conscience. “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God” John 16:2 (NAS95).

Saul and many others today believe if they are sincere and zealous God will be pleased, yet Paul called himself the chiefest of sinners because of misguided zeal. It was “not according to knowledge.” They were not enlightened, nor discerning and lacked intelligent zeal. Knowledge without zeal often becomes cold, formal and ineffective in saving souls. When a knowledge of God’s word is combined with extraordinary zeal the saving power of God’s word will produce much fruit to the glory of God.

**“Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” Titus 2:14 (NAS95).**

This verse summarizes the mission of Christ on earth (Luke 19:10). God desires that every Christian be a knowledgeable, zealous person working in His kingdom. To create this kind of person, we had to be redeemed from our past life of sin. Christ willingly offered Himself to pay the ransom price. As a part of the process He purified us **unto Himself**. Those who obey now belong to Him, bought and paid for by His sacrifice (Hebrews 9:14). We no longer belong to ourselves but to Him, redeemed for His service and to promote His glory. “For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” Romans 14:7 (NAS95). He is the giver of life, the sustainer and redeemer, what claim do we have on anything, if we submit to Him (James 4:7). God created us to be a **peculiar people** (I Peter 2:9), separate and apart from the world, even as we live in the world. He created us for a purpose, **zealous for good works**.

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” Ephesians 2:8 (NAS95).**



1. Which passage makes it clear it is possible to lose zeal once you have developed it?
2. Which passage describes how we can regain our zeal?
3. Describe what is found in John 2: 13-14 that relates to zeal.
4. Explain your working definition of zeal.
5. What is Christ's mission in coming to earth? (Give the passage)
6. God desires that all men be saved. What is your responsibility toward mankind? (Passage)
7. Would you describe yourself as a "peculiar" person? Why or why not?

# SELF-CONTROL

The word self-control comes from a Greek compound word that means “one who has a controlling grip or hold of himself.” Aristotle, who lived 384-322 B.C., wrote that self-control is “the ability to restrain desire by reason.” He also wrote, “Go not after thy lusts but refrain thyself from thine appetites. If though givest thy soul the desires that pleases her, she will make thee a laughingstock to thine enemies that malign thee. Take not pleasure in much good cheer, neither be tied to the expense thereof. Be not made a beggar by banqueting upon borrowing, when thou hast nothing in they purse, for thou shall lie in wait for thine own life and be talked about.”

## THREE TYPES OF CHARACTER

1. The one who deliberately does things that are wrong. He has exercised his freedom of choice and deliberately choses the way of desire. Sometimes called a profligate.
2. Another is one who does things that are wrong, but he does not do them by choice; he does them because he has no hold on himself and is led by impulse and desire. His course of action has over-ridden his reason which tells him what is right and good. He is without self-control.
3. A third is one who exercises a strong hold on himself, his desires, impulses and passions. He has learned self-control.

## How does one gain self-control?

Control the body: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body” I Corinthians 6: 19 & 10 (NAS95).

Control attitudes: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” Ephesians 4: 31 & 32 (NAS95).

“But now you also, put them all aside; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech form your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” Colossians 3: 8 – 10 (NAS95).

Control actions: “Whatever you do, do in word or deed, do all in the names of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” Colossians 3:17 (NAS95).

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” I Corinthians 10:31 (NAS95).

Control the mind: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortress. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” II Corinthians 10: 3 & 4 (NAS95).

Thought control is the most important and the most difficult area of self-control. God created mankind with the ability and responsibility to have wholesome and righteous thoughts. “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the **thoughts of his heart** was only evil continually” Genesis 6:5 (NAS95). The Lord smote every living creature by the flood, save 8 souls. God will always hold every individual accountable for his **thoughts**.

Self-control of the mind determines what kind of person each one will be. “For as he thinks within himself, so he is” Proverbs 23:7 (NAS95).

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, <sup>[a]</sup>fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries” Mark 7:21 (NAS95). Each of us is responsible for: “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” Proverbs 4:23 (NAS95). Only if we control our thoughts can we control our actions. We are in charge, we are accountable, we are responsible for our actions.

Plan to grow your self-control: Move from childish to mature, grow up – put away childish thoughts by instilling more of God’s word into our minds, making application of God’s life-giving thoughts (I Corinthians 13:11, 3: 1-3). Hebrews 6:1 instructs us to grow beyond the elementary - pressing on toward maturity.

As a Christian we are at war with weapons that are mighty before the Lord (II Corinthians 10:4). God has provided us with a sword which is “quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” Hebrews 4:12. As a soldier in Christ’s army, we must capture the great strongholds of imagination and exalted high things must be cast down (II Corinthians 10:4). **Every though must be taken captive**, a prisoner of war. I am in charge; I am the boss. With God’s help we can be victorious (Romans 8:37).

When we place our trust and dependence in God, He has promised to “**guard your heart and your thoughts in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 4: 6 & 7). The idea of guarding or keeping is a military term, like a stronghold, castle or a garrison where we are protected from Satan IF we remain under His protection (Psalms 25:20).

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything, worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Philippines 4:8 (NAS95)). Let these things be the object of your attention and study. Put them in daily practice and the world around you will be greatly influenced toward God. As we dwell on these things, we must think about HOW (our attitude).

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to **think soberly**, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3 (NKJ)). We are to control our thoughts modestly, prudently in an attitude of humility. This is the expectation of the Lord, who will help us reach our goal.





1. List the different pronouns Aristotle used in discussing self-control.
2. Examine the progressive nature of the three types of character. Which one are you?
3. Arrange in order of importance the four types of control and explain why.
4. In your own words explain what the heart is.
5. Did Naaman control his thoughts correctly in II Kings 5? Explain why you feel this way.

6. How can we grow our self-control? Provide scripture.

7. What is the difficulty of applying II Corinthians 10:5? Why?

8. Explain what Hebrews 4:12 means to you.

9. How does God guard our hearts and thought? Provide scripture,

10. Observe how Jesus, in Matthew 4: 1-11, used self-control to defeat Satan.

Link: Self-control: 3/18/18

# HUMILITY

Meekness and humility are two different Greek words, used in slightly different ways however, they are both a state of mind. Gentleness and lowly are synonyms of both and used often in the scriptures. Humility is the absence of pride and arrogance (Webster Dictionary). Humility is a habitual frame of mind of a child of God because he understands that everything he has come from God: (1) salvation (2) undeserving love (3) regards himself as not his own. He cannot exalt himself because he owes everything to Christ who purchased him with His own blood. What do I have to brag about? A humble mind is the root of **all** other graces and virtues.

There is a common thought that humility and meekness are synonyms for weakness however, this is completely contrary to the scriptures. Meekness and humility are the opposite of self-interest or self-assertiveness.

“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant”  
I Corinthians 13:4.

Jesus taught the great lessons on humility and meekness; describing Himself as meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29). The first Beatitude is, “the meek shall inherit the earth.” Humility is the way to true greatness: “humble as a little child” (Matthew 11:25, 18:5, Luke 10:21).

In John 13: 1-17 Jesus gives us the greatest example of humility, meekness, gentleness and lowliness. Examine carefully the extremely important lessons from the actions and teachings of Jesus. “Peter said to Him, ‘Never shall You wash my feet! Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with me’” John 13:8 (NAS95).

Peter gives us a “never” statement because he did not understand what Jesus was doing, but he was not being disrespectful. Washing the feet of others was the job of a slave, not the Messiah. Peter could not see how God would be glorified; we must obey the will of God even if we can not see how God is gloried. See how quickly Peter learned the lesson of humility; when Jesus explained that without the washing Peter would have no part of Christ, nothing in common, no interest in My work and no part of My glory. With the explanation Peter’s enthusiasm rose, requesting that all of him be cleansed. Every Christian desires that he be clean from all sin, without reservation.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” I  
Thessalonians (NAS95). J

Our wil, our intellect, our affections, our judgement, all should be brought under the influence of the gospel of Christ by the washing (cleansing) in baptism.

“For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you” John 13:15 (NAS95). In this verse He taught His disciples a lesson on humility and self-sacrifice. It was no about ceremonial foot washing as part of worship. Man added it to the regular worship in the fourth century.

*Sense shines with double luster when set in humility. An able and yet humble man is a jewel worth a kingdom.* William Penn

“It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud” Proverbs 16:19 (NAS95).

“**Gentleness**, self-control; against such things there is no law” Galatians 3:12 (NAS95).

“With all **humility and gentleness**, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love” Ephesians 4:2 (NAS95).

“As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;” Colossians 3:12 (NAS95).

### Meekness & Humility

1. Being submissive to the will of God. Not so much a person who exercises self-control as one who is completely God controlled.
2. Being humble, teachable, not too proud to learn, or to accept the necessity of forgiveness. Humility is the first step to learning. Without humility there can be no true religion, without humility we cannot see that our own weakness and our need for God. True humility banishes all pride.
3. The person who is meek and humble is a person who is submissive to God’s will and walks in gentleness with consideration for others (Matthew 11: 28-30, Micah 6:8). It is not a spineless type of meekness because the meek and humble cannot be *moved from the standards of God’s word by which he lives* (Numbers 12:3).

“You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVE GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Therefore, **humble** yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” I Peter 5:5-7. Barnes commentary states that the idea of clothe yourself is an apron worn by slaves, so the meek and humble man is willing to take on any job however humble it may be in order to glorify God (James 4:6).

In almost every verse that refers to pride or humility there is a reference to self. Clothe yourself, humble yourself, submit yourself, if we fail to humble ourselves God will humble us by His power and might.

Proverbs 3:34, 11:2, 12:15, 15:33, 22:4, 27:2 and Psalms 25:9, 149:4, II Chronicles 7:14

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” Philippians 2: 5-8 (NAS95).



1. Define meekness and humility.
2. What is the world's perception of meekness and humility?
3. I Corinthians 13 is about love of the brethren. How does meekness and humility affect our ability and attitude to love?
4. List each principle you can learn from John 13: 1-7.
5. Can a person be meek and humble without self-control? Explain.

6. Express your understanding of the meaning of the three words translated meek and humble.
  
7. How can we clothe ourselves in humility? Provide scripture.
  
8. What can be learned from the six verses in Proverbs about humility?
  
9. List the different character traits contained in Philippians 2: 3 – 8.
  
10. Can a person go to heaven without being meek and humble? Why or why not? Provide scripture.

# INTEGRITY

The word integrity comes from the same Latin root as integer and implies a wholeness of person, one who is undivided. A person who is living rightly, undivided, not being a different person in different circumstances. Often defined as *who you are when no one is looking*.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus speaks in Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God,” – undivided, following God’s commands and full of moral purity.

Consider Solomon’s integrity in I Kings 8: 54 – 61, “Let your heart therefore be **wholly devoted** to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”

“As for you, if you will walk before ME as your father David walked, in **integrity of heart** and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinance,” I Kings 9:4 (NAS95).

“Since I know, o my God, that you try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the **integrity of my heart**, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You, I Chronicles 29:17 (NAS95).

Study the numerous passages in Proverbs that teach lessons on integrity: 3:34, 11:2, 12:15, 15:33, 22:4, and 27:2. “He who **walks in integrity** walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will be found out,” Proverbs 10:9 (NAS95). A person of integrity will display a good reputation and will not fear that they will be exposed or found out, because integrity provides a safe walk through life.

“The **integrity** of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them,” Proverbs 11:3(NAS95). The person who lives a life of integrity is guided by God’s wisdom in contrast to those without integrity will follow false ways and be corrupted and will be destroyed by their decisions and the actions of their lives.

“A righteous man who walks in his **integrity**, how blessed are his sons after him,” Proverbs 20:7 (NAS95). A person who lives a life of integrity leaves a path for these who follow.

All these verses imply a sense of duty and a recognition that we must make a serious commitment to serve the living God, His commandants and His ways (James 1:22).

## Corruption

The opposite of integrity is corruption. Speeding and stealing are NOT considered by most as the same level of sin however, they both corrupt your integrity. Man’s wisdom has corrupted integrity by classifying sin from small to large. Some much so that lying has become a part of American culture, a trait of American character. People lie without thought, for no reason. In the book, The Day America Told the Truth, the authors estimate that 91% of the people lie regularly. Only 13% believe in the 10 commands, 40% believe in 5 of the 10. Corruption is so corrosive, it is also very deceptive, so many people feel like they can be just a little dishonest and still be okay. It is okay to cheat on your taxes, go over the speed limit or not be truthful. Some want to be honest enough to ease our conscience.

### *Current Set of Commandments for America*

- 1) I don't see the point of observing the sabbath (first day of the week). 77%*
- 2) I will steal from those who won't really miss it. 74%*
- 3) I will lie when it suits me, because it doesn't cause any real damage. 64%*
- 4) I will cheat on my spouse; after all, given a chance they will also. 53%*
- 5) I will procrastinate at work and do absolutely nothing about one day in five. 50%*

These are the same people we come in contact with everyday at work, school and everywhere. How is the culture in America affecting you?

Honesty is one of the traits of integrity: “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men, II Corinthians 8:21 (KJV). Romans 12:17. When truthfulness and honesty fail our whole system of government will fail. In our courts today, eyewitness is no longer the best evidence of a crime, mainly because of a culture of lying. “**Truthful** lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue I only for a moment,” Proverbs 12:19 (NAS95).

“And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You are **truthful** and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any,’ “Matthew 22:16 (NAS95). Again, we can see the perfect example demonstrated by Christ in His daily life.

Trustworthiness is another trait of integrity: “Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy,” I Corinthians 4: 1-2 (NAS95). As servants of Christ we **MUST** be trustworthy, faithful, blameless with all fidelity or the world will not see Christ living in us.

“So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,” Philippians 2:15 (NASV95). Following the examples of Noah, Abraham, and Job, whether in our private lives or in the public testimony of public lives there must be the same **BLAMELESS** person to be pleasing to God and to appear as lights in the world. If there is duplicity in our daily lives, actions and decisions, we will destroy the effects of the gospel that we claim to live by.

Sow a thought, reap an act.  
Sow an act, reap a habit.  
Sow a habit, reap a character.  
Sow a character, reap a destiny  
(unknown)





1. Explain integrity in your own words.
2. What part does integrity play in your relationship with others?
3. How do I demonstrate integrity in my daily life?
4. List 4 traits of integrity.
5. Name 4 Old Testament characters that had integrity. Give passages.

6. List character traits that are opposite of integrity
  
7. List 3 New Testament characters that did not have integrity. Give passages.
  
8. Explain the cost to God's kingdom when Christians do not have integrity.
  
9. What issue in your life would improve if you had more integrity?
  
10. What can you do to be more consistent in proactive in instill integrity in your life?

# FAITHFULNESS

Everyone has an idea what faithfulness is, but most have a hard time explaining the specifics that define faithfulness. Some of the synonyms include fidelity, loyalty, devotion, dedication, commitment, reliable, and steadfastness.

The scriptures use faithfulness in 4 ways:

1. Attribute of God
2. Positive characteristic of some men
3. Characteristic that some don't have
4. A gift of the Spirit

The faithfulness of God is an essential part of who He is (Psalms 89:8, Hebrews 13:8). When God speaks - what he says will always happen in time and place. He protects us from evil (II Thessalians 3:3). He sets limits on temptations (I Corinthians 10:13), He forgives our sins (I John 1:9), and He sanctifies us (I Corinthians 1:9, Philippians 1:6).

When a person walks consistently with God, in humble service to Him they are called faithful. Nehemiah 7 says he was looking for men of character whom he could trust, wouldn't take bribes, committed to serving the people and would uphold the integrity of the office. Sounds like traits of a deacon or elder, doesn't it? He found two men who were "more faithful and God-fearing" than the others, Hanani and Hananiah. The better we know God, the better we can imitate him (Ephesians 6:12).

As a characteristic that some are lacking, their hearts are often fickle, despite the best intentions. Matthew 14 – Peter had more faith than the others in the boat but his faith failed him in time of need, Jesus called it "little faith." Matthew 26:75 – Peter never intended to deny Jesus until the circumstances seemed to alter his actions.

**Faithlessness** is generally caused by self-centeredness: the father of irresponsibility. II Timothy 3: 1-5 was written many centuries ago however, it sounds much like today. Examine these passages and look for the description of characteristics that make up unfaithfulness.

Faithfulness affects every relationship in life. In Galatians 5:22ff faithfulness is included in the fruits of the spirit. To receive the fullness of these blessings is dependent on yielding to His will so we can walk with God.

God-centeredness is not cheap, some are willing to pay the price by giving their lives.

"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith," Habakkuk 2:4 (NAS95).

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master,'" Mathew 25:23.

"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan," Revelation 2:9 (NAS95). These

words of Jesus were penned by the Apostle John. He was writing to the Christian in the city of Smyrna. A city devoted to Pagan worship, with temples built to Zeus, Athena and Cybele (mother earth to the Romans). In 23 AD a temple was built in honor of Tiberius, Roman emperor until 37 AD. Worship of the Pagan gods was voluntary; however, emperor worship was compulsory. Any person who refused to worship the emperor was punished in a variety of ways: persecution, imprisonment, seizing property, denied ability to buy and sell goods and food. The Christians in Smyrna became poverty stricken, considered the lowest class of citizens. Those without proper faith could spend a few minutes worshipping the Emperor and go on about their business “without any consequences.” At the time this letter was written it was illegal to be a Christian in Rome and much of the empire. Jesus recognizes the extremely difficult situation the Christians in, and offers this encouragement: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life,” Revelation 2:10 (NAS95). Don’t be afraid, yes you are going to suffer BUT be faithful and rewarded with a crown of life. Many refused to bow down to worship the emperor and were cast into prison, and some killed. Paul had a similar thought in Romans 8:18 and II Corinthians 4:17, calling such times as momentary of light affliction when compared to the “crown of life.”

When you awake tomorrow morning what difficulty will you face? Will you expect to suffer for the cause of Christ? How?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death,” Revelation 2:11 (NAS95). How well do we hear? What/who do we listen to? Matthew 15:10 – Jesus links hearing with understanding, He also admonishes them to be careful “how” they hear. In Revelation, Jesus instructs them to listen to the Spirit, we need to listen to God’s word.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century America, we live in a free society, able to work, worship and live our lives without fear of persecution, at least for now. We don’t know what the future holds for any of us.

Jesus expected the Christians in Smyrna to remain faithful even in their circumstances. He did not give them any slack. Be faithful or be condemned! Question? How does God’s expectations for us today compare with those of Smyrna?

Finally, they were told to overcome those things which stood between them and Christ. Those who overcome can master defeat and prevail over obstacles that hinder their service to God. Since we know that overcoming trials and tribulation worked in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, we can have confidence that it will also work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

“But if we walk in the Light as HE Himself is the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin, “I John 1:7.



1. What synonym best describes faithfulness for you? Why?

2. List the 4 ways faithfulness is used in the scriptures.

3. Why were Hanani and Hananiah put in charge?

4. List examples of Bible characters who were called faithful:

I Peter 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_ Ephesians 6:21 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephaphras \_\_\_\_\_ Onesimus \_\_\_\_\_

Moses (N.T. passage) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Provide three examples of Christians who were unfaithful.

6. Compare Romans 8:18, II Corinthians 4:17, and I Peter 1: 6 & 7.

7. Why did Christ tell the Christians in Smyrna that they were rich?

8. Explain what Jesus meant in Matthew 15:10.

9. What must you overcome to be faithful?

10. Explain I John 1:7 as it applies to your life.

Links on [mightyisthelord.com](http://mightyisthelord.com)

1/21/12 – Walk by Faith

5/20/12 – People of principle

9/16/12 – Problem with Lying

4/5/15 - Outcome of Faith

5/6/15 – Wholly devoted

# SERVANT

One of the greatest challenges in this life is to develop the heart of a servant. In Romans 1:1 Paul calls himself a “bond-servant for Christ Jesus.” To be a true bondservant to Christ is to subject ourselves to Him in everything we do. Our manner of life, conduct, speech, and doctrine. Why would anyone be willing to become a slave? We may not have realized it at the time of our conversion, but we were slaves to sin (Romans 6: 17 & 18)! We were so grateful for our freedom from our sinful state we volunteered to be a slave to Christ. A bondservant willingly seeks the well-being of his master and complies with his commands.

## Four Steps to Developing a Servant’s Heart

**First**, we need an example or model to follow. “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,” Philippians 2:5 (NAS95). As we study this passage about Christ it must be our beginning place to imitate Christ as we develop as heart of a servant. Imitate His attitude then apply it to obeying His will. “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men,” Philippians 2: 6 & 7 (NAS95). WE understand that Christ was flesh and blood as we are, but there is more to this verse. He veiled or hid His divine nature when He came in likeness of man, but without sin. HE took on the likeness of man, the habits of a servant. He kept company with those of lowly estate. In John 13, Jesus took on the role of a slave, bondservant when He washed the apostle’s feet. He was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver; the price of a wounded slave and He was beaten as a slave would have been during His mock trials and last of all He was humiliated as a slave when He was crucified. “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,” Matthew 20:28 (NAS95).

“Therefore, He has to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted,” Hebrews 2: 17 & 18 (NAS95). By becoming a bondservant, Jesus fulfilled this scripture and is still reigning as our High Priest before God.

Jesus left us many examples to follow but none more compelling than to be a servant to others, as He did.

**Second**, we must make a daily conscience decision to lay up treasures in heaven by serving God. When we serve others, God promises an inheritance that is, “imperishable, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” I Peter 1:4. Laying up treasures in heaven is our motivation for serving others, “But the greatest among you shall be your **servant**,” Matthew 23:11. As we develop the **servant’s heart**, we will be willing to do whatever job comes along, whether great or small. I will be more interested in serving others than worrying about who is serving me. “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you **shall be your servant**, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave,” Matthew 20:

26 & 27 (NAS95). The very essence of serving others is shown in I Peter 5: 5 – 7, be submissive to one another, being clothed with humility toward one another, because God will resist the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

Examine closely Ephesians 6: 5-8, servants are to obey with a sincere heart, not to please men but as “slaves of Christ doing the will of God from a sincere heart.” It takes a lot of learning to reach this point, to come to grasp with the concept that if we are a slave to Christ, we have no will of our own, we will have emptied ourselves of our will in order to live for Him. We can begin to see the “big picture” and will have come to understand the meaning of passages like Romans 12:3, “For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith,” (NAS95).

**Third**, we must develop a genuine love for people. Out of love for mankind Jesus took on the form of a bondservant to experience life as any man would. “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need, “Hebrews 4: 14 – 16 (NAS95). Jesus loved us without reservation, and we must learn to love the souls of mankind, yes even those who are hard to love. Those who are like us, who share many similarities are easy to love. But those who are different makes it much harder for us to develop a good relationship with unless we remember two things: they were created in the image of God and they have a soul that we need to share the “good news” of a loving Savior with them. Genuine love is to commit oneself to another, seeking good and humility, patience and gentleness (Ephesians 4: 1-3).

**Fourth**, we must be always on the alert, “looking for opportunities to serve.” As we grow in these attitudes of a servant, we can see less of our needs and be more focused on the needs of others. We will have replaced things that hinder our service;

1. Failure to look for opportunities
2. Spiritual immaturity that blinds us to our responsibility to serve
3. Understand that we were sent to serve, NOT be served
4. Dethroned self and enthroned Christ

Finally, we must understand that bondservant is seeking to please God and that his work is never done because the “fields are white, ready for the harvest,” John 4:35

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,’” Matthew 25:34 (NAS95). Where were these? Why were they rewarded? What had they done? One answer to all three questions, they were faithful servants, doing the will of God, having the heart of a servant.





1. List the 4 steps in developing a servant's heart.
2. Describe how Christ took on the form of a bondservant.
3. Christ *emptied* Himself of His divine nature, what must we *empty* from ourselves?
4. What was the greatest example of a servant that Jesus calls His disciples to follow?
5. What servant attitudes are we instructed to have in I Peter 5?
6. Examine Romans 12:3. How does this verse relate to the discussion of a servant's heart?

7. Why is it difficult to love some people?
  
8. List the servant attributes given in Ephesians 6: 5-8.
  
9. What can hinder us in serving others?
  
10. Do you have a servant's heart?

Links: [mightyisthelord.com](http://mightyisthelord.com)

4/1/12 - Which ones have you encouraged?

4/9/16 - Life of Servitude

4/9/17 – Get Out of Your Circle

7/29/18 – A Servant's Heart

# DILIGENCE

“Watch over your heart with all **diligence**, For from it flow the springs of life,” Proverbs 4:23 (NAS95). “Keep your heart with all **diligence**, For out of it spring the issues of life,” Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV)

There are many differing words used in the scriptures similar to diligence, many used in the same way to describe what it takes to run the race of life or walk according to God’s word. They all teach the same concept, arriving at the same place at the end.

Hebrews 12: 1 & 2 – Endurance running the race – imperishable crown

James 1:12 – Endure temptation – crown of life

II Timothy 2:12 – endure – Reign with Him

Hebrews 10:36 – Endure – receive the promise

II Peter 1:10 & 11 – Diligence – entrance to the kingdom

Diligence is defined as energetic, strenuous, earnest, arduous effort, zealous, making every effort. The contrast can be seen in the antonyms: carelessness, negligence, slackness, idleness, laziness and we could add spiritual atrophy.

Examine II Peter 1: 1-11 as an illustration of how to apply all diligence to live a faithful life.

“Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and excellence,” II Peter 1:3 (NAS95). God has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness. Further, He has granted us His precious and magnificent promises, through them we can become partakers of the divine nature – providing us an escape from the corruption of the world. We have been given these tremendous advantages and privileges so we **MUST** give all diligence, make a strenuous effort to accumulate the additional virtues that keep us from stumbling (verse 10). It takes great diligence to continue increasing in these virtues and to reach the highest levels of holiness.



**Diligent**

**This is a partnership with God. HE provides the knowledge and we provide the diligent**

“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, **perseverance**, and in your perseverance, godliness, “II Peter 1:5 & 6) (NAS95).

“Therefore brethren, be all the more **diligent** to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble, “II Peter 1:10 (NAS95). As we practice these virtues and they become habits, they will help us to be fruitful and useful in the kingdom, beneficial to others we serve and pleasing to God.

Several previous lessons focused on these subjects but notice that DILIGENCE is the power or force behind the ability to activity increase in these virtues. My definition of perseverance has always been to “*keep on keeping on*” also grit, tenacity, rugged determination no matter the circumstances. The Apostle Paul uses the word endure/endurance throughout his writings to give the same instruction (I Corinthians 4:12, 9:12). “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will **be able to endure** it,” I Corinthians 10:13 (NAS95). Diligence is the power behind our efforts to endure temptation but also hardship and ill-treatment for the cause of Christ (I Peter 2:20).

The Hebrew writer admonishes us: we all need endurance. “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised,” Hebrews 10:36 (NAS95). WE need endurance to do the will of God, running the race won’t happen accidentally.

Hebrews 10:32-36 discusses the difficulty of enduring, diligently pressing on all the way to the end. Many suffered greatly and no question the dreaded “D” words attach their faith: doubt, despair, discouragement and depression. However, those who endured through diligent effort kept their “better possession,” (verse 34) which is God’s promise (verse 36). Fear is expressed that some may be overcome by temptation, persecution, doubt, or discouragement and “shrink back” losing the promised reward that comes with endurance and diligent effort to serve God (Hebrews 10: 36, 39).

What can motivate us to, “run with endurance the race that is set before us,” Hebrews 12:1 (NAS95)?

1. We must view this life a marathon, not a sprint. Matthew 13:20
2. Every Christian is in the race! There are not spectators on the sideline watching.
3. The race has a starting point and a finish line.
4. Each one must follow the rules or be disqualified. I Corinthians 9:27
5. Everyone who competes exercises self-control. I Corinthians 9:25
6. The object is to win the race.

Paul’s statement on this subject is found in II Timothy 4: 6 – 8, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing,” NAS95. This should be our motivation to endure this life with a great diligence, “keep on keeping on” no matter what (II Corinthians 11:24).

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful until death**, and I will give you the crown of life,” Revelation 2:10 (NAS95).



1. Define diligence in your own words.
2. Explain God's contribution to our partnership with Him.
3. What is our contribution to the partnership?
4. How does perseverance different from diligence?
5. What is my definition of perseverance?
6. Explain how we can always be useful and fruitful in God's service.
7. Does God remove temptation from us? I Corinthians 10:13
8. Why is it important that we understand what the race is in? Hebrews 12:1
9. Are you a spectator in the race of life or a participant? Explain
10. Do you feel included in verse 8 of Hebrews?

# MATURITY

Christian maturity is never finished on this side of eternity.

As we accumulate the Christian virtues of the previous lessons, continuously applying them to our lives, we are approaching maturity!

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I **press on** so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and **reaching forward** to what lies ahead, I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,” Philippians 3:12 - 14 (NAS95).

Paul provides insight into how he was able to overcome many difficulties, hinderances, and Satan-inspired roadblocks to have an impact on the world of his day. Yes, he made some zealous mistakes until he learned who and what Jesus was about, then that same zeal produced a huge harvest for the Lord. He used those past mistakes as a motivation to do better in the future. His focus was the future: pressing on, reaching forward, pressing on toward the goal, running the race, striving, straining and giving it his all. WHY? His goal was a spiritual one – a home in Heaven with his creator.

“Finally then brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God, (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more,” I Thessalonians 4:1 (NAS95).

“Therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to **walk in a manner worthy** of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling,” Ephesians 4: 1- 4) (NAS95). The mature person is aware of the need to walk worthy of the Lord and this instructs us how to be successful in our walk with the Lord. There are many passages that explain HOW we should walk: Romans 6:4, II Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 6:16, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 1:10, and I Thessalonians 2:12. Beginning in Ephesians 4:11 Paul shows us the wisdom of God in how He gave support and organization to the infant church to reach maturity. The purpose of these offices was to equip the saints to grow and mature in the unity of faith. Different translations use varying terms to express the idea; perfect man, full grown, manhood. Ephesians 4:13. “This shall continue until we all attain to that unity which is given by faith and by a fuller knowledge of the Son of God; until we reach **the ideal man** – the full standard of the perfection of the Christ,” TCNT.

To measure continual growth Paul gives us a standard, *keep on keeping on* until we all attain that unity and a fuller knowledge of the Son of God, *keep on keeping on* until we reach the full standard of the perfection of Christ.

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming,” Ephesians 4:14 (NAS95). Here Paul gives us a **mark of immaturity** to look for as we progress on the walk of life. There are many others to be on guard against because some of these are Satan’s weapons against us.

1. More concern for self than others, even those close to us.
2. Rationalizing our conduct/misconduct.
3. Rejecting correction and those making the correction.
4. Becoming difficult to get along with if you don’t get your way.
5. Easily influenced by others, especially in the wrong direction.
6. Choosing friends that will pull you in the wrong direction.
7. Willing to bite the hand of anyone who tries to correct or lead in the right direction.
8. Turn against those who care most about you and would be true friends.

“When I was a child, I use to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things,” I Corinthians 13:11 (NAS95).

There are many marks of maturity in the scriptures. “So, they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name,” Acts 5:41 (NASV95). At this time, we may not be called on to suffer physical flogging or be put in prison however, we must have the same state of mind – ready to stand strong for the Lord.

### **Marks of Maturity**

Living a holy life – denying self. “That I **may know Him** and the *power of His resurrection* and the fellowship of **His sufferings**, being **conformed to His death**,” Philippians 3:10 (NASV95). We should be fully acquainted with His nature, character, work and the salvation He provides (Ephesians 3: 17 - 19). Know the power of His resurrection, understand and experience the influence the resurrection means, hope of immortality which sustains the soul during the prospect of death, being raised in like manner, and raising the mind above the world. (Romans 6:11) Fellowship in His suffering and consider it an honor and privilege to share in such suffering. To share in His suffering is to share in His glory. Paul wanted to be like Christ in ALL things, even death (II Timothy 2:11 & 12).

Imitating Christ - “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ,” I Corinthians 11:1 (NASV95). Paul continues to express his desire to be “just like Christ,” (Colossians 1:24) in his moral character, suffering and desire to spend eternity in Heaven. He urges his readers to understand that they (and we) should follow in the footsteps of Christ by following in Paul’s (I Corinthians 4:16, Philippians 3:17, II Thessalonians 3:9).

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children,” Ephesians 5:1 (NASV95). “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,” I Thessalonians 1:6 (NASV95).

Following Christ as the perfect example – “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you,” John 3:15 (NASV95). There are other passages that give us instructions about following Jesus our Lord. “Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate **His perfect patience as an example** for those who would believe in Him for eternal life,” I Timothy 1:16 (NASV95).

Patience is a mark of maturity, when pleasure and gratification are set aside in favor of the long-term gain of spending eternity with Christ, who is the perfect example. “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me,’” Luke 9:23 (NASV95). Carrying the cross, a rough crude post, was part of the punishment prior to the actual crucifixion. It was a burden since Jesus had been beaten across the back, it was disgraceful and a trying ordeal. However, Jesus chose this illustration to challenge every would-be Christian to show to marks of maturity, denying himself, and taking up the cross. Then, and only then, are we eligible to be a true follower of Christ.

Becoming an example to be followed – “So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia,” I Thessalonians 1:7 (NASV95). They were an example when they stood firm in the gospel, were zealous in spreading the gospel and showed their integrity when trials came. “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, **show yourself an example** of those who believe,” I Timothy 4:12 (NASV95). Be an example in all aspects of life, regardless of age or conditions. “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified,” Titus 2:7 (NASV95). Take notice that in each passage there is an element of demonstration (show, prove) thus showing the marks of maturity.

Being a Mentor – Sharing your life experiences and God’s faithfulness can be of great value to those with less experience.

Other marks of maturity: perseverance, humility, dependability, honesty, dependable.

*Maturity is the art of living in peace with that which you cannot change, the courage to change what you can and the wisdom to know the difference. R. Niebuhr*





1. When can we reach maturity?
2. List Paul's suggestions for overcoming.
3. What does "keep on keeping on" mean to you?
4. Describe "walking in a worthy manner".
5. List three passages that each us HOW to walk in this life.
6. How would you describe the ideal man?

7. List the 4 worst marks of immaturity. Why?
  
8. Rank the marks of maturity by order of importance.
  
9. What demonstrates you have the mark of maturity?

# THANKFULNESS

*Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude.  
Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness.  
Thankfulness may consist merely of words.  
Gratitude is shown in acts.  
Henri F. Amiel*

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father,” Colossians 3:15-17 (NAS95)

The definition of gratitude is, “a feeling of thankful appreciation for favors or benefits received; warm appreciative response to kindness; thankfulness. Gratitude is inadequately expressed only in words. To be effective our words MUST be accompanied with deeds. True gratitude is evident in the lives and action of the grateful. By contrast, ingratitude is one of the core motivations for sin. In Genesis 2:15-17, God had blessed Adam and Eve beyond measure and beyond what was deserved [*much like we are today*]. God withheld only two trees for their benefit. If Adam and Eve had been truly grateful, they would have had no reason to listen to Satan and eat of the forbidden fruit. Because she did not value what she had been given by the God of heaven, she listened to the sales pitch of Satan. She saw that the fruit was “good for food,” “delight to the eyes,” and “desirable to make one wise,” I John 2:15-16. Satan is still selling the same stuff today and mankind is still falling for the same sales pitch, just new packaging. She ate and gave to her husband and he ate (*like they were hungry*) and sin entered the world because of **ingratitude**. The blessings of God should be far more sufficiently motivating to do good and to turn away from evil, resisting the stale sales pitch.

The record of Joseph, while in Egypt, serves as an example of his gratitude for what God had done for him. Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, but Joseph used every situation to give glory to God. There are some parallels to Adam and Eve: both were greatly blessed by God, and only one thing had been withheld. In Joseph’s situation the one thing was Potiphar’s wife. She repeatedly made sexual advances toward him, but he refused them all. The reason for his refusal is given in Genesis 39:8 & 9, “But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?’” (NAS95).

Why did he refuse her advances?

1. His master had graciously given him more than he could even ask for.
2. He recognized that taking the withheld thing would be sinful, even if nobody knew.
3. The act would have been a sin against God.
4. His ingratitude would be a slap in the face of God.



“Let the peace of Christ **rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful**. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with **thankfulness** in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** through Him to God the Father,” Colossians 3:15-17 (NAS95). For the peace of God to **RULE** in our hearts, preside over it, and direct it an attitude of thankfulness must be present. Without this attitude a person will always be in turmoil, chaos, agitated, restless and dissatisfied with their lives. Instead, let us be grateful for the privileges and hope as a Christian, which promotes peace and harmony.

Paul continues these thoughts in Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father,” (NAS95). Whatever we do in this live, temporal or religious, the command is the same. Do what He requires with an honor to glorify Him in words and actions always accompanied with thanksgiving. When we gratefully remember the divine goodness of God, who provided a Savior for the lost and damaged souls, we should cheerful and with great enthusiasm perform every act of life to the glory of God.

There are many passages about ingratitude. One example is recorded in Luke 17: 11 – 19. Jesus healed ten lepers however, only one of the ten was grateful. Romans 1:21 describes ungrateful mankind as they who knew God but didn’t glorify Him and were unthankful. In the catalog of vile sins in II Timothy 3:1 & 2 ungrateful is on the list. These verses should cause us to ask ourselves, are we grateful for our blessings?

“Count your many blessings, name them one by one.” We sing these words from a hymn but do we practice recognizing, listing the physical blessing and the Giver of such blessings? Just as a thought teaser, are you thankful for: the ability to see, hear, taste, smell, sense of touch? Or the ability to walk, talk, to remember, plan and make decisions etc.?

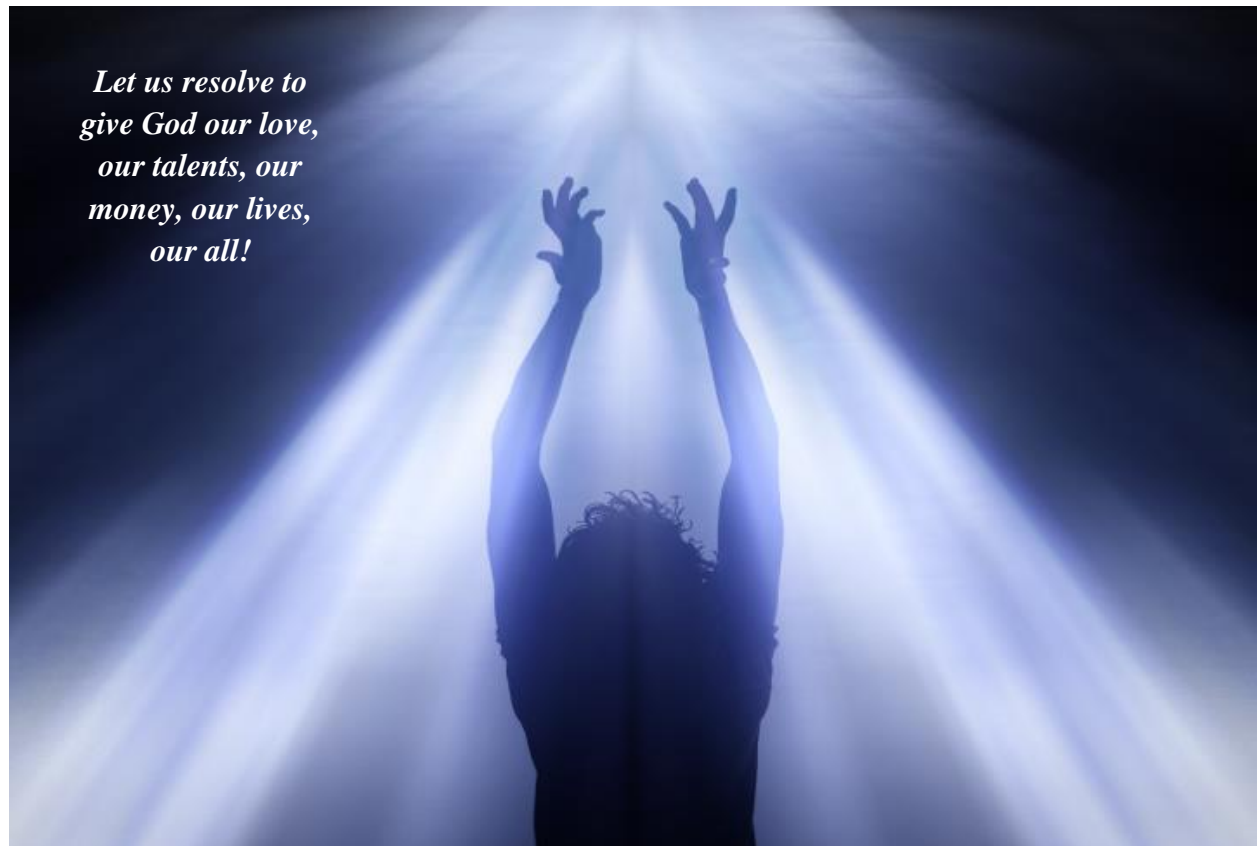
Count your spiritual blessings. How grateful are we for all those made available through Christ? “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,” Ephesians 1:3 (NAS95). Jesus taught a great lesson in Luke 7:40 – 42, “love, forgiveness and gratitude.”

Gratitude for God’s forgiveness should be a powerful force in our lives. Every person should be more aware of the magnitude of their sins in contrast to the love God has shown. Love that makes forgiveness possible. It is the recognition of Christ’s love that motives a person to obey

the gospel in the first place and the growing gratitude that comes from a sense of emptiness and spiritual need that propels us forward toward a godly life. Only a thankful heart can provide a pure place for, “**Christ to form in you,**” (Galatians 4:19) as we express our gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ.

Express our gratitude by our lives and our lips. Thanks-saying is not necessarily thanks-giving, but thanks-living is following the will of God (I Thessalians 5:18).

“What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?” Psalms 116:12 (NAS95).  
*Let us resolve to give God our love, our talents , our money, our lives, our all!*





1. Explain, in your own words, the meaning of the quote by Henri F. Amiel.
2. How can we best express gratitude?
3. What lessons can be learned from the Genesis record of Eve's exchange with Satan?
4. List the 4 reasons Joseph refused Potiphar's wife's advances.
5. What is the meaning of the first phrase in Colossians 3:15?

6. List examples from the scriptures of ingratitude.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How often do you stop to count your blessings? How many blessings have you counted?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What are you most thankful for in your life? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Examine Galatians 4:19. What is Paul's message to you in this verse?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How would you answer David's question in Psalms 116:12?



# JOY

There is great deal of difference between joy and happy/happiness. Happiness is based on “happenings,” the things going on around us at the time. Webster defines joy as, *prospect of possessing what one desires*. The same root word is used many times in the scriptures, rejoice or blessed are also words that help us get a fuller understanding of the idea of real joy. Because of the misuse of these, we may not have the right understanding of the concept. In many scriptures hope and peace are attached to the word joy. This adds an eternal connection illustrating the strong difference between joy and happiness.

Joy contrasts with weeping and sorrow. It is pleasant, right and beneficial, and has the fringe benefit of promoting good physical health. The Christian should be filled with joy because God demonstrates His love for us in so many ways: Christ’s sacrifice, forgiveness, spiritual blessings, His church, Christian fellowship, and the promise of eternal life.

Joy is a distinguishing characteristic of the Christian life. It is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” Romans 14:17 (NAS95). **Joy is a state of mind** that is not controlled by the “happenings” around us. We cannot always control the circumstances in this life, but we can always control our attitude as we confront those circumstances. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Christians may be persecuted, struck with sickness, or experience accidents. Things can happen to any of us, but remember it is a “happening” and should not affect our joy.

“Now may the God of **hope** fill you with all **joy and peace** in believing, so that you will abound in **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit,” Romans 15:13 (NAS95).

## *Where do we look for joy in our lives today?*

- (A) Becoming conscious of God’s love for us. 1John 4:19
- (B) Because of the love for the lost. John 4:35
- (C) The joy of serving God. John 4:34
- (D) There is great joy in the hope of heaven. II Cor. 5:1

(A) We should have a full understanding and consciousness of what God’s love is for us. We need to be aware of the effects of that love in our lives. Being forgiven of our past sins and then being obedient to the will of God transforms us from slaves of sin to servants of righteousness. Romans 6:17 & 18. For a fuller explanation of the love of God, study the



I John 4:7-21. Analyze the statement, “God is love” and the commandment, “let us love one another.” The explanation for why we should love one another is plain. God loved us while we were sinners-*hard to love because of our condition*, but God did anyway. If we don’t show love for our brother, *we don’t know God and don’t love Him*, verse 7. The remainder of the chapter provides a deeper understanding of the love God has for us. The process that He chose for our salvation demonstrates His love which saves the souls of the obedient.

(B) The parables in Luke 15, sometimes called the chapter of lost things, helps us understand how Jesus felt about lost souls. Look carefully at verses 11-24. The record shows us the background, behavior and complete fall of the younger son. But it also shows us how the younger son “came to himself” and understood that he was a mess and very hungry His decision to return home was strictly physical however, Jesus uses this occasion to teach us a spiritual lesson. Our heavenly Father is straining His eyes looking for sinners to come to Him for forgiveness, with open arms to receive them and give them mercy. In the book of Acts there is great rejoicing with each conversion because their names are added to the Lamb’s book of life (Luke 10:20 and Philippians 4:3. We must develop that same attitude, have an urgency for reaching the lost. “Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins,” James 5:20 (NAS95).

(C) Joy is the byproduct of purity in our character and faithfulness to God. “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness and peace and joy** in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another,” Romans 14:17-19 (NAS95). The righteousness mentioned is the habit of obeying God in all that we do. It becomes part of us as our daily lives produce peace with God, and also with men of like precious faith. The joy is spiritual comfort, which is a result of being in favor with God and at peace with men, all based on the well-established hope for future salvation. “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may **finish my race with joy**, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God,” Acts 20:24 (NKJV). Paul knows he will be put in prison, but it doesn’t matter because he has the joy of knowing he has faithfully met every duty, every challenge and every trial (II Corinthians 11). This must be our attitude so when this life nears the end, we don’t have a bunch of *shoulda, coulda, woulda*, things left on the table, leaving us with regrets rather than joy.

(D) In I Peter 1:3-5 Peter describes the basis for our hope, our inheritance, and our reward. “In this you **greatly rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, **you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible** and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls,” I Peter 1:6-9 (NAS95).

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope** completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”. I Peter 1:13 (NAS95).

**Joy is our salvation and the hope of eternal life.**

There are several unique things about Christian joy. It is very special in this crazy world in which we live because it is opposite to most of the world’s values.

**First**, a Christian’s capacity for joy is *increased* by sorrow and trials. Jesus told His disciples that the sorrow they felt over His departure would make their joy even greater upon His return (John 16:20-22). Present sorrows can help intensify the appreciation for future joy. In this world, grief and sorrow robs us of joy; in Christ, grief and sorrow becomes an avenue for joy.

**Secondly**, true joy helps Christians discover profit and advantages in suffering. “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing,” James 1:2-4 (NAS95). Christians took joy when their property was taken (Hebrews 10:34). The apostles took joy in suffering because they were worthy to suffer for Christ,” Acts 5:41). “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you,” Matthew 5:11-12 (NAS95).

**Third**, joy is shared among Christians. “**Rejoice** with those who **rejoice**, and weep with those who weep.” Romans 12:15 (NAS95). This same thought is emphasized in I Corinthians 12:25 & 26. We are one body, all in it together, so we share in the joy and suffering.

Saved the best for last-**Christian joy is burglar-proof** - no one can steal it from you. and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly **rejoice with joy inexpressible** and full of glory,” I Peter 1:8 (NAS95).

**If we walk in fellowship with God, Christian joy will be our companion along the pathway.**

*Joy is the echo of God’s life within us. J. Marmion*



1. Express the difference between happiness and joy.
2. What makes joy a state of mind?
3. Where do we look for joy in today's world?
4. Why should we love one another according to I John 7:21?
5. Explain the meaning of, "covering a multitude of sins," in James 5:20.
6. What is one byproduct of a faithful life with God?
7. In your own words, what is Peter's meaning of inexpressible joy?



# HOPE



“This **hope** we have as an **anchor of the soul**, a **hope** both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,” Hebrews 6:19 (NAS95). Hope has two ingredients, desire and expectation. Hope reaches out into the future, attaches itself to what we desire and expect to receive because of teachings of the scriptures. The hope of eternal life is represented as the soul’s anchor, the world is a boisterous, dangerous sea, and the Christian life is a voyage. The storms of life will last for a short time, but the anchor will provide safety through the storms of life because the anchor is safe and secure, steadfastly held by the cable connected to the ship. Hebrews 13 tells us that the anchor is within the veil: the dwelling place of God, the haven, place of safety. The anchor won’t slip, drag or break because hope holds fast to the place of God.

“There is an appointed time for everything, and there is a time for every event under heaven,” Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NAS95).

Man’s season of hope occurs while we are living on earth. It is a time when mankind looks for, yet does not see, the promised reward. “For **in hope** we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?” Romans 8:24 (NAS95). Hope only abides when there is a reality of a reward and also a longing expectation of that reward in the heart of man. Hope becomes a reality because of man’s trust in God’s faithful promise.

## **Hope abides because:**

**God Promised** - Hope rests and has its foundation on God’s promise. Jesus in Matthew 5:12 announced, “great is your reward in heaven. The Hebrew writer assures us that hope abides as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, using Abraham as an example (Hebrews 6:13-19). He waited patiently for the promise to be fulfilled. His promise is immutable (fixed, unalterable) and God took an oath as a guarantee. The promise is as sure as His existence and as secure as the perfection of His nature.

**God is faithful** - We can examine the evidence of God’s truthfulness and faithfulness of His words beginning with Genesis 3. His word was given concerning the seed promise to Abraham and Isaac, the land promise to the nation of Israel and the promised Messiah. “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” so that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?” Hebrews 13:5 & 6 (NAS95). Hope prevails because Jehovah is trustworthy.

**Man believes** - With all the evidence that God has provided, His promises, His faithfulness, and blessings, hope only abides if man believes and acts on these things: “the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen, Hebrews 11:1. When Moses left Pharaoh’s house, it was by faith convicted of things not seen, but looking for a greater reward (Hebrews 11:24 – 26). More evidence is given in Romans 4:18 - 21, “Abraham in hope believed against hope and wavered not through unbelief but was strong in faith.” Because we have God’s promise and His faithfulness, we have confidence in the unseen reward.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” I Peter 1:3 - 5 (NAS95). This living hope is spiritual, not physical, as some today base their hope on the idea that Jesus will reign on David’s earthly throne. That hope is as dead today as it was in Peter’s day.

This **living hope** is based on the promises and power of God demonstrated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This crowning point of His redemptive work proved He was the Son of God. Hope has tremendous value in our daily lives. **Hope** keeps us on the right course, right heading, as a pilot uses a directional signal to reach his destination. **Hope** helps lighten our load, by making us unaware of the weight of the burden. **Hope** helps us have a proper attitude toward trials and hardships. **Hope** give us the strength to overcome Satan’s roadblocks. **Hope** gives us vision to see beyond our eyes. **Hope** intensifies our desires to complete what we started. **Hope** provides confidence (II Peter 1:4). **Hope** binds us to purity and moves us to fruitfulness (John 3:3, Colossians 1:5-7).

This **living hope** leads us to the inheritance, verse 4, that God has promised to those who patiently, yet eagerly wait on the Lord. This inheritance is ours! It will not perish, be defiled or fade away because it is reserved in heaven for you. It is guarded and protected by the power of God. It is safe.

“But in all these things we **overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37- 39 (NAS95). The living hope allows us to be conquers through the power of God. The only thing that can separate us from the inheritance, our reward of spending eternity with God in heaven - is us. The paramount importance of Revelation 2:10, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful until death**, and I will give you the crown of life,” cannot be made any clearer. God has provided EVERYTHING for the salvation of our souls, leaving us with responsibility of obedience so we can be joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8).

## **HOPE provides SALVATION**



1. What is the purpose of a boat anchor?
2. List three passages that deal with anchors.
3. How were they helpful in the account?
4. List the ingredients of hope.
5. When does hope become a reality?
6. How do God's promises relate to hope?

7. Analyze Romans 4:18-21. What was Abraham's role in the discussion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Contrast the difference in a living hope and a dead hope?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. List what you consider the values of having hope?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What does it mean to "wait on the Lord?" Support your answer with scripture.