

# **Cultivating Christian Character #1**

## *Holiness : God's Character in Us*

### **I. The Saintliness of the Believer**

- A. Necessary to approach God (Ps.24:3-4/Heb.12:14)
- B. Objectively Defined: Set apart by God for Himself (Lev.20:26)
- C. Subjectively Defined: Likeness to God (Lev.11:44-45)
- D. Related to every category of behavior (1 Pet 1:14-15)

### **II. What holiness isn't necessarily:**

- A. Religious regularity (Matt.6:1-18/23:14, 23-28)
- B. Charismatic manifestation (Matt.7:21-23/Deut.13:1-3)
- C. Asceticism (Col.2:20-23/Matt.11:18-19)

### **III. What holiness is necessarily:**

- A. Christ reproduced in us (Gal.4:19/Col.1:27/2 Cor.3:18)
- B. God's character exhibited through us:
  - 1. God's requirements: Fairness [justice]; kindness [mercy]; humility [walking humbly] (Mic.6:8)
  - 2. The "weightier matters of the law": justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matt.23:23)
  - 3. The fruit of the Spirit: Justice (Isa.5:7); love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (meekness), self-control (Gal.5:22-23)
  - 4. The "New Man": Mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, patience, forbearance (tolerance), forgiveness, love (Col.3:12-14); Truthfulness, diligence, generosity, graceful speech, kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness (Eph.4:23-32).
  - 5. Spiritual "additives": Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love (2 Pet.1:5-8)
  - 6. "Pure religion": compassion on widows and orphans, purity of life (James 1:27)

### **IV. Why character counts**

- A. God's image corrupted by and tarnished in man (Rom. 1:22-23/3:23)

B. God's desire to entrust us with His glory (Heb.2:10/ Ps.4:6/1 Cor.6:15)

## **Cultivating Christian Character #2**

### ***Walking as Jesus Walked (1 John 2:6)***

#### **I. The Problem of inconsistency**

- A. God's complaint (Hos.6:4/Jer.2:20)
- B. The believer's frustration (Rom.7:15-25/Gal.5:17)

#### **II. The Solution**

- A. Walking in the Spirit (Rom.8:4/Gal.5:16)

##### **1. How Jesus walked**

- a. The human weakness of Jesus (Phil.2:5 (8/John 4:6-7/Mark 13:32/John 14:10)
- b. The power that worked through Him (Isa.11:1-2/61:1/Matt.12:28/Acts 1:1-2)

##### **2. Walking on the sea... (John 14:6 w/6:19/Matt.14:25-32)**

- a. Step-by-step (Rom.4:12)
- b. Empowered (Phil.2:13/Rom.8:13)
- c. Guidance (Rom.8:14)

##### **3. How it is done,,,**

- a. Be filled (Acts 1:8/Eph.5:18)
- b. Cheerful Surrender (Eph.5:19-21)
- c. Trust (2 Cor.5:7/Eph.6:16/1 John 5:4)

##### **4. What it looks like...**

- a. Walking in the fear of the Lord (Isa.11:2/Neh.5:9/Pr.8:13/16:6/23:17/2 Cor.7:1/1 Pet.1:17 [includes "walking humbly" Micah 6:8/Pr.22:4/Isa.66:2])
- b. Walking in wisdom (Isa.11:2/Col.4:5/Eph.5:15-17 [obeying Jesus is wisdom— Mtt.7:24-27])
- c. Walking in love (Eph.5:2/Gal.5:22-23)
- d. Walking in the Light (John 8:12/1 John 1:6-10)

- B. Perseverance [Gr. *hupomone*, "abiding under;" endurance; perseverance; "the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial"] (Luke 8:15/21:19/Rom.2:6-7/5:3-4/Heb.10:36/12:1/James 1:3-4)

## **Cultivating Christian Character # 3**

### *Living Peaceably With Your Conscience*

#### **I. The Trouble with the conscience**

- A. Definition: the innate sense of right and wrong (2 Cor.4:2/John 8:9)
- B. Origin & purpose: God's concession to man's fallen state (Gen.3:22)
- C. Its violation and injury (James 4:17/e.g., Matt.26:69-75)
- D. Its irritation and protest (1 John 3:20)
- E. Its desensitization (1 Tim.4:2)
- F. Its defilement (Titus 1:15)
- G. Ultimate consequence: shipwrecked faith (1 Tim.1:19)

#### **II. The Christian's Conscience (Rom.2:14-15)**

- A. The need to keep a clear conscience (1 Tim.1:5/2 Cor. 1:12)
  - 1. To maintain confidence before God (1 John 3:21/1 Tim.1:19)
  - 2. To maintain confidence before men (1 Pet.3:15-16/Pr.28:1)
  - 3. To maintain spiritual authority (1 Tim.3:9)
  - 4. To maintain a soft heart and a right spirit (Ps.51:10)
- B. Disorders of the conscience
  - 1. Cauterized or defiled conscience (1 Tim.4:2/Tit.1:15)
  - 2. "Weak" (tender) conscience (Rom.14:2/1 Cor.8:12)
  - 3. Symptoms of a neglected conscience
    - a. Continuous, low-grade condemnation (Gen.42:21)
    - b. Loss of joy (Ps.51:12)
    - c. Fearfulness and paranoia (Pr.28:1/Matt.14:1-4)
    - d. Withdrawal from "light" (Gen.3:7-8/John 3:19-21)
    - e. Rationalizing & blame-shifting (Gen.3:12-13/1 Sam.15:14- 15)
    - f. Loss of appetite or health (Ps.32:1-4)
- C. Cures for disordered conscience (Heb.9:14/10:22):
  - 1. Repentance (1 John 1:9/Pr.28:13)
  - 2. Restitution, where applicable (Matt.5:23-24/Luke 19:8-9)
  - 3. Forgiving others (Matt.6:14-15/18:34-35)
  - 4. Conscience-training (Heb.5:14)
  - 5. Distinguishing "conviction" from "condemnation"

D. Maintenance of a good conscience (Acts 24:16)

1. Better to suffer than to compromise the conscience (1 Pet.2:19)
2. "Walk in the light" — avoid secret sins; receive correction (1 John 1:7-10)
3. Avoid unnecessary "questionables"
  - a. "Lawful" but unedifying activities (1 Cor.6:12/10:23)
  - b. Things that stumble others (1 Cor.10:25-29)
4. Heed the "checks" (Col.3:15)
5. Submit to proper authority (Rom.13:1-5)

## **Cultivating Christian Character # 4**

### *God's Word At Work In You*

#### **I. The two creations (2 Cor.5:17)**

- A. Parallels between the two creations (2 Cor.4:6)
- B. Lessons about transformation from the Old Creation (Gen.1)
  - 1. Incremental/ Seasonal
  - 2. Good at every stage
  - 3. Accomplished by God's Word (Ps.33:6, 9)

#### **II. The Word: Alive and reproductive (Heb.4:12/John 6:63)**

- A. The root of the righteous (Prov.12:12)
- B. Good Seed (1 Pet.1:23/Luke 8:11-15)
- C. At work in you (1 Thes.2:13/John 17:17)

#### **III. The Pattern of Teaching (Rom.6:17)**

- A. The fashioning of character by habit (Jer.13:23/1 Pet.1:14-15/Rom.12:2)
- B. God's inner working (Phil.2:13)

#### **IV. Cultivation of the Word**

- A. Receive the implanted Word (James 1:21)
- B. Mix with faith (Heb.4:2)
- C. Meditate in it day and night (Ps.1:2/Josh.1:8)
- D. Obey it (James 1:22/John 13:17)
- E. Disseminate it (Ezra 7:10/Heb.5:12ff)

## **Cultivating Christian Character #5**

### *The Principled Life part 1*

#### **I. Examples of Principled behavior**

- A. Joseph (Gen.39:7-9)
- B. David (1 Sam.26:9-11)
- C. Daniel (Dan.1:8)

#### **II. Dominant desires: Values**

- A. Desires in conflict (Gal.5:17/Rom.7:14-25/Eph.2:3)
- B. Character is defined in terms of dominant desires, or “values” (1 Sam.16:7)
- C. Values are revealed by pursuit, not by proclamation (Prov.20:6)
- D. Values and pursuits unworthy of the Christian
  - 1. Material things (Matt.6:31-32/1 Tim.6:9/John 6:27)
  - 2. Vain things (Eccl.1:14) [inconsequential things: e.g. sports, celebrities, fads]
  - 3. Ease, comfort or convenience (Ps.73:12/Amos 6:1/Luke 12:19/13:23-24)
  - 4. Worldly honor, pomp and prestige (John 5:44)
- E. The Godly person’s values and pursuits
  - 1. Unbroken communion with God (Ps.27:4)
  - 2. The favor of God (Phil.3:7-9)
  - 3. Righteousness (Matt.5:6/6:33)
  - 4. The kingdom of God (Matt.6:33/11:12)
  - 5. Wisdom from God (Prov.2:2-5/4:4-5)
  - 6. The things of God (Matt.16:23)

## **Cultivating Christian Character #6** *The Principled Life part 2*

### **I. "Principles" of the righteous life (Micah 6:8/Matt.23:23)**

#### A. Justice

1. Seamless Fairness (Deut.16:20/Matt.1:19)
2. Outspoken (valiant) in the cause of right (Jer.5:1/9:3/Luke 3:19)

#### B. Compassion [Mercy] (Luke 6:35-38)

1. Forgiving (Mark 11:25-26/Eph.4:32)
2. Generous (Prov.22:9/28:27/James 2:15-17/1 John 3:17)

#### C. Humility

1. Self-effacing (Ex.3:11/2 Sam.7:18/1 Cor.6-7/2 Cor.12:11)
2. Contented and thankful (1 Tim.6:6-8/Heb.13:5/1 Thess.5:18)
3. Submission to God and to legitimate authority  
(2 Sam.16:10-11/Luke 1:38/1 Pet.2:13-21; 3:1-2)

#### D. Faithfulness (integrity)

1. Loyalty to God (Rev.2:10/17:14)
2. Faithfulness in human affairs (Pr.25:19/Ps.15:4/Luke 16:10)

### **II. Self-control: the subordination of lesser desires to greater**

#### A. Self-discipline vs imposed discipline (1 Tim.1:9-10)

#### B. The choice: Diligence or bondage (Prov.12:24/25:28)

#### C. Determination to die uncompromised rather than to live compromised (Dan.3:17-18)

## **Cultivating Christian Character #7**

### *Beholding the Glory*

“Everyone that has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3)

#### **I. The Vision and the Hope**

- A. The Glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea  
(Num.14:21/Isa.11:9/Hab.2:14/2 Cor.4:4-6)
- B. Understanding the call of God (1 Thess.2:12/ 2 Thess.2:14)
- C. The hope of the calling (Eph.1:18/Rom.5:2/Tit.2:13/Col.1:27)

#### **II. God’s glory=Christ’s image**

- A. The glory in Jesus (John 1:14/Heb.1:3)
- B. Glory in us (Heb.2:10/Rom.8:29/ Rom.8:18-19/Col.3:4)

#### **III. Looking unto Jesus**

- A. Infectious glory (Ex.33:18-23/34:29-33/2 Cor.3:7-13, 18/1 John 3:2-3)
- B. Imitation of Christ (Jn 13:15/5:19/ Eph.5:1/4:20-21/Phil.2:5-11/Heb.12:1-2/1 Cor.11:1)

#### **IV. Day and night (Gen.1:16)**

- A. Jesus, the Sun (Ps.19:4-5/Mal.4:2/Isa.9:2/60:1-5/Luke 1:76-79 /John 8:12/9:4-5)
- B. The night, Jesus’ absence (Rom.13:12/1 Thess.5:2, 5)
- C. The light of the moon (Song 6:10/Phil.2:15/ Matt.5:14-16/1 Pet.2:11-12)
- D. The anticipated Dawn (Isa.40:3-5/60:1-5/18/Ps.110:3/ Hos.6:3/Matt.24:27 [Luke 11:36]/Matt.13:40-43/ 2 Pet.1:16-19 [Gal.4:19]/Prov.4:18)

## **Cultivating Christian Character #8** *Character Carved By Affliction part 1*

**I. Is affliction good or bad?** Ps. 119:71/I Pet. 3:17/ Heb. 12:10-11/ Rom. 8:28

**II. Some ways in which Christians may suffer:**

Poverty (I Cor. 4:11); Sickness (II Tim. 4:20); Bereavement (Phil. 2:27); False Accusation (I Pet. 3:16); Heartbreak (II Cor. 11:28-29); Handicap (Gal. 4:13); Rejection (II Tim. 4:10,16); Dry Spells (Isa. 50:10); Unequal Yoking (I Pet. 3:1); Persecution, Imprisonment, Torture, Death (Heb.11:35/ 2Tim.3:12)

**III. The training of royal seed—II Tim. 2:12**

A. Sign of God's care (Heb. 12:6-11/ Rev. 3:19)

1. Corrective discipline (Ps. 23:4/ Jer. 10:23-24/ 1 Cor. 11:29-30)

2. Self correction (1 Cor. 11: 31-32)

B. Bearing the cross (Lk. 9:23/ Heb. 11:24-26/ I Pet. 4: 1-4)

I. Common "meaningless" sufferings (2 Cor 11:25b/ Job 1:13-19/John 9:1-3)

**IV. Potential benefits of suffering—Heb. 12:11**

A. Endurance (Rom 5:3/ Jas. 1:3)

B. Compassion (Ex.23:9/Heb. 5:2/ 4:15)

C. Obedience (Heb. 5:8-9/ Ps. 119:67)

D. Comfort (2 Cor. 1:4)

E. Trust in God (2 Cor 1:9/ Ps. 107:26-28)

F. Humility (2 Cor. 12:7)

G. Prayerfulness (2 Cor. 12:8/ Acts 4:24/ 2 Sam. 14:29-32/ Jas. 5:13)

H. Homesickness for Heaven (1 Kg. 19:4/ Phil. 1:23)

I. Testimony to God's power (Phil. 1:12-14, 28/ Jn. 9:3)

J. Fellowship with Jesus (Phil. 3:10)

## **Cultivating Christian Character #9** *Character Carved By Affliction part 2*

### **V. Response to Suffering** (hardening vs softening of the heart)

- A. The tragedy of suffering “in vain” (Jer. 2:30/ Isa. 9:13/ Gal. 3:4)
- B. How to profit from affliction
  - 1. “Think it not strange” (1 Pet. 4:12/ 1 Cor. 10:13/ Job 5:7/ 1 Pet 5:9)
  - 2. “Seeing the invisible” (Heb. 11:27/ 2 Cor. 4:16-18)
    - a. God’s sovereignty (Gen. 50:20/ Job 2:10/ John 18:11)
    - b. God’s goodness (Ps. 119:75/ 1 Pet. 4:19)
    - c. Christ’s example (Heb. 12:1-4/ 13:12-13)
    - d. Future character benefits (Heb. 12:10-11/ Job 23:10)
    - e. Heavenly rewards (Heb. 10: 32-36/ Mtt. 5:11-12)
    - f. God’s right to be God (Job 38-42)

### **Disappointment: His Appointment**

Disappointment: His Appointment  
Change one letter, then I see  
That the thwarting of my purpose  
Is God’s better choice for me.

His Appointment must be blessing  
Though it may come in disguise  
For the end from the beginning  
Open to His wisdom lies.

Disappointment: His Appointment  
Proves the Lord, who loves me best,  
Understands and knows me fully  
Who my faith and love would test.

For like loving earthly parents  
He rejoices when He knows  
That His child accepts unquestioned  
All that from His wisdom flows.

Disappointment: His Appointment  
No good thing will He withhold  
From denials oft we gather  
Treasures of His love untold.

Well He knows each broken purpose  
Leads to fuller, deeper trust  
And the end of all His dealings  
Proves our God is wise and just.

Disappointment: His Appointment  
Lord, I take it then as such  
Like the clay in hands of potter  
Yielding wholly to Thy touch.

All my life’s plan is Thy molding  
Not one single choice be mine  
Let me answer unrepining  
“Father, not my will but Thine.”

