

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION I

INTERNAL LIFE ESTABLISHED

LESSON ONE

CHARACTER - VIRTUE – INTEGRITY

INTRODUCTION

Almost everyone today expresses concern regarding what causes people to do the things they do. Psychology has taken the approach that a person's actions are controlled by his environment or life history. The Bible makes it clear that it is a person's internal character, which is found in his heart, that controls his actions. Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." It is **not** a person's circumstances, lineage, or even his history that **controls** him, but it is his character that controls him. The Bible says in Proverbs 23:7a, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:" When a child accepts the teachings he receives, and hides the teachings in his heart (whether the teaching is from his parents or his teachers) it will control the actions in his adult life.

God makes it very clear that if a person's actions are bad it is a result of what is in his heart. Mark 7:20-23, "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Those who are not saved do not have the character of God because they do not have the "new life" which comes only from God. They cannot be forced into or changed into a Christian character. Ephesians 4:18, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:" They are blind in their heart and do not have the capacity to see the character of God.

For a Christian to have godly actions he must have godly character. When a person accepts Christ as his personal Savior, God gives him a clean heart. Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" A person's character is in his heart, and with a changed heart comes a changed character. Romans 6:17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

A person is controlled by the things in his heart. When a person gets saved, God changes his heart and redirects his character. A person has to input the knowledge of God to make and show internal change. When a person does not show a change of character, one can assume that person is not saved.

II Corinthians 3:3, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." At the point of salvation, God puts His character in the heart of the saved person. David knew that it was the word of God in his heart that controlled his actions. Psalms 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psalms 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

The words character, virtue, and integrity are very similar and identify the traits of a person's life. In this course, every lesson will be based on a combination of these three traits. The word "*elder*," as it is used in all these lessons, is making reference to a person who has established an individual internal strength that manifest moral excellence which produces consistent and perpetual godly actions. This person shows he has put God's word into his life and lives it. The following is a Bible study to understand and establish elders for the work of the Lord.

SECTION ONE - CHARACTER

Character: distinctive quality or strength: One of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual; the complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person.

A person with good character is one who has internal attributes or strength that controls his actions. Character shows who a person is on the inside. **At some point in time, God will reveal your character!**

- I. THE MEASURE OF AN ELDER'S *STRENGTH* IS DETERMINED BY HIS CHARACTER. The word character is not found in the Bible but the word "*power*" is used many times to show distinctive qualities of moral strength. The kingdom of God itself is in character, not human life.

I Corinthians 4:19-20, “But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the **power**. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in **power**.”

II. THE MEASURE OF AN ELDER'S *FAITH* IS DETERMINED BY HIS CHARACTER. Faith works with character.

II Thessalonians 1:11, “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with **power**.” Without proper character, the faith of a person will falter.

III. THE MEASURE OF AN ELDER'S *LIFE* ITSELF IS DETERMINED BY HIS CHARACTER. God did not give us a life of fear, but one of power (character), love, and a sound mind.

II Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of **power**, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

IV. THE MEASURE OF AN ELDER'S *GODLINESS* IS DETERMINED BY HIS CHARACTER. In the last days men shall profess to know God, but they will not have His character.

II Timothy 3:1-5, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the **power** (character) thereof: from such turn away.”

SECTION TWO - VIRTUE

Virtue: Moral strength: a conformity to a standard of right; a particular moral excellence.

A virtuous person is one who has internal moral strength that controls his actions. Saved and

lost people both can have virtue. An elder has **godly** virtue inside of him, and exhibits it through strong, godly, moral actions.

I. AN ELDER'S THOUGHTS ARE CONTROLLED BY HIS VIRTUE. What causes people to think what they think? Virtue causes the elder's thought process to be what it is.

Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; **if there be any virtue**, and if there be any praise, think on these things." When virtue is lacking, people listen to and think on many other things.

II. GOD CALLED CHRISTIANS TO VIRTUE AND BY VIRTUE WE PARTAKE OF THE NATURE OF GOD.

II Peter 1:3-8, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath **called us to glory and virtue**: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: *that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, **add to your faith virtue**; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As seen by this verse, adding virtue to our salvation is a choice. It is the first thing to add and begins the changes in the thinking process.

SECTION THREE - INTEGRITY

Integrity: Soundness: a firm adherence to a code of moral values.

A person of integrity is one who consistently and perpetually uses his internal moral strength (virtue) to control his actions. An elder is one who has integrity, which keeps him from departing from

the standard of godly morals he has internally.

I. THE MEASURE OF AN ELDER'S CHOICE OF DIRECTION IS DETERMINED BY HIS INTEGRITY.

Integrity guides the righteous in his life. A Christian that lacks integrity quits God and changes the direction and life God has for that Christian.

Proverbs 11:3, "The **integrity** of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them."

II. THE MEASURE OF AN ELDER'S CHOICE REGARDING HOW HE WALKS IS DETERMINED BY HIS INTEGRITY. Integrity controls how a just man walks.

Proverbs 20:7, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him."

The number one thing that causes children not to walk with God is that their parents quit walking with God due to their lack of integrity. Christians should not quit a church or God just because they do not like what the church is doing. A Christian should change a ministry or a church because God has something better for him or another ministry for him somewhere else.

III. THERE ARE TWO MEN IN THE BIBLE GOD SAID HAD INTEGRITY. God looked at their hearts and knew

they would stand firm in what they chose.

A. David - I Kings 9:4, "And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, **in integrity of heart**, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:"

David repented from his earlier sins, and from that point on, stayed true to God. People will sin, but not give up God. Two contradicting New Testament examples are Peter and Judas. Just as Jesus prophesied, Peter denied him as the rooster crowed, but repented and kept serving the Lord. Judas however, said he was the Lord's friend and servant, but betrayed Him and quit serving Him!

B. Job - Job 2:3, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job,

that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still **he holdeth fast his integrity**, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.” Job 2:9, “Then said his wife unto him, **Dost thou still retain thine integrity?** curse God, and die.” Job 27:5, “God forbid that I should justify you: **till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.**” Job 31:6, “Let me be weighed in an even balance **that God may know mine integrity.**”

This verse shows that integrity is a choice; a Christian purposes in his heart he will not leave God and God’s plan for his life.”

IV. GOD MEASURES ELDERS BY THEIR INTEGRITY. Trials establish the Christian’s integrity.

Integrity is tested when people would not blame a Christian for quitting God or a ministry. Integrity is measured by the question, “What would it take to cause me to quit?”

- A. David knew that God was going to judge him by his integrity. The word “judging” means to receive rewards—or not—if a Christian quits serving God (I Corin. 3).

Psalms 7:8, “The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and **according to mine integrity** that is in me.”

Psalms 26:1, “Judge me, O LORD; for **I have walked in mine integrity**: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.”

- B. David walked in his integrity and knew that God took care of him because of it.

Psalms 26:11, “But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.”

Psalms 41:12, “And as for me, **thou upholdest me in mine integrity**, and settest me before thy face for ever.”

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION I

INTERNAL LIFE ESTABLISHED

LESSON TWO

FAITHFUL - TRUSTWORTHY - DEPENDABLE

INTRODUCTION:

Any time an employer or a church looks to assign tasks to a person, they should always take into consideration whether or not the person can be trusted to complete the assignment. There are three attributes of God that He wants Christians to instill into their life. A good Christian must be faithful, trustworthy, and dependable. The greatest determining factor considered when delegating a responsibility is whether or not a person will **complete** the responsibility given to him.

When God looks at a person's life and decides what He will assign for that person to do, His decision is determined by whether or not that person will assume the responsibility to accomplish the work God gives. One of the primary qualities a pastor looks for when considering a Christian for work in the church, is whether or not the Christian will be faithful to complete it.

SECTION ONE - FAITHFUL

Faithful: a firm adherence to the truth and to the duties of religion. Firmly adhering to duty; of true fidelity; loyal; true to allegiance. Constant in the performance of duties or services; exact in attending to commands.

Being faithful is a personal issue—something that is within a Christian's heart.

I. A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO IS FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS.

- A. When God looks for faithfulness in a person's life, He will first look at how a Christian takes care of the earthly (carnal) things. Money and material things are very important to God. The issue is not necessarily how much a person has, but what the person does with what he has.

Luke 16:10-12, “He that is faithful in that which is least is *faithful* also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the **true** riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?”

- B. God will give authority to those who are faithful in the little things. ***If a person does not see little things as being important, he will never be a faithful servant.***

Luke 19:17, “And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.”

II. GOD WANTS HIS WORD TO BE PLACED IN THE HANDS OF FAITHFUL MEN.

- A. God put Paul in the ministry because he was faithful.

I Timothy 1:12, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, *for that he counted me faithful*, putting me into the ministry;”

- B. Paul instructed Timothy to place the Word of God in the hands of faithful men.

II Timothy 2:2, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

- C. For a Christian to be given stewardship of the works of God, he must first be faithful.

I Corinthians 4:2, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

III. GOD INSTRUCTS CHRISTIANS TO ADHERE TO THEIR PROFESSION OF FAITH, including consistent assembling with the church, because of His faithful promises.

Hebrews 10:23-25, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

IV. GOD HAS PROMISED SPECIAL BLESSINGS TO A CHRISTIAN THAT IS FAITHFUL WITH THE THINGS GOD PLACES IN HIS CARE (CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL).

A. God will bless a faithful man.

Proverbs 28:20, “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.”

B. God will preserve the faithful.

Psalms 31:23, “O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.”

C. God will cause the faithful to dwell with Him.

Psalms 101:6, “Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.”

V. GOD WILL MAKE FAITHFUL SERVANTS RULERS OVER HIS HOUSEHOLDS.

Matthew 24:44-47, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.”

VI. GOD WILL GIVE A CROWN OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH.

Revelation 2:10, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

SECTION TWO - TRUSTWORTHY

Trustworthy: deserving of the confidence of *another*; deserving reliance or resting of the mind on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship or other sound principle by *another*

person.

Trustworthy has to do with relationships, whereas faithfulness is personal.

I. WHEN A CHURCH CONSIDERS PEOPLE TO PUT IN MINISTRY, IT SHOULD LOOK FOR THOSE WHO ARE TRUSTWORTHY.

- A. The virtuous woman was trustworthy, which enabled her husband to have confidence in what she did, and he was able to depend on her actions.

Proverbs 31:11, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.”

- B. Paul considered Timothy trustworthy, and committed the preserving of the faith to him.

I Timothy 6:20, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:”

I Timothy 1:18-19, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:”

- C. Paul was convinced that Timothy was trustworthy because he was real and sincere.

II Timothy 1:5, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am *persuaded* that in thee also.” (persuaded: to rely with inward certainty).

Many times pastors do not see people in their own church being trustworthy, and cannot give them responsibilities. Therefore, the pastor “micro-manages” every little thing in the church, and the church cannot grow because the pastor can only do so much work!. If integrity is built in people, they will become faithful and trustworthy, and churches can grow because more people can share the workload.

II. WHEN GOD LOOKS FOR A CHRISTIAN TO PLACE IN A MINISTRY, HE LOOKS FOR SOMEONE WHO IS TRUSTWORTHY.

A. God counted Paul trustworthy, and put the gospel in his hands.

I Thess. 2:4, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”

I Timothy 1:11, “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”

B. God counted the author of Hebrews trustworthy, and placed His children in his care.

Hebrews 2:12-14, “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the **children which God hath given me**. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”

The most important issue of stewardship is people—not things. A question to consider is “What do Christians do with the people God has entrusted to them? Do Christians continue to disciple them or let them spiritually die?”

C. God wants Christians to be faithful because it is one of the strongest measurements people look for to determine whether or not to have faith in them.

I Corinthians 3:5-6, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom *ye believed*, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (*believed* - to have faith).

III. CHURCHES, AS WELL AS INDIVIDUALS, ARE GIVEN WORK TO DO ACCORDING TO THEIR TRUSTWORTHINESS. The church at Thessalonica was set as the ensample to all those who were trustworthy in Macedonia and Achaia.

I Thessalonians. 1:7, “So that ye were ensamples to all that *believe* in

Macedonia and Achaia.” (ensample – a pattern or model for imitation). Many times pastors do not trust people in their own church to give them responsibilities.

Therefore, they “micro-manage” every little thing in the church, and the church does not grow because the pastor can only do so much work!. If integrity is built in people, they will become faithful and trustworthy, and churches can grow because more people can share the workload.

IV. GOD INSTRUCTED CHRISTIANS TO BE TRUSTWORTHY TO THOSE GOD PLACED IN AUTHORITY TO RULE OVER THEM.

Hebrews 13:17, “*Obey* them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (Obey: the same word as translated persuaded in other verses: "to rely with inward certainty; trust". It is not the same word as in “children obey your parents”).

SECTION THREE - DEPENDABLE

Dependable: may be counted on to sustain others by having them fastened or attached. One to whom others can adhere; hold to; be retained by; **able to support those who attach**; rest with confidence; trust; confide; have full confidence or belief on.

This is also a relationship-oriented word. A good example of those dependable are teachers, people who disciple others, an expansion of the pastoral staff.

I. DEPENDABILITY COMES FROM THE HEART OF A PERSON causing him to fulfill all his promises, which allows others to depend on him.

A. Everything a Christian does should be as unto the Lord.

Colossians 3:23-24, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” (heartily - put your heart into it).

B. Paul commended Epaphroditus for his dependability of service to the ministry.

Phil. 2:25-30, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”

II. A DEPENDABLE PERSON WILL RECEIVE THE REWARDS OF HIS DILIGENCE AS PROMISED BY THE LORD. (Diligent: characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort; to have determination). A dependable person is one who is always determined to accomplish the task set before him.

A. To be dependable, a Christian must diligently (determined to acquire) seek good.

Proverbs 11:27, “He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.” **A person gets what he seeks.** The principle of sowing and reaping is an important issue to keep in mind.

B. To be dependable, a Christian must be diligent in his business and work.

Proverbs 22:29, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” (be raised up to honor, noticed, accepted).

Proverbs 10:4, “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.”

C. To be dependable, a Christian must be diligent in keeping his thoughts on plenteousness (plenteousness - abundant; sufficient for every purpose).

Proverbs 21:5, “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness (more than enough); but of every one that is hasty only to want.” **Don’t settle for ten when you can have fifteen.**

- D. To be dependable, a Christian must be diligent in bearing rule (rule - control; command or authority over).

Proverbs 12:24, “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.”

If a person is diligent, he will make sure everything works and things get accomplished. That person is recognized and is given authority.

III. A DEPENDABLE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS MADE ABSOLUTE DECISIONS REGARDING HOW HE IS GOING TO LIVE HIS LIFE.

- A. A dependable Christian will never depart from his profession of faith in Christ.

Hebrews 10:23-25, “Let us **hold fast** the profession of our faith **without wavering**; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to **provoke unto love and to good works**: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Christians should never provoke others to be discouraged or to be quitters!

- B. The apostles **showed their dependability by preaching and teaching** Jesus Christ even after they were commanded not to.

Acts 5:40-42, “And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

- C. The Christians at Thessalonica **endured** persecution and tribulations so they could continue the work of the kingdom of God.

II Thess. 1:3-6, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God

for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;” (God’s vengeance).

- D. Churches were instructed to take certain widows into their numbers to be taken care of by the churches. One of the qualifications she had to meet was that she had been diligent in following good works.

I Timothy 5:9-10, “Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, *if she have diligently followed every good work.*”

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION I

INTERNAL LIFE ESTABLISHED

LESSON THREE

LOYALTY - RESPECT - HONOR

INTRODUCTION:

Christians who participate in ministry need to have three characteristics evident to those around them. Christians need to highly esteem those that God has placed in authority and leadership over them by being loyal. Christians need to show respect to those who are grounded and are stable with their lives. Christians should respect those who have gained wisdom and display abilities to work. Christians should honor those who have earned a good name by the works they have done and the life they have lived. People attach their lives to others who do not have good characteristics and are loyal to them, even when they live like the devil! Many times people, especially teenagers, will follow those who are liars, thieves, boasters, whoremongers, cheaters, drug addicts, drunks, and the list could go on and on.

Every Christian needs to be careful to whom he attaches his life. The Bible tells Christians to give honor to whom honor is due. Even in the Bible, before the verse “honor thy father and mother” there are many instructions to fathers and mothers on how they are to live their life. If a parent doesn’t live right, they are not to be honored. People will become loyal to and follow those they respect and honor. Some people will even give control of their lives to those they follow. Most of the time, success or failure in a Christian’s life and will be determined by the people the Christian respects and honors. Every Christian needs to be careful to whom they apply these three characters traits. But once they are established, they should adhere to them for the glory of God.

SECTION ONE - LOYALTY

Loyalty: Faithfulness to a superior; true to pledged faith, duty or love.

Loyalty is choosing to be faithful (internal) and show preferential actions (external) when dealing with a person who has **earned** allegiance. A person's allegiance can be to a spouse, a friend, a pastor, or a business associate. Loyalty can also be toward an organization, church, school, or even a nation.

It is crucial that Christians develop loyalty to those who have **proven** their faithfulness. Do not be loyal to a person who is not faithful (adherence to the truth or religious duty). The ability to be loyal comes from God, and needs to be evident in the life of every Christian.

There are many servants of God who have had their ministry destroyed by people who have listened to gossip or rumors, and believed what they heard *without verifying* the facts to see if it is true. Many times a pastor or Christian leader has served God for many years, and then have one rumor destroy that leader's ministry. A Christian who hears a rumor or gossip, and does not have loyalty, will immediately turn away from the one they have been following, allowing the leader to fall alone. Without loyalty to God, people doubt God the first time something goes wrong, instead of doubting something or someone else. Many times people, especially young people, will turn away from God because they have not developed loyalty to Him. Sometimes they will listen and believe a professor, or some antagonist, challenge the validity of God, **instead** of verifying God's Word and holding onto their Friend, Jesus Christ.

I. EXAMPLES OF LOYAL SERVANTS.

A. Moses was loyal to God's house, and God trusted him.

Numbers 12:6-8, "And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

B. Tychicus was loyal to his ministry of serving the Lord.

Colossians 4:7-9, "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here."

II. ATTRIBUTES OF A LOYAL PERSON.

- A. A loyal friend does not talk or gossip about his friends.

Proverbs 11:13, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”

- B. The messages of God are committed to loyal men.

II Timothy 2:2, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

III. WHAT A LOYAL PERSON PRODUCES.

- A. A loyal ambassador (one who represents another) produces health to the one whom sent him.

Proverbs 13:17, “A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.”

- B. A loyal messenger refreshes the soul of his master.

Proverbs 25:13, “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.”

One key of loyalty to consider is “how do you feel when a person walks through the door?” Loyalty will keep a Christian from turning against people who are faithful to the Christian. Remember, people will hunt for disloyal spirits by asking questions to probe into other peoples’ lives. Always ask “why” a person asks particular questions and ask if there an underlying reason for asking questions about other people?

SECTION TWO - RESPECT

Respect: That estimation or honor in which men hold the distinguished worth or substantial good qualities of others. That conduct or course of action that proceeds from esteem; regard; or due attention of another person.

Respect is often translated “*favor*” and is shown by being reverent to the person.

Respect is something that is earned because of how a person lives his life. Respect should be given to a person who is **consistent** in following what he believes. When a person is wishy-washy regarding what he does, he will never have the respect of those around him. A Christian should always be consistent, and diligently work to adhere to what he believes.

There are many today that promote not showing respect to others. They choose to eliminate all titles of respect such as Mister (Mr.), Mistress (Mrs.) Miss, Doctor, your Honor, and many more. They believe that everyone should be treated the same way. They try to lower those who have attained qualities that enable them to achieve greater works from their earned positions of respect.

There are also times a Christian needs to show respect for an **office or position** even when the person holding it does not deserve respect. The person that is the president of the United States may or may not deserve respect, but this office should always be respected. In a church, the pastor may do something to dishonor himself, but the position of pastor should always be respected. A man should never be given the office of pastor unless he is respected by those in his church.

Some people disregard getting married because they do not respect the position of husband or wife. They choose to live together, without accepting marital positions, so they can separate any time they do not respect the other person. Divorce has become an easy out when people lose respect for their spouse. Divorce should only be entered into with great reverence and respect for the positions of husband and wife.

The way to differentiate between respecting an office and honoring a person is to look at the responses inside and outside. Even though someone cannot show honor to the **person** holding an office (internally the heart will not *submit* to the person without respect), one can still obey (externally) the **position** of the office for the sake of the showing respect to the office.

I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO HAVE PROPER RESPECT FOR THOSE HE PLACES IN THE MINISTRY.

A. Christians should respect others more than self.

Phil. 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Remember, even Jesus lowered himself!

- B. Paul told the church at Philippi to respect Epaphroditus because of his work for the Lord.

Phil. 2:25-30, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had beensick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”

- C. God wants Christians to respect those He places in positions in His work.

I Thess. 5:12-13, “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their **work's sake**. And be at peace among yourselves.”

A lack of respect destroys works. If respect is shown, peace dwells.

II. THERE WERE MANY LISTED IN THE BIBLE TO WHOM GOD SHOWED RESPECT.

- A. God showed respect for Abel, but not for Cain. Does God respect you?

Genesis 4:4-5, “And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”

God had respect for Abel before he gave his offering to God. Abel was a shepherd and took care of those placed in his care. It is evident that God respects those that takes care of others.

- B. Mary was chosen to be the mother of Jesus because God respected her. Mary was not the plain, simple little girl she's depicted to be by the world.

Luke 1:26-31, “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto

a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for *thou hast found favour with God*. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.”

III. THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO GAINED THE RESPECT OF OTHERS BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITHFUL RESPECT TOWARDS GOD.

- A. Joseph gained the respect of the keeper of the prison **because the Lord was with him**. If a Christian tries to gain God’s respect, people will respect the Christian.

Genesis 39:20-22, “And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and ***gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison***. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.”

- B. The apostles had the respect of the people ***because they continued the work of God***.

Acts 2:46-47, “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and *having favour with all the people*. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

IV. TO HAVE THE RESPECT OF GOD AND OF PEOPLE , THE BIBLE LISTS CERTAIN ATTRIBUTES THAT A CHRISTIAN MUST HAVE.

- A. When a Christian has mercy and truth, God and men will respect him.

Proverbs 3:3-4, “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: *So shalt thou find*

favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.” (Mercy is when someone does not get what is deserved (“mercy of the court”). In contrast, grace is giving someone that which has not been earned).

- B. When a Christian has understanding, he will get respect. One thing to understand on this point, a Christian parent should never say “I just don’t understand” to a teen. That will lower the respect of the teen immediately.

Proverbs 13:15, “Good understanding *giveth favour*: but the way of transgressors is hard.” A Christian should crave understanding.

- C. When a Christian shows forth righteousness, others will respect him.

Proverbs 14:9, “Fools make a mock at sin: but *among the righteous there is favour*.” (mock: to ridicule, scoff).

- D. Israel lost the respect of God because they did not continue in the covenant made with them. (to walk in grace)

Hebrews 8:9, “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.”

SECTION THREE - HONOR

Honor: The esteem due or paid to value; high estimation; any expression of respect or of high estimation by words or actions; any act by which reverence and submission are expressed; a good name; dignified respect for character.

When a Christian honors another person, that person's name and actions are elevated above others. This is not an action to belittle other people, but places the person being honored in the position of being an example. The life actions of this person have shown that he or she is worthy of honor or elevation. It is easy to submit to someone that is honored, because both actions come from the heart.

- I. EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE IN HIS LIFE THE CHARACTER THAT ENABLES HIM TO HONOR OTHERS.

- A. God wants Christians to honor one another.

Romans 12:10, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; *in honour preferring one another.*” Affection or feelings of attachment are a major part of a Christian honoring another.”

B. God instructed Christians to honor those to whom honor is due.

Romans 13:7, “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. The following are just some of those who should be honored.”

1. Eph. 6:2, “Honour thy father and mother...”
2. Matt. 13:57, “...A prophet is not without honour...”
3. John 5:23, “...all men should honour the Son...”
4. I Thess. 4:4, “...every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in honour;” (vessel: body).
5. I Timothy 5:3, “Honour widows that are widows indeed.”
6. I Timothy 5:17, “...the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour...”

II. HONOR IS SOMETHING THAT EVERY SAVED PERSON SHOULD DESIRE TO HAVE IN HIS LIFE. HOWEVER, A CHRISTIAN MUST GIVE GOD AND MAN SOMETHING TO HONOR.

A. Every Christian should know how to keep his body under control (in honor).

I Thessalonians. 4:4, “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;” There are many who do not know to control their own bodies. People who do not control their own bodies are incontinent, and often become gluttonous, lazy, and cannot control their tempers.”

B. Everyone should seek the honor that comes from God. A Christian should not go after honor just to try and obtain honor. A Christian should live the way God wants him to live, then God will give him honor.

John 5:44, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”

III. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD LOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING TRAITS IN A PERSON BEFORE HE GIVES

A PERSON HONOR.

- A. A Christian who serves Christ should be given honor, because God will give him honor.

John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

- B. A Christian who does good works should be given honor.

Romans 2:10, "But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:"

- C. A Christian who follows after righteousness and mercy should be given honor.

Proverbs 21:21, "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour."

- D. A Christian who is gracious should be given honor.

Proverbs 11:16, "A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches." (gracious - kindness, favor)

- E. A Christian who regards reproof should be given honor.

Proverbs 13:18, "Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured."

- F. A Christian who is humble should be given honor.

Proverbs 15:33, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility." Proverbs 18:12, "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility."

- G. A Christian who does not show strife should be given honor.

Proverbs 20:3, "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling."

- H. In a church, God instructs his people to give honor to the uncomely. (uncomely – inelegant).

I Corin. 12:23-26, "And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have

no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having *given more abundant honour to that part which lacked*. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”

I. Elders that rule well should be given double honor.

I Timothy 5:17, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

J. A virtuous woman should be given honor.

Proverbs 31:25, “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.”

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION I

INTERNAL LIFE ESTABLISHED

LESSON FOUR

RESPONSIBLE - COMPASSIONATE – TEMPERATE

INTRODUCTION

God is responsible for everything in His possession and for every promise He ever made. God wants every Christian to assume the responsibilities for the things He places in the care of the Christian. God also wants Christians to function under their responsibilities with compassion and temperance. Being responsible does not exclude showing compassion for those who are hurting, but even this benevolence should never be to the extreme. To be a healthy Christian, a saved person must balance all three of these and live for God.

There is a great need for responsible Christians today, but Christians seem to be deficient because of a lack of compassion and temperance. There are so many who go to extremes at the expense of other areas of their lives. For example, some people go after money at the expense of ministry. Some go after sports or hobbies at the expense of their families. Some go after retirement at the expense of the church. Some go after physical appearance at the expense of building the spiritual life. And some go after notoriety at the expense of humility.

Every Christian should live a balanced life by being responsible for everything God places in his stewardship, and never at the expense of other things or people in his life.

SECTION ONE - RESPONSIBLE

Responsible: “Able to discharge an obligation; or having estate sufficient to the payment of a debt. Liable to account; accountable; answerable as for a trust, a confidence, or a debt.”

God wants Christians to accept the responsibility for the possessions given or placed

in their charge. Responsibility covers material things as well as spiritual. Many times God places ministries in the possession of a Christian, only to have the Christian desert the ministry for earthly activities.

One of the greatest reasons ministries are not filled and completed is because of the lack of responsibility on the part of many Christians. There is an astronomical need today for responsible Christians. Christians are needed who will not be diverted from ministry to worldly activities. Christians are needed who will finish what they start. Christians are needed who are trustworthy. Christians are needed who love the Lord enough to serve Him no matter what the cost.

I. EVERY PERSON SHOULD SEE HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE TO GOD FOR WHAT HE DOES WITH HIS LIFE.

A. The Bible says that everyone is responsible to God and will give account to Him.

Romans 14:12, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Often Christians fail to realize that they give account to God for **all** their life as well as **everything** in their life. That includes church life, work life, and family life.

B. God said that vengeance was His responsibility— not man’s responsibility.

Romans 12:19, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto

wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Christians are not to take vengeance into their own hands. Christians should realize that when they carry out vengeance on someone who has done them wrong, they are being irresponsible and stealing from God what rightfully belongs to Him. This includes bitterness (holding hard feelings against someone).

C. The good Samaritan showed that he was responsible by stating he would repay the innkeeper all that he spent on the injured man.

Luke 10:30-36, “And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on

the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”

II. GOD HOLDS EVERYONE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER OWN WORKS.

- A. God used a parable to explain that He would hold His servants responsible for their works.

Matt. 18:23-27, “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”

- B. God holds His stewards responsible for what is placed in their trust.

Luke 16:1-2, “And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.”

Sometimes Christians have things removed from their lives because they are not responsible for their stewardship of a ministry, a house, a car, etc.

- C. God proclaimed that pastors would be responsible to Him for every soul presented to them.

Hebrews 13:17, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit

yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

III. CHRISTIANS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO AND FOR EACH OTHER.

A. Paul knew that he was responsible to all Christians for his ministry.

I Corin. 4:1-3, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.”

B. Paul told Philemon that he would be responsible for anything the slave Onesimus owed Philemon.

Philemon 16-19, “Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.”

SECTION TWO - COMPASSIONATE

Compassionate: A sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another; pity; empathy.

Compassion is a mixture of love and sorrow. Compassion is the portion of love that attends to the pain or regret of others. Compassion will produce temporary affection, even towards an enemy, during a time of extreme distress.

Compassion is the feeling a Christian has when he looks upon a distressing situation in another person’s life. It can also be spiritual in nature by understanding the condition of a person without Christ or understanding the condition of one who has deserted Christ for the world. Many times a Christian is referred to as being hard, which actually is saying that he does not have compassion. God wants every Christian to have and to show compassion towards others when it is proper to do so.

Compassion generally has *accompanying actions* toward those who are hurting. When a Christian

has true compassion, he will try to relieve some of the hurt of others by helping. It may be sharing the pain or showing some act of benevolence.

I. JESUS HAD *COMPASSION AND SHOWED* IT ON MANY OCCASIONS.

- A. Jesus was moved with compassion because the people did not have a shepherd.

Matt. 9:36-37, “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;”

- B. Jesus had compassion on the multitude because they had been with Him for three days, and had nothing to eat.

Matt. 15:32, “Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.”

- C. Jesus had compassion for two blind men, and healed them.

Matt. 20:30-34, “And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”

- D. Jesus was moved with compassion toward the man who was a leper, and cleansed him.

Mark 1:40-42, “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me

clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”

- E. Jesus had compassion on the mother of a dead man, and raised him from the dead.

Luke 7:12-15, “Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

II. CHRISTIANS ARE INSTRUCTED TO SHOW COMPASSION TOWARD OTHERS.

- A. Every man should have and show compassion to his brothers.

Zech. 7:9-10, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.”

- B. The good Samaritan had compassion on the man the thieves wounded.

Luke 10:30-34, “And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

An important issue to recognize is that compassion is lost because of

fears of legalism (represented by priest and Levite in the above passage). For example, if a woman that is hurting came to church to find help and relief *wearing slacks*, would she not be welcomed in many churches? Legalism takes away compassion.

C. Christians are instructed to have compassion for each other.

I Peter 3:8, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:”

III. HAVING COMPASSION TOWARD THE LOST INFLUENCES THEM, and makes a difference in their eternal destination.

Jude 22-23, “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

Many times evangelism does not work because the people do not have compassion when dealing with people. The people become just numbers on a tally sheet, and Christians do not see the needs of the people when compassion is not included in evangelizing others.

SECTION THREE - TEMPERATE

Temperate: Moderate; not excessive; moderate in the indulgence of the appetites and passions; cool; calm; not marked with passion; not violent; patient; calm.

A Christian should not go to extremes at any time. It is very easy for a person to get caught up in something, and take it to extremes. God wants each of His children to remain moderate and balanced, and never go into excess. Proverbs 11: 1 states, “a false balance is an abomination to the Lord” and Proverbs 20:23 states that a false balance is not good. Many times a Christian will forsake all areas of his Christianity, except one, in an attempt to excel in that one. Instead of excelling in the one, he becomes a misfit in his church and in society. Christians have been known to go to church, and sing, and then leave before the preaching. Some have been known to teach Sunday School, and not attend other services. Some will give to a particular offering, at the expense of all others. God wants Christians to be temperate

in all areas.

There are some churches that go to extremes in many different ways, from concentrating only on evangelism, to excluding lost people all together. A good, balanced church is one that does everything God wants it to, but never at the exclusion of other ministries. A church needs to have good music, but not at the exclusion of preaching. A church needs to have an active youth ministry, but not at the exclusion of having a good children's ministry. There are many ways a church can forsake temperance, and apply all its resources and work to one area of ministry. People, as well as a church, should not eliminate one good thing at the expense of another. However, too many irons in the fire cannot keep the iron hot. Christians should learn to excel in one ministry, instead of doing four ministries haphazardly. Temperance is the way God has given Christians not to be controlled by passions or compassion, while fulfilling the responsibilities given in stewardship.

I. GOD WANTS TEMPERANCE AS A PART OF EVERY CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

- A. When a man strives for mastery, he should be temperate. (mastery - superiority in competition).

I Corin. 9:25, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

As Christians work to achieve, they must keep things in the proper place with temperance. For example, a person cannot loose his job to support his family while he is preaching or teaching in a church. Christians can achieve and do great works for the Lord while balancing life in this world. Also, the world wants Christians to take everything to extreme at the expense of other things. For example, the car salesman wants a customer to buy their car whether the customer can afford it or not. Or an employer may want long working hours on a job to further a career by making the company more money, but it would be at the expense of time to build families, and time to work in ministry.

- B. God listed temperance as one of the things a Christian should add to his faith.

II Peter 1:5-9, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these

things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

II. GOD PLACES TEMPERANCE AS A HIGH AUTHORITY.

A. Temperance is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit.

Gal. 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

B. God lists temperance in the list of qualifications for a church administrator.

Titus 1:7-9, “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

C. The Bible says that temperance compliments sound doctrine.

Titus 2:1-2, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.”

Spiritual maturity shows temperance. God holds Christians accountable for everything given them. Compassion feels sorrow for someone hurting and moves them to give. Without temperance, an individual or a church could give away all of their money trying to take care of needs. Without temperance, Christians do not have compassion when they have nothing to help. They can become hardened, having no compassion because they were not responsible. Temperance is very necessary to balance responsibility and compassion.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION I

INTERNAL LIFE ESTABLISHED

LESSON FIVE

COURAGE - STEADFASTNESS - RESOLVED

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest issue every person has to determine is what controls his life. Many people are controlled by the events that take place in their lives. There are very few people, or Christians for that matter, that are controlled by what they are on the inside. A Christian who makes up his mind, and then has the ability to adhere to his decision, is like Christ. Before Jesus came to Earth, He had already made up his mind what he was going to do. Because of this, He had but one decision to make when each situation came into His life—whether or not He was going to continue to follow the decision He made before coming to this earth.

Every saved person needs courage if he is going to steadfastly hold onto the resolutions he has made in his mind, and follow them all his life. He needs to study God's Word to know what he should adhere to, and hold to his resolve until the day he dies. It takes a tremendous amount of courage for a Christian to be steadfast, and to hold onto the determined purpose of his life when times of temptation come.

The devil works to discourage a Christian and to doubt his decisions. He has used the same method since Adam and Eve. If he can get a Christian to doubt the godly decisions he has made, the Christian will lose courage and become unstable. Lack of courage is one of the greatest destroyers of the Christian's life. Once a Christian starts doubting God, the Word of God, and the ministers of God, he will falter in the life he chose to live in Christ.

SECTION ONE - COURAGE

Courage: Bravery; a quality of mind which enables people to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits; valor; boldness; resolution."

Courage has to be a vital part of every Christian's life, because there are many events and challenges that will try to sway the Christian from doing what is right. Being a Christian is not an easy lifestyle. Many times the whole world will try to persuade the Christian to turn away from Christ.

It takes a lot of courage for Christians to continue in Christ all their life.

I. SPIRITUAL COURAGE COMES FROM THE **CONFIDENCE OF KNOWING** THAT GOD IS WITH YOU AND IS GIVING YOU HIS POWER. Christians usually face fear when they go into something alone. If a Christian does not know that God is with him, he will be insecure and will operate under doubts, and most of the time, will fail.

A. Moses told Israel (specifically Joshua) to have courage that the Lord would go with them.

Deut. 31:6-7, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it."

B. The psalmist advised that the Lord would strengthen the hearts of Christians when they have courage and wait on the Lord.

Psalms 27:14, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

II. PEOPLE WITH COURAGE TRANSMIT THEIR COURAGE, AND AFFECT OTHER PEOPLE. Courage is contagious. When one person shows courage, most of those around him will do the same. People gain courage, and are encouraged by the stories told as examples of

others who had courage.

- A. A righteous person shows his courage to others.

Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”

- B. Paul became courageous when he was met by the brethren, and he thanked God.

Acts 28:15, “And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”

- C. Because of Paul's courage, many of the brethren had courage, and spoke the word of God without fear.

Phil. 1:14, “And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

- D. Paul's courage enabled others to see Christ in his body.

Phil. 1:20, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”

- E. Barnabas declared to the brethren the courage of Paul.

Acts 9:26-30, “And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached **boldly** at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake **boldly** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.”

- III. WHEN A CHRISTIAN HAS COURAGE, HE WILL CONTINUE IN THE MINISTRY EVEN THOUGH HARDSHIPS TRY TO TURN HIM AWAY. Quitting is easy for many people because they lack

the courage to finish. Many times people will say things like "I'll try;" "We'll see how things work out;" "I'll watch and see how you do;" "If God is willing." These types of statements give

people a way out so they can quit and not develop the courage to commit.

A. Paul and Barnabas spoke the Word of God with courage.

Acts 13:46, "Then Paul and Barnabas **waxed bold**, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

B. Paul sought the right words that he could speak the mystery of the gospel with courage.

Eph. 6:19-20, "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth **boldly**, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may **speak boldly**, as I ought to speak."

C. Paul was entreated shamefully at Philippi, but showed courage even during a time of contention.

I Thessalonians 2:2, "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were **bold** in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."

SECTION TWO - STEADFASTNESS

Steadfastness: "Firmness of mind or purpose; fixed in principle; constancy; resolution."

There are many Christians today who change their mind like they change clothes. It is clearly evident, as seen in the number of divorces, that steadfastness is not a major part of Christianity. In the year 2000, statistics told us that over thirty-five percent of Christian marriages end in divorce. It is very hard to get Christians to fulfill their commitments to the ministry, as well as in their secular life. There are so many who do not see a problem with simply changing their minds according to their feelings. A Christian should not change his mind unless the Scriptures clearly disagrees with his decision or evidence is clearly presented that the decision made was not right.

The devil works hard to keep a Christian from being steadfast. The devil uses many things to cause Christians to fall into doubts and fears that will destroy the work for Christ.

II Peter 3:17, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”

I. WHEN CHRISTIANS ARE STEADFAST THEY **DO NOT CHANGE WHEN ADVERSITY COMES**. Change should only come from God and the Word of God. The world tries to make a person change by bringing hardships, frustrations, persecutions, and even illnesses.

A. Ruth was steadfast regarding her decision to follow Naomi. Even when Naomi tried to get Ruth to stay and not go with her, Ruth was steadfast in her decision.

Ruth 1:18, “When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.”

B. Job's friend, Zophar, advised him that steadfastness should be a part of being right with God.

Job 11:15, “For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear:”

C. Christians can know that another Christian has faith by steadfastly (constantly) watching the Christian. It is very easy for a Christian to change judgment according to circumstances that comes into a person's life. When a person is steadfast, he does not change or fluctuate from his beliefs, even when life occurrences change.

Acts 14:9, “The same heard Paul speak: who **stedfastly beholding him**, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,”

II. WHEN A CHRISTIAN IS STEADFAST, HE WILL **FINISH** WHAT HE STARTS. It is very easy to fluctuate in direction, as well as in ministry. Others need to know that a Christian is going to finish what he starts. This steadfastness allows those watching to trust the person that is doing the work.

A. Jesus made up his mind that He was going to Jerusalem, and his apostles saw that he was steadfast in His decision.

Luke 9:51, “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he

should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,”

- B. Paul challenged all the brethren to stand steadfast in the work of the Lord, because a Christian's labor is not in vain.

I Corin. 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

- C. Paul was steadfast in his hope for the Corinthian church, knowing that they would endure the sufferings to come, and they would continue to follow Christ.

II Corin. 1:5-7, “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.”

- III. THERE ARE MANY WHO BENEFIT FROM THE STEADFASTNESS OF CHRISTIANS IN THEIR COMMITMENTS MADE TO GOD. Families, churches, friends, and even the lost world are affected by the steadfastness of Christians. Mankind, in general, has very little respect for a quitter.

A. In Acts, the early believers bonded together and saw many signs and wonders as the result of the apostles continuing steadfastly in what they had been taught.

Acts 2:42-46, “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and the apostles did many wonders and signs. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,”

- B. The result of the church at Colossi being steadfast in their faith in Christ, was that Paul had joy.

Col. 2:5-7, “For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

IV. ALL ABSOLUTE STEADFASTNESS COMES FROM A CHRISTIAN KEEPING HIS EYES ON THE LORD, EVEN IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY. It is very important that Christians know what the truth is and never fluctuate from it. Every saved person needs to determine what he has his eyes set on.

A. When Jesus ascended up to heaven, His disciples looked steadfastly upon his Rising, to the extent that they did not see the messengers of God.

Acts 1:10, “And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;”

B. As Stephen was being stoned, he looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw Jesus at the right hand of God.

Acts 7:55, “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,”

C. The Word of God is steadfast.

Hebrews 2:1-3, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;”

SECTION THREE - RESOLVED

Resolved: Fixed purpose of mind; settled determination; resolution; determined in purpose.

It is very important that each Christian determine what he is going to do with his life, as well as

what he is going to do with Jesus Christ. A Christian, who does not make up his mind regarding what he is going to do, will almost always accomplish nothing. He will sit back, let others do the work, sacrifice their time, and provide their money for the work of the Lord. The Bible tells Christians that *as they think in their heart that is what they are*. **What a Christian resolves in his heart is the primary controller of his life.**

I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO RESOLVE TO PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM AND TRUST HIM THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES. Resolve requires that a Christian makes a decision about what he is going to do with his life.

A. After Barnabas saw that a great number of the Grecians had turned to Christ, he challenged them to resolve to cleave unto the Lord.

Acts 11:23, “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with **purpose of heart** they would cleave unto the Lord.”

B. God promised that He would keep the person in peace that resolved to trust in God.

Isaiah 26:3, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is **stayed** on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

II. A CHRISTIAN WILL GIVE ACCORDING TO HOW HE MAKES A RESOLUTION IN HIS HEART ABOUT WHAT HE IS GOING TO DO. Christians need to make up their minds regarding what they are going to give to the work of the Lord.

A. When the unjust steward realized that he was called to account for his stewardship, he resolved what he would do.

Luke 16:1-4, “And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from

me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.”

- B. All the disciples at Antioch resolved to send relief to the Christians at Jerusalem.

Acts 11:29, “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, **determined** to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:”

- C. Paul challenged every one in the church at Corinth to resolve in their heart how much they would give.

II Corin. 9:7, “Every man according as he **purposeth** in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

- III. PAUL MADE SEVERAL RESOLUTIONS REGARDING WHAT HE WOULD DO. Paul had a strong Will, and once he resolved what he was going to do, he did it.

- A. Paul resolved in his spirit to go to Jerusalem by way of Macedonia and Achaia.

Acts 19:21, “After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

- B. Paul resolved that he would not know anything that went on among the Christians at Corinth, except Jesus Christ.

I Corin. 2:2, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

- C. Paul resolved that he would not go to the church at Corinth again with heaviness.

II Corin. 2:1, “But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.”

- IV. IN PSALMS, GOD MAKES IT CLEAR TO CHRISTIANS THAT THEIR LIVES ARE GREATLY DETERMINED BY WHAT THEY RESOLVE IN THEIR HEARTS. The Bible makes it clear that as a man thinks in his heart, that is what he is. Every Christian needs to resolve what he is going to do with his life. Once a person is saved, he is going to Heaven. But what is he going to do with his life until then?

- A. The psalmist resolved that his mouth would not transgress.

Psalms 17:3, “Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.”

- B. The psalmist stated that he would not be afraid because he had resolved in his heart to trust in the Lord.

Psalms 112:7, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.”

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION II

GODLY ATTITUDE INSTILLED

LESSON SIX

GRATEFUL - THANKFUL - HUMILITY

INTRODUCTION

Failure to be grateful is probably the greatest deficiency in the life of a Christian. When a person is not grateful, he assumes what he receives from another person is owed. He thinks that something he did or something in him qualifies him to receive from others. The truth is that no person on this earth deserves gifts or grace from God. When a Christian is grateful, thanksgiving and humility will be evidenced in his life. Thanksgiving is sharing with others (and God) that we are pleased with what has been done for us.

Realizing a person gives something that is not earned produces humility. A person who is puffed up or controlled by pride will not accept gifts, lacks having humility, and is not thankful. Many attributes that God wants a Christian to have are attached to receiving gifts. Of course, the greatest gift of all is salvation. Any religion that promotes earning salvation has no humility. If a person thinks something is earned, they will not be thankful.

SECTION ONE - GRATEFUL

Grateful: having a due sense of consideration for a favor; kindly disposed towards one from whom a favor has been received.

A grateful person is one who recognizes and appreciates the grace that another has shown to him.

- I. GRATEFULNESS WILL CAUSE CHANGES IN A PERSON'S LIFE. There are many people who prayed and asked the Lord to save them, but have no apparent change in their lives. Christians will often wonder (and rightfully so) whether or not they got saved. The reality could be that they

never became grateful, which is the *heart attitude that causes a life to change*.

It shifts a person's focus from self to others (including God).

- A. A grateful person will not purposely continue in sin because he is thankful for what God has done for him.

Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

- B. A grateful person realizes what he received from God was because of the grace of God, not from any works he has done, nor from any favor he has earned. A grateful person no longer works to gain favor with God, but works for God because he was given favor as a gift from God.

Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Romans 4:4, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

Even when a Christian focuses on heaven, he may work for that time and what he is going to get in heaven. When the focus is on heaven, instead of focusing on what the Christian has on this earth, the Christian becomes ungrateful.

- C. Gratefulness places a song in a person's heart.

Col. 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

- II. A CHRISTIAN SHOWS HIS GRATEFULNESS TO GOD BY GIVING TO GOD HIS TIME, TREASURES, AND TALENTS. Being grateful produces actions toward God, so that God and others can see that the Christian recognizes that all he has come from the Lord.

- A. Paul showed his gratefulness by *laboring* for the Lord.

I Corin. 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

- B. A Christian shows gratefulness towards God by *giving to Him in excess*.

II Corin. 4:15, “For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” (redound – to be in excess).

The more grace a Christian has, the more thanksgiving should be given to the Lord. God gives grace and many more things people do not deserve. If a Christian is not getting anything from the Lord, he should ask “why?”

- C. The churches of Macedonia showed their gratefulness by *giving their money* to help the church at Jerusalem.

II Corin. 8:1-2, “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”

- III. GRATEFULNESS PRODUCES MANY THINGS IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN. Most Christians want their lives to be productive, but do not realize that being grateful is the key that opens the door to having a productive life.

- A. Being grateful produces *fruit* in the life of a Christian.

Col. 1:5-6, “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:”

- B. God is consolation for the Christian, and should produce gratefulness and *good hope* in the life of Christians. Because Christians have received grace, they should show grace to other.

II Thessalonians 2:16, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,”

- C. Gratefulness causes Christians to have grace, which *enables us to serve God*.

Hebrews 12:28, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence

and godly fear:”

- D. Gratefulness produces *good works*. Christians should work because they are grateful, and they should not work from out of debt to God.

II Corin. 9:8, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:”

- IV. IF A CHRISTIAN IS NOT GRATEFUL, HE WILL TAKE THE THINGS OF GOD FOR GRANTED . By nature man is not grateful, but self-centered. Christians will often become so consumed with what they *want* ,*they fail to be grateful for the things God has already given them*. Failure to be grateful is the primary reason Christians turn back to the world. When a Christian is not grateful, salvation is taken for granted and nothing is given out.

- A. When a Christian is not grateful, he will turn away from God and try to find something additional. The Galatians moved to another gospel. If they had been grateful and recognized what Christ had done for them, they would not have left God's gospel

Gal. 1:6, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:”

- B. If a Christian is not grateful, he will depart from grace and return to legalism. In legalism a person has to work for what he gets. But under grace, God does it all.

Hebrews 12:15, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”

Gal. 5:4, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

SECTION TWO - THANKFUL

Thankful: impressed with a sense of kindness received, and ready to acknowledge it; having a sense of gratitude by acknowledging kindness from someone else.

The difference in gratefulness and thankfulness is that gratefulness is in the heart (inward) and thankfulness is something expressed to others (outward).

When a person is not thankful, he has no gratitude. He is selfish and does not recognize the works and gifts of others. When a person is thankful, he has recognized what others have

done for him. Every person on this earth has some reason to be thankful to others, but many can only see what they do and expect others to do things for them. They live life as takers with perpetual expectations from others.

- I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE THANKFUL. One of the attributes that change peoples lives more than anything else is being thankful.
- A. God instructs us to give thanks in all things.
1. Eph. 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"
 2. I Thesslonians 5:18, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
 3. I Thessalonians 2:1, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;"
 4. Phil. 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
 5. Col. 2:7, "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."
- B. Christians should always come to God with thanksgiving. The number one thing God wants to hear from His children is thanksgiving.
1. Psalms 100:4, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."
 2. Psalms 107:22, "And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing."
 3. Hebrews 13:15-16, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."
 4. Psalms 116:17, "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD."

5. Psalms 95:2, “Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.”

II. A PERSON WHO IS NOT THANKFUL USUALLY HAS A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE ABOUT EVERYTHING. They are focused on what they do not receive, and live a very disappointing life.

- A. When a Christian is not thankful, his motives will become vain and untrustworthy.

Romans 1:21, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

- B. When a Christian is not thankful, he will not have the peace of God ruling in his heart. Having peace and being thankful are directly tied together. A Christian should shift to thanksgiving, and see how quickly peace follows.

Col. 3:15, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

III. IF A CHRISTIAN WILL ONLY TAKE A LITTLE TIME AND LOOK FOR THE THINGS GOD HAS DONE FOR HIM, IT BECOMES VERY EASY TO GIVE GOD THANKS. The following are reasons to give God thanks:

- A. Because He delivers Christians from their enemies.

Psalms 18:48-49, “He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.”

- B. Because of His holiness.

Psalms 30:4, “Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

- C. Because God is good and His mercy endures forever.

Psalms 107:1, “O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

Psalms 136:1, "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

- D. Because God has righteous judgments.

Psalms 119:62, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments."

SECTION THREE - HUMILITY

Humility: freedom from pride and arrogance; a modest estimate of one's own worth; a deep sense of one's own unworthiness in the sight of God; self-abasement; repentance for sin, submission to the divine will of God.

It is easy for Christians to let pride cause them to think they are special because of something they have done, something they have said, how they look, or where they have been. It is very easy for a person to compare himself with others and think he is better. The truth is that when Christians look at God, **(which should be done all the time)** they have no reason to be prideful. When a Christian compares himself to God, humility will be there.

- I. GOD WANTS US TO HUMBLE OURSELVES TO HIM. The way Christians can exalt God is to become humble. One of the greatest reasons God cannot bless many Christians is because they are not humble. They somehow take the credit for what God has done. They go to God with expectations and demands, instead of thanksgiving.

- A. When a Christian humbles himself under God, then God can raise him up.

James 4:6-10, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the *humble*. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. *Humble* yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and *he shall lift you up.*"

- B. Christians are told to put on humility. God wants us to realize our state so that He can raise us up.

Col. 3:12, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;”

- C. Jesus humbled himself and took upon himself the position of a man, which is below God.

Phil. 2:8-11, “And being found in fashion as a man, *he humbled himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- II. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO HUMBLE THEMSELVES TO OTHER CHRISTIANS who are more mature and are able to teach the younger Christian the ways and truths of the Lord. Christians should recognize more mature Christians (elders), and realize that they are less than the elders in ministry and in ministry abilities (humility).
- A. Young Christians should submit themselves to the elders. Submission itself comes from humility.
- 1Peter 5:5-7, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
- B. The way to test a friend is to place oneself under the friend (humble) and see what the friend will do with the life given him.
- Proverbs 6:3, “Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.” Remember, a friend loves at all times and a friend will tell you the truth in love at all times.

- III. THERE ARE MANY DANGERS FOR CHRISTIANS WHO ARE NOT HUMBLE. The Bible says that

pride comes before destruction, and that God will elevate the humble. Because God loves Christians, He will humble those who exalt themselves.

Luke 18:9-14, “And he spake this parable unto certain which *trusted in themselves* that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: *for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*”

IV. GOD HAS OBLIGATED HIMSELF TO BLESS THOSE WHO WILL HUMBLE THEMSELVES. **Failure to be humble restricts God, but humility opens the doors of Heaven.**

A. Christians must humble themselves before God can give them honor.

Proverbs 15:33, “The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.” Proverbs 18:12, “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.”

B. It is better to have a humble spirit than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 16:19, “Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”

C. Honor is what controls a humble person.

Proverbs 29:23, “A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.”

D. When a Christian humbles himself like a child, then God will make him great.

Matt. 18:4, “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION II

GODLY ATTITUDE INSTILLED

LESSON SEVEN

FRUGAL - ECONOMIC - THRIFT

(PRUDENCE) - (PROSPERITY) - (CONSERVATIVE)

INTRODUCTION

A frugal person is one who shows good economy when dealing with money or anything attached to it. God wants Christians to be responsible in dealing with all earthly possessions. God does not want Christians to be irresponsible or wasteful with spending money. God wants Christians to be good business people and not squander the possessions God places in their stewardship. Many times Christians fail to take care of the things God places in their care, and then wonder why God does not give them more.

Some people destroy the house they live in or the car they drive. They do not keep their clothes clean, and even fail to care for their bodies. They pray for God to give them more to replace what they have destroyed or allowed to decay and rust away. God wants His children to take care of His possessions that He places in their care. **Failure to take care of the things of God is to fail God.**

This same principle applies to churches also. God will only give as many church members

as a church is able to care for. God's attitude with a church is "if a church does not take care of the people within the church, do not expect the church to grow." All the property God places in the care of a church, a home, or an individual should be cared for with respect to God and His instructions.

SECTION ONE - FRUGAL (PRUDENCE)

Frugal: economical in the use of appropriation of money, goods or provisions of any kind; saving unnecessary expense, either of money or of anything else which is to be used or consumed; sparing; not profuse, excessive or luxuriant.

Prudence: implies caution in deliberating and consulting on the most suitable means to accomplish valuable purposes, and the exercise of intelligence in discerning and selecting them.” Prudence differs from wisdom in that prudence implies more caution and reservation than wisdom, analyzing what is seen in the present to foresee and avoid evil. It is sometimes mere caution or circumspection. Wisdom is conceiving and executing that which is good for possible things in the future.

I. THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT PRUDENCE IS ASSOCIATED WITH SEVERAL GODLY TRAITS.

A frugal Christian does not waste the things God places in his care and seeks for the input into his life that will help him become frugal.

A. Wisdom dwells with those who are frugal (prudent). Wisdom cannot dwell with waste.

Proverbs 8:12, “I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.”

B. A frugal man is one who has wisdom and knows his way. The wise Christian knows where he is going, and has analyzed what the end will be when he gets there. He realizes the most economical way to get there.

Proverbs 14:8, “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.”

C. A frugal man is wise in his heart.

Proverbs 16:21, “The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.”

D. A frugal man has wisdom and appreciates reproof when he is not correct.

Proverbs 15:5, “A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.”

Proverbs 17:10, “A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.”

Proverbs 19:25, “Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.”

E. A frugal man looks to where he is going in all areas of life. Be prudent and figure out contracts, especially credit card contracts. The world uses every trick to convince people the figures for interest rates are monthly or yearly, when most of

the time they are actually daily interest rates.

Proverbs 14:15, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.”

- F. A frugal man anticipates evil and avoids it.

Proverbs 22:3, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

- G. A frugal wife comes from the Lord.

Proverbs 19:14, “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.”

II. A FRUGAL CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO DEALS WITH MATTERS ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE. It is imperative that Christians study the Bible and apply the knowledge they gain into their lives. God has provided Christians with absolute truths to guide them in their dealings with life. The key word that helps Christians with understanding is “Why”? If a Christian has an understanding of “why”, they have knowledge, understanding and wisdom to make choices. Simple minded people have no answers for “why”.

- A. A frugal man deals with matters according to knowledge. That person will figure things out before he does something. He plans his days, his work, and his life.

Proverbs 13:16, “Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.”

- B. A frugal man is crowned with knowledge.

Proverbs 14:18, “The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.” The simple person just runs around in life, plans for nothing, and accomplishes nothing. Therefore, he inherits nothing. The prudent person wants to know answers and seeks to get answers to do things right.

- C. A frugal man's heart seeks knowledge.

Proverbs 18:15, “The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.”

III. SOME MEN IN THE BIBLE WERE NOTED FOR BEING FRUGAL. One of the greatest testimonies a Christian can have is that he deals with the things of this life the way God wants him to.

- A. Jesus showed that He was frugal by giving Christians the mysteries of God.

Eph. 1:5-9, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:”

God didn't give the mysteries to educate people or to show off, but for His children to walk with His wisdom .

- B. David was a man that was known for being frugal in matters of business.

I Samuel 16:18, “Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.”

- C. Solomon had prudence and was allowed to build the temple of God.

II Chron. 2:12, “Hiram said moreover, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.”

- D. Sergius Paulus was a frugal man and sought to know the word of God from Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 13:7-12, “Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them,

seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell

on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

IV. A FRUGAL MAN DETERMINES IN HIS HEART WHAT HE SHOULD GIVE. Many times Christians are moved by compassion when an organization asks for money. **Christians should give according to what they determine in their hearts, not by their emotions.** God can direct a person's heart, but his emotions come from his earthly life. A frugal Christian needs to make decisions about giving from his heart. A church should try not to stir emotions to get money from a person. Giving has to come from the heart.

II Corin. 9:6-7, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

SECTION TWO – ECONOMIC (PROSPERITY)

Economic: pertaining to the regulation of household concerns; managing domestic or public money affairs with concerns and moderation; not wasteful or extravagant.

Prosperity: advance or gain in anything good or desirable; successful progress in any business or enterprise; success; attainment of the object desired.

How a Christian takes care of his home, business, and church property is of great importance to God. God does not want Christians to be wasteful with their personal belongings or with the things that belong to others. It is very easy to be negligent with property, food, or even a person's health. How a person does his work is also of great importance because he can waste a lot of time and materials on a job.

God blesses those who show good economy since He knows they can be trusted with the material things placed in their care. Every Christian should work to become frugal in their personal economy and in every area of their life.

A Christian should not buy with emotions. They should look at all things as an economy issue in using God’s money, and look at the whole picture of something before buying. Research

should be done on most products. Questions should be asked such as, “How will it last?”,

“What’s the maintenance expense?”, “Is this really the cheapest in the long run?” or “If I buy the really good one, how much longer will it last?”

I. THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF MEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT WERE RECOGNIZED FOR THE ECONOMICAL WAY THEY DID BUSINESS. These men were careful with properties and careful with how they did their work.

A. God prospered Joseph so that others would know that God was with him. Joseph showed good economy over Potiphar's house. Potiphar was so impressed how Joseph handled his house, that he made him overseer of his household.

Genesis 39:2-4, “And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.”

B. God told Joshua that He would prosper him if he didn't turn away from the law. Joshua was challenged to observe (show good economy) and do all that was written in the law.

Joshua 1:7-8, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

If a Christian shows good economy with how he handles the law, God will prosper him.

C. David charged his son, Solomon, that if he would walk in God's ways (to show good economy) God would prosper him. God's ways include proper stewardship of

the things in a person's care. **Stewardship is the determining factor of how God will prosper a person.**

I Kings 2:3, “And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.”

- D. Hezekiah showed that he was economical in taking care of the house of God and God prospered him.

II Chron. 31:20-21, “And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, *he did it with all his heart, and prospered.*”

- E. The Jews showed good economy in rebuilding the Temple, and God prospered them.

Ezra 6:14, “And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.”

Sometimes God will give a Christian something and then watches how the Christian handles it. If a Christians does not think something is important, was it not important to God, or did God just want to see what the Christian’s attitude would be with the thing given him?

- II. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO LIVE THEIR LIVES AND DO THEIR BUSINESS WITH GOOD ECONOMY. *Christians must realize everything they have in their possession belongs to God.* If they do not give and do not properly use the things in their possession, God cannot prosper them. **A Christian cannot afford not to be a giver!**

- A. A good economist gives to God, recognizing that God provided. This allows God

to prosper him again and again.

I Corin. 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

- B. God wants every Christian to be able to be economical in handling his own business.

I Thessalonians 4:11, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;"

Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

- C. God instructs Christians to show good economy by working. If a person will not Work, then Christians should not feed him. Christians have to be careful not to sit and wait for God to do a miracle! Christians must get out and work to provide for things.

Sometimes people receive assistance when they are not working. A person who receives assistance of any kind is accountable for what they do with that assistance. Sometimes people will misuse assistance, which it places a curse upon that person because they are accountable to God for that assistance.

II Thessalonians 3:10-14, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."

Gal. 6:4-5, "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."

- D. Christian women were identified by being economical. They were to be

economical in using the things in their possession to accomplish the works of God. Good works from God's perspective require being economical.

I Timothy 2:10, “But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

III. PROVERBS GIVES CHRISTIANS GOOD INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING BEING ECONOMICAL.

Economy is an intricate part of every action a person does. Economy determines how a person works, walks, talks, and even what he thinks. God told Christians He was against idle words, vain thoughts, and lazy workers. Proverbs helps us to understand how God deals with all our actions.

A. Even a child is known by how he does things (economy).

Proverbs 20:11, “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.” Parents need to teach children to take care of toys, clothes, etc. It is easier to be lazy as a parent or to “do it yourself” and not work so hard with teaching children.

B. A pure man is known by how he works (economy).

Proverbs 21:8, “The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.” People can observe other people’s work to learn a lot about who they are.

C. The virtuous woman was known for how she worked (economy).

Proverbs 31:13, “She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.”

D. The virtuous woman was praised for the way she worked (economy).

Proverbs 31:31, “Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

SECTION THREE – THRIFT

(CONSERVATIVE) (LABOR)

Thrift: economical management in regard to property; success and advancement in the acquisition of property or increase of worldly goods. Every Christian should be economical when

purchasing or repairing properties.

Conservative: preserving, guarding or protecting; preservation from loss, decay, injury, or violation; the keeping of a thing in a safe or entire state. Christians should protect and take care of things we have been given.

How a Christian spends his money on the properties in his care is of great importance to God. God does not want Christians to be wasteful when purchasing new items, when replacing items, or when repairing items already in their care. Many times a Christian can be wasteful by simply failing to comparison shop when buying an item. For instance, a Christian should never buy the first car they see. They should check prices and make sure they are being thrifty. Every car salesman tries to get a person to make a decision without comparing prices.

God can bestow more stewardship upon those who show good thrift. Every Christian should be conservative, especially when an item needs repair. A Christian has to determine if it is more economical to repair or replace an item.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE THRIFTY AND WORK, BUT *IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS.*

II Corin. 9:6, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” A person reaps according to what and how much he sows.

I Corin. 9:25, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”

If a man strives for mastery he must be temperate. (mastery - dominion; power of governing or commanding; superiority in competition; preeminence); (temperate – moderate; not excessive; to exercise self restraint). It is easy to be excessive; to be great in one area, and throw everything else away (be out of balance.)

A. Christians show their thriftiness by working according to Christ's working.

Col. 1:29, “Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

B. It is the Lord that expects Christians to be thrifty by sending them to labor in the

harvest.

Matt. 9:37-38, "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

C. When a man is thrifty and works for masteries, he must do it lawfully.

II Timothy 2:5, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." For example, a Christian doesn't rob his employer to give to the church!

II. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD SHOW THRIFTINESS BY WORKING WITH A MOTIVE DEEPER THAN JUST CARNAL GAIN. A Christian should work for eternal things. When he works on his job, it should be to be able to give to others, to show others a proper view of the Lord, and to keep him from being idle. Also, a Christian will become carnal and self-centered if he does work to use his skills and money for others and the Lord.

A. Christians should be thrifty and work so they can give.

Acts 20:35, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Eph. 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

B. Paul showed his thriftiness by working with his hands while blessing others.

I Corin. 4:10-12, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:"

C. Christians should be thrifty and labor in the Lord.

Romans 16:12, "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord."

III. GOD ALSO RECOGNIZED THRIFTY WOMEN BY POINTING OUT THE WORK THEY DID. God will deal with men and women according to how they work. It is very important that women understand they should also be thrifty with their possessions and with the work they do.

A. Women showed thrift by working with Paul in the gospel.

Phil. 4:3, “And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.”

B. Mary was recognized by Paul for being thrifty by working with them.

Romans 16:6, “Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.”

IV. GOD WILL REWARD THRIFTY CHRISTIANS ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS. It is hard work to serve the Lord. It is hard work to get a Sunday School lesson together. It is hard work to work with the children in the nursery. The world tries to do everything to keep a Christian from being effective for the Lord. Why would a Christian want to work to serve God? God will reward Christians according to their works, in heaven and here on this earth.

When God looks at the works of Christians, He will determine how He will reward them by how thrifty they were. Christians need to remember that to whom much is given, much is required. **Being thrifty is dealing with what you have, not with what others have. What are you doing with the things in your possession?**

A. Christians will receive rewards from God according to how thrifty they were with their works.

I Cor. 3:8, “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward *according to his own labor.*”

B. Christians should know that their labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I Cor. 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

C. God will remember the thrifty Christian’s work of faith and labor of love.

I Thessalonians 1:3, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;”

D. God stated that thrifty laborers are worthy of their rewards.

I Timothy 5:18, "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."

E. Christians should labor thriftily for the food that Christ gives, which lasts forever.

John 6:27, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION II

GODLY ATTITUDE INSTILLED

LESSON EIGHT

COMMITTED - PERSISTENCE - ENDURANCE

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems with Christians today is a lack of committing to Christ and choosing to live for Him. Many say they are committed, but lack the persistence to continue with God when problems arise. Many depart from the faith, or even change their beliefs, because they do not have the fortitude inside of them to finish what they started for the Lord. Persecutions and tribulations will always come into the life of a Christian, and only a determination to persevere (made in the mind and heart) will keep the Christian serving God. It is not enough for a Christian to just commit his life to Christ. A Christian must continue when hard times come and be persistent to finish his life for Christ.

SECTION ONE - COMMITTED

Committed - To give in trust; to put into the hands or power of another; to entrust.

Christians need to commit (entrust) their lives to Christ and also to the qualified workers of the Lord. Christians also need to build their lives so that others can commit to them. All Christians should strive to become trustworthy, so that others can commit to them. Commitment is basically a two-part process:

- I. THE FIRST PHASE IS BEING ABLE TO PLACE YOURSELF OR POSSESSIONS INTO THE HANDS OF SOMEONE ELSE. A Christian needs to be able to commit to others.
 - A. If a Christian commits the direction of his life unto the Lord, God will cause the Christian's objective to be reached because the Christian's objective becomes God's objective. The way (or direction) of a Christian's life should be placed in the hands of the Lord. This can only take place if the Christian trusts God. Few

Christians truly trust the Lord in their daily walk. Do Christians really trust God or do they believe they know more about their life than God does?

Psalms 37:5, "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

Pr 16:9, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

- B. When a Christian commits his works unto the Lord, his thoughts will be established. Many thoughts throughout the day are not from the Lord. A Christian's works or actions of production should be committed to the Lord, which will cause the Christian to think about what is being produced for the Lord. Doubts and insecurities come from not trusting the Lord and not putting works into His hands. Remember the Bible says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

Proverbs 16:3, "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

- C. Job committed his cause unto the Lord. Job had recognized the workings of God and knew that God was able to take care of his commitment to God. (cause: "What is the purpose? What is being accomplished? What am I living for?")

Job 5:8-11, "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety."

- II. THE SECOND PHASE OF COMMITMENT IS FOR A CHRISTIAN TO BE WORTHY FOR OTHERS TO PLACE THEIR LIVES OR POSSESSIONS INTO THE HANDS OF THE CHRISTIAN. Christians have to show they are worthy for others to commit things to them.

- A. There are some qualifications necessary before others can commit to the Christian the true riches in life. A Christian must be faithful in all things to qualify for others to commit to him. A Christian needs to show good stewardship of the small

things of others before he is entrusted with another person's life. The pattern set in a Christian's life is seen in all area of his life. Does the Christian really care about the little things? Is the Christian faithful to take care of the children in the nursery before he can be put in charge of taking care of adults?

Luke 16:10-13, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

- B. Timothy was given instructions to commit the things he was taught to faithful men who were to teach them to others. Christians need to commit the teaching of the Word of God to Christians who have proven themselves faithful to teach it to others.

II Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

- C. The oracles of God were committed to the Jews. God trusted men like Abraham and Moses and committed His oracles to them (oracles: something said including the thought). The nation of Israel was given the responsibility of caring for the things God said.

Romans 3:1-2, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

III. THE FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE TO WHOM THINGS WERE COMMITTED:

- A. God committed the dispensation of the gospel to Paul. God trusted Paul enough to commit the great message of the gospel to him. Paul experienced numerous hardships, from being stoned to being shipwrecked, but never disappointed God

by neglecting what had been put in his trust.

1 Corinthians 9:16-18, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing *willingly*, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel."

- B. God committed to Christians the word of reconciliation (evangelism). Every saved person needs to realize that evangelism has been given to him. Christians need to make sure they do not disappoint God by not fulfilling His commitment to them.

II Corinthians 5:19, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

- C. Paul committed to Timothy the responsibility of carrying the mercy of Christ to the lost, bringing glory to the Lord. Paul placed into the hands of Timothy the charge (mandate) of commanding Christians to fulfil the work of the Lord. Paul didn't just charge Timothy, he entrusted him to charge others also.

1 Timothy 1:15-20, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." They through their faith down and would not carry it.

IV. OWNERSHIP OF POSSESSIONS CAN PREVENT PEOPLE FROM COMMITTING TO THE LORD. It is much easier for the poor to commit to the Lord because they do not have as many earthly strongholds that keep them from committing to or from trusting in the Lord. If the Lord gave a Christian a million dollars, would that Christian be in church on Sunday continuing his ministry or would he have to do too many other things, changing his service to the Lord in his local church? Would he take a “break” from ministry, to travel, to purchase more earthly things that would take time and effort away from current ministry?

Psalms 10:14, "Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless."

I Timothy 6:17, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

SECTION TWO - PERSISTENCE (CONTINUE)

Persistence - To continue steadily and firmly in the pursuit of any business or course commenced; steady pursuit of what is undertaken. The difference between persistence and integrity is that integrity is a personal-oriented character trait, while persistence and perseverance is more work-oriented.

Continue - To last; to be durable; to endure; not to cease to do or use.

For a Christian to have the persistence that is needed to continue following God, he needs the help of God. Acts 26:22, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:"

There are many who do not persist in following Christ because they are “not of us” (the same mind, heart, or direction as the local church body). 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE PERSISTENT IN FOLLOWING HIM.

A. Jesus appointed kingdoms to those who continued with Him.

Luke 22:28-29, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;"

- B. Christians who quit serving God miss out on the things God would have given them in eternity.

I Corin. 3:14-15, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

- C. The early disciples continued with gladness and singleness of heart.

Acts 2:46, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"

- D. If the Christian perseveres in the things that were heard from the beginning (salvation) he will continue in the Son and the Father. Sometimes Christians try to step out from salvation and try to do things another way, continuing in their own power and not staying with the power of salvation.

I John 2:24, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

II. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE LIKE PAUL AND PERSIST IN DOING THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY AT ALL COST.

- A. Paul persisted against the Jews that the gospel might continue.

Galatians 2:5, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

- B. Paul was stoned and left for dead, but because the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ was his life, he rose up and went to the churches exhorting the Christians to persevere in the faith.

Acts 14:19-22, "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the

city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

- C. Christians will be presented in the sight of Christ without blame if they persist in the faith.

Colossians 1:21-23, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: *If ye continue in the faith* grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;" (falling into the same category as Hymenaeus and Alexander).

III. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO PERSIST IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- A. God wants Christians to continue in His Word that they might be His disciples.

John 8:31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;"

- B. God wants Christians to continue in His love.

John 15:9, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

- C. God wants Christians to continue in one accord.

Acts 1:14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

- D. God wants Christians to continue in the apostles' doctrine.

Acts 2:42, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

- E. God wants Christians to persist in goodness.

Romans 11:22, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

- F. God wants Christians to persist in the things that they have learned.

II Timothy 3:11-14, "Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;"

- G. God wants Christians to continue in brotherly love.

Hebrews 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue."

IV. THERE ARE MANY BLESSINGS WHICH GOD GRANTS TO CHRISTIANS WHO ARE PERSISTENT.

- A. God will bless the work of those who persist in the law of liberty.

James 1:25, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

- B. God blessed the early Christians because they prayed with persistence.

Acts 12:5,15,16, "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him....And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished."

- C. God blessed the Christians at Antioch of Pisidia after they persisted that Paul and Barnabas stay and preach to them the Word of God.

Acts 13:42-44, "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the

grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

SECTION THREE - ENDURANCE (PERSEVERANCE)

Endurance - To last; to continue in the same state without perishing; to remain; to abide; to bear; to sustain; to support without breaking or yielding to force or pressure. Perseverance – To persist in any business or enterprise undertaken; to pursue steadily any design or course commenced; not to give over or abandon what is undertaken.

I. WHETHER OR NOT A CHRISTIAN PERSEVERES IS ONE OF THE BASIC MEASUREMENTS OF HIS WORTH TO A MINISTRY.

- A. There will be some who will not persevere being offended by the persecutions that come because of the Word of God.

Mark 4:17, "And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."

- B. There are some that will not persevere with solid doctrine because of their own desires. They will find teachers who will listen to them and say what they want instead of what the Word of God says.

II Timothy 4:3-5, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

- C. God instructs His disciples to persevere as good soldiers. Sometimes the thinking of a Christian is "if it gets too tough, I can quit". The most disgraceful thing a soldier can do is desert. A soldier of the Lord enlists until he dies.

II Timothy 2:1-4, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth

himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

II. GOD BLESSED THOSE IN THE BIBLE WHO PERSEVERED AND CONTINUED WITH THE LORD.

- A. Paul persevered sufferings for the salvation of others (Christians today). When Christians suffer, other people are the issue. When things get tough, think of others and it will help to keep on serving!

II Corinthians 1:6, "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."

- B. Paul persevered all things for the sake of the saved.

II Timothy 2:8-12, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:" (deny rewards, not salvation).

- C. Abraham persevered and obtained the promise of God.

Hebrews 6:13-15, "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

- D. Just as Jesus endured the suffering of the cross, Christians are to persevere in all situations and not faint in their minds.

Hebrews 12:1-3, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider

him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

III. GOD WILL REWARD CHRISTIANS WHO PERSEVERE WHEN TIMES OF PERSECUTIONS OR TRIALS COME.

- A. The Lord delivered Paul out of all his persecutions and afflictions because he persevered.

II Timothy 3:10-14, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;"

- B. A Christian's church will benefit by his perseverance.

II Thess. 1:4, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:"

- C. Chastening (correcting wrong action) will come and those who persevere will be dealt with by God as His children. What does God want to get rid of in the life of the Christian?

Hebrews 12:5-8, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

- D. Those who persevere through temptations will receive the crown of life.

James 1:12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is

tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

IV. HOW A CHRISTIAN GETS THE ABILITY TO PERSEVERE:

A. Prayer and watching assists perseverance.

Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

B. Charity is the internal power that enables Christians to persevere all things.

1Corinthians 13:7, (Charity) "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION II

GODLY ATTITUDE INSTILLED

LESSON NINE

CONTENT - PATIENCE – SINCERITY

INTRODUCTION

God wants Christians to be content with their life so they can be at peace. When a Christian is content, it is easy for him to be patient and sincere. When a Christian is not satisfied with his state of life, he is typically impatient and appears to be insincere to others. Being content seems to be one of the hardest character traits for a Christian to gain. The world teaches that a person should never be content and should always strive for bigger and better things. Almost all the retail sales, commercials, and advertisements in the world push for people to buy something more than what they currently have.

Lack of contentment can cause Christians to overextend their time, their energy, and their income. One of the primary products of the world that shows the lack of contentment is credit card debts. When an overextension of time, energy or income happens, the Christian's church is on the losing end. The Christian is incapable of giving the way he should to the work of the Lord, either with his money or time.

God wants Christians to be content with the life He's given them, to show patience in waiting on the Lord to work in their life, and to be sincere in everything they do.

SECTION ONE - CONTENT

Content - Having a mind at peace; easy; satisfied, so as not to fret, object, or oppose. To make quiet, so as to stop complaint or opposition; to appease; to make easy in any situation.

There are many Christians who will never be satisfied because they are looking for *things* they do not have instead of being thankful for the things God has already given them. Being content *does not mean* that a person should sit back and not have any drive to achieve in life, nor

does it mean that people should be content with having sin in their life. Do not go in that direction with contentment. A Christian should never be content with problems or imperfections in his life. **Contentment can never be attached to or operate with sin. A Christian should never, under any circumstances, be content with sin in his life.** But at the same time, a Christian should be satisfied with what he has and where he is in life. A person cannot change his history or where he is at the present time, but a person can be different tomorrow.

Failure to be content causes a person to be unstable. Many people jump from one job to another, one church to another, and even one spouse to another. That person can never be satisfied with anything and will spend his whole life jumping from one thing to another. That person tends to think that life is unfair, that everything is against him, and that God does not bless him. The verse that says all things work together for good is obviously not a verse for that type of person. It is after a Christian gains contentment, that God can add other things to a Christian's life.

God will never lead a Christian to leave a ministry because the Christian is not content. Fulfilling needs in a Christian's life is **not** the issue and will not make a Christian content. Christians should leave a church if it has sin in its structure that does not get corrected. But they should not leave a church because of looking for something better, or because they do not like something about the church in which God has placed them. Christians need to develop and learn how to handle problems correctly, and not run from them. The same issues will continue to occur until the Christian learns what God wants him to learn.

I. THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE NOT CONTENT BECAUSE THEY WANT WHAT GOD WILL NOT GIVE TO THEM. There are times even a Christian will set his heart on things he cannot have, and when he does this, he will not be content.

A. A jealous person will never be content. When a person thinks someone else has received more than they have, or they want what another person received, they cannot be content. God gives what He wants to give and Christians should be glad He gave it and praise the Lord for it, not be jealous because he did not receive it.

Prov. 6:34-35, "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts."

- B. A person who covets another person's position of authority will not be content. Diotrephes would not be content unless he had the superiority over all the church. There are some people in a church that are not satisfied until they have preeminence (wanting to be first in rank or importance over others). They don't care if God did not place them in that position; they only see that they do not have it and will not be content until they get their way.

III John 9-11, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and *not content* therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."

- II. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE CONTENT. When Christians are not content, they are continually dissatisfied and anxious regarding what is happening in their life. Many times people take drugs just because they are sad and dissatisfied about things in life instead of being content. The world even tries to make people feel guilty because they do not "keep up with the Joneses" or they do not have a better house, car, clothes, etc.

- A. Godly contentment is great gain. The following verses define contentment and instruct Christians on how to be content. The word "gain" means to acquire or get possessions. There are many who dedicate their lives to obtaining worldly possessions, when the Bible makes it clear that contentment itself is great gain and not material things. The way for a Christian to determine correct gain is to establish *what is the purpose of the gain?* Is the gain for use in ministry, or will it eventually take the Christian further away from serving God because of the focus, time, effort, or money it will consume?

1 Timothy 6:5-11, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. **But godliness with contentment is great gain.** For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment **let us be therewith content.** But

they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; **and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.**”

- B. Christians should be content when they have accomplished the work God has instructed them to do. When giving an assignment or doing an assignment in ministry or for a job, a Christian need to be satisfied (content) when it gets completed. Moses was content after he realized that the priests had offered a sin offering for their own sins.

Lev. 10:16-20, "And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive, saying, Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD? Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy place: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded. And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and if I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD? And when Moses heard that, he was content."

- III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WITH WHICH GOD INSTRUCTS A CHRISTIAN TO BE CONTENT. God wants Christians to be content in their life, but gives specific instructions about certain areas in life.

- A. Be content with your *wages*. It is amazing how many people will overextend their spending because of wanting material gain, and then get upset with their employer because he doesn't pay them enough to meet their financial obligations. Is the more expensive car, or home, or things really necessary for life and ministry? If finances were not overextended, would there be contentment with wages?

Luke 3:14, "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

- B. Be content in *whatever state the Christian is in*. There are many who spend their whole life wishing for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. There are pastors who have fifty in attendance and spend all their time dreaming about a church of a hundred or looking to be called to a bigger church instead of building the one he is pastoring. There are Christians who keep wishing they would be asked to do some major job in the church, while never doing anything to show they are trustworthy to handle small jobs. They are never content and do not learn to serve where they are.

Phil. 4:11, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

- C. All Christians should be content with their salvation because *Jesus will never leave nor forsake them*. A Christian should serve the Lord where he is and should do it with all his might. The main issue is not what a Christian has or what a Christian is doing, but who is always with the Christian while working. What more could a Christian ask for than to know that the God of everything is always with him!

Heb. 13:5-6, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

SECTION TWO - PATIENCE

Patience - The suffering of afflictions, pain, toil, calamity, provocation or evil, with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or fretfulness. May spring from constitutional fortitude, from a kind of heroic pride, or from Christian submission to the divine will of God.

Patience is the characteristic that enables a Christian to continue on his mission of life. *When a Christian does not have patience, events that detain or hinder his life will cause the Christian to be distracted and he will depart from accomplishing what God directed.* The events could even cause him to sin because of the frustration he experiences while being detained by

circumstances. Patience allows a Christian to stay on course no matter what life brings.

The Bible glorifies Christians who have patience in their lives. Paul gave glory to the church at Thessalonica for having patience. They stayed true to what they were to do for God. II Thess. 1:4, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your *patience* and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."

I. PATIENCE GOES ALONG WITH THE POWER OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN. There are many Christians today who do not have the power of God and fail to connect the lack of power to their lack of patience.

A. When a Christian is strengthened with the power of God, patience is produced. One of the identifying attributes of a Christian having the power of God on his life is that he has patience.

Col. 1:10-11, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, beingfruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, *unto all patience* and longsuffering with joyfulness;" Patience was the first thing listed after being strengthened by the power of God. This is very different than some concepts preached today about showing the power of God.

B. The power of patience is what enables a Christian to possess his soul (possess – to have control over). What do people look for to determine if someone is in control of their life? Patience has to be seen. A root problem that causes many people to have uncontrolled actions in their life is lack of patience. When a person has uncontrolled actions, and does not have control of his temper, patience is needed to change his life.

Luke 21:19, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

II. PATIENCE IS AN ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF MATURE CHRISTIANS. When determining who is a mature Christian, others should always look to see if patience is shown. If the Christian does not have patience, that person is still functioning as a child spiritually, no matter how long the person has been saved or what the person does in a church.

A. God told Christians to look at the prophets as an example of patience. All Christians will face hardships of one kind or another, and patience will keep

Christians on track. The reason many Christians quit when hard times come is because they lack patience. The most outstanding characteristic of the prophets is that they did not quit when they faced hard times. They stayed with God knowing the final result was in the hands of God.

James 5:7-11, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

- B. When God gave instructions regarding elders, he stated that they had to have patience. Too many preachers and churches are weak because they do not have patience.

Titus 2:2, "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."

- C. God instructed Christians to be patient toward all men. Patience is not something that is selective to be present some times and absent other times. Patience is not something to be turned on and off by the choice of the Christian. When patience is developed, it becomes part of a Christian's character.

1Thess. 5:14, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men."

- III. There are some specific areas in which the Bible tells Christians to have patience. Every Christian should work at keeping these things continually in his life.

- A. Christians are to be patient and *continue in well doing*. Patience is what will keep a Christian from turning away from the direction God has established for him to follow. Patience is what leads Christians to the end God has promised them.

Rom. 2:7, "To them who by *patient continuance in well doing* seek for

glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:"

- B. Christians are to have patience with the *Scriptures*. A Christian should not get discouraged when studying the Word of God and quit. Most people think they know what the Bible says about some issues and want an instant fix to everything, but do not have patience to study the Bible. This fast food mentality is evidenced in taking pills for quick fixes in society today. Every Christian can understand the Bible if they will study it with patience. Isn't patience actually tested and developed as a Christian studies the Bible?

Rom. 15:4-5, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we *through patience and comfort of the scriptures* might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:"

- C. Christians should have patience even when they *suffer for their goodness*. If Christians are wrongly persecuted for doing good, they should have patience and wait on the Lord.

1 Peter 2:20, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

- D. Christians are to *run with patience the race set before them*. Christians should have the patience to continue in the work of the Lord and set aside all the things that keep them from finishing the work of the Lord.

Heb. 12:1, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"

- IV. MANY TIMES CHRISTIANS ARE BROUGHT INTO CONTACT WITH THE VERY THINGS THAT WILL PRODUCE PATIENCE AND PRAY FOR GOD TO REMOVE THEM. Many times they do not understand what develops patience in a Christian's life. Some may turn away or even turn against God because He did not remove the things that would have produced patience in the Christian's life. The following are things that produce patience in the life of a Christian:

- A. When a Christian's faith is tried, patience is produced. Once a Christian understands the value of patience, he will appreciate the trials that help produce patience.

James 1:3-4, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (contentment)

- B. Tribulations in life produce patience. No one wants tribulations to be a part of their life, but when tribulations do come, a Christian should understand the reason and endure it with patience.

Rom. 5:3-5, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

V. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME AREAS IN LIFE THAT REQUIRE PATIENCE:

- A. When a Christian seeks a position or a ministry in a church, it is required that he show patience. A Christian must have patience to be approved as a minister of God.

II Cor. 6:4, "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,"

- B. To be approved as a bishop in a church, a person must be patient. The word "bishop" means administrator, and to be able to run the business of a church requires that a person have patience. Many churches approve a minister because he has knowledge or even skills, but God also makes it clear that a minister must also have patience.

I Tim. 3:3, "Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;"

- C. The signs of being an apostle included having patience. When you look at the lives of the apostles, you find patience was necessary or they would have turned back like so many others did.

II Cor. 12:12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."

- D. The servant of the Lord must have patience. There have been many servants of the Lord who quit when problems came because they did not have the patience to finish the race. Most of the world has no respect for Christians today because they lack patience and do not endure in times of difficulties.

II Tim. 2:24-26, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

- E. The promises of God are inherited by Christians who develop patience. Every Christian wants God to bless them, *but very seldom do they connect His blessings to their patience.*

Heb. 6:12, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

SECTION THREE - SINCERE

Sincere - Pure; unmixed; being in reality what it appears to be; not fake; not simulated; not assumed or said for the sake of appearance; real; not hypocritical or pretended.

Christians are not to put on false pretenses, but in everything be real (sincere). Christianity is not a game for people to play, but it is life itself. A sincere Christian is one who lives what he believes and practices what he preaches.

- I. CHRISTIANS ARE TO LIVE A LIFE OF SINCERITY. For Christians to be proper examples to society, they have to be sincere. The world looks for authenticity in things and in people. Hypocrisy or being two-faced should never be part of Christianity. Does a Christian put on his church face at church, house face at home, work face at work? Under God's grace, a Christian does not have to put on a phony face to prove everything is okay. And if things are not okay, a Christian has to be real and sincere because no one can help if he is not.
- A. Being sincere shows that we are of God and shows others the good taste or good smell of the Christian's life. Christianity gives a different aroma to different people. To the lost, it is a bad smell. To those that are practicing their Christianity, it is a sweet smell.

II Cor. 2:14-17, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.

And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." (savour – to taste or smell usually with pleasure).

- B. Christians are to prove the sincerity of their love. The way a Christian proves his sincerity is *to be real when showing* love toward others.

II Cor. 8:7-8, "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."

- C. Christians should desire the sincere milk of the Word. Christians should want to know the Word of God with sincerity. Christians need to know that the Word of God is real and desire it in their life. A Christian cannot grow when the Word of God is not real, whole, complete to him.

I Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

- II. CHRISTIANS SHOULD SERVE GOD WITH ALL SINCERITY. When a Christian works for the Lord, it should be done with a sincere motive—in other words, because they want to.

- A. Christians are to rejoice with godly sincerity, not the wisdom of the flesh. When a Christian openly triumphs about his life, he should make sure what he says is sincere.

II Cor. 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

- B. When Christians are sincere, they will approve things that are excellent. When a Christian accepts things as being over and above normal, he should do it with sincerity and not give false approval or false compliments.

Phil. 1:9-10, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

- C. Christians are to preach with love showing sincerity. Pastors and all preachers should speak the Word of God from their heart, knowing that what they say is real.

Phil. 1:14-17, "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel."

- D. Christians should be sincere in all good works. When a Christian does good works, he should always work with right motives and with a pure heart.

Titus 2:7, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,"

- E. Joshua challenged Israel to serve God with sincerity and truth. Joshua wanted to make sure that those who served God would not share their service with other gods.

Joshua 24:14, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD."

- III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD REMOVE THE OLD LEAVEN OF MALICE AND WICKEDNESS AND LIVE WITH SINCERITY AND TRUTH. A Christian is not sincere when he tries to serve God with internal motives to hurt or to do wrong to others. Many times Christians try to minister to others while they feel jealous, want revenge, or desire some personal gratification. At a time like this, they only hurt those they are ministering to. Any Christian who ministers to others should have a sincere and godly heart that wants to help them.

I Cor. 5:6-8, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Phil. 2:3-4, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION III

CHRISTIAN ACTIONS EXHIBITED

LESSON TEN

GIVING - CARING - CHEERFUL

INTRODUCTION

It is very important that every Christian develops a giving spirit. When a Christian develops a giving life, he will care about others. And when he cares about others, he will have a cheerful character. If a Christian spends all his time taking care of himself, he will be selfish and live a life without cheer. Many times when a Christian hears a reference to giving, he automatically thinks of offering plates and pleas for money. The real issue is having a giving spirit. This is inside of a person and is never controlled by the circumstances of life. When a Christian is not a giver, he will not care about others, and will end up being sad and lonely. God wants every Christian to have His character of giving, which leads to caring. God also wants His children to be cheerful.

SECTION ONE - GIVING

Giving - The act of bestowing; conferring; imparting; granting; delivering. Giving comes from within a Christian. This is where he chooses to give because of who he is, and not for what he might receive.

- I. GOD IS A GIVER, WHICH IS PART OF HIS CHARACTER. What is one of the character traits that makes God who He is? It is the very loving character of God, which causes Him to give. God wants Christians to have the same character as He does, which makes it imperative that Christians be givers. If Christians are to have God's character, then Christians need to understand how God gives.
 - A. God is like a parent who gives good gifts to His children. God knows how to give many more good things to His children, when they ask, than even good earthly parents can give.

Matt. 7:9-11, "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*"

- B. Jesus asked the woman at the well to give him a drink of water. He offered to give her living water if she would only receive it. Jesus used the woman's giving to help her understand God's giving to her. One of the main reasons the world does not accept God's salvation is because they do not understand unconditional giving.

John 4:7-15, "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, *Give me to drink.* (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

- C. Jacob made the statement that he would give back ten percent of everything God gave him. Jacob's name was later changed to Israel which means "he will rule as God". It is clear that Jacob understood God's giving and was willing to demonstrate God's character to others. The biggest change in the life of a Christian is the day he or she recognizes God gives everything to the Christian. The Christian should give back to God because he gives everything to us.

Gen. 28:22, "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (The place he called God's house was called Bethel)

II. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO GIVE TO OTHERS TO GLORIFY THE NAME OF CHRIST. One of the greatest ways a Christian glorifies the name of Christ is by his giving. Any Christian who does not give is not glorifying the name of Christ. There is no way a person can be like Christ without being a giver.

A. Christians have freely received the things of God, and should give them freely to others. The word “freely” used in the following verse means ‘gratuitously’, which means ‘something given voluntarily or beyond obligation’. God has given to Christians beyond obligation and wants Christians to do the same.

Matt. 10:8, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

B. God wants Christians to give in the name of Jesus Christ. Many Christians want to receive the credit for their giving instead of giving credit to Christ. There are many who will give if there is some recognition given to them. It might be public acknowledgement or naming something after them. This does not mean a church cannot name a building or something after a person, but a church should never receive money if the person giving it wants the glory to go to himself instead of Christ.

Mark 9:41, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

III. GOD HAS GIVEN CHRISTIANS INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING HOW THE CHRISTIAN IS TO GIVE. Christians are to be outlets for the things of God and give according to His instructions.

A. God said that He will give to those who gives to others. God determines how much He will give to a Christian by how much the Christian gives. God gives with the same measurement. A Christian cannot out give God.

Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

B. When a Christian chooses to give, God wants them to give with simplicity. Simplicity means with singleness of heart or with sincerity without seeking self-fulfillment. Christians should never give with complicated motives or self-centered desires.

Rom. 12:8, "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

- C. When a Christian gives, it should be from his heart and what he chooses to give. A Christian's heart is the center of his existence. It is where he thinks and feels. God wants a Christian to give according to how he thinks in his heart. God wants a Christian to give because he wants to and chooses to, not because he is coerced or motivated by guilt or any other external thought. God wants a Christian to give because he loves God and wants to glorify Him.

II Cor. 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (purposeth - the act of setting before a person an object to be reached or accomplished; grudgingly - unwillingly; with reluctance or discontent; necessity - that which must be and cannot be otherwise).

- D. One of the key attributes of a righteous person is to be a giver. A righteous person is one who is just in being right. God makes it clear that a righteous person is one who does not spare in giving, but gives because it is right.

Prov. 21:25-26, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not."

IV. HOW A CHRISTIAN GIVES IS ONE OF THE BASIC IDENTIFIERS OF WHO THE CHRISTIAN IS.

Individuals, organizations and even nations are identified by their giving.

- A. A Christian should work to earn money so that he might give to those who are in need. One of the major reasons for a Christian to be a good worker is so he can give. Most of the time, Christians pray for promotions or raises on the job for personal gain instead of being able to give more.

Eph. 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

- B. The church at Philippi communicated to Paul regarding how it gave to him. Not only should individuals give, but churches should be givers also. If a church body is to represent Christ, then a church must give with the right attitude.

Phil. 4:15, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."

- C. One of the main ways to gain friends is to be a giver. Many times people will wonder why they do not have friends, and never associate having friends with giving. Not only does God use giving to determine how he identifies Himself with a person, but individuals do the same. A person who has friends must be friendly to others, which is recognized by his giving. Be a friend to God by giving to Him.

Prov. 19:6, "Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts."

- D. When a Christian gives to the poor, God will supply his needs. A Christian is instructed to give to those who are poor because God does. (poor does not mean begger).

Prov. 28:27, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse."

SECTION TWO - CARING

Caring - To look to; regard; attention; or to heed with a mindset of safety and protection. Caring is looking after another person's life and showing them attention. God wants Christians to care about others, and particularly, their brothers and sisters in Christ. David was greatly disheartened because there was no one who cared for his soul. Probably the greatest loneliness a person can ever experience is to think that no one cares about his life. This is what David felt when he wrote the following: Psalms 142:4, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." He thought there was no place of protection or caring.

- I. GOD CARES FOR CHRISTIANS AND GLORIFIES CHRISTIANS WHO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS. God elevates caring above many other actions of a Christian.
- A. The Samaritan was a man that was not recognized as a child of God (Israelite) but he was recognized for his caring. Jesus compared the religious leaders with a Samaritan (half-Jew and half-Gentile) and gave praise to the Samaritan because he cared. God makes it very clear that caring about others takes precedence over "religion".

Luke 10:34-35, "And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

- B. Every Christian can trust God to care for them. The Bible clearly states that God takes care of the children of God.

1 Peter 5:6-7, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

- II. THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI CARED FOR PAUL. Churches, as well as individual Christians, should care about others. A church should take care of its own members, as well as those it sends out.

Phil. 4:10, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity."

- III. CARING FOR THE THINGS OF THE WORLD WILL KEEP A CHRISTIAN FROM CARING FOR THE THINGS OF GOD. It is very easy for a Christian to become consumed with the cares of this world at the expense of caring about the things of God.

- A. Caring for the things of the world will compress or bind the Word of God. Those who spent their time caring for the things of the world will have the Word of God choked from their lives. They will be afraid to talk to others about Christ because it might cost them something.

Mark 4:19, "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

- B. Caring for the riches and pleasures of this life are like thorns to the sharing of the Word of God. Those who spend all their time caring for the things of the world, and not caring for others, will become selfish and never produce anything for the Lord.

Luke 8:14, "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

- C. Martha accused the Lord of not caring that she was serving alone and challenged Him to make her sister serve instead of worshipping. Every Christian should serve and care for the things of God, but never at the expense of hearing the Word of God.

Luke 10:39-42, "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

- D. A pastor who works for money will not care for the sheep under his ministry. He will only care for his income and will run when trouble comes.

John 10:13 "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

- IV. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO TAKE CARE OF HIS CHURCHES. If a church is truly what God designed it to be, it will take care of those who comes in contact with the church. The leaders of a church must show care for others as an integral part of their character.

- A. God wants the members in a church to care for each other. There will not be divisions or schisms in a church when the members care for each other. It is very difficult for a Christian to criticize and condemn others when the Christian cares about them.

1 Cor. 12:25, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

- B. Paul recognized his responsibility to care for all the churches. Paul listed the problems he had experienced, from being beaten to being shipwrecked, but recognized that his daily responsibility was to take care of the churches.

2 Cor. 11:28 "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

- C. Paul recognized that Titus had the same care for those in the church at Corinth as he did. One of the greatest bonds two Christians can have between each other is when they care for each other.

2 Cor. 8:16 "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you."

- D. Paul recognized Timothy for his care for the church at Philippi. Paul recognized Timothy as having the same mind that he did, and that was to care for the state of the church at Philippi.

Phil. 2:19-22, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel."

- E. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth to point out the things they were doing wrong because he cared for them. Paul did this out of a motive of love. When a Christian cares about another person, he will do what he can to help the other person do what God said was right. This must be done with a right heart motive to help, and not to condemn!

2 Cor. 7:12 "Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you."

- F. If a man does not know how to rule his own house, he will not know how to take care of a church. (rule - to control the will and actions of others, either by arbitrary power and authority, or by established laws.) God makes it clear that how a man rules his house is directly attached to caring for others. If a man does not care for his own house, he should not be allowed to take care of one of God's churches.

1 Tim. 3:5 "(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"

SECTION THREE - CHEERFUL

Cheerful - Expressive of good spirit or joy. Being cheerful is not just something someone feels inside, but it is also an outward expression of having a good spirit. Being cheerful is usually associated with showing hope or courage. Being cheerful dispels gloom and worry. A cheerful person does not have the "mullygrubs" (mull - to consider at length; grub - a slovenly person; sloven - negligent of neatness or

cleanliness). A person who has the mullygrubs is one worries over a matter until he doesn't care about the outcome or how it appears. A person with the mullygrubs is not cheerful.

I. CHRISTIANS NEED TO BE CHEERFUL BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS DID FOR THEM. Christ has done and is still doing many things for Christians. When a Christian recognizes what Christ has done, he has good reason to be cheerful. Happiness is not looking to get something (on the outside), but recognizing what you already have (on the inside).

A. Jesus told the man who had been sick to be of good cheer because his sins had been forgiven. When a Christian realizes that Christ has forgiven him of his sins, he should be cheerful.

Matt. 9:1-7, "And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house."

B. Jesus told his disciples to be of good cheer because He was present with them.

Matt. 14:24-27, "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

C. Jesus told his disciples to be of good cheer because He had overcome the world. (overcome - to conquer; to subdue; to defeat.)

John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

II. WHEN CHRISTIANS RECOGNIZE THEY HAVE BEEN BLESSED BY GOD, THEY SHOULD BE CHEERFUL.

- A. God told Paul to be of good cheer because he was going to testify of Him at Rome. When a Christian gets an opportunity to share the Word of God with others, he should do it cheerfully.

Acts 23:11, "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

- B. Paul was cheerful when he was allowed to answer for himself regarding Christ. When a Christian is given the opportunity to give a testimony of what God has done in his life, the Christian should do it cheerfully.

Acts 24:10, "Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:"

- C. Paul told the occupants of the ship he was on to be of good cheer because God had told him they would not lose their lives. When a messenger of God assures people that they are going to be okay because of what God said, they should be cheerful.

Acts 27:21-25, 36, "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.... Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."

III. THERE ARE TIMES IN THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS WHEN THEY ARE INSTRUCTED TO BE CHEERFUL.

- A. When a Christian shows mercy to others, it is to be done with cheerfulness. When a Christian does not hold another person responsible for the wrong he did to the Christian, his heart should do it with cheerfulness.

Rom. 12:8 "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

- B. When a Christian gives, God wants him to give cheerfully. Most of the people in the world have little or nothing to give. Every Christian who has been blessed by God with money should be more than willing to give, and to be cheerful when he does give.

2 Cor. 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

- C. A merry heart is shown by having a cheerful countenance. (merry - pleasant; agreeable; delightful). When a Christian has a merry heart, it can be seen on his face. Why do so many Christians look so sad?

Prov. 15:13, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION III

CHRISTIAN ACTIONS EXHIBITED

LESSON ELEVEN

KIND - GENTLE - FRIENDLY

INTRODUCTION

Kindness is one of the greatest manifestations of Christ that a Christian can exhibit. A person who is ruff and gruff is not considered to be Christ like. People are judged by their actions toward others. Christians are to be kind to others and gentle in actions, which causes others to recognize their friendship. There are so many people who call themselves Christians that purposefully speak to tear down and hurt others. Churches are split, marriages are destroyed, children are confused, and many more devastating results come from so-called Christians who are not kind and gentle. Many even brag about being destructive to others with their harshness. Humanity or carnality has infiltrated churches causing many to fight and hurt each other. There are saved people all over who are not serving Christ because they have been hurt by these so-called Christians. This study makes it clear that being kind, as well as being gentle and friendly, are to be absolutely essential in the life of all Christians if the work of the Lord is going to be accomplished.

SECTION ONE - KIND

Kind - disposed to do good to others, and to make them happy by granting their requests, supplying their wants, or assisting them in distress; having tenderness or goodness of nature; benevolent.

When a Christian is kind, he has a character that wants to be good to others. Probably the greatest identifier of Christianity is when Christians show kindness one to another. Religion without kindness it is not Christianity, no matter what name it carries. In Acts, Paul recognized the kindness of the ungodly heathens. Even barbarians show kindness.

Acts 28:2, "And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."

I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO HAVE KINDNESS JUST AS HE HAS KINDNESS. The Bible makes it clear that God is kind and wants all His children to be kind. When Christians look at the attributes of God and seek to be like Him, kindness must be a part of the character of a Christian.

A. The saved are instructed to put on kindness. Kindness is not a choice for Christians, but a mandate.

Col. 3:12, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;"

B. God showed his kindness to mankind by sending his Son, Jesus. Very seldom do Christians realize that God's provision of salvation was an act of kindness. This makes it clear that kindness has no limit. Kindness is not just a small act, but can also be major acts of being good to others. Sharing the gospel should always be done as an act of kindness. Evangelism should not be done from feelings of duty, or superiority, nor by force.

Titus 3:4-7, "But after that the *kindness and love of God* our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

C. A person's affections or longings are demonstrated by his kindness. It is easy for people to say, "I care", "I love you", "You are important". But none of these things said are believed without kindness.

Prov. 19:22, "The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar." (desire - a longing; affection)

II. GOD MAKES IT PLAIN THAT TRUE CHRISTIANS HAVE TO BE KIND. The Bible makes it clear that Christians should make sure that others who say they are Christians have the right spirit. The Bible also makes it clear that kindness must be manifested before others will know a person is a Christian.

A. Christians are given strict instructions to have affections motivated by kindness. Kindly affectioned means to "cherish highly". God wants Christians, and specifically members in

the same church, to cherish Christian brothers and sisters. Christians should have a special relationship with each other.

Rom. 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"

- B. Charity is kind. Charity is translated from the greek word "agape" which means love, affection, benevolence. Charity is love with giving attached, which makes it clear that Christians are to show kindness by giving to others.

1 Cor. 13:4, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,"

- C. The virtuous woman spoke with kindness, which is given as an example for everyone. Having virtue is directly associated with speaking with kindness. How a Christian speaks to others is a great exhibitor of virtue. Parents should always remember to speak with kindness to their children.

Prov. 31:26 "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

- III. BEING KIND TO CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS CLEARLY AN IDENTIFYING CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN. Christians often refer to each other as brothers and sisters, but if kindness is not present, then there is no verification of this kinship. The way so many so-called Christians treat each other causes the world to doubt, and even reject, Christ.

- A. One of the qualifications for being a minister of God is to show kindness. When a church starts looking for ministers, whether it is a pastor or anyone to minister to others, it should watch how a Christian responds to others. If a Christian does not treat other Christians in his church with kindness, he should not be approved as a minister.

II Cor. 6:4 & 6, "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,"

- B. When a Christian is kind to his brothers and sisters, he is showing them grace. This means the Christian gives to his brothers and sisters things they do not deserve nor have earned. Where would Christians be today if the Lord treated them the same way they treat other people?

Eph. 2:7, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his *grace in his kindness toward us* through Christ Jesus."

- C. Being kind to brothers and sisters works in conjunction with forgiving them. There is no greater act of kindness than to forgive others for the things they have done wrong. Forgiveness is when a Christian gives up his right to collect what is owed him by someone else.

Eph. 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

- D. Kindness is the sixth thing a Christian is to add to his faith to complete having the nature of Christ. Jesus was kind to his apostles, followers and even strangers. If Christians are to be like Christ, they must be kind to others.

2 Peter 1:4-7, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

SECTION TWO - GENTLE

Gentle - mild; soft; not rough, harsh or severe. The label of being a "gentleman" is given to a man who is not rough or harsh, and deals with others with sensitivity. God wants Christians to be gentle in their dealings with others.

- I. GOD IS A GENTLE GOD AND HE WANTS CHRISTIANS TO HAVE HIS CHARACTER OF GENTLENESS. There are many things about God that preachers teach and preach, but seldom messages about being gentle. Our culture teaches that people cannot be mighty or have strength and be gentle. Today many Christians are brash, harsh, impertinent, disrespectful, discourteous, and just plain rude. They never stop to study what the Bible says about having actions that are pleasing to God.
- A. Christ was gentle. When a Christian studies the life of Christ, he will find that Christ was a gentle man in his dealings with both sinners and Christians.

2 Cor. 10:1, “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you.”

- B. The gentleness of God is what made David great. David's own testimony showed that the gentleness of God was what made him great—not His power, knowledge, or any of the other attributes of God. It is beyond comprehension that gentleness has the ability to make a person great. There are many people who try to become great, and gentleness is probably the last thing on their list of things they need to be great. It is amazing that what God says so many times is put in last place instead of first?

2 Samuel 22:36, “Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great.”

Psalms 18:35, “Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

- C. The character of the Holy Spirit is shown in the life of a Christian by producing fruit. Gentleness is one of the characteristics of the fruit of God. In the process of God building Christians, He produces gentleness as part of the fruit that enables him to work with others. Fruit is the product of God. If the Holy Spirit of God works in the life of a Christian, his life will show the characteristics listed below:

Gal. 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

- D. God's wisdom is recognized by gentleness along with other things. The wisdom of the world tells people to be hard and self-centered, while the wisdom of God tells Christians to be gentle.

James 3:17, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

- II. CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE REQUIRED TO BE GENTLE. God does not want Christian leaders to be rude and harsh. God wants His leaders to be like Christ, which is gentle. Many times people think that Christian leaders must to be hard and rough if they are going to control a church or ministry. The truth is that God looks for gentleness in the lives of His leaders.

- A. God used a nurse cherishing her children to help Christians understand how gentleness works. Pastors take care of peoples' lives and God wants them to be gentle in their care of people. Many times new Christians have to be cared for just like a nurse takes care of children. Christian leaders must be willing to take care of little children. It is very easy to become impatient and snap or bark at new Christians. Christian leaders should remember that they are children and be gentle with them.

1 Thess. 2:7, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:"

- B. God stated that for a Christian to be a servant of the Lord, he must be gentle. This is not an option, but a clear requirement. The Bible does not allow servants of the Lord to be contentious or quarrelsome. He must be willing to teach others with patience and meekness to keep them out of the snare of the devil.

II Tim. 2:24-26, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

- C. God's peculiar people are to be gentle. Gentleness is not an attribute of humanity, and is seen as peculiar even in Christians. History has established that when Christianity is not present in a society, gentleness is not present in that society. One of the peculiarities of Christianity is gentleness.

Titus 3:1-2, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men."

- III. TENDERNESS COMES FROM THE HEART OF A CHRISTIAN. A person with a tender heart is one who is easily moved to love, to pity, or to sorrow for someone who is hurting. A person who is considered hardhearted is one who does not soften or move when others are suffering. Christians should be moved because of what is in their heart, and because they want to help others.

- A. God instructs Christians to have a tender heart so they would be kind and forgive each other. A person who is not tenderhearted will be inclined toward bitterness and anger. Not

being tenderhearted will also cause a person to be susceptible to turmoil, and to speak hurtfully to others.

Eph. 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

B. Jesus showed his tenderheartedness by being moved by the needs of others. When Christians look at others, do they see the same thing that Christ sees? Do Christians ignore the needs of others or belittle those who are hurting, or are they moved because of their misfortune?

1. Because Jesus was tenderhearted, He was moved when He saw the multitudes who were as sheep without a shepherd.

Matt. 9:36, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

2. Because Jesus had a tender heart, He was moved with compassion to heal the sick within the multitude of people, and then He fed the five thousand men plus women and children.

Matt. 14:14, "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick."

3. Because Jesus was tenderhearted, He was moved with compassion and cleansed the leper.

Mark 1:40-41, "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean."

A tender heart is moved with compassion, which causes the Christian to be gentle. A hard heart will not be gentle, nor have compassion. When a person loves others, is tender-hearted, has compassion, and shows gentleness, that person is vulnerable and can get hurt by others. Many times when Christians get hurt, they go into a self-defense mode by throwing a wall up around their heart, and losing compassion and gentleness. At that point, they have become ineffective for

the Lord by allowing the sin of an ill-mannered person to take away their compassion and gentleness toward others. Christians should always keep an open and tender heart in order to be Christ-like.

SECTION THREE - FRIENDLY

Friendly - one who is attached to another by affection; one who deems another with sentiments of esteem, respect and affection, which lead him to desire the company of others, and seeks to promote the happiness and prosperity of others.

When a Christian is a friend, he always strives to help and increase the happiness and welfare of his friends. Paul was allowed to go to his friends to be taken care of. Acts 27:3, "And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself."

Abraham was known as the friend of God. Abraham had great affection and love for God and did everything he could to increase God's prosperity. Abraham really cared about God and His welfare. James 2:23, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." Isaiah 41:8, "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

I. GOD GIVES CHRISTIANS INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING BEING A FRIEND. One of the greatest values a person can be to one another is to be a friend. A Christian will never be lonely as long as he has friends. A Christian should count a friend as much of an asset as he would his home or his bank account!

A Christian should never say, "I don't have a friend." If a Christian shows Christ-like character, such as kindness, compassion, tender-hearted, and charity (giving expecting nothing in return), they **will** have friends.

Friendship works one way, with charity. A Christian should not make demands on a friend. A friend should have the right to give back with charity also.

A. A friend should never be taken for granted, nor should a person be presumptuous of others because of their friendship. A Christian should allow a friend to elevate him to a

position of prominence. He should never assume that his friendship gives him license to elevate himself.

Luke 14:10, "But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee."

- B. A true friend loves at all times. A true friend does not stop being a friend when his friend goes through a tough time. A person who claims to be a friend and turns his back when problems or adversity comes, was never a true friend.

Prov. 17:17, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

- C. One way to have friends is to be friendly. Friendship is contagious and causes others to become friendly. There are many who whine and cry because they do not have any friends, but fail to become friendly. People seem to never understand that friendship starts within a person, and when a person is not friendly, he will not have friends.

Prov. 18:24 "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

- D. A Christian should not forsake his friends, and especially should never forsake his best friend, Jesus. Many times Christians turn away from their friends and forsake them. They do not care about the hurt and anguish they cause their friend, the one they were supposed to love. A person who is a friend cannot just turn his back and desert his friends.

Prov. 27:10 "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off."

- E. A husband and a wife should be best friends. The most important part of a marriage relationship is friendship. When the problems of life come, it is friendship that will last, not physical or monetary ties.

In fact, the first step of dating should be just friendship. The second step should be wanting to share the heart. And the last step should be a commitment to each other (engagement level). Even if the dating process does not go any farther than step one, at least the Christian has gained a friend.

Song of Solomon 5:16, "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

II. THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP. Friendship is one of the strongest bonds two people on the earth can have. Friendship will cause a person to stand, and even die if necessary, to protect his friends (this does not mean to protect their sin). A true friend has the power to love and to stand with a friend, but never at the expense of rejecting Jesus Christ, THE Friend. A Christian should never be asked to forsake Jesus Christ or His words.

A. The greatest love of all is for a person to give his life for his friend. A true friend is one who would die for a friend. The way a Christian can know who is a true friend, is to ask "Who am I willing to die for?" Not think, hope, or wish he would be able to die for, but *know who* he would die for.

John 15:13-15, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

B. A true friend will tell his friend the truth, and not just agree with him when he is wrong. Many Christians think they are being a friend if they do not hurt their friend's feelings by telling their friend what is right. But in reality, *a true friend is one who will always tell the truth because he truly loves and cares for the life of his friend.*

Prov.27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

C. The sweetness of a friend rejoices the heart. When a friend calls on the phone, just the sound of the friend's voice is sweet. A friend is someone a Christian looks forward to being with and spending time with.

Prov. 27:9, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."

D. A friend brings a smile to the face of his friends. Isn't it amazing how a person's face lights up when he sees a friend? There is always a warm feeling in a Christian's heart when a friend is present.

Prov. 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

III. HOW TO DISCERN REAL FRIENDS. It is very important that every Christian be able to identify who real friends are. If a Christian made a list of his friends, who would be on that list? Would his pastor? Would his spouse? Would his neighbor? Would his Christian brothers and sisters? At the same time, if a Christian made a list of all those to whom he is a friend, who would be on that list? If a Christian is wise, he will know who his friends are and make sure the relationship is maintained.

A. The way to know if a person is a true friend is for a Christian to lower himself below another and see what his friend does. How a so-called friend treats a Christian when he has latitude, will show if he really is a friend. When a person knows he can take advantage of another, true friendship will constrain him. Christians try to build relationships without testing. When something is told to a friend, watch what the friend does with it.

Prov. 6:3, "Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend."

B. Those who whisper and gossip can separate friends by using their unrighteous judgment to condemn someone without finding the truth. Christians should never make a judgment call (breaking friendship) against a friend without talking to the friend and finding the truth. Friendship is too important and should never be dissolved based on gossip. The reason a person gossips is to cause division between friends.

Prov. 16:28, "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."

Prov. 17:9, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends."

NOBODY'S FRIEND

(Author unknown)

My name is Gossip. I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives. I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age. The more I am quoted the more I am believed. My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me, because I have no name and no fact. To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become. I am nobody's friend. Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same. I topple governments and wreck marriages. I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartaches and indigestion. I make innocent people cry in their pillows. Even my name hisses, I am called Gossip! I make headlines and headaches. Before you repeat a story ask yourself, is it TRUE? Is it FAIR? Is it NECESSARY? If not, DON'T REPEAT IT!!!

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION III

CHRISTIAN ACTIONS EXHIBITED

LESSON TWELVE

ATTENTIVE - CONCENTRATED - DETERMINED

INTRODUCTION

Being unprepared for the events in life is not bliss, and destruction comes to those who are not attentive to what is going on around them. A Christian has to be attentive to things around him so he can concentrate on the decisions he has to make about the direction of his life. Once a Christian knows what the decisions are he has to make, he can determine what he is going to do. When he knows he has made the right decision, then he can adhere to that decision and live his life by it. It is imperative that a Christian be attentive to the events in his life, so he can concentrate on them in order to arrive at a determined life.

SECTION ONE - ATTENTIVE (HEED)

Attentive - Intent; observant; regarding with care; applied to the senses of hearing and seeing; to give attention. Heed - care; caution; watch for danger; notice; circumspection; seriousness.

Most of the time people say "pay attention" when talking about being attentive. When a person pays attention to something, focus or concentration is placed on what he is working on, listening to, or learning. When a person comes to church, it should be with full intent to gain something. When a person is attentive, he is more careful with his words or his actions, and tries not to make mistakes. Many times, when a person is in a hurry, he will usually not pay attention to what he is doing or where he is going. When this happens, a person is much more apt to do something wrong or to do something that will hurt others because he doesn't take time to think. Sometimes, people will believe that a person does not care, when in reality that person just did not slow down enough to pay attention and think!

When a person does not pay attention, that person is doing one thing with his body while his mind is somewhere else. It might be called daydreaming, spaced-out, or several other things. It might also

mean

that the person who is not attentive does not even show up for work or school (attendance).

When God says, "pay attention" to something, it is wise for a Christian to give focus and priority to what God is talking about. There are many times in the events of life when the Holy Spirit says "pay attention", but the Christian never realizes it is God speaking to him. Christians would mature faster, work harder, and live better if they would just pay attention to God!

I. THERE ARE SOME SPECIFIC THINGS GOD SAYS CHRISTIANS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO. There are many things in life that a Christian should pay attention to, and when attention is given, it causes remembrance. It is amazing how people can remember one thing and not another. How many times have parents told their children to "pay attention", as well as teachers, coaches, instructors, and many others. Without realizing it, instructors know that when attention is given, children (and adults) will learn and do what they are told.

A. God wants Christians to pay attention to understanding. Understanding is a vital part of making good decisions. The reason many people get off course and change direction is because they do not understand why they are doing something. When a person understands something, it will be remembered. A person does not have to remember every word or detail, but know what and why he does something.

Prov. 4:1, "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." (Attend - attune your ears to hear)

B. God wants Christians to pay attention to His words. Many times Christians memorize a verse without paying attention to what it is saying and never understand it. When David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart" he was not saying he memorized it, but instead he was saying he was paying attention to it. It was not just words he was putting in his heart, but what God said.

Prov.4:20, "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings."

C. God wants Christians to pay attention to His wisdom. Proverbs directs everyone who reads it to seek wisdom; not just any wisdom, but God's wisdom. There are many kinds of wisdom in the world, including worldly wisdom. There is the wisdom of man, the wisdom of investments, the wisdom of health, the wisdom of education, and many more.

But God wants Christians to have is His wisdom given to His children in His word. Faith with understanding is put into the Christian's heart and is remembered.

Prov. 5:1, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding:"

- D. God wants Christians to pay attention to the spoken words from God. There are some who do not understand the power of the spoken word. They choose to not attend church because they do not want to hear the Word of God preached. Every saved person should pay attention to the spoken word. When a Christian goes to church, he should pray and try to concentrate on what is being preached. The preaching is more than just a man speaking—it is the Word of God being spoken.

Prov. 7:24, "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth."

- E. Paul instructed Timothy to pay attention to reading, exhortation, and doctrine. Timothy was a young preacher and Paul was instructing him regarding how to grow. Paul made it clear that he should pay attention to *reading*. Every Christian should discipline himself to read often. He also told Timothy to pay attention to exhortation, which is to appeal and reassure by being near. Paul wanted Timothy to *pay attention to those near him* who appealed to him to do the things of Christ. Paul also told him to *pay attention to doctrine*, which are God's instructions on how to live. Paul wanted Timothy to get the right reading material as well as right instructions. A Christian should always weigh what he reads or hears with the Bible.

1Tim. 4:6, 10, 13-14, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained... For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe... Till I come, *give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

- II. WHEN CHRISTIANS PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY ARE TAUGHT AND ENTRUSTED WITH, THERE ARE WORTHWHILE RESULTS. There are so many who are instructed regarding what to do with their

Christian life, but never pay attention to what they are told. Many times a pastor will preach the Bible and warn Christians about what is going to happen, but the message falls on closed ears. When a Christian does pay attention, his life will follow God's instructions.

- A. The priests and scribes couldn't destroy Christ because the people paid attention to what He was saying. When the leaders of Israel tried to destroy Christ, they sought someone to testify against Christ trying to prove that what He was teaching was wrong. But the people were paying attention and held to the truth of what Christ said.

Luke 19:47-48, "And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him."

- B. Lydia was a woman who paid attention to the things spoken by Paul because God had opened her heart, and she was baptized along with her household. Paul gave instructions to many, and Lydia *chose to pay attention to what he said*. There are many who hear what a man of God says, but they do not pay attention and still do what they think is best for them.

Acts 16:14-15, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."

- C. The people paid attention to the things Philip spoke and had evil spirits removed or were healed. How big would the book be if there were a record of all the things God wanted to do for people in need, but He was unable to do anything because the people would not pay attention to what He said? How many miss the blessings of God because they will not pay attention to what He says?

Acts 8:5-8, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord *gave heed unto those things which Philip spake*, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city."

III. PASTORS ARE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE WORK GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO THEM. God gave instructions to pastors to pay attention to oversee all the flock He has given them. Pastoring itself is shepherding or taking care of a flock or congregation. When a man is given the position of pastor, God expects him to take care of those in his flock. He is not responsible for all sheep; only those placed into his care.

A. God told pastors to pay attention to feeding their flock. God does not want pastors to neglect the feeding of his members, and should always make sure they have good spiritual food to eat.

Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

B. In the Old Testament God condemned the shepherds because they did not take care of the sheep. The sheep became food for the beasts of the world instead of living in a protected flock with ample food. The shepherds of many churches, or so-called churches, feed all the beasts of the world with their sheep instead of caring for them and building them.

Ezek. 34:8-9, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;"

IV. THERE IS GREAT DANGER WHEN A CHRISTIAN PAYS ATTENTION TO THE WRONG THINGS. It is very easy for Christians to redirect their attention to the things of the world. Many times Christians even bring the worldly things they pay attention to into their church, and expect the church to pay attention to the same things.

A. Timothy was warned not to pay attention to fables and endless genealogies. A fable is a fictitious story that may sound good, but in reality, it has no power. Timothy was not to pay attention to fictitious tales that produce questions. How many times do Christians hear the terms "what if" or "let's just suppose" or "let's make up a scenario". Christians should be cautious with literature that combines the truth of scripture and make believe. Most of the time, it becomes very difficult to distinguish fact from fiction, which causes

confusion with the scripture. Paul clearly instructed Timothy not to pay attention to such thinking.

Paul also told Timothy not to pay attention to endless genealogies or "family trees". What makes a Christian important is not their earthly family, but their heavenly family. When a Christian looks at his family tree, it only has two parts: his Father God and the Christian himself.

1Tim. 1:4, "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."

- B. God made it clear that in the latter times some would depart from the faith because they would pay attention to seducing spirits.

1Tim. 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"

Seducing spirits are those who are impostors and mislead people. They think they are right and try to get others to follow them by attracting, enticing, luring, or charming them. They do not tell the facts or all that is happening. They only tell what they

want to trying get others to follow them. Because they come across as being sweet and kind, people pay attention to them without comparing what they say to God's truth. Many Christians would rather have others be sweet and kind than to be truthful. They like the mentality of "don't tell me the truth, just make me feel good!" mentality.

II Tim. 4:3-4, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Paul was even amazed that he became the enemy of the church at Galatia because he told them the truth. Gal. 4:16, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

- V. GOD MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF CHRISTIANS DO NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THE THINGS THEY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, GOD'S TEACHINGS WILL SLIP AWAY. It is very easy to not pay attention to the things that are important to God, and then in the future, no one remembers them. So much of Christian history has been lost because Christians did not

pay attention to what was said or done.

Heb. 2:1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

SECTION TWO - CONCENTRATED

Concentrated - To bring to a common center, or to a closer union; to cause to approach nearer to a point or center; to bring nearer to each other.

To have a concentrated mind is to center it on one thought process to the exclusion of all others. To concentrate means a person centers all his thoughts on one single subject at a time. A double minded man is one who cannot center his thoughts on a single subject. The reason many Christians cannot reach a conclusion about a question or decision is because they cannot concentrate on it.

- I. THINGS ON WHICH A CHRISTIAN SHOULD CONCENTRATE. There are some things God tells Christians to concentrate because they are very important to the success of Christianity. So many times Christians concentrate on everything, except the things God told them to. Then they wonder why their life is so unstable and incomplete.
 - A. Christians should concentrated on *praising God*. When a Christian praises another, he recognizes what that person has done. Christians should always recognize what God has done and praise Him for doing it. The only way a Christian can accomplish this is to continually concentrate (focus) on God to see what He is doing.

Psalms 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." (fixed - to be erected; set up; established)

Psalms 108:1, "O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory."
 - B. Christians should concentrate on *spiritual things*. It is very easy to concentrate only on the things of the earthly life, which will all die at the end of the earthly life. **The peace that God gives to Christians comes from concentrating on the eternal spiritual things.**

Rom. 8:6-7, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

- C. Christians should concentrate on *what Jesus did* and not concentrate on their own self. When a Christian looks at Christ and not himself, he will not fail. The reason a Christian fails or quits is because his thoughts become indistinct. Because the Christian did not concentrate, his thoughts become unclear and confused. He no longer is absolute in what is right.

Christians will miss God's message when they are focused on the things around them. When their focus changes off of self or the world, it returns to Christ

Heb. 12:2-3, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For *consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*"

- II. WHEN A CHRISTIAN CONCENTRATES ON SOMETHING, IT WILL CHANGE HIS LIFE TOWARD WHAT HE IS THINKING. The way a Christian changes his life (either forward or backward) is by concentrating on something. If he concentrates on sin, pain, hurt, injury, trouble, offenses, or even grief, he will go backward and end up living a carnal life. If he concentrates on the things of God (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance) he will go forward to a godly life. Prov. 23:7a, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:"

- A. The way a Christian renews his mind is to **change what he concentrates on**. When a Christian wants to change, he needs to place the things of God in his mind and think on them. People will go toward what they focus on. **All people, saved or lost, will become what they spend their time thinking about.**

Rom. 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Phil 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

- B. The way a Christian becomes fully persuaded in any matter is to concentrate on it. When a Christian does not concentrate, he will never be absolute in any statement he makes. The way he becomes persuaded is by bringing all the information on the subject into an encapsulated or concentrated form so he can remember and know it.

Rom. 14:5, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be *fully persuaded in his own mind*."

- C. The way a Christian becomes established or built up is by concentrating on what is right. The reason so many Christians remain unstable and erratic is because they have not learned to concentrate on the things of God.

II Cor. 1:17, "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?"

III. A CHRISTIAN HAS TO **CHOOSE** TO CONCENTRATE BEFORE HIS THOUGHTS WILL BE ESTABLISHED
AND

PRODUCTIVE. A person makes up his mind by concentrating on something. If a person does not **want** to establish his thoughts regarding a matter, he will never concentrate. God works in accord to the Christian making up his mind. God cannot give to the Christian if the Christian does not concentrate to make up his mind and to purpose in his heart.

It is very important that teachers make the things of God interesting and exciting to a student, so he will choose to concentrate. It is also important that elders truly want the things of God in their minds so they will concentrate on the things of God.

- A. When a Christian willingly concentrates on a godly objective, he will accomplish the objective. The reason many saved people do not accomplish the things of God is because they are not willing to concentrate on those things. If a person does not want to concentrate, it will not happen. Someone else cannot make it happen if there is no desire!

Each individual has to **choose** to concentrate on the things he has to accomplish.

II Cor. 8:10-12, "And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it; *that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind*, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

- B. When a Christian concentrates with intense or fervent thoughts, he will accomplish his desired goal. When a Christian become fervent (heated up), he will be adamant or absolute about what he believes, whether it is right or wrong.

II Cor. 7:7-11, "And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

- IV. A CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO CONCENTRATE ON THE THINGS OF GOD AND EXCLUDE THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD THAT SPOIL, CONTAMINATE, OR DEFILE THE THINGS OF GOD. Every time a Christian hears or sees something that is against God, he should identify it in his mind as harmful or destructive. He should avoid it and not spend his time trying to understand or change it. It is his mind he needs to change, not the harmful thing.

- A. A Christian who concentrates on the instructions of God will not allow the leaven of worldly philosophy to control his mind. There are many so-called

Christians who try to hinder the truth by teaching worldly principles equal to God's truth and work to overthrow the absolutes of God. A good example of this is ruling a church with democracy. The only way this could work is if every member of the church was completely in tune with God. Then it would not be a democracy, but it would be theocracy. If something does not match with scripture, reject it!

Gal 5:7-10, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I have confidence in you through the Lord, *that ye will be none otherwise minded*: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be."

- B. God instructs Christians not to allow their concentration to be jolted by spirit, word, or letter. PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE! know that God will never contradict His own Word. No matter what a Christian hears or from whom he hears it, he should always stay with the Bible.

II Thess. 2:1-3 "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;"

- C. God wants Christians to concentrate on the power and love of God so all fear is cast out. *When a Christian fears, it did not come from God*. No matter what the world teaches or does, it will not change God. Why do Christians ever allow fear to control them when God promised to give Christians His power, love, and a sound mind.

II Tim. 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

- D. If a Christian does not concentrate, he will become double minded and unstable. Because a Christian does not concentrate, he never establishes facts from fiction and right from wrong. Many times Christians say things like; "I

hope so", or "If you think so", or "Do what you think is best" and never establish the truth. The only way an individual can establish absolutes is to concentrate on the right things of God.

James 1:8, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

James 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."

SECTION THREE - DETERMINED

Determined - To end by the decision or conclusion of a cause, or of a doubtful or controversial point; applicable to the decisions of the mind. To settle ultimately; to settle or establish; to limit to a particular purpose or direction.

God determined that in Christ every person could have forgiveness of sins. One of the greatest blessings a Christian has is to know that God determined what He would do regarding a lost sinner. God determined that redemption and forgiveness of sins would be by the blood of Jesus Christ. No matter what men think or choose, God has already determined what He will do. **He will not change the decision He made in His heart.**

Eph. 1:6-9, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:"

There are many things a Christian must determine in the course of his life. He has to determine whom to marry, what church to join, what ministry to work in, what profession to follow, and on and on. A determined person is one who makes a decision and then sticks to it. Many Christians fail in life because when they make a decision, they are not determined to stay with their decision. As soon as adversity or problems arise, they change their decision. Many times, Christians change jobs, churches, and even spouses just because they have not determined (purposed) in their heart and mind to stay with their decision.

James 1:8, "A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways." Determination is one of the greatest assets a Christian can have. It will take him through the hard times and help him to enjoy the good times.

I. SOME OF THE THINGS CHRISTIANS NEED TO DETERMINE.

- A. Christians should determine *what they will accept as facts*. A Christian will receive many statements and many written articles that state something is correct. Before a Christian accepts something and arrives at a conclusion, it is wise to **always make sure** the things heard are correct. Is it fact or fiction? Is it man's thinking or is it according to God's Word? Is it from an individual's perspective, or did the situation really happened the way it was told? Christians should try to get to the bottom of the source to make sure it is correct.

I Cor. 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Prov. 12:17, "[He that] speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit."

- B. A Christian should determine *what is going to come out of his mouth*. There are many warnings in the scripture about what a person says. One of the best sayings that will help understand this point is, "It is better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool, than to open it and remove all doubt." Many times Christians repeat gossip they hear and never research it to see if it was true.

Often a preacher will read an article and assume it is correct without checking the source. If you do not know for sure that something is true, do not repeat it. Even if something is true, godly discretion is needed to know if it should be repeated.

Prov. 13:3, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: [but] he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."

Psalms 17:3. "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; *I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*"

- C. Christians should determine *if they are going to help others or live a selfish life*. The disciples determined to send relief to the brethren. Many times in coming to a determination, a Christian will only look at his own life or circumstances. **To accomplish what God wants, the Christian must always take**

into consideration how his conclusion will affect others.

Acts 11:28-29, "And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:"

II. THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES ARE WAYS CHRISTIANS DETERMINE THEIR DECISIONS.

- A. A Christian's decision is determined within his own self. An old adage says it well, "*A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.*" No matter what someone else says is right or wrong, the only way a person will determine what is right or wrong is within himself. Even when the Bible says something is sin, a Christian has to decide within himself if it is sin. Many times the pastor or Sunday School teacher will teach facts about the Bible, and wonder why someone they taught does not follow their teaching. For whatever reason, that person did not make a decision within himself.

II Cor.2:1, "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness."

- B. A Christian's decision should be determined by seeking good counsel. When a Christian gets good counsel, it is from someone who helps him understand his decision and guides him through his own thoughts to come to a conclusion. Good counsel inputs information to the Christian that enables him to make a right decision. Most people get counsel when they have to make a major decision, and many times it is from someone who does not know what he is talking about, counsels with the world's wisdom, or states his opinion. From what basis do people get their opinion or thoughts when giving counsel?

Prov. 20:18, "Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war."

- C. A Christian's decision is determined within his own heart. The best way for a Christian to know what is in his heart is to ask what he wants to do. A person's "want to" (desire) is what his heart is. When a Christian determines a

conclusion and attaches his 'want to', he is making a decision in his heart. If the Christian makes a decision, but did not really want to do what he decided, he will later change it or regret what he did. God wants all Christians to make decisions in their heart because "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

Acts 11:23, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Prov. 16:9, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION III

CHRISTIAN ACTIONS EXHIBITED

LESSON THIRTEEN

ORGANIZED - PROMPT - COURTEOUS

INTRODUCTION

Anytime there is more than one person in one place at the same time, there must be some kind of organization to make things happen properly. When organization is not in place, relationships become confused, and discord will appear. The Bible makes it clear that confusion does not come from the Lord, that He is organized, and everything works according to His plan and purpose. The theory of evolution shows that everything developed through an accidental process, instead of a divine design. How often do people doubt that God is organized?

When a person is organized, he will also be on time to the events he plans in his life. The ability to be prompt is connected to being organized. Organization always allows a Christian to be ready to act quickly when it is time to make a decision or to follow the action he is instructed to do. If a Christian is not prepared to respond without delay, he is not organized the way God wants him to be.

Even when a Christian is organized and lives in a state of promptness, he should always be courteous to others. The actions of a Christian toward others will fail unless the Christian is courteous. A Christian can be organized and willing to do everything God says, but can be rejected because of the way he responds toward others. Christians must treat others with kindness, be polite to them, and show them proper respect.

SECTION ONE - ORGANIZED

Organized - Arranged into suitable parts with proper officers appointed, that the whole may act as one body. Systemized; reduced to a form in which all the parts may act together to one end.

Order - regular disposition or methodical arrangement of things. Lack of organization is associated with ungodliness and is even listed as one of the attributes of hell. Job talked to his friends and thought he was going to the place of darkness that has no organization. Job 10:20-22, "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, *without any order*, and where the light is as darkness."

When things are not organized, people will find chaos, confusion, discord, and upheaval. Many times a family or church appears chaotic, but seldom do people realize that the absence of organization is what causes the upheaval and confusion. When people operate without governmental organization, it is called anarchy, whether it is a country, church, or home.

- I. THE LORD WORKS IN THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS TO ORGANIZE THEIR LIVES. The greatest act of organization ever found is in the book of Genesis Chapter One and Two. The earth was without form and void and God organized it. God established organization and God wants every church and every Christian to be organized. It will make their life more effective.
 - A. The Lord organizes the steps of a good man's life. The term "a good man" is making reference to any person who is brave, courageous, and honorable. A good person is a valiant person or a strong warrior. Every move a good person makes is under the guiding hand of God. This verse does not just make reference to a person who is saved, but to one who is living the life God instructed him to live *even if circumstances in life are difficult*.

Psalms 37:23, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*"
 - B. The Lord organizes the steps of a good man by His Word. When the Lord orders a good man's steps, it will be with His Word and in accord with what His Word says. A good man would not want it any other way.

Psalms 119:133, “*Order my steps in thy word:* and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

II. EVERYTHING A CHRISTIAN DOES SHOULD BE ORGANIZED.

- A. Job organized his cause (cause - that to which the efforts of an intelligent being are directed). Job knew what his efforts were being directed toward. He was not on a merry-go-round with his life, but he lived toward his cause, which was to serve God at all times no matter what happened in this world. The world offers Christians numerous distractions to take them away from their cause. Every Christian should follow Job's example and live for what God has set in order and always follow God.

Job 13:18, “Behold now, *I have ordered my cause*; I know that I shall be justified.

- B. Christians should do everything with organization. Christians should not just pick and choose the things to be organized, but should understand that God wants everything organized. This means church, home, work, sports, and even shopping. God does not want anything done haphazardly or disorganized. ***Being unorganized causes some of the greatest wastes of a person's time and energy.***

1 Cor. 14:40, “Let all things be done decently and *in order.*”

- C. Christians need to organize their words when they speak. It is not enough for Christians to organize their actions; they should also organize everything they say.

Job 33:5, “If thou canst answer me, *set thy words in order* before me, stand up.”

Everyone has a restricted amount of time to use, and much time is lost because Christians do not organize what they say. Rambling on and on about things wastes time, and so does a silly, vain conversation. Not only are unorganized words a waste of time, but they are also something that must be accounted for to God.

Matt. 12:36, “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

The apostles misjudged Mary Magdalene thinking her words were idle. When people think a person's words are idle, they will not listen to nor believe what the person says. Luke 24:11, "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

III. GOD WANTS CHURCHES TO BE ORGANIZED. During the days of the early churches, a ministry was established to organize the churches. Paul sent out Timothy and Titus to organize the churches. Much of what is written in the books of First and Second Timothy, as well as Titus, were written to provide instructions for organizing churches. God does not want churches to function aimlessly and without good organization. Churches, just like homes or businesses, fail if they are not organized.

A. Paul and Timothy went to the churches to organize them. If God thought organization was so important, churches today should dedicate a lot more time and effort to properly organize all the ministries, as well as the monies, of a church.

Acts 16:3-5, "Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were *the churches established* in the faith, and increased in number daily." (Established means to confirm; make stable; or organize).

B. Paul told the church at Corinth that he would organize the way they did things when he visited there. Paul planned a trip to Corinth to organize the church there. They were unorganized and doing things that were not pleasing to God.

1 Cor. 11:34, "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I *set in order* when I come.

C. Paul left Titus in Crete to organize the Christians and ordain elders to maintain the organization that he set in order.

Titus 1:5, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest *set in order* the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:”

For church growth, more elders and leaders are needed to organize things. A good pastor can only pastor one hundred people effectively without needing elders to help with the organization.

SECTION TWO - PROMPT

Prompt – Ready and quick to act as occasion demands.

A person who is prompt is one who is ready and quick to act upon the demands made on him, or is always in place when it is time for a pre-decided action. A person should be prompt to work, to church, or to any event in which he is expected to be present for action.

I. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHEN THE DISCIPLES WERE CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST, THEY RESPONDED WITH PROMPTNESS. They did not wait until the next day, but they followed Christ instantly or promptly.

A. When Jesus called James and John, they promptly left their ship and followed Christ. The disciples had been prepared by John the Baptist for the time when the Lord would tell them to follow Him, and they were prompt in responding when He said, "follow me."

Matt. 4:21-22, “And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And *they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.*”

B. When Jesus healed the blind, they promptly received their sight. When God does something, it does not take a long time for it to take place. When God speaks, it happens!

Matt. 20:34, “So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and *immediately their eyes received sight*, and they followed him.

- C. When the angel spoke to the women after the resurrection of Jesus, he told them to promptly go and tell the disciples. They were not to stop and think about it or wait until a convenient time, but to go at once and tell the disciples that Jesus was alive.

Matt. 28:1, 5-7, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre... And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And *go quickly*, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

- D. After Paul was blinded, he went to the house of Ananias who told him to *call on the name of the Lord and be saved—promptly*. Paul did not hesitate, but he followed the instructions given him and was saved.

Acts 22:12-16, "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now *why tarriest thou?* arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, **calling on the name of the Lord.**"

This baptism was not water baptism, but immersion into Christ, calling on the name of the Lord. Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

- II. WHEN A CHRISTIAN IS LEAD TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN THE MINISTRY, HE SHOULD FOLLOW PROMPTLY. When the vision came to Paul to go to Macedonia, he promptly undertook to go. Every Christian should be prepared to follow Christ promptly when asked to undertake a mission for Him.

Acts 16:9-10, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, *immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia*, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

III. EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD RESPOND PROMPTLY WHEN A DOOR IS OPENED TO PRESENT THE GOSPEL TO A LOST PERSON. When an opportunity arises to preach, a Christian should promptly preach the Word. Almost every Christian has experienced the guilt or regret following a time when God impressed upon them to talk to someone about Christ, and they did not act upon His leading. Every Christian should always be ready to present the good news of salvation, even if a Bible is not at hand. Christians should know the verses of salvation in his mind and heart to be able to present the gospel any time and any place.

II Tim. 4:1-2, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; *be instant in season, out of season*; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

1Peter 3:15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [*be*] *ready always to [give] an answer* to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"

SECTION THREE - COURTEOUS

Courteous - Elegance or politeness of manners; especially, politeness connected with kindness; showing respect or reverence with kindness or favor performed with politeness.

If a Christian is organized and prompt in following Christ, he still must treat others courteously. There are some who are organized, yet treat others with disrespect and show little or no kindness. It is sad to say, but sometimes there are people in places of authority in churches who treat others as lesser people, instead of equal parts of the same body of Christ. They do not see others as part of the big picture. They only see people as part of their own picture and

pawns to be used. In the Bible, God recognized Julius, the Centurion for being courteous. This Centurion was in charge of transporting Paul to Rome, and even though he had this rank of authority over Paul as a prisoner, he treated Paul courteously.

Acts 27:3, “And the next day we touched at Sidon. And *Julius courteously entreated Paul*, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.”

I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE COURTEOUS TO OTHERS. Christians should be courteous to others, whether they are a new Christian or a pastor. There are many scriptures that tell the followers of Christ not to be evil to others. The word evil means to hurt others, and being courteous to others is a great deterrent to evil.

A. Christians should have holy and courteous actions toward others. One of the primary ways people consider if a person is a Christian is whether or not that person is courteous. When someone sees a person acting rude, brash, or harsh they automatically assume the person is not a Christian. The number one place a Christian should be courteous is in the home.

I Peter 1:15, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all *manner of conversation*;”

II Peter 3:11, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what *manner of persons* ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,”

B. Christians should be controlled by their relationship with God, which is on the inside. **Christians should never allow others to control their actions nor respond to the evil acts of others by doing wrong or hurtful things to them.** God wants Christians to have compassion and love for one another, and they should show it by being courteous.

1 Peter 3:8-11, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, *be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing*; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue

from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and *do good*; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

- C. Christians should not have evil (hurtful) communications because it perverts courteousness. One of the greatest hurts one Christian can do to another is to hurt with words. Many times saved people speak hurtful words and make degrading statements to others. Too often Christians are not courteous to others and say evil things, which causes separation and division. A very common thing to do, but one of the worst, is to cut down children with hurtful words, such as "brat" or "stupid".

1 Cor. 15:33, "Be not deceived: *evil communications corrupt good manners.*" (manners - way of performing or executing)."

II. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE COURTEOUS TO SHOW AND TO RECEIVE HONOR.

- A. For a person to be courteous, he must be humble. He must care about others and see their importance before he will show proper actions of politeness toward them.

Prov. 15:33, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility."

- B. The reason a person is not courteous is pride. Pride will not let a person be humble, and without humility a person will not be courteous to others.

Prov. 29:23, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

- C. One of the best ways for a Christian to show his loving feelings toward others is by being courteous. How many times does someone try to convince another that they love them, but are always doubted because they fail to be courteous? How many times does a wife feel insecure with her husband, and doubts that he loves her because he is not courteous? For a person to show love to others, he must be courteous.

Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

- D. When women are courteous, they will be given honor by other Christians.

Prov. 11:16, "A *gracious woman* retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches."
(gracious - expressing kindness and favor).

- III. GOD WANTS CHRISTIAN PARENTS TO PRODUCE COURTEOUSNESS IN THEIR CHILDREN. There are great numbers of rude, impolite, and inconsiderate children today. The reason so many are like this is because parents are not teaching them to be courteous to others. Words like "please", "thank you", "sir", "madam", and "may I" have been replaced with slang and belligerent actions of contention which are argumentative and quarrelsome. **Every Christian parent needs to assume the responsibility to teach their children to be courteous.**

- A. If parents will properly instruct their children, wise children will be produced. It is evident that wise children are courteous to others, because wisdom is associated with righteousness, and produces joy in parents. A child that is inconsiderate and not courteous will not give joy to parents.

Prov. 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

Prov. 23:24, "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him."

- B. God instructs parents to teach their children to be courteous. God instructed fathers to nurture or educate their children in the admonition of the Lord, which means to call attention to the ways of God. God's ways include being courteous to others.

Eph. 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

- C. Christian leaders are to rule their homes the way God established for them to be run. This includes teaching their children to be grave, which means to have respect and reverence for others. When looking for a Christian leader, a main issue to consider is whether or not a man's children are courteous to others.

I Tim. 3:1-5, 12, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, *having his children in subjection with all gravity*; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)... Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.”

One thing to consider at this point is the normal development in the teen-age years. Teens will always try to prove who their parents are and even God. They will try to figure out if they want to walk the way their parents walk. They will push to prove who mom and dad are and what they stand on. Parents need to understand who they are and hold onto Jesus and His teachings, even when going through the tests with their children. Knowing this will help Christians to rule their children well, even if they are “normal teenagers”.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN ELDERS

DIVISION III

CHRISTIAN ACTIONS EXHIBITED

LESSON FOURTEEN

ZEALOUS - AMBITIOUS - ENTHUSIASTIC

INTRODUCTION

Every Christian should want to do the work of the Lord and should fervently seek the things of God. They should work hard to accomplish the work of the Lord with a right heart attitude. Christians should get excited about God's works, and passionately seek to accomplish what God wants done.

Christians should desire to mature to become worthy of being placed in positions of authority to oversee the works of the Lord. It is not wrong to seek power, provided a Christian works to earn it. However, there are many wrong motives behind people seeking power. Some want power and authority awarded to them without even working for it. There are some Christians who desire power, but only so they will look important. Some Christians may even want to be pastors, thinking God would reward them because of their position. God wants every saved person to be a worker, and He will reward them with positions, but sometimes a position and power would only puff up the Christian because of a wrong heart motive. At the Judgement Seat of Christ, God will reward a Christian for his work, not his position. Christians also get rewards for their work while they are here on this earth.

It is good for Christians to show some excitement once in a while and they should certainly get excited about accomplishing something for the Lord. Enthusiasm is contagious, and when one Christian gets fervent about doing something for the Lord, others will be motivated to do the same.

When Christians act like they do not want anything to happen for the Lord, their church will soon die. Through the years many churches have had revival meetings to try to bring life back into a church. What is a revival? A revival is when something that has dwindled or died is revived. It is when the members of a church get excited about the work of the Lord and start working to accomplish His goals and objectives. Christians should become zealous about good works because they are ambitious about

God's purposes. When Christians have the desire to work for the Lord, they should approach it with enthusiasm so many others will get excited.

SECTION ONE - ZEALOUS

Zealous - Passionately engaged or fervent in the pursuit of a thing; an eagerness of desire to accomplish or obtain some object. It may be manifested either in favor of any person or thing, or in opposition to it, and in a good or bad cause.

Zealousness is usually identified as having many **actions** as a result of a passionate belief. Zealousness must have strong feelings either for or against something or someone before an action can be classified as zealous. Without zeal there would be no church splits, no divided families, and no wayward children. At the same time, without zeal there would be no evangelism, no discipleship, no praise, and no church ministries. Zeal is a regular part of most peoples' lives, and unless it is **properly directed**, it will destroy many of those lives.

- I. ISRAEL HAD ZEAL, BUT NOT FOR WHAT WAS RIGHT. Israel passionately rejected Christ because they thought they were right in what they were doing. They were zealous with their own personal objectives, and rejected God's written word because of their own desires.
 - A. Israel had zeal for God, but not with knowledge. Israel was ignorant about the righteousness of God, and thought they could be righteous by following the law given to them by Moses. There are many religious people in the world today who are zealous about their religion, but not according to the Word of God. They often think they are right just because they are zealous.

Rom. 10:1-4, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish

their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

- B. Many of the Jews who got saved still zealously adhered to the law, and, consequently, adversely affected many of the Christians at Galatia. Even today there are times that a church can be lead in a wrong direction by someone who is zealous, but not following the Bible. A zealous person can affect some people in the church, and sometimes can affect the whole church to go in the wrong direction.

Gal. 4:17-18, “They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”

II. GOD RECOGNIZED SOME CHRISTIANS FOR THEIR ZEALOUSNESS.

- A. Paul was zealous toward God before and after he was saved. Before his salvation, he was zealous about the law. But after he was saved, he was zealous toward Christ.

Acts 22:3, “I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.”

- B. The Christians at Corinth were zealous of spiritual gifts, and God told them to use the gifts to edify the church. Today, many Baptists tend not to get zealous about spiritual gifts because of religions that spend all their energy trying to get spiritual gifts. The church at Corinth was recognized in a positive way for being zealous about spiritual gifts. But God cautioned them to use their spiritual gifts to help edify their church, and not themselves. Spiritual gifts are given for God to be seem working through every Christian to edify the church. Christians have the responsibility to use these gifts for others, and never for themselves.

I Cor. 14:12, “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, *seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*” (become equipped to quality for gifts).

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE ZEALOUS ABOUT GIVING. The zeal of the Christians at Corinth regarding giving provoked many other churches to give. There is a great tendency for Christians to shy away from giving because of so many complaints from the lost or from non-zealous saved people. Some Christians would get very excited if the church building was on fire, but the last thing they would get excited about is the offering. Christians should be zealous about giving just as much as any other ministry for the Lord.

II Cor. 9:1-2, “For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and *your zeal hath provoked very many.*”

IV. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE ZEALOUS IN THE WORK OF THE LORD. There are many churches today that do not get excited about anything, and especially about doing the work of the Lord. Many times when leaders in a church challenge their members to give their life to serve God in a ministry, Christians will act like they are being asked to literally sacrifice their life. There have been so many jokes about work, that people often think work is a sin, especially if it is in a church. A church should never have to beg for workers! Christians should always ask, “Am I available for the work that is needed” , but they should never substitute one thing for another.

A. One of the ways Christians were approved was by having zeal. When Christians do not have zeal, the world does not recognize them as being approved. Even the world looks for zeal in a person's life.

II Cor. 7:11, “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

B. Christians should be like Epaphras and have a great zeal for other Christians by laboring in prayers for them. When a church calls for a prayer meeting, what percent of the

congregation will show up? Christians should be zealous in praying as much as any other ministry in a church.

Col. 4:12-13, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.”

- C. God also made it clear that it is right to be zealously affected by good things. It often seems that when something is wrong in a church, everyone gets excited. But when a church does things right, hardly anyone gets excited. Christians should be zealously affected by the good things a church does!

Gal. 4:17-18, “They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”

- D. God has purified for Himself a peculiar people who are zealous of good works. **No saved person should ever be satisfied unless they are actively involved and zealous in doing good works for the Lord.** The world sees Christians as “peculiar” when they show their zeal and involvement in doing good works for the Lord!

Titus 2:14, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

SECTION TWO - AMBITIOUS

Ambitious - **desire** of power, honor, office, superiority or excellence; aspiring. Ambitious has to do with the inside desire, whereas being zealous has to do with actions.

Christians should have a **desire** to **properly** attain power and honor. It is not wrong to go after power and honor, unless a person tries to get it without earning it. For a Christian to attain superiority in a church or a ministry, it should be earned by doing a good job and accomplishing things. The Bible

says that if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good thing. The issue is whether or not he will work to earn it.

I Cor. 9:24, “ Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? **So run, that ye may obtain.**”

I. THE BIBLE LISTS THINGS FOR WHICH CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE AMBITIOUS. Christians should want to be excellent in some things. There are some who think humility means a Christian should never desire power or superiority. Humility does not restrict a Christian from working to achieve excellence in work or ministry. **A Christian should always work to do the best he possibly can.**

A. The Christians at Corinth were ambitious of getting spiritual gifts. The Bible shows that the Christians at Corinth were zealous of spiritual gifts and they desired to have spiritual gifts. Their ambition to have power and honor through spiritual gifts was evident. But Paul warned them to redirect their desire toward being able to tell others what the Word of God says.

I Cor. 14:1, “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”

B. The Christians at Corinth were ambitious to be clear of all the sin problems in their church. The church at Corinth wanted their sin problems removed, and showed this ambition by correcting those who were doing wrong.

II Cor. 7:11, “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

C. Paul was ambitious for the Christians at Colossi to have the knowledge of the will of God. Paul wanted them to know the will of God and have wisdom and spiritual understanding in knowing what God's plans were for them.

Col. 1:9, “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;”

II. PAUL EXPRESSED HIS AMBITION REGARDING WHAT HE WANTED CHRISTIANS TO DO. Paul's enthusiasm was not just for what he could do (through Christ), but also for what he wanted Christians to do then and now.

A. Paul's ambition for Christians is that they would not collapse due to his tribulations. Paul suffered many cruel hardships, and did not want others to stop working for the Lord because of what happened to him.

Eph. 3:13, “Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

B. Paul's ambition was that every Christian be persistent until the end. He wanted them to have full assurance regarding their hope. He wanted all Christians to stand in their hope and never quit serving God.

Heb. 6:11, “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:”

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD HAVE AMBITION ABOUT SPECIFIC THINGS DISCUSSED IN THE BIBLE. God wants every saved person to advance with their Christian life, no matter what age, race, or sex. It is crucial that children learn and grow, but at the same time, a Christian is never too old to learn and grow.

A. Every Christian should have ambition regarding *receiving the Word of God*. If a Christian does not want the Word of God, his life will never develop into what God wants. There are many saved people who never do anything for God because they do not seek the Word of God. The one thing that will cause a person to advance in Christianity is putting the Word of God in his heart—not just in words to know, but words to live by.

I Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, *desire the sincere milk of the word*, that ye may grow thereby:”

- B. Christians should be ambitious in *helping other Christians walk worthy of God*. God wants every saved person to walk appropriately and suitable to carry the name of God. There are so many who call themselves Christians, but are not worthy of the name. Every saved person should want to carry the name of Christ correctly.

I Thess. 2:4, 8-12, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.... So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

- C. Christians should have ambition to *hold the office of a bishop*. Christians should want to become leaders in their church and hold offices. If a saved person does not have the ambition to become a leader, he usually becomes apathetic and allows the work of the Lord to falter and fail.

I Tim. 3:1, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

- IV. GOD WANTS TO GIVE CHRISTIANS THE THINGS THEY HAVE AMBITION TO RECEIVE. When Christians delight in the Lord, He will give them what they have ambition for. The main reason there are so many Christians today who are not being blessed is because they do not want the things of the Lord. There are many who pray and ask God for the things of this world, and fail to receive

pleasure in the Lord. They often despise and even hate the work of the Lord, while praying for God to give them the things of this world. When a saved person receives pleasure in the Lord, that person will want to be in church, will want to be serving in a ministry, will want to give, and will want to be identified with Christ.

Psalms 37:4, “Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

SECTION THREE - ENTHUSIASTIC

Enthusiastic - “Highly excited; warm and ardent; zealous in pursuit of an object; heated to animation. Fierce passion or excitement of the mind, in pursuit of some object, inspiring extravagant hope and confidence of success.”

When a person has enthusiasm, he gets heated up about doing something. Enthusiasm can be good or bad according to what a person is trying to accomplish. There are many Christians who dream about accomplishing something in ministry, but because they never get enthused, they never work to accomplish it.

- I. Christians should become enthusiastic about the *work others do* not just their own. Christians should get enthused about what God does and what other Christian workers do.
 - A. Christians should get their enthusiasm from the workings of Jesus Christ. Christians should not get their enthusiasm from what they know or what they can do, but **what the Lord can do**. It is easy for a person to get excited about what they are able to do and never understand it is what the Lord can do that should excite Christians.

Col. 1:29, “Whereunto I also labour, *striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*”

Gal. 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

- B. The Christians at Corinth were enthusiastic in helping Paul accomplish his work. Christians need to get enthused about the works of others, as well as their own works.

II Cor. 7:7, “And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.”

Phil. 2:4, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

- II. CHRISTIANS NEED ENTHUSIASM, AND ENTHUSIASM NEEDS PROPER CONTROL AND DIRECTION. Enthusiasm is a tool and should be properly used and applied to a person's life.

- A. When Christians are enthusiastic in trying to obtain excellence, they still should be restrained in their actions. Christians should not become fanatics or totally unbalanced.

I Cor. 9:25, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is *temperate in all things*. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”

- B. When Peter was placed in jail, the Christians prayed enthusiastically for God to set him free. The people were not praying for Peter just because they were his friends and they liked him. They were praying enthusiastically for him *because of the work of the Lord*. The motive behind a prayer is very important. When Christians are asked to pray for someone, they should ask, “why should I pray for them?” Many prayers are very humanistic, and Christians should direct their prayers properly in God's will.

Acts 12:5, “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

- III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO BE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT. God wants Christians to get excited about the right things. Many times Christians get excited and enthusiastic about the wrong things. Christians tend to get enthusiastic about the earthly side of a

church, and not the spiritual side. God wants Christians to get enthused about the same things He gets enthused about.

- A. Christians should be enthusiastic regarding *loving others*. There is nothing more important to God than for Christians to love each other with the love He has given. When a Christian comes to church, he or she should come to church to love each other fervently with a pure heart!

I Peter 1:22, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:”

- B. Christians should be enthusiastic in showing charity to other Christians. Charity is giving to others the things of God, and Christians should be enthusiastic givers!

I Peter 4:8, “And *above all things have fervent charity* among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

- C. Christians need to be like Apollos, who was *enthusiastic about the scriptures*, and spoke and taught with great diligence. Apollos was excited about the scripture, even before he understood that Christ was the Lord. But once he was given that knowledge and understanding, he was more enthusiastic because he knew he was proclaiming the truth. Many times when a person (who seems to be excited about the scripture) is corrected, they are more excited about learning the truth than they are about the scriptures. Christians need to be enthusiastic about the scriptures, and seek to always be accurate. When they are corrected, they should rejoice in learning the truth.

Acts 18:24-28, “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass

into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”

- D. Christians should be enthusiastic about *servicing the Lord*. Every Christian should be excited and enthusiastic about being able to serve the Lord. God wants to work through His children, and provides everything needed to get His work done. The only ingredient needed to get His work done is a fervent spirit.

Rom. 12:11, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”

And all of God’s people said “Amen”