

APPENDIX J

THREE KEY AREAS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER TO DEVELOP

Developing character and integrity is crucial for every Christian. *Before God can promote us in His Kingdom, we need to first have the character in place* that will enable us to withstand and overcome the temptations and testings that we will invariably experience when serving the Lord. The Apostle Peter wrote in his epistle, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” **(1 Peter 5:8)**

As Christians it is also important that our lives reflect the message that we are preaching. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:16)**

Jesus was our role model for humility. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even, the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.” **(Philippians 2:5-9)**

Developing a humble and teachable spirit is also a key to walking a victorious overcoming life. When we humbly place our total dependence on God we do not have to worry as He promises to supply all of our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus **(Philippians 4:19)** and that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. **(Philippians 4:13)** Jesus Himself said, “...Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” **(Matthew 6:33)** Jeremiah the prophet wrote, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.” **(Jeremiah 17:7)** Like John the Baptist we need to say, He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease.” **(John 3:30)**

In the following study I will be looking at what the Bible says in relation to *Humility, Having a Servant Heart and a Teachable Spirit*. I will then share how many other areas of our life will be impacted by these three character attributes, and how we can best develop these attributes in our own life as Christians.

HUMILITY

The Bible makes it clear of the danger of having pride in our own life, how God resists the proud and how promotion within God's Kingdom comes to those who are humble and God dependent.

i) **Pride precedes a fall**

The book of Proverbs says, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (**Proverbs 16:18**)

"Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty and before honour is humility" (**Proverbs 18:12**)

The Bible also gives an account of how when King Nebuchadnezzar became proud about his achievements, (**Daniel 4:30**) God immediately took his kingdom away, (**Daniel 4:31**) and he became insane and roamed about like a wild animal for seven years. (**Daniel 4:32-33**) After seven years King Nebuchadnezzar began praising God and he had his kingdom restored back to him by God. (**Daniel 4:34-37**)

ii) **Humility precedes promotion in the Kingdom of God**

God's Kingdom is totally different to the spirit of this world. In this world people love to receive recognition and endeavour to promote themselves, but in God's Kingdom, it is those who are willing to give their life away who will truly find life and who God will raise up to do great and mighty things for Him. The Bible has many Scriptures that state that greatness and promotion comes as we learn to humble ourselves and to die to all selfish ambition.

Jesus himself said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, **him My Father will honour.**" (*John 12:24-26*)

JESUS HIMSELF SAID THAT WE ARE TO HUMBLE OURSELVES. IT IS IN DOING THIS THAT WE RECEIVE PROMOTION IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Jesus said, "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (**Matthew 23:12**)

James in his epistle wrote, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (**James 4:10**)

The Apostle Peter wrote, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time," (**1 Peter 5:6**)

GOD RAISED UP MOSES TO BE A GREAT LEADER WHO WOULD LEAD THE ISRAELITES OUT OF BONDAGE IN EGYPT. HE WAS REFERRED TO IN THE BIBLE AS BEING THE MOST HUMBLE MAN ON EARTH

“(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth)” (*Numbers 12:3*)

Psalm 147:6 says, “The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked to the ground”

THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT HUMILITY IS A PREREQUISITE FOR BEING USED MIGHTILY OF GOD. GOD WILL SHARE HIS GLORY WITH NO MAN

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things which are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” (**1 Corinthians 1:27-29**)

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

iii) God resists the proud

The devil (Lucifer) was thrown out of heaven because of his pride and jealousy. Pride in our lives will be a barrier to seeing God’s blessing and favour in our lives.

On the other hand, God blesses those who have a humble dependence on Him and who put their trust in the LORD. (**Jeremiah 17:7-8**)

The bible makes it clear that God resists those who have pride in their life.

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (**James 4:6a**)

“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (**1 Peter 5:5**)

“The Lord will destroy the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.” (**Proverbs 15:25**)

HAVING A SERVANT HEART

As Christians we should have a desire to help build the Kingdom of God. Serving one another in the Body of Christ is a key to seeing God's Kingdom expanded here on earth. The first church had great unity and they all helped one another as anyone had need. **(Acts 2:44-46)** The first church grew rapidly **(Acts 2:47)** **(Acts 5:14)** and moved in power. **(Acts 5:12-16)**

As Christians we need to use our spiritual gifts to help see others come to faith and to help other believers to grow in their faith. Ministry is all about helping others to grow in their faith and to fulfil their God given destinies.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel." **(1 Corinthians 14:12)**

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." **(1 Corinthians 12:7)**

JESUS MADE IT CLEAR THE GREATNESS IS ALL ABOUT SERVING OTHERS

After washing the disciples feet, Jesus said to them, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." **(John 13:14-15)**

After the mother of Zebedee's sons had come to Jesus asking if her two sons could sit in His Kingdom, one on His right hand and the other on the left, (Matthew 20:20-21) Jesus said to His disciples,

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." **(Matthew 20:25-26)**

TO HAVE A SERVANT HEART MEANS:

i) Living for others

The Apostle John wrote, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. **(1 John 3:16)**

The Apostle Paul also wrote, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification." **(Romans 15:1-2)**

ii) Esteeming others better than yourself

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” **(Philippians 2:3-4)**

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another.” **(Romans 12:10)**

iii) Helping others to fulfil their God given destiny

Jesus said, “And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?” **(Luke 16:12)**

HAVING A TEACHABLE SPIRIT

Having a teachable spirit is a key to fulfilling our God given destiny. When a Christian has a teachable spirit they will invariably avoid many of the pitfalls that unteachable people experience throughout their lives. To learn from other mature believers and to continually seek the Lord for His wisdom and direction in helps a Christian to grow strong in their faith, so that they in turn can encourage and help other believers to remain strong in their faith. The Bible makes it very clear how important it is that a person has a teachable spirit and that great blessings come to those who are teachable.

“Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.” **(Proverbs 19:20)**

“Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” **(Proverbs 15:22)**

“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” **(Proverbs 11:14)**

“He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.” **(Proverbs 16:20)**

“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.” **(Proverbs 9:9)**

“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.” **(Proverbs 12:1)**

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” **(Hosea 4:6)**

HAVING A TEACHABLE SPIRIT MEANS:

i) Desiring Wisdom

“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.” **(Proverbs 3:13)**

King Solomon knew the importance of having wisdom when he was made King of Israel. When asked by God, “What shall I give you” Solomon said, “Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?”

(2 Chronicles 1:10)

HAVING A HEALTHY FEAR OF THE LORD WILL HELP US TO CONTINUALLY PURSUE GODLY WISDOM. (Proverbs 1:7)

ii) Having an obedient heart

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” **(1 Samuel 15:22a)**

Due to his disobedience Saul was rejected as King by God.

(1 Samuel 15:10-29)

Unlike King Saul, King David, except for his relationship with Bathsheba, always sought the Lord for His counsel in all that he did and was a man after God’s own heart.

iii) Having a submitted heart

Having a submitted heart is a key to becoming all that God has planned for our life. Being submitted to other mature Christian leaders and being open to correction helps to safeguard us against making unwise decisions in life. What happens in our life is invariably related to what is in our heart. The Bible says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.” **(Proverbs 4:23)**

For this reason we need to choose our friends wisely. The Bible says that “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.” **(Proverbs 12:26)** If we spend time with people who are rebellious and not submitted or accountable to anyone, they can begin to negatively impact our life. The bible says that “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” **(Galatians 5:9)**

The devil is continually trying to sow rebellion and discord into the lives of Christians. As believers we need to make wise choices that will help us to become more Christlike in our character, so that our light will continue to shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)** Having a submitted heart and a teachable spirit are keys to safeguarding us against drifting of track in our Christian walk. God has a great plan for each of our lives and it involves staying on the narrow path that truly leads to the abundant life that Jesus spoke of.

Being submitted to other mature Christians of good character helps us to stay on that narrow path. Continuing to maintain a right heart attitude is crucial for all Christians. As Christians we must live in this world but not be of this world. The bible makes it clear that we must not allow the spirit of this world to impact our hearts. **(1 John 2:15-17)**

When a Christian begins to lose their first love for the Lord, they are then in danger of drifting off track in their life. All backsliding begins in the heart of a Christian. The book of proverbs says, **“The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied from above.”** (Proverbs 14:14)

iv) Being a person of prayer (God dependent)

Those who have a teachable spirit will always seek God in prayer for His wisdom and direction on an ongoing basis. The book of proverbs says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

The Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of having a prayerful dependency on God,

“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” **(Ephesians 5:17)**

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-” **(Ephesians 6:18)**

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;” **(Colossians 4:2)** and

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” **(Philippians 4:6)**

Jesus Himself said to His disciples, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” **(Luke 22:40)**

v) **Being open to learning from others**

A Christian with a teachable spirit will have godly mentors in their life and know the wisdom that comes from having a number of mature believers in their life who can give them wise counsel when major decisions have to be made. A mature Christian will always appreciate input from other mature believers into their life. The bible makes it very clear that to isolate oneself from fellowship is not wise but that "... in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. (**Proverbs 11:14**)

"A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment." (**Proverbs 18:1**)

The writer of Hebrews emphasised this. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (**Hebrews 10:24-25**)

vi) **Having a repentant heart (Keeping short accounts with God)**

As Christians it is important that we keep our hearts soft by keeping short accounts with God. Wrong attitudes and all know sins in our life should be repented of quickly, so that we can continually have intimate fellowship with the Lord. Maintaining short accounts with the Lord helps us to clearly hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. Unconfessed sins have the potential to rob us of that close intimacy with God so that we do not hear as clearly the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Though as Christians we are always in a relationship with Jesus Christ, sin can impact the sweetness of our fellowship with the Lord. The bible makes it clear that God loves to continually restore us to that place of intimate fellowship with Himself. **The Apostle John wrote**, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**)

HAVING A REPENTANT HEART IS A KEY TO MAINTAINING AN INTIMATE WALK WITH THE LORD AND TO REMAINING STRONG IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK.

Having a repentant heart helps us to continually stay on course with God's plan for our life and to remain strong during times of temptation. Someone once gave the analogy of how when you are sitting on the top of a slide at a fun or recreational park, you are safe when you are sitting at the top. The moment you move forward a bit you begin to slide down. As you begin to slide down you can always easily move back up to sit at the top of the slide.

But once you have begun sliding down the slide you begin to slide faster and faster the further you go down the slide until it is impossible to stop. The same thing can be applied to sin and temptation in our Christian walk. It is good to address any sin in our life right at the beginning before it gains momentum in our life so that it becomes a stronghold in our life.

Therefore how important it is to have a repentant heart as a Christian. God has a great plan for our lives but the devil will do everything that he can to destroy that plan or to sidetrack us from God's best plan for our life.

Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (**John 10:10**)

vii) Being led by the Holy Spirit

As Christians we need to allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct our steps. **The Apostle Paul said in the book of Roman's**, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (**Romans 8:14**) Walking in obedience is a key to receiving God's blessings. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth.

A Christian with a teachable and submitted heart will desire to know the promptings and guidance of the Holy Spirit in their life. As they allow the Holy Spirit to direct their steps, they know that God's destiny for their life will unfold.

Jesus said to His disciples, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you all things to come." (**John 16:13**)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (**John 14:26**)

AS WE LEARN TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:16) (Galatians 5:25) WE WILL NOT ONLY BECOME MORE HUMBLE AND MORE TEACHABLE AND SERVANT HEARTED, BUT WE WILL ALSO INVARIABLY BEGIN TO GROW IN CHARACTER IN MANY OTHER AREAS OF OUR LIFE AS WELL.

AS WE LEARN MORE AND MORE TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT, WE WILL ALSO BEGIN TO GROW IN THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT AREAS:

- **We will keep our commitments with others** (Matthew 5:37)
- **We will cultivate endurance in our life** (Galatians 6:9)
- **We will speak the truth** (1 Corinthians 5:8)
- **We will practice self-control** (1 Peter 3:17) (*2 Peter 1:5-8*)
- **We will become more kind and gentle** (Ephesians 4:32a)
- **We will respect our bodies** (Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit)
- **We will endeavour to guard our tongues** (Ephesians 4:29), and
- **We will offer forgiveness to others** (Ephesians 4:32b)

IN CONCLUSION

- **INTIMACY WITH THE LORD**
(*John 15:4-5*) (*Psalm 37:4*) (*John 4:23-24*)
- **MEDITATING ON THE WORD OF GOD**
(*Romans 12:2*)(*John 8:31a-32*) (*Joshua 1:8*)(*Psalm 1:1-3*)(*Psalm 119:33-40*)
- **AND BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**
(*Ephesians 5:18*) (*Galatians 5:22-23*)

ARE ALL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES THAT WILL HELP US TO GROW IN THE AREAS OF HUMILITY AND IN BECOMING MORE SERVANT-HEARTED AND TEACHABLE.

AS WE GROW IN THESE THREE AREAS, WE BEGIN TO QUALIFY FOR GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.