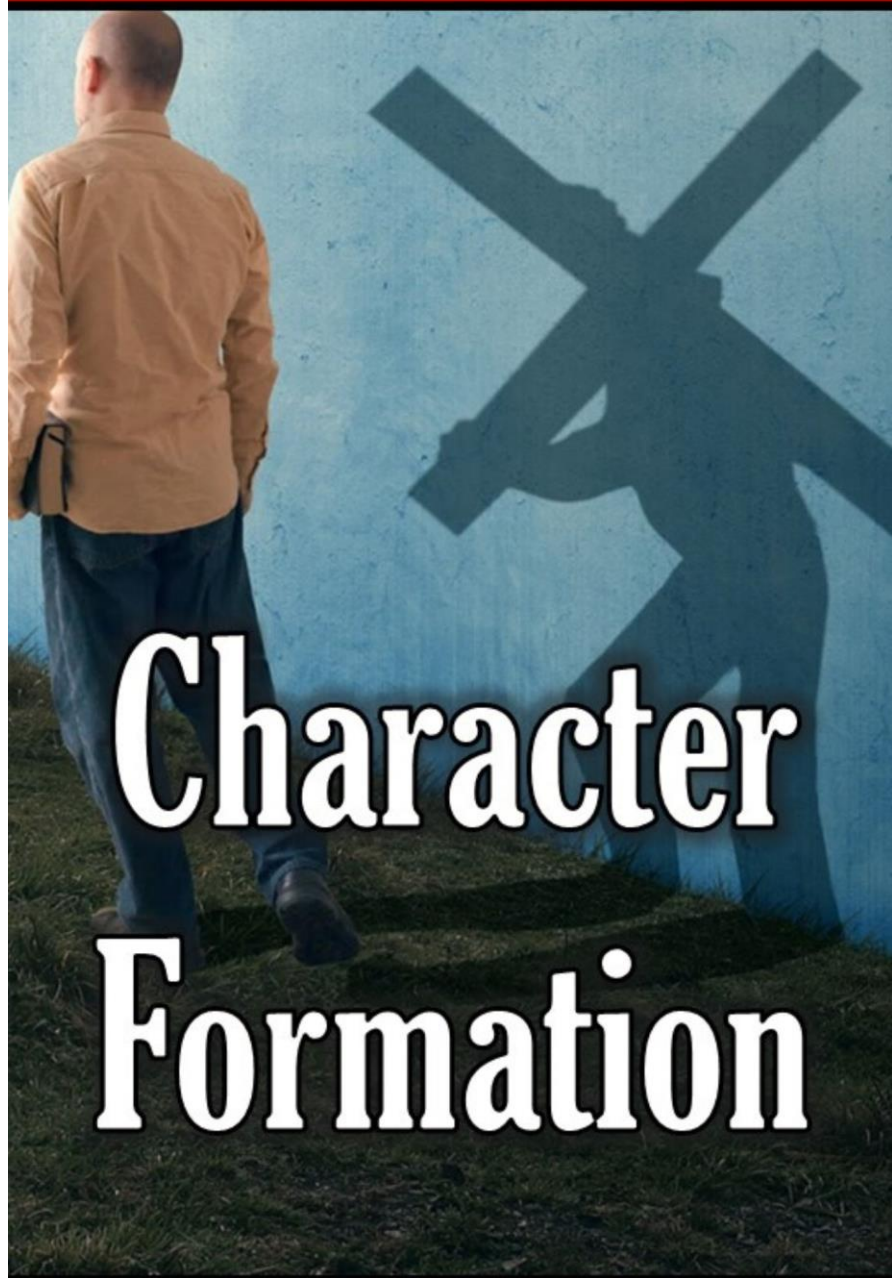


Tool Box Series



Character Formation

Study Outline

Introduction	4
Freewill your choice	5
Holiness & Sanctification	6
Practical sanctification	7
Character formation	9
The Father's discipline	10
Start with the heart	11
Battlefield of the mind	13
Mental attitude & training	16
Flesh vs. Spirit	17
Fruit of the Spirit	21
Love	22
Joy	24
Peace	26
Longsuffering – Patience	27
Kindness	29
Goodness	33
Faith -Faithfulness	36
Meekness – Gentleness	40
Temperance - Self-control	43
Peter's list of virtues	46

Trained by the Word	47
Ambassadors for Christ	49
Questions for different situations	50
Am I representing Christ? A good example?	51
Do I Offend or Stumble Others?	52
Does it look bad or inappropriate?	54
Am I Modest or Sensual?	55
Am I leading people to God, or being led astray?	56
Am I Hiding my Light, or Hiding My Sin?	57
Am I acting Immature?	57
Are my words foolish, Idle, build up or tear down?	58
Is this helpful? Building up? God's will?	59
Does this glorify God?	59
Am I motivated by God's love?	60
Am I selfish? Considerate to others?	60
Call to Action	62

Character Transformation (Fruit of the Spirit)

Introduction

In many churches, you will never hear anything about self-control, spiritual discipline, death to self, holiness, or becoming a new creation in Christ. But for the believers that will be the bride of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit and character formation are a natural consequence of obedience to the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

We need to make it clear from the start that it is only by the grace of God that anybody is saved, filled with the Spirit, or able to glorify God with their life. We do not want to confuse the obedience of grace with the law, and we oppose any form of works-based salvation or religious legalism. Salvation is by God's grace, and it is God who works in us to make us willing to do his will.

*Titus 3:4-6 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, **not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,***

*Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

Freewill your choice

God strives and works with us, but we have a choice whether we obey or reject him. God extends the invitation to whosoever will and is not just for salvation but also for sanctification and walking in the Spirit. It's up to us to obey his promptings and work together with him.

***Matthew 11:28-30** "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

***John 7:37-38** On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

***Revelation 22:17** And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

We are blessed to be under the new covenant, where God reveals himself to each person by writing his law in each of our hearts and minds individually. And Jesus said his sheep hear his voice, so each believer should know his voice for themselves without intervention from anyone else. Each person should obey what God has written in their hearts and the voice of the great shepherd.

Hebrews 8:10-12 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

John 10:14, 27 *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

Holiness & Sanctification

The words holy or holiness and sanctify or sanctification can be interchangeable and mean pure, morally blameless, consecrated (dedicated, set apart), innocent, modest, chaste, and clean.

There are two applications of sanctification or holiness. The first was imputed to us as a gift by faith in Christ when we were born again. When Christ died for us on the cross, he became our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption before God as the only means of salvation. Nobody could ever earn salvation by their works, but God gives it as a gift through faith in Christ, so all the glory belongs to Christ alone.

Hebrews 10:10, 14 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 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 that are, **that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.**

Practical sanctification

The second application of sanctification is the practical outworking of holiness and could include character formation and fruit of the Spirit. The practical application of being sanctified is a process whereby we separate from worldliness and sin and become more like Jesus. If we claim salvation and the righteousness of Christ, people will watch to see if we are legitimate in our profession. Jesus said we know a tree by its fruit, good or bad. If our lives reflect holiness or the Devil, people see it. Working out our salvation with fear and trembling is a practical part of our sanctification and spiritual growth.

Romans 6:19-23 ... For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. ... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness ...

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

We have seen that God has given us free will to choose, and we have been sanctified and perfected at the cross in Christ. As believers in Jesus, we are responsible for separating ourselves from worldliness and sin as we undergo character transformation and sanctification, walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 2:19-21 ... "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, IF anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

2 Corinthians 6:16-17 *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them;** and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.***

Hebrews 12:14 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*

Character formation

When we surrender our lives to Christ, a tremendous transformation takes place, and we are so drastically different that it is like we have a new life, and our old way of life fades into the past. At least that's what is supposed to happen.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

However, some people do not exhibit any noticeable change, and others start well and then revert back to their old ways. It's sad to see professing Christians living like unsaved worldly people, or even worse. Paul wrote to a congregation of people who had returned to the old way of life. He prayed that they would start their Christian life over again and focus on developing the character of Christ in their lives.

Galatians 4:19 *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*

The Father's discipline

If Children bear their father's resemblance, then spiritually speaking, we either resemble the character of Christ or the devil. If we profess to be born-again Christians, God the father will not allow us to keep living an ungodly sinful life, and he will help us with a character adjustment. In the same way, a father disciplines his children, God the Father will correct us to make us holy like he is because he loves us. And if we receive correction and discipline from God, that is evidence that we are his children, but those who reject his discipline are not his children.

Hebrews 12:5-10 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and **do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.**" **Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.**

If you are unwilling to obey God, and accept his correction, you are either an unsaved child of the devil or a spiritual infant which will never mature until you are willing submit to God, his will, his word, and his correction.

Start with the heart

The starting point for character formation is a change in heart. We begin with a good house cleaning and do away with the stinking thinking. The external forces outside our body do not make us sin, but the evil thoughts inside our hearts lead us into sin. There is a struggle between the inner man and the outside world, and transformation happens when the inner man takes charge and renews the mind.

***Mark 7:20-23** He (Jesus) went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For **from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'**"*

2 Corinthians 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though **our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Ephesians 3:16** ... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to **be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

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

Jesus walked through a world full of sin, yet Satan could not get inside his mind. Jesus saw and heard many things, but nothing ever got inside him because he ruled in the Spirit.

Isaiah 42:18 "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant (Jesus), or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, And blind as the LORD'S servant? ***Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear.***"

John 14:30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for ***the ruler of this world (Satan) is coming, and he has nothing in Me.***

Proverbs 16:32 ***He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.***

However, when Lot walked through the streets of Sodom, his soul was vexed and tormented by everything he saw. Lot's problem was that he had been compromising, and he was like a brother to the Sodomites (Genesis 19:7), and he let Sodom get into his head. Remember Lot's wife, don't look back or think back (Luke 17:32, 9:62).

2 Peter 2:6 ... ***and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials ...***

But God will help us to walk the streets as Jesus did, so we can see without observing and hear without listening. We can control what our eyes watch on the streets, in our homes, or with our cell phones. Like a blind person, we can depend on God to be our guide, to lead us to walk by the Spirit, and can mentally shut out the things we don't want to see or hear.

Isaiah 30:21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

Battlefield of the mind

In the tech world, they have a saying, garbage in, garbage out. Whenever we watch or listen to anything that fills our minds with sex, murder, witchcraft, and godless immoral filth, we put ourselves in a position of compromising, condoning, and mentally participating in those acts. Voluntarily participating in filling our eyes with images and ears with sounds of wickedness can be a form of idolatry or spiritual adultery. And when we intentionally expose ourselves to evil and perversion, we can defile, damage, and sear our conscience, so it becomes insensitive or dead.

Jeremiah 7:9 "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and

walk after other gods whom you do not know, "and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

An undisciplined mind is the devil's playground, and we cannot afford to be careless and ignore the escalating dangers of the end times. Tech and media companies are taking our personal information (data mining) and feeding it through algorithms with artificial intelligence to manipulate our minds to create subliminal acceptance or outright addictions to ungodly lifestyles or agendas.

Our cell phones, tablets, laptops, and other devices can be Trojan horses for the devil to get influence and manipulate our thinking, entering through our eye and ear gates. With the advent of digital IDs, digital vaccine passports, banking, GPS, online buying and selling, there is a phone app for

everything. All our tech devices are an essential part of modern life, and because we can't live without them, cell phones have become enslavement devices. These digital tracking devices that we call phones are powerful brainwashing, social engineering, and data collection weapons. There is also a demonic element at work and this tech explosion goes way beyond human and artificial intelligence. The media and tech industries are tools to usher in the new world order and the antichrist.

Yes, Christian ministries use the same devices, but that window is rapidly closing, and anything contrary to the approved narratives is flagged, de-platformed, destroyed, and removed from public view. There is a remnant of believers becoming more sensitive to the Holy Spirit and are weening themselves off the devil's media milk. The narrow path has fewer travelers and narrows even more as the world around us gets more wicked. We need to stay on alert because Jesus can come at any time. And what will he find us doing, watching, and listening to when he returns?

Ephesians 2:2 ... in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince (Satan) of the power of the air (air waves, TV, internet, radio, etc.), the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Our thought life controls who we are, either for God or the devil. We must decide to control our thoughts, eyes, ears,

and behavior and give our time in service to God with eternity in view. The time is short, and the spiritual battles will only increase as we get closer to the coming of the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **The god of this age** (Satan) **has blinded the minds** of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

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

Mental attitude & training

Athletes are committed to a disciplined training routine that controls every aspect of their lives, including coaching, exercise, practice routines, and diet. They train repetitiously, hour after hour, day after day, to be stronger, faster, and better to defeat their competition. They are not mere spectators or fans but are continuously active and seek to excel above all others.

Our goal should be to have a greater mental resolve, commitment, and discipline in serving God because we are in a competition and are running to win the prize, which is being the bride of Christ.

We compete against ourselves as our sinful nature fights against our efforts to yield to the Holy Spirit so we can run this race with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

1 Corinthians 9:24** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Flesh vs. Spirit

The apostle Paul had a dilemma because he said that when he tried to do good, he would end up doing bad. He recognized something from within that was working against him and concluded that the enemy was his fallen human nature. Paul experienced a perpetual war between his sinful nature and the Holy Spirit. Sound familiar?

Romans 7:15-24** I do not understand what I do. **For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing. ...

*... Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So, I find this law at work: **When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.** What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

***James 4:1** Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. **You murder and covet** and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Paul tells us the solution to the dilemma of sinful nature's control over us. First, there is no condemnation to those who are abiding **IN Christ Jesus**, and second, the Holy Spirit sets us free from the law of sin and death, which is the stronghold of our sinful nature.

***Romans 8:1-4** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so, he condemned sin in sinful man, in*

order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

The key to victory is the Holy Spirit, who puts to death the sinful nature, its mindset, and the misdeeds of the body. He that is dead to sin is free from sin's power, so those who have their mind controlled by the Spirit and led by the Spirit are free from the sinful nature. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Therefore, it is our responsibility to yield to the Holy Spirit and crucify the flesh with its lust and affections.

Romans 8:5-9 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Romans 8:12-14 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are

sons of God.

Galatians 2:19-20 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 5:24-25 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

When we yield to the Holy Spirit, he influences our thoughts and prompts us to put to death our sinful desires, mentally nailing them to the cross and burying them with Christ so Jesus can live his life through us. Let's look at the list of all our spiritual enemies that the Holy Spirit will slay in our lives.

Galatians 5:16-21 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not

inherit the kingdom of God.

Colossians 3:3-10 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ... But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Fruit of the Spirit

When we yield to the Holy Spirit and die to our self-will and sinful nature, we receive power from the Spirit that lifts us above our natural abilities and circumstances. Walking in the Spirit will guide us to publicly manifest the character of Christ in every situation and at all times. They say you don't know a Christian by how they act but by how they react. Everyone can be happy and friendly in the good times, but how do we respond under pressure when attacked, wronged, angered, or tempted? Let's look at Paul's list of character traits that are evidence of the Holy Spirit in someone's life.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

It is not enough to gloss over that list, so let's look at each character trait and Biblical examples that describe how we should represent the character of Christ to the world.

Love

There are multiple words for love in the New Testament, but we will only concern ourselves with the word "agape," which is God's love, the highest form of love that elevates the concern for others above our self-interest. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies, and he demonstrated his love for us by dying in our place on the cross while we were his enemies. The Holy Spirit can give us the supernatural ability to love someone who has caused great pain and grief to us, our family, or our people.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

1 John 4:19-21 We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we

have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Therefore, the devil's greatest goal is to separate us from the love of God, and the greatest danger of all our trials, tests, and sufferings is that we would walk away from God's love. But God said he would never leave or forsake us. Loving God in the hard times and loving our enemies as ourselves, regardless of our feelings and circumstances, can be a witness of God's supernatural love flowing through us.

1 John 4:16** And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and **he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Romans 8:35-39** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

***Hebrews 13:5** "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Joy

There is a difference between Joy and happiness. Happiness is dependent on what is happening and disappears in hard times. Joy is unaffected by circumstances and can manifest during the most severe suffering and intolerable circumstances. Anybody can be happy in the good times, but when times get hard, it becomes very evident who has the joy of the Holy Spirit. Another difference is that God's joy is a source of strength and deliverance and is eternal.

***Nehemiah 8:9-10** And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; **do not mourn nor weep.**" **For all the people wept,** when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. **Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"*

Isaiah 35:10** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, **with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

***Isaiah 61:3** To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, **The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;** That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

Acts 5:41 *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

2 Corinthians 7:4 *Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. **I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.***

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

1 Peter 1:6-8 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, **may be found to praise, honor, and glory** at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, **you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.***

Two sources of joy for believers are the word of God and prayer, which is supernatural because unbelievers' disdain both and are dead to God. To those alive in Christ, we find great joy in the word, prayer, and everything about God.

Jeremiah 15:16 *Your words were found, and I ate them, And **Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.***

Isaiah 56:7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

Peace

Peace is an aspect of God's character. He is the God of peace, king of peace, Jesus is the prince of peace, and he dwells in the hills of peace, Jerusalem. Jesus offered his peace to his disciples, which he said was not the same peace as the world gives. The world's standard for peace is the absence of war, conflicts, or noise. The peace that Jesus gives is an inner spiritual peace that is not affected by anything happening externally in the physical world. God's peace is only available to the righteous who are at peace with him, and there is no spiritual peace or rest for the wicked, ever.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

Isaiah 57:19-21 "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him." But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ... "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."

Longsuffering - Patience

The word longsuffering has to do with forbearance, patience, and restraint. Thank God he is patient and longsuffering because he gives us time to repent and turn to him instead of rendering immediate judgment against our sin. Otherwise, we would have no opportunity to be saved.

2 Peter 3:5 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.

Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Romans 9:22-24 *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

Lamentation 3:21-23 *This I recall to my mind; therefore, I have hope. Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

It's great that God demonstrates his longsuffering for us, but what about our longsuffering and patience toward others? Patience and restraint are not a fruit we want to eat because that would involve controlling ourselves while someone or something is irritating, aggravating, abusing, creating stress, and pushing us to our limits. In every place where there are people or difficult circumstances, there is a need to have self-control over our emotions and actions to inwardly dismiss and forgive abuse and afflictions while outwardly manifesting the character of Christ. Most of us can forgive one transgression, but to forgive 490 times a day, as Jesus said, would require supernatural grace from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 18:21-22 *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.*

Colossians 3:12-13 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, **longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**

Ephesians 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Colossians 1:10-11 That ye **might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful 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;**

Kindness

God speaks about the kindness he felt between himself and Israel that existed in Israel's youth with love, pity, and mercy, and he reminded Israel of their espousals to him with sentimental tones. There is a regrettable melancholy that reflects closeness and intimacy that was lost and deeply missed by God and summarized by the words, "I remember the kindness of your youth."

Jeremiah 2:2-3 "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love

of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them," says the LORD."

Even though Israel went away from the Lord and consequently felt forsaken and grieved in spirit, God always reached out to them and invited them back into the kindness of the espousals they once had. All they had to do was repent and turn to God with all their hearts, and God said he would gather them with everlasting kindness.

Joel 2:13-14 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?

Isaiah 54:6-10 For LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," says your God. "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer. ... For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

When we were lost, rebellious, deceived, and enslaved to sin, the kindness and love of God appeared and saved us. Like Israel, our first love with God is the most beautiful time of our life that we never want to lose.

Titus 3:3-5** At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. **But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

God saved us with a purpose, as we have a calling to show the same kindness that brought us to salvation to others as ambassadors of Christ. As the bride of Christ, we have the "law of kindness" on our tongue to speak salvation to the lost, begging them to reconcile with God through Christ.

Proverbs 31:26** She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is **the law of kindness.

Proverbs 16:21** ¶ The wise in heart will be called prudent, and **sweetness of the lips increases learning.

Proverbs 16:24** Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, **Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Not everything is sweetness and honey because sometimes we rebuke, correct, or smite someone with kindness for their benefit. How we say something can be more important than what we say, we should only speak operating within the boundaries of the law of kindness. We should never correct anyone in anger because a soft answer can break a bone and turn away wrath. In the short term, a correctly applied rebuke may hurt, but it will be an ongoing blessing like an excellent oil or a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. Controlling the tone and content of every word spoken while being a good ambassador of Christ is a supernatural grace.

Psalms 141:5 Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.

Proverbs 25:15 By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Goodness

God is a good God, goodness is his character, and goodness naturally flows out from him even to those who do not deserve it. But those who reject the goodness of God will experience his severity. His goodness and his severity bring a balance of justice and mercy. Notice that in God's character, good is not balanced with evil because there is no evil in God whatsoever. God is absolutely pure and infinitely holy and can do no evil.

Romans 11:22 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*

The goodness of God contrasted with our sinfulness, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness should bring us under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and lead to repentance.

Romans 2:3-4 *And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

That repentance is part of an endless cycle because of our sinful human nature. We want to do good and do what is right in the strength of our flesh, but we end up disappointing ourselves and doing the opposite. We have a sinful nature that pulls us toward sin and makes us a prisoner to sin, keeping us from doing the good we want to do.

Romans 7:18-23 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So, I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. or in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Thank God for his goodness and mercy because he has supernaturally equipped us to live above our sinful nature. The cross of Christ sets us free from the law of sin and death, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to live good godly, and fruitful lives.

Romans 8:1-5 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

***Ephesians 5:8-11** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

***2 Thessalonians 1:11-12** 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: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

God longs for his children to glorify him for all the goodness and blessings he freely and abundantly bestows upon us. Grateful believers should be like salt that creates a thirst in those who are lost and challenges them to taste and see God's goodness and mercy for themselves.

Psalms 34:8-10** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you, His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; **But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing

***Peter 2:2-3** Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

***Psalms 107:8-9** Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.*

***Psalms 107:13-16** Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two.*

Faith - Faithfulness

God is faithful, so we can fully trust that whatever he has said that he will do, he will do it, and we can have confidence in him. The question is how that faithfulness affects us. The following is a short list of what God has promised to do for us.

Faithful over temptations

1 Corinthians 10:13** There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but **God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Faithful to establish & guard

***2 Thessalonians 3:3** But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.*

Faithful to his word

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

Faithful to forgive

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

Faithful to make us rapture ready

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Faithful in suffering

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Faithful unto death

2 Timothy 2:11-13 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

To know if we are faithful, we must be tested and proven trustworthy. Testing may come in many forms, such as compromise and lukewarmness, which are deceiving and can induce spiritual slumber and backsliding. Other types of

testing may come from severe persecution and even the threat of death. Being faithful in those extremes comes only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the apostles they would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses, and the Greek word for witness is *martus* or martyr.

Hebrews 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

The book of Revelation describes Jesus as a faithful witness. Jesus is the faithful martyr that tasted death for every person by the grace of God. When Jesus returns at the second coming, he is called Faithful and True and followed by an army of saints who are called, chosen, and faithful.

Revelation 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

Revelation 3:14 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

Revelation 19:11-16 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ... On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS*

AND LORD OF LORDS.

In these last days, the faithfulness of the saints will be tested like never before by deceptions, temptations, compromise, persecutions, and death. The worst is yet to come, and believers could face severe persecution and possibly even martyrdom before the rapture. During the great tribulation, martyrdom is the only option for salvation. Jesus speaks to the suffering churches saying be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life. If we are not faithful right now, what are the chances of being faithful then?

Revelation 2:10-11 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**"

Revelation 17:14 *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

Jesus told several parables regarding the judgment of rewards and how rewards would get dispersed based on faithfulness, faithful over little or much, equals ruler over little or much. Jesus said that people who were responsible got rewarded by having rule over cities, most likely during the millennial reign of Christ.

*Luke 12:42-43 And the Lord said, **who then is that faithful and wise steward**, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

*Matthew 25:21 His lord said unto him, **Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.***

*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?*

*Luke 19:17-19 "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were **faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.**' "And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' "Likewise, he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'*

Meekness - Gentleness

Jesus described himself as meek and lowly in heart. It is hard for us to comprehend how Jesus spoke the worlds into existence, every knee will bow before him, and he has all power in heaven and earth, but he is meek and lowly in heart. The contrast between being all-powerful and yet being meek and humble is beyond our comprehension and

proves that meekness is not a weakness.

***Matthew 11:28-30** Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and **learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:** and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Paul was also impacted by how Jesus stepped down from his position in heaven, laid aside his power, humbled himself more than a common man, and made himself a servant to all men, leaving us an example to follow in his steps.

Philippians 2:3-8.** Let this mind be in you, which was also in **Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

God empowered Moses to be a great leader and used him to do many spectacular miracles, including ten plagues against Egypt, parting the Red Sea, and providing food, water, and every necessity for two and a half million people in a dry, barren desert. And this was no small task, and it was not a picnic for Moses, who carried the daily needs, burdens, and egos of millions of people on his shoulders. How did Moses do it? He was the meekest man in the whole world!

Numbers 12:3 Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.

David was the greatest King of Israel, a prophet, Christ the Messiah was from his lineage, they called him the sweet psalmist of Israel (rock star, songwriter, and musician), and he was the champion warrior and greatest general. David established Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Jews, and he gave the construction plans for the temple and supplied the materials to build it. So, David must have been aggressive and forceful as a leader, right? No, the secret to his greatness was God's gentleness.

2 Samuel 22:33-36 God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places. He teaches my hands to make war, So, that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great.

Psalms 18:35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.

Our sinful nature always seeks to exalt self, but the Holy Spirit can mortify the pride and arrogance of our old life and empower us to have the mind of the Spirit to serve others with humility and gentleness. Paul encourages us to esteem others higher than ourselves with the same mindset as Jesus in humility and gentleness.

Philippians 2:3-8 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. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

1 Thessalonians 2:6-8 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "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."

Temperance – Self control

Followers of Jesus are supposed to be disciples or disciplined ones. God is a God of order, not confusion. God designed everything in creation to function according to a set order, orbits, gravity, seasons, cycles, and God's authority.

As followers of Jesus, we should develop consistent spiritual disciplines that control every aspect of our lives and not live a disorganized and chaotic spiritual life. Paul compares godly discipline to athletic training, so being filled with the Holy Spirit supernaturally lifts us above our sinful nature and our physical limitations to have victory in doing the will of God.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

1 Timothy 4:8 *For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

Reading the Bible, we see that believers are supposed to wrestle, strive, and fight the good fight of faith as good soldiers of Christ. Soldiers are taught discipline and are trained at boot camp and conditioned to take orders and throw themselves into the battle without hesitation or questioning. They do not get distracted by secular activities while they engage the enemy on the battlefield. A sloppy, undisciplined, lazy, untrained, rebellious, and independent soldier is a dead soldier walking.

2 Timothy 2:3-5 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs, he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

The unsaved and half-saved worldly Christians do not want to hear about keeping the lustful desires of the body in check and living a holy life of dedication to God. The apostle Paul was on trial by a Roman ruler, but Paul turned the tables and preached the gospel in his defense. Felix, the ruler, was put on the spot by Paul's message of temperance, and he was afraid and sent Paul away.

Acts 24:24-25 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

As we mentioned before, we are like athletes that train to run a race to win a crown, but we run for eternal crowns with no recognition or accolades in this life. There are five different everlasting crowns mentioned in the Bible, but that is not our primary goal. We are motivated, and the driving force of our lives is to win Christ, and nobody better exemplified that attitude than Paul, who was an unstoppable gospel preaching machine.

Philippians 3:8-14 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Peter's list of virtues

Peter mentions a list of different virtues and then tells us that we should intentionally and actively incorporate those godly virtues to produce the character of Christ in our lives. He also said that anyone not involved in this process is spiritually blind.

2 Peter 1:5-9 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and

abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

The Holy Spirit uses our conscience and the word of God to guide us. If we are sensitive to him, he will guide us to do what is right, which will change and form our character, (John 16:8, 1 Timothy 3:9). When we combine Peter and Paul's list of character traits, we see the fruits that come out of obedience to the Spirit.

Diligence	faith	Virtue
Knowledge	Godliness	Joy
Self-control	Kind	Loving
Perseverance	Peaceful	Patient
Good	Faithful	Gentle

Trained by the Word

Reading and memorizing Bible verses will train our minds, to think according to the scriptures with God's thoughts, instead of our own rationale and reasoning. Notice how God links his thoughts with his ways.

*Isaiah 55:7-9 Let the wicked forsake **his way**, And the unrighteous man **his thoughts**; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. "**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways**," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.***

2 Timothy 3:15-17 and how from infancy you have known **the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation** through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, **correcting and training in righteousness**, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Timothy 4:14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. **Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.** Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

We are told that we can bring **every thought captive** to obedience to Christ, who is the word of God. To control our thoughts, we must train our minds, and every time our thoughts go astray, we must bring them back to the word of God. But it will never happen without a conscience effort.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, **whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if**

there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things.

Think on these, whatsoever is ...

True	Noble	Just	Pure
Lovely	Good Report	Virtue	Praiseworthy

Ambassadors for Christ

One reason God wants us to have the character of Christ, is so we will accurately represent Christ to a lost and dying world. Many people will judge Christ by how we represent him, therefore we have an obligation to live godly lives.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 . . . I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness . . .

Questions for Different Situations

We want to do the right things, but sometimes we are not sure about what to do. And as we mentioned from the beginning, it is God who writes his laws on our heart and mind, so we will not suggest any laws, rules or regulations. But we will give a sample list of questions that demonstrate how to each person can search the word of God for answers. As we pray and read the word of God, we will come to our own conclusions, and that process will change and mature us.

Paul wrote to Timothy, giving instructions for believers to live godly and to guide their behavior among the congregation of God's people. Paul was not legalistic but gave principles to be applied in various situations giving discernment to believers to be self-controlled.

1 Timothy 3:14-16 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

We list some common questions and follow them with scriptures that answer the questions. No commentary is needed because each believer needs to gain wisdom and discernment, so they can rightly divide the word of truth for themselves.

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Am I representing Christ? Am I a good example?

John 13:3-16, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ... So, when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. "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.

1 Peter 2:21-23, For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

2 Corinthians 3:1-3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? **You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.** You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Do I offend or stumble others?

Mark 9:42-43 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched.

1 Corinthians 8:9-13, But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Romans 14:13-21, Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

Does it look bad or inappropriate?

1 Thessalonians 5:22-23, Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the background: Joseph was sold as a slave and became the chief of staff over Potiphar's household. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, and Joseph rejected her advances. But one day, Joseph was careless and was left alone in the house with Potiphar's wife, and she again made advances toward Joseph, and he rejected her and ran outside. But because they were alone and he had no witnesses, she accused him of attempting to rape her, and Joseph went to prison for the appearance of evil.

*Genesis 39:1-20 Thus he (Potiphar) left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now **Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused ... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So it was, as she spoke to Joseph, day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. ...***

... And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "... He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. "And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

Am I modest or sensual?

1 Timothy 2:8-10 *I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*

1 Thessalonians 4:2-5 *For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;*

2 Corinthians 7:1 *2 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.*

Am I leading people to God, or being led astray?

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

Ephesians 5:8-13, For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34, Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

Am I hiding my light, or hiding my sin?

Luke 12:2-3, *"For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. "Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.*

John 3:19-21 *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ...
... "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."*

Am I acting immature?

1 Corinthians 13:11 *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

1 Corinthians 3:1-3, *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Are my words foolish, idle, build up or tear down?

Ephesians 5:3-4, But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Matthew 12:36-37, "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Proverbs 12:18; There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.

Proverbs 15:1-4, A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 16:23-24, The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

Proverbs 18:21, Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Is this helpful? building up? God's will?

1 Corinthians 10:23-24, "Everything is permissible" but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

Romans 15:1-6, We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

James 4:13-15 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

Does this glorify God?

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ...

... Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Am I motivated by God's love?

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Am I selfish? Considerate to others?

Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Romans 15:1-3 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

Philippians 2:19-22 *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. **I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.** But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

Galatians 6:1-5, *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.** If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.*

Luke 6:31-36 *Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. **But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.** Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most-High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. **Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.***

Call to Action

We are in the end times; our world is changing quickly to line up with Bible prophecy. Jesus said the signs of his return would be like birth pangs, growing in intensity and frequency and globally. All those signs happen at once, and we can see them happening in real-time with wars, food shortages, pandemics, shutdowns, and natural disasters, all leading to a one-world government ruled by the antichrist. Also, there will be a great falling away from Christ, with churches becoming perverted, politically woke, and government-controlled. Eventually, all true believers will have to come out of the dead institutional denominations and fake churches. Thank God we have a blessed hope that Jesus will rapture the church before wrath and judgment hit the earth!

While we have time and freedom, we should study the scriptures, share the gospel, and learn to live by faith. This book is part of a series of basic teachings that all Christians should know and teach. We call it the "toolbox series" because each study is a tool for you to share your faith with others. For free resources and study materials, visit our website at: Ears2Hear.online

