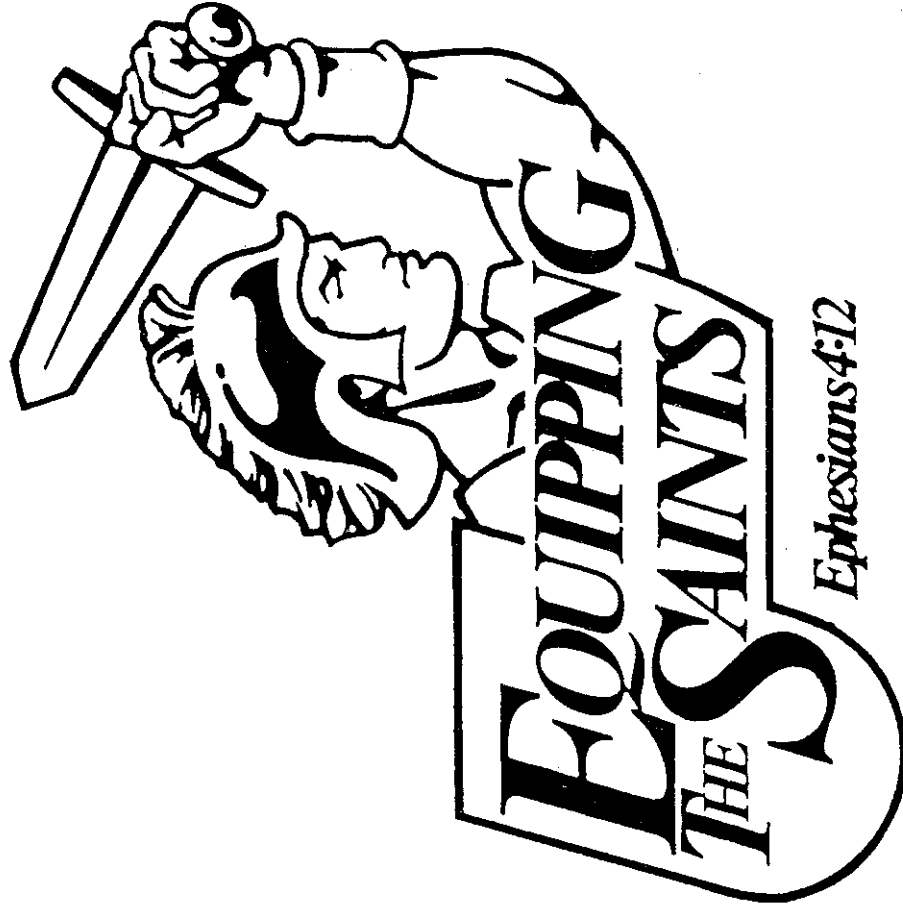




*for the work of service, to the
building up of the body of Christ*

Book Four

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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

- **Character Development**
- **Faith**
- **Servanthood**
- **Pride vs. Humility**
- **Integrity**
- **Purity**



1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the integrity of the financial system and for the ability to detect and prevent fraud.

2. The second part of the document outlines the specific procedures for recording transactions. It details the steps involved in the accounting process, from the initial entry of data into the system to the final review and approval of the records.

3. The third part of the document discusses the role of the accounting system in the overall management of the organization. It highlights how the system provides valuable information for decision-making and for the monitoring of the organization's performance.

4. The fourth part of the document addresses the challenges associated with the implementation and maintenance of an accounting system. It identifies common pitfalls and offers strategies for overcoming them, ensuring that the system remains effective and efficient over time.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes by summarizing the key points discussed and reiterating the importance of a robust accounting system for the success of any organization. It encourages the adoption of best practices and the continuous improvement of the accounting process.

6. The sixth part of the document provides a detailed overview of the accounting system's architecture and components. It describes the various modules and databases that make up the system and how they interact to process transactions and generate reports.

7. The seventh part of the document discusses the security measures implemented to protect the data stored in the accounting system. It outlines the access controls, encryption techniques, and backup procedures used to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information.

8. The eighth part of the document addresses the integration of the accounting system with other organizational systems. It explains how the accounting system can be linked to the human resources, sales, and procurement systems to streamline data flow and improve operational efficiency.

9. The ninth part of the document discusses the training and support provided to users of the accounting system. It describes the various training programs and helpdesk services available to ensure that users are confident and competent in using the system.

10. The tenth part of the document concludes by discussing the future of accounting systems. It explores emerging technologies and trends that are likely to shape the development of accounting systems in the coming years.

ETS 4/1

Assignment Sheet

Date _____

Name _____ Topic _____ Christian Character

Lesson _____ Character Development _____ Class _____

Lecture	Completed	
	Yes	No
Review "Character Development"		
Bible Study		
I Thessalonians 3		
Write Discussion Questions		
PSMA		
Do 5 PSMA		
Write a set of objectives for this term.		
Reading		
Bible Reading Chart		
Pursuit of Holiness--Chapter 1		
Pride vs Humility		
Evangelism/Follow-Up/Discipleship		
Pray for person to win and disciple.		
Meet with disciple.		
Scripture Memory		
Write in 2 verses you memorized.		
Review all verses.		



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Definition of Character

What is character? Character is the sum total of personal traits possessed by an individual that makes him what he is. Character has special reference to moral qualities, ethical standards and principles which govern a person's conduct and cause him to choose one course of action over another.

Christian character growth is based upon our allowing God to develop His attributes in our personal lives. In II Corinthians Paul says:

And all of us, with unveiled face (because we) continue to behold (in the Word of God) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in increasing splendour and from one degree of glory to another (for this comes from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit).

II Corinthians 3:18 (Amp)

We can see from the above passage that character development is a continuous process in our lives and is dependent upon our constant "beholding" of the Lord through His Word. Peter also emphasizes this in II Peter.

Do you want more and more of God's kindness and peace? Then learn to know Him better and better. For as you know Him better, He will give you, through His great power, every thing you need for living a truly good life: He even shares His own glory and His own goodness with us! And by that same mighty power He has given us all the other rich and wonderful blessings He promised; for instance, the promise to save us from the lust and rottenness all around us, and to give us His own character. But to obtain these gifts, you need more than faith; you must also work hard to be good (VIRTUE), and even that is

not enough. For then you must learn to know God better and discover what He wants you to do (KNOWLEDGE). Next you must learn to put aside your own desires (TEMPERANCE) so that you will become PATIENT and GODLY, gladly letting God have His way with you. This will make possible the next step which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them (BROTHERLY KINDNESS) and finally you will grow to love them deeply (CHARITY). The more you go on in this way, the more you will grow strong spiritually and become fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

II Peter 1:3-8 (LB)

It is clear, therefore, the Christian character requires that we constantly work at these areas of our life as we walk by faith daily. We can never become what God wants us to be on our own strength--we must trust Him to produce His character in us. But neither can we simply sit back and wait for this to happen spontaneously. We must work hard at obeying what God reveals to us from Scripture. Growth in Christlike character is clearly a matter of TRUST and OBEY!

In the chart below we can see how Christian character traits are emphasized by Peter, Paul and Jesus Himself and how drastically they differ from our own fleshly pride.

PAUL			PETER			JESUS		
Gal. 5:16-21			Gal. 5:22-23			II Pet. 1:3-8		
Fleshly Traits			Christian Character Traits			Fleshly Traits		
Carousing	Love	Virtue	Poor in spirit					
Impurity	Joy	Knowledge	Mourn					
Licentiousness	Peace	Temperance	Meek					
Idolatry	Patience	Patience	Hunger and thirst for righteousness					
Sorcery	Kindness	Godliness	Merciful					
Enmity	Goodness	Brotherly kindness	Pure					
Strife	Faithfulness	Charity	Peace-makers					
Jealousy	Gentleness		Rejoicing in persecution					
Anger	Self-control							
Selfishness								
Dissension								
Party spirit								
Envy								
Drunkennes								
Immorality								

How Character is Formed

NOTES

When God is in control of our lives He produces His fruits or attributes in our characters (THESIS). But if we allow Satan to be in control, he will either produce the ANTITHESIS (the direct opposite of God's fruits) in our characters or a SYNTHESIS (compromise). Either of these alternatives is less than God's best and prevents us from becoming what He wants us to be.

Every believer is a new creation in Christ. His inner man has been born again by the Spirit of God. Therefore, he has a new capacity to develop a character which reflects the qualities of Jesus Christ. These qualities of life are the Christian traits that we have already listed.

Sometimes Christians fail to form a character which glorifies God. Why does this happen? Although our inner man is saved, our outward man is still corruptible and perishing, and awaiting completed redemption.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

II Corinthians 4:16

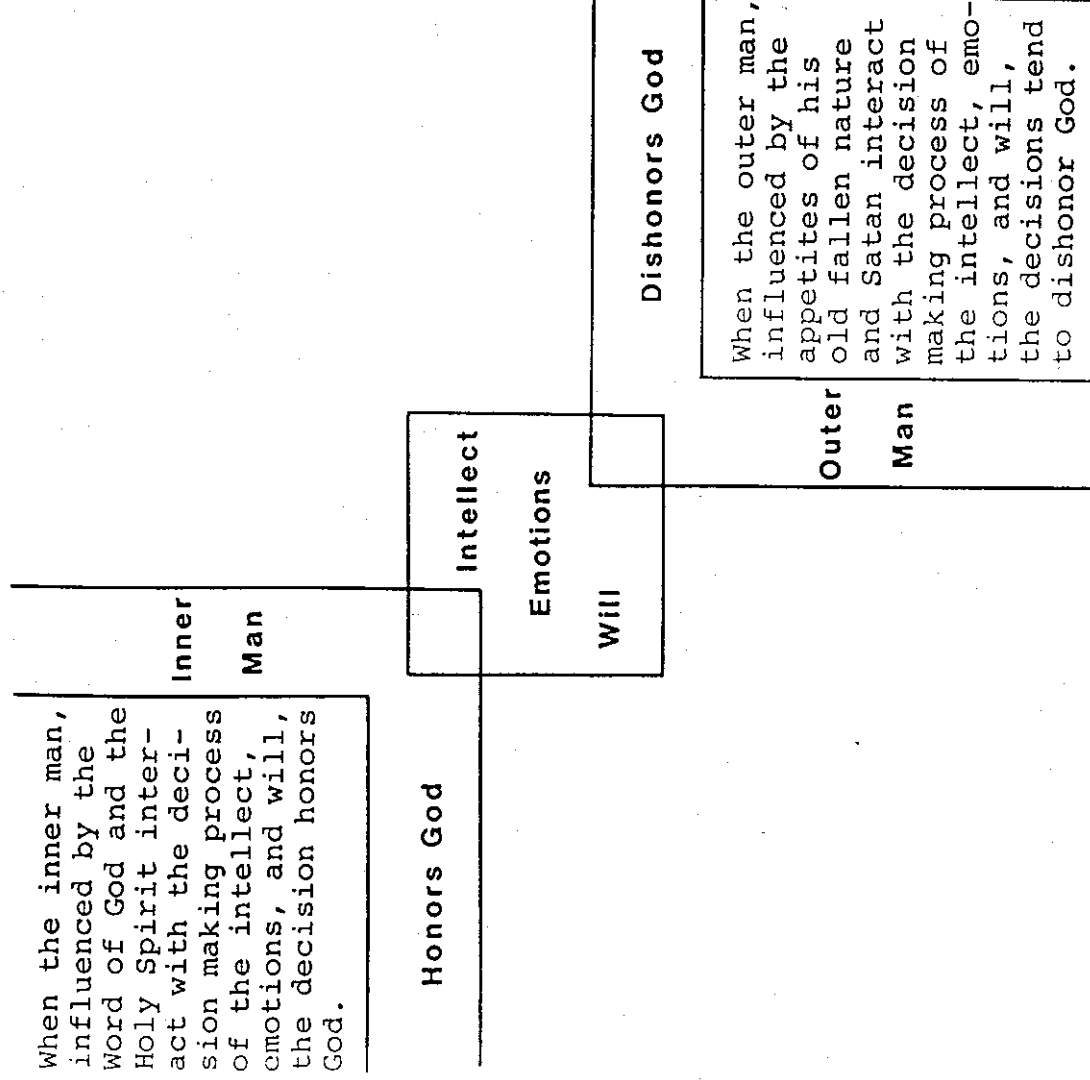
And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:23

The desires of the flesh press us to give them an opportunity to be manifested through our bodies. Daily, decisions are made in our inner man, whether to obey God's will and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, or to yield to the desires of the flesh. God created us with a will, an intellect and emotions, Satan will try to influence these three faculties to condone evil thoughts (intellect), to yield to what feels good (emotions) or to act upon what we want rather than what we know is right (will).

To develop true Christian character traits we must not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. This means bringing every thought (intellect) into captivity to the obedience of Christ, submitting our feelings (emotions) to the scrutiny of the Word of God to see if they are in accord with His desire for us, and yielding our wills to the Spirit's control so that we obey instantly and joyfully God's revealed will for us in His Word.

As our mind, emotions, and will are brought into the service of the Holy Spirit who lives within us through obedience to God's Word, the works of the flesh will not be manifest in our bodies. Instead, Christian character traits will be formed in our lives.



We must therefore be very clear what we allow our mind to feed upon. If we continue to behold daily the glory of the Lord through His Word, God will be in control of our decision-making mechanism. But if we continue to feed the physical or fleshly part of us through indulgence, lust, impure reading materials, movies, etc., we allow Satan to take control. The choice is ours! Will you let your soul be ruled by the Spirit or by your flesh?

How to Develop Character

Recognize the Influence of Your Environment

Your home, parents, school, church, job, government and friends have a great influence on you. Some of that influence took place when you were only a child and cannot be erased. However, by careful regulation of your current lifestyle it can be overcome.

The Holy Spirit--the chief agent

God, the Holy Spirit, can transform any Christian's life into a life that will please God. Trust Him to do miracles in you.

The Word of God--the chief tool

Unless we are consistently looking to God through His Word to guide us in our decisions and thought life, we can never expect lasting character growth to take place. A Christian must continue in the word in order to have a disciple's character.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed....

John 8:31

Application and Honest Evaluation

No amount of Bible reading or study will help unless we put it into action in our lives.

But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

James 1:22

Friends

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Proverbs 27:6

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Proverbs 27:17

Be open and teachable to godly Christian friends.

Don't try to save face.

Be wise and accept counsel and correction--this leads to growth.

Listen to your enemies--don't be discouraged by their criticism but ask God to help you evaluate it and make any needed changes in your life.

Guard Your Intake

Be careful about books, movies, friends, TV programs. These can be great helps or hindrances to your thought life.

Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Proverbs 27:20

Be of Conviction

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow evil men's advice, who do not hang around sinners, scoffing at the things of God; but they delight in doing every thing God wants them to, and day and night are always meditating on his laws and thinking about ways to follow him more closely. They are like trees along a river bank bearing luscious fruit each season without fail. Their leaves shall never wither, and all they do shall prosper.

Psalms 1:1-3 (LB)

Don't be easily influenced and swayed by the world.

Observe Godly Men and Women

Study the lives of great men and women of God who have left their mark for the cause of Christ.

Seek God's Help through Prayer

A consistent and earnest prayer life will help us to overcome the weakness of our flesh.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Matthew 26:41

Avoid the Traits that God Hates

Study the Scriptures to learn what things displease God. Being aware of these things will help you avoid them.

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Proverbs 6:16-19

Conclusion

It is our character which either draws people to Christ or repels them. Character will largely determine the quality and kind of ministry we will have with others. Godly character is a mixture of faith and disciplined daily walk. It is up to each individual and God to determine what his life will be like.

Dwight L. Moody once said, "The world has yet to see what God will do in the life of one who is wholly yielded to Him." Will you let Him do His work in your life?

Character Development

Character Traits

- Discipline (self control)
- Faithfulness (dependability)
- Purity (holiness, godliness)
- Control of tongue
- Initiative (resourcefulness)
- Availability, flexibility, adaptability
- Discernment

- Positive self-image
- **Generosity**
- Patience, gentleness, calmness
- Boldness, courage, forcefulness
- Punctuality
- Sense of humor
- Decisiveness
- Confidence
- Gratitude
- Neatness (appearance, dress)
- Common sense
- Whole-heartedness (drive, perservance, thoroughness, diligence)
- Enthusiasm (cheerfulness)
- Optimism

Qualities for Good Relationships

- Truthfulness
- Submission
- Humility
- Sensitivity
- Loyalty
- Friendliness
- Hospitality
- Diplomacy (tactfulness, cooperation)
- Transparency (openness, teachability, frankness, sincerity, receptiveness)
- Forgiveness
- Obedience
- Compassion

1 THESSALONIANS 3

PRELIMINARY STUDY

Read the chapter 2 to 4 times, at least once in another translation.

Number of times read _____

The very first word of chapter three is significant. Someone has well said,

"When you see a therefore or wherefore
Find out what it's there for."

So look again at chapters one and two...did you notice the suffering of the Thessalonian believers and Paul's great love for them? These are the reasons for the action he takes in chapter three. His love for them grew during the experiences related in chapters one and two.

DEFINITIONS

Use a dictionary and write in the definitions not given.

Vs. 1 Wherefore

Therefore; for that reason.

Vs. 1 Forbear

Vs. 4 Verily

Vs. 5 The tempter

The devil, Satan.

Vs. 6 Timotheus

Timothy, one of Paul's collaborators.

Vs. 6 Charity

God-inspired love ("charity" has this meaning throughout the New Testament).

Vs. 13 Saints

True believers in Christ (those made clean and holy by faith).

WHAT DOES THE CHAPTER SAY?

Again be conscious of paragraph divisions as you paraphrase the chapter. This time read the paragraph two or more times and then paraphrase it as a whole. The first of each paragraph is paraphrased for you. You do the rest. You may prefer to do it on scratch paper first, then write it into your book.

Paragraph No. 1--3:1-5

For those reasons, when we couldn't stand it any longer I was willing to remain alone in Athens:

[illegible]

Paragraph No. 2--3:6-10

But when Timothy returned from visiting you, he brought good news of your faith and love, your warm interest in me and your strong desire to see me, just as I long to see you.

[illegible]

Paragraph No. 3--3:11-13

May God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ make possible our visit to you.

Looking back over the chapter, is your paraphrase complete by comparison with the chapter? Does it read smoothly?

WHAT DO OTHER SCRIPTURES SAY?

Record the key thought from each cross reference below that refers to the verse from I Thessalonians 3.

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Cross Reference</u>	<u>Key Thought</u>
4	<u>Phil. 1:29</u>	<u>Suffering promised to believers.</u>
5	<u>I Peter 5:8</u>	
8	<u>III John 4</u>	
10	<u>Col. 4:12</u>	<u>Earnest prayer for believers' growth.</u>
12	<u>I Thess. 4:9,10</u>	
13	<u>I John 3:2,3</u>	

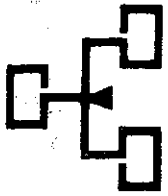
HOW CAN YOU PROFIT?

Perhaps the Lord has already impressed you through some portion of this chapter. If not, go back over the chapter prayerfully to see what He wants you to put into practice in your life or service.

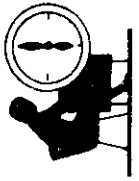
State in two or three sentences below what you want to apply, and how.

Are you sharing with others what God is teaching you?

"To keep a blessing, share it."



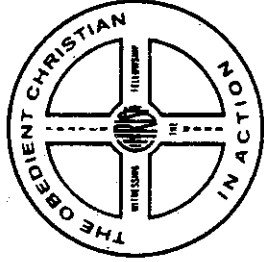
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APPLICATION



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BIBLE STUDY

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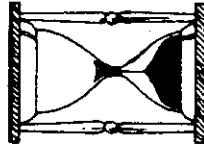
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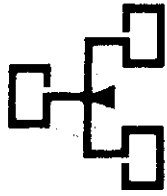
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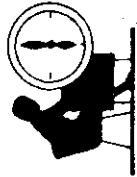
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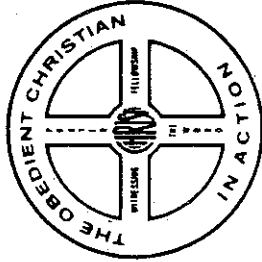
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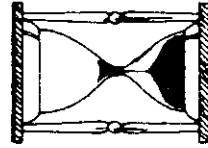
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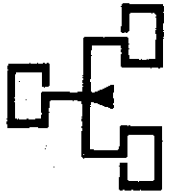
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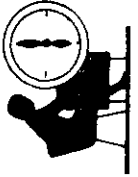
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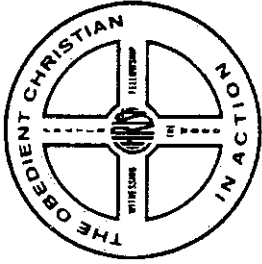
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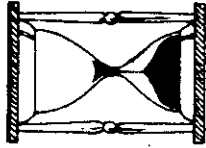
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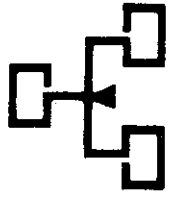
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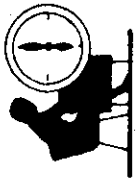
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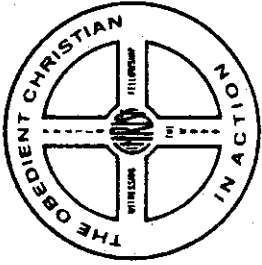
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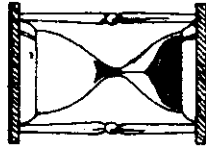
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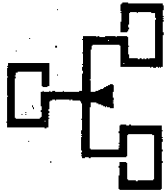
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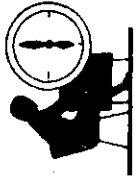
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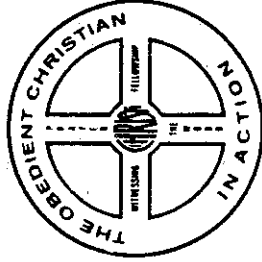
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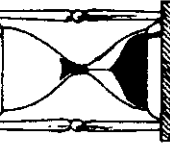
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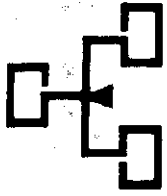
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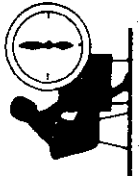
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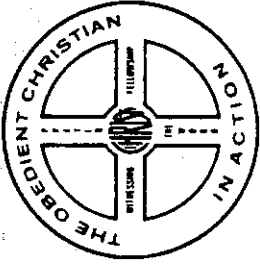


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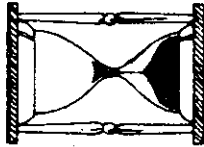
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EQUIPPING THE SAINTS PERSONAL EVALUATION FORM

DATE _____

LIFE OBJECTIVE	Objectives	
	Present Position	
	Obstacles	
	Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
	Plan to Implement	

SCRIPTURE MEMORY	Objectives	
	Present Position	
	Obstacles	
	Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
	Plan to Implement	

BIBLE READING	Objectives	
	Present Position	
	Obstacles	
	Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
	Plan to Implement	

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

PERSONAL EVALUATION FORM

BIBLE STUDY	
Objectives	
Present Position	
Obstacles	
Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
Plan to Implement	

PRAYER	
Objectives	
Present Position	
Obstacles	
Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
Plan to Implement	

WITNESSING	
Objectives	
Present Position	
Obstacles	
Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
Plan to Implement	

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

PERSONAL EVALUATION FORM

CAREER/STUDIES	Objectives	
	Present Position	
	Obstacles	
	Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
	Plan to Implement	

USE OF RESOURCES	Objectives	
	Present Position	
	Obstacles	
	Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
	Plan to Implement	

	Objectives	
	Present Position	
	Obstacles	
	Activities to Overcome Obstacles	
	Plan to Implement	

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS PERSONAL EVALUATION FORM

FOLLOW-UP		Objectives			
		Present Position			
		Obstacles			
		Activities to Overcome Obstacles			
		Plan to Implement			

EXERCISE & SLEEP		Objectives			
		Present Position			
		Obstacles			
		Activities to Overcome Obstacles			
		Plan to Implement			

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP		Objectives			
		Present Position			
		Obstacles			
		Activities to Overcome Obstacles			
		Plan to Implement			

THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS

by Jerry Bridges

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Foreword

Jerry Bridges, the secretary and treasurer of The Navigators since 1969, who had previously served this fruitful enterprise in field ministries in Missouri, Colorado, and Holland before becoming responsible for the administration of its legal and financial affairs, has given the world one of the most incisive, appealing and conscience-stirring treatises on scriptural holiness ever written. Without a doubt, the Lord has enabled His servant to prepare a volume that will have a far-reaching impact upon the lives of countless numbers who read it.

The dominant theme of this heart-moving study is the need for increasing pursuit by believers for the holiness of life which God, whose holiness is ever gratefully remembered, can alone make possible. Pursuit is the key word which the author, whose personal pursuit has been long and strong, constantly repeats.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson declared that one of the inherent and unalienable rights of men is "the pursuit of happiness." Professing Christians must be brought to realize that the preeminent desire and demand of God for us is that of the continual pursuit of holiness of life, and the reflection of His own holiness. "Be ye holy, as I am holy."

Well over 100 years ago, William Blake urged his readers to "put off holiness, and put on intellect." But divorced from divine holiness, intellect is like a ship without a captain, and doomed to disaster. In our quest for holiness, the prayer must ever rise from the heart,

"Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose."

This is why we must warmly commend this compelling coverage of practical holiness, in which the author fully shows that the whole of life must be permeated with the holiness a thrice-holy God can impart.

Dr. Herbert Lockyer, Sr.

Author

Jerry Bridges has been secretary-treasurer of The Navigators since 1969 and is responsible for the administration of the organization's legal and financial affairs.

He grew up in Tyler, Texas, and received Christ as a teenager through the influence of his local church. He attended the University of Oklahoma under the Navy ROTC scholarship program. He received a bachelor's degree in general engineering in 1951 and was commissioned as an officer in the U. S. Navy, where he first came in contact with The Navigators during the first few months of his service.

Following his discharge, he ministered with The Navigators in San Diego, California, while working as an engineer for an aircraft manufacturing company. In 1955 he moved to Colorado Springs to serve full time on The Navigators headquarters staff. He has also served in Holland as administrative assistant to the European director, and as an area representative in Kansas City, Missouri.

He and his wife Eleanor and their two children Kathy and Dan live in Colorado Springs.

Preface

A farmer plows his field, sows the seed, and fertilizes and cultivates--all the while knowing that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent on forces outside of himself. He knows he cannot cause the seed to germinate, nor can he produce the rain and sunshine for growing and harvesting the crop. For a successful harvest, he is dependent on these things from God.

Yet the farmer knows that unless he diligently pursues his responsibilities to plow, plant, fertilize, and cultivate, he cannot expect a harvest at the end of the season. In a sense he is in partnership with God, and he will reap its benefits only when he has fulfilled his own responsibilities.

Farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer. The farmer cannot do what God must do, and God will not do what the farmer should do.

We can say just as accurately that the pursuit of holiness is a joint venture between God and the Christian. No one can attain any degree of holiness without God working in his life, but just as surely no one will attain it without effort on his own part. God has made it possible for us to walk in holiness. But He has given to us the responsibility of doing the walking; He does not do that for us.

We Christians greatly enjoy talking about the provision of God, how Christ defeated sin on the cross and gave us His Holy Spirit to empower us to victory over sin. But we do not as readily talk about our own responsibility to walk in holiness. Two primary reasons can be given for this.

First, we are simply reluctant to face up to our responsibility. We prefer to leave that to God. We pray for victory when we know we should be acting in obedience.

The second reason is that we do not understand the proper distinction between God's provision and our own responsibility for holiness. I struggled for a number of years with the question, "What am I to do myself, and what am I to rely on God to do?" Only as I came to see what the Bible teaches on this question, and then faced up to my own responsibility, did I see any progress in the "pursuit of holiness."

The title for this book comes from the biblical command, "Pursue holiness, for without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14, author's paraphrase). The word pursue suggests two thoughts: first, that diligence and effort are required; and second, that it is a lifelong task. These two thoughts form a dual theme throughout this book.

While seeking to set forth clearly and accurately God's provision for our holiness, I have deliberately stressed our responsibility, feeling that this is an emphasis sorely needed among Christians today. At the same time I have sought to emphasize that holiness is a process, something we never completely attain in this life. Rather, as we begin to conform to the will of God in one area of life, He reveals to us our need in another area. That is why we will always be pursuing--as opposed to attaining--holiness in this life.

In addition to my own personal Bible study on the subject of holiness, I have profited greatly from the writings of the Puritans--and those who followed in their school of thought--on the subject of holiness. On numerous occasions I have quoted directly from them and have so indicated in the appropriate footnotes. In other instances their phraseology has crept into my own manner of expression. This is particularly true of writings of John Owen and of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones of London, both of whose writings on this subject have been of invaluable personal blessing.

I do not profess to know all about this subject, nor can I claim all that much personal progress. Many times while writing this book I have had to first make application to my own life. But what I have discovered has been of invaluable help to me in my own pursuit of holiness, and I trust will be of help to all who read it.

To explore more fully the scriptural principles of holiness which I studied in writing this book, I encourage the reader to work through A Bible Study on the Pursuit of Holiness, which is published by NavPress as a companion to this book.

Finally, I want to express my thanks to Mrs. Peggy Sharp and Miss Linda Dicks, who patiently typed and retyped the various drafts of the manuscript.

Holiness Is for You

For sin shall not be your
Master, because you are
Not under the law, but under
Grace.

Romans 6:14

The shrill ring of the telephone shattered the stillness of the beautiful, crisp Colorado morning. On the other end was one of those utterly impossible individuals God seems to have sprinkled around here on earth to test the grace and patience of his children.

He was in top form that morning--arrogant, impatient, demanding. I hung up the phone seething inside with anger, resentment, and perhaps even hatred. Grabbing my jacket, I walked out into the cold air to try to regain my composure. The quietness of my soul, so carefully cultivated in my "quiet time" with God that morning, had been ripped to shreds and replaced with a volatile, steaming, emotional volcano.

As my emotions subsided, my anger turned to utter discouragement. It was only 8:30 in the morning and my day was ruined. Not only was I discouraged, I was confused. Only two hours before, I had read Paul's emphatic declaration, "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace." Despite this nice-sounding promise of victory over sin, there I was locked in the vise-like grip of anger and resentment.

"Does the Bible really have any answers for real life?" I asked myself that morning. With all my heart I desired to live an obedient, holy life; yet there I was utterly defeated by just one call.

Perhaps this incident has a familiar ring to you. The circumstances probably differed, but your reaction was similar. Perhaps your problem was anger with your children, or a temper at work, or an immoral habit you can't overcome, or it may be several "besetting sins" that dog you day in and day out.

Whatever your particular sin problem (or problems), the Bible does have the answer for you. There is hope. You and I can walk in obedience to God's Word and live a life of holiness. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, God expects every Christian to live a holy life. But holiness is not only expected; it is the promised birthright of every Christian. Paul's statement is true. Sin shall not be our master.

The concept of holiness may seem a bit archaic to our current generation. To some minds the very word holiness brings images of bunned hair, long skirts, and black stockings. To others the idea is associated with a repugnant "holier than thou" attitude. Yet holiness is very much a scriptural idea. The word holy in various forms occurs more than 600 times in the Bible. One entire book, Leviticus, is devoted to the subject, and the idea of holiness is woven elsewhere throughout the fabric of Scripture. More importantly, God specifically commands us to be holy (see Leviticus 11:44).

The idea of exactly how to be holy has suffered from many false concepts. In some circles, holiness is equated with a series of specific prohibitions--usually in such areas as smoking, drinking, and dancing. The list of prohibitions varies, depending on the group. When we follow this approach to holiness, we are in danger of becoming like the Pharisees with their endless lists of trivial do's and don'ts, and their self-righteous attitude. For others, holiness means a particular style of dress and mannerisms. And for still others, it means unattainable perfection, an idea that fosters either delusion or discouragement about one's sin.

All of these ideas, while accurate to some degree, miss the true concept. To be holy is to be morally blameless.¹ It is to be separated from sin and, therefore, consecrated to God. The word signifies "separation to God, and the conduct befitting those so separated."²

Perhaps the best way of understanding the concept of holiness is to know how writers of the New Testament used the word. In I Thessalonians 4:3-7, Paul used the term in contrast to a life of immorality and impurity. Peter used it in contrast to living according to the evil desires we have when we lived outside of Christ (I Peter 1:14-16). John contrasted one who is holy with those who do wrong and are vile (Revelation 22:11). To live a holy life, then, is to live a life in conformity to the moral precepts of the Bible and in contrast to the sinful ways of the world. It is to live a life characterized by the "[putting] off of your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires...and [putting] on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22,24).

If holiness, then, is so basic to the Christian life, why do we not experience it more in daily living? Why do so many Christians feel constantly defeated in their struggle with sin? Why does the Church of Jesus Christ so often seem to be more conformed to the world around it than to God?

At the risk of oversimplification, the answers to these questions can be grouped into three basic problem areas.

Our first problem is that our attitude toward sin is more self-centered than God-centered. We are more concerned about our own "victory" over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve the heart of God. We cannot tolerate failure in our struggle with sin chiefly because we are success-oriented, not because we know it is offensive to God.

W. S. Plumer said, "We never see sin aright until we see it as against God...All sin is against God in this sense: that it is His law that is broken, His authority that is despised, His government that is set at naught...Pharaoh and Balaam, Saul and Judas each said, 'I have sinned;' but the returning prodigal said, 'I have sinned against heaven and before thee;' and David said, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.'"3

God wants us to walk in obedience--not victory. Obedience is oriented toward God; victory is oriented toward self. This may seem to be merely splitting hairs over semantics, but there is a subtle, self-centered attitude at the root of many of our difficulties with sin. Until we face this attitude and deal with it, we will not consistently walk in holiness.

This is not to say God doesn't want us to experience victory, but rather to emphasize that victory is a by product of obedience. As we concentrate on living an obedient, holy life, we will certainly experience the joy of victory over sin.

Our second problem is that we have misunderstood "living by faith" (Galatians 2:20) to mean that no effort at holiness is required on our part. In fact, sometimes we have even suggested that an effort on our part is "of the flesh."

The words of J. C. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool from 1880 to 1900, are instructive to us on this point: "Is it wise to proclaim in so bald, naked, and unqualified a way as many do, that the holiness of converted people is by faith only, and not at all by personal exertion? Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it. That faith in Christ is the root of all holiness...no well-instructed Christian will ever think of denying. But surely the Scriptures teach us that in following holiness the true Christian needs personal exertion and work as well as faith."4

We must face the fact that we have a personal responsibility for our walk of holiness. One Sunday our pastor in his sermon said words to this effect: "You can put away that habit that has mastered you if you truly desire to do so." Because he was referring to a particular habit which was no problem to me, I quickly agreed with him in my mind. But then the Holy Spirit said to me, "And you can put away the sinful habits that plague you if you will accept your personal responsibility for them." Acknowledging that I did have this responsibility turned out to be a milestone for me in my own pursuit of holiness.

Our third problem is that we do not take sin seriously. We have mentally categorized sins into that which is unacceptable and that which may be tolerated a bit. An incident that occurred just as this book was nearing completion illustrates this problem. Our office was using a mobile home as temporary office space, pending the delayed completion of new facilities. Because our property is not zoned for mobile homes, we were required to obtain a variance permit to occupy the trailer. The permit had to be renewed several times. The last

permit renewal expired just as the new facilities were completed, but before we had time to move out in an orderly manner. This precipitated a crisis for the department occupying the trailer.

At a meeting where this problem was discussed, the question was asked, "What difference would it make if we didn't move that department for a few days?" Well, what difference would it make? After all, the trailer was tucked in behind some hills where no one would see it. And legally we didn't have to move the trailer; just vacate it. So what difference would it make if we overstayed our permit a few days? Isn't insistence on obeying the letter of the law nit-picking legalism?

But the Scripture says it is "the little foxes that spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15, KJV). It is compromise on the little issues that leads to greater downfalls. And who is to say that a little ignoring of civil law is not a serious sin in the sight of God?

In commenting on some of the more minute Old Testament dietary laws God gave to the children of Israel, Andrew Bonar said, "It is not the importance of the thing, but the majesty of the Lawgiver, that is to be the standard of obedience....Some, indeed, might reckon such minute and arbitrary rules as these as trifling. But the principle involved in obedience or disobedience was none other than the same principle which was tried in Eden at the foot of the forbidden tree. It is really this: Is the Lord to be obeyed in all things whatsoever He commands? Is He a holy Lawgiver? Are His creatures bound to give implicit assent to His will?"⁵

Are we willing to call sin "sin" not because it is big or little, but because God's law forbids it? We cannot categorize sin if we are to live a life of holiness. God will not let us get away with that kind of attitude.

These three problems will be addressed in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this book. But before moving on, take time to settle these issues in your heart, right now. Will you begin to look at sin as an offense against a holy God, instead of as personal defeat only? Will you begin to take personal responsibility for your sin, realizing that as you do, you must decide to obey God in all areas of life, however insignificant the issue may be?

As we move on, we will first consider the holiness of God. This is where holiness begins--not with ourselves, but with God. It is only as we see His holiness, His absolute purity and moral hatred of sin, that we will be gripped by the awfulness of sin against the Holy God. To be gripped by that fact is the first step in our pursuit of holiness.

Footnotes

- ¹Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), page 7 of the "Greek Dictionary of the New Testament."
- ²W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (1940; single volume edition, London: Oliphants, Ltd., 1957), pages 225-226.
- ³Williams S. Plumer, Psalms (1867; reprint edition, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), page 557.
- ⁴J. C. Ryle, Holiness (1952 edition, London: James Clarke & Co.), page viii.
- ⁵Andrew Bonar, A Commentary on Leviticus (1846; reprint edition, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), page 218.



PRIDE VS. HUMILITY

Introduction

In a fallen world where men and women have rejected their Creator, pride abounds. God has been removed from His rightful throne as Sovereign Ruler of the universe. Self now reigns. As a result of man's pride, the world is filled with sin and evil and man is suffering the consequences because he rejects the only One Who could put things right. Because of its horrible and devastating nature, it is of little wonder that God hates pride.

Definition

The dictionary defines pride like this.

To be lifted up; arrogant; haughty; inflated with self-esteem.

Pride means placing ourselves in a position that God never intended, and being dissatisfied with the place that God has for us in His plan for the universe.

Pride--the First Sin

In Isaiah we are given insight into Satan's sin.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Isaiah 14:12-14

Here we see that five times Satan rejects the place where God has set him and tries to usurp the throne of God.

- I will ascend into heaven.
- I will exalt my throne above the stars.
- I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation.
- I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.
- I will be like the most High.

Not only did Satan reject God's plan and place for himself, but he also deceived Eve into rejecting God's plan for mankind.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Genesis 3:1-6

Their act of rejection and pride plunged men into rebellion against God.

Whenever a person's eyes are turned from God to self, pride rules. Pride places man at the center of the universe. It takes God from his lawful position as Lord and enthrones man there. Pride makes man dissatisfied with himself and his resources because it causes him to focus inward rather than upward on God and on His resources.

When Eve was confronted with the act she said, "The serpent beguiled me." Today Satan is still in the job of beguiling mankind into the same deceitful rejection of God through pride.

Pride is Deceitful

Pride can take two forms.

Inflated--Here a man feels that he is better than the world around him. He deserves more because he is such a wise, good, clever person. He therefore is constantly seeking to push himself ahead, be better than the next person, brag about his gifts and abilities. He is dissatisfied with what he has and is constantly seeking more!

Deflated--Here a man is constantly focusing on his weaknesses, his shortcomings, his inadequacies. He feels unable to assume responsibilities, witness to others, make friends, etc. because he is focusing inward on himself. At first glance, this does not appear to be pride because it is so negative in its manifestation, but it is pride nonetheless. Self is still central. The person is dissatisfied with the way God created him. He feels cheated and he focuses on all the things he feels he should have had but doesn't have. This form of pride often leads to depression and emotional/mental problems.

Pride is Destructive

It destroys any possibility of a personal relationship to God because self will not allow God to be in control. As long as God is held at arm's length and not allowed to be God of our lives, no vital relationship can exist.

One evening at an evangelistic rally, a Christian leader was chatting with a young man who called himself a "freethinker." He said, "The God you worship is not the same as the God I worship." He then began to tell him all the attributes he felt God should or would have. After he had talked for some time, the leader said, "Have you been worshipping the God who created you or are you trying to create a God in your own image? As long as you are doing the latter, pride is the Lord of your life and self is the ruler of your universe. You are not worshipping the true God." He was stunned. For the first time, he realized that he had deceived himself by pridefully creating a "god" to fit his own thinking.

Because pride is so destructive, God warns us about it time and time again in Scripture.

What the Bible says about Pride

Pride disgusts the Lord. Take my word for it--
proud men shall be punished.

Proverbs 16:5 (LB)

The reason pride disgusts God is because it rules out
the possibility of man being in fellowship with God.

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven
are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a
lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood...

Proverbs 6:16-17

As the children of God we need to understand that God
hates pride. If this is an undealt-with problem in
your life, you need to deal with it now. If we refuse
to deal with it, we will suffer the consequences of it.

The Cost of Pride

Destruction

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty
spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an
humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide
the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 16:18-19

Shame

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with
the lowly is wisdom.

Proverbs 11:2

Contention

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the
well advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10

Brought Low

NOTES

A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Proverbs 29:23

Have you ever wondered what the root of despair and depression is? The root is pride and it will bring anyone to his emotionally and spiritually lowest depths.

Rejection

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

I Peter 5:5

Manifestations of Pride

An unforgiving spirit --Cherishing resentment because we are too proud to let it go. Jesus said:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15

Saving face--Being too proud to admit mistakes or to ask forgiveness of another.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

Acquisition of wealth --The desire to pamper self with comforts. The rich man of Luke 12:15-21 fell into this form of pride only to have his life taken at the height of his wealth. Jesus said:

Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Luke 12:15

Pressure on children--to become what we want them to be rather than what God wants them to be.

False piety--Solomon warns,

Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

Ecclesiastes 7:16

The Pharisees exhibited this over-righteous attitude by criticizing and judging everyone else. They were so concerned with their own pride and piety that they were blind to the sin in their own hearts. Jesus called them "whited sepulchres" which appear beautiful outwardly but are filled with dead men's bones and uncleanness. (Matthew 23:25-28)

Authority--Most of us love positions of authority. We strive to "work up in the company" or to gain positions of leadership. Authority feeds pride.

But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

Matthew 20:25-27

We must take care to distinguish that there is a right kind of pride. For example, there is the satisfaction that comes from a job well done or from seeing our children or spiritual children walking with God (III John 4). As long as we realize that God is the One who has empowered us and graciously allowed the accomplishment, and as long as we give God the glory, we are not in sin. But we must take care to keep our pride pure and turned God-ward.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Humility: God's Alternative

Definition: Humility is giving to God His rightful place in the center of our lives. It means accepting God's role and place for me in His creation.

Humility means neither thinking too highly of myself nor depreciating myself before God.

Humility accepts God's plan with gratitude and thankfulness--gives Him the glory.

Humility understands that God is in control regardless of what is happening, and willingly trusts God to work things out.

God's Formula for Greatness

Perhaps nowhere is God's way in greater contrast with the world than in the area of pride and humility. The world teaches that to be great, to be fulfilled, to be successful, you must put self first. Jesus says this is totally wrong. On the contrary, He says, to be successful, great and fulfilled in the true sense you must put God first and live in humility before Him.

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased;
and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 14:11

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant, And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Matthew 23:11-12

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

I Peter 5:5-6

We could state the formula very simply.

Man exalts himself-----God abases or humbles.

Man humbles self-----God exalts or honors.

The choice is ours to fit into the formula where we desire. Where do you fit in?

How to Deal with Pride

Ask God to make you aware of pride in your life

NOTES

Prayerfully ask God to search your heart for any roots of pride that may be there. God will be faithful to reveal them to you if you are sincere when you ask. Often after praying such a prayer, you may find yourself in a humbling situation which will pinch the nerves of pride in your life. They will then be clear to you if they have not been before.

See yourself from God's perspective

Often pride comes because we do not have a Biblical view of our own worth to God. Through the Scriptures, we discover that we are of infinite value to God--loved, cared-for, redeemed at the price of His Own Son. We will also discover that all we have in talent, possessions, status or authority comes from God. If we carefully meditate upon what we read, we will see that all our worth, value and importance comes from God, and that without Him we are as worthless as branches severed from the vine. We may appear to be alive and fruitful for awhile, but like a severed branch we are in fact dead and useless.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15:5-6

Focus on God's power in prayer and praise

On our own we may feel confident and capable, or fearful and weak. However pride affects us we must constantly remember that we are, in fact, not alone at all.

For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Acts 17:28

Without God's grace extended to each of us daily, we would not be alive at all. We must realize that it is God and God alone--not our own power--which allows us to do or to have anything.

When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

The Example of Jesus

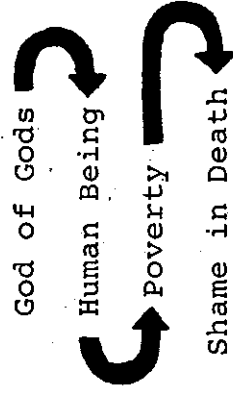
Whether in success or in failure, God commands that we should have the same mind as Jesus had.

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. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

It would have been humbling enough for the Son of God to simply become a man. To leave the delights of heaven and enter a fallen world would have been a great step down even if Jesus had come as a king. But He did not come as a king. He humbled Himself a second time by being born in poverty, living the life of a simple carpenter, working by the sweat of His brow to earn his living. Yet, Jesus humbled Himself once again when He left the world of honorable men to die like a common criminal on the most shameful execution instrument of the day.

We can illustrate Christ's three-fold humility this way.



Summary

As we begin to focus upon Jesus as the Source of all we have and the Example for all we do, pride will dissipate and we will not be able to do other than give all glory to Him.

ETS 4/2

Assignment Sheet

Date _____

Name _____ Topic _____ Christian Character

Lesson Faith Class _____

Lecture	Completed	
	Yes	No
Review "Faith"		
Bible Study		
I Thessalonians 4		
Write Discussion Questions.		
PSMA		
DO 5 PSMA		
Reading		
Bible Reading Chart		
Pursuit of Holiness -- Chapter 2		
Integrity		
Evangelism/Follow-Up/Discipleship		
Pray for person to win to Christ.		
Hand in Follow-Up Guide for Convert and Disciple.		
Scripture Memory		
Write in 2 verses you memorized.		
Review all verses.		



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FAITH

Introduction

As we have learned, the focal point of discipleship is the sovereignty of God. We have said that the sovereignty of God is the source from which faith is generated. In a very real way sovereignty and faith are the reverse sides of the same coin. Faith is what transforms sovereignty from philosophy or theology into reality. Faith is that character quality that allows us to trust God to do what He said He would do.

Definition of Faith

Hebrews 11 defines faith for us.

Faith is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us even though we cannot see it up ahead.

Hebrews 11:1 (LB)

Faith is an attitude of the heart or mind that causes a person to trust God to do what He has promised. This trust is based upon God's faithfulness to His word in the past but concerns present and future events.

Faith therefore can be only expressed in two areas.

The Assurance of Things Hoped For

We cannot express trust in God for things that have already happened--but only for those things which are yet unaccomplished in our lives.

Noah, for example, was told by God that a great flood would take place in the future and that he should prepare an ark. It was Noah's faith that the future great flood would in fact take place, which motivated him to complete the ark in obedience to God.

...when he heard God's warning about the future, Noah believed Him even though there was then no sign of a flood, and wasting no time built the ark and saved his family...

Hebrews 11:7 (LB)

We have the opportunity to individually trust God for future events in our personal lives. Those of us who are unmarried for example, can trust God for a life partner. Those of us who are married must learn to trust Him for the lives and salvation of our children as they are born and grow up. Since none of us can see the future--even five minutes ahead, we must exercise faith in God for future events.

The Conviction of Things Not Seen

The Bible tells us that no one has seen God at any time (I John 4:12). Neither have we seen heaven nor the things that God has prepared for us there (I Corinthians 2:9). Yet each of us who believes in God and names the name of Christ is exercising faith in something he has never seen. We believe there is a God, a heaven, a hell, angels, and spiritual power even though most of us have never even claimed to see any of these things. The Bible tells us that these invisible things are even more real and eternal than the temporal and visible things we see each day (II Corinthians 4:18). Therefore, by faith we place our trust in things not seen.

Faith, therefore, is expressed by commitment before knowledge. For example, a man may need open heart surgery. He may hear of a famous heart surgeon who has performed the operation successfully many times. The patient may mentally believe that the surgeon is able to perform the task. But until he actually commits his own body to the surgeon's scalpel and skill, he is not exercising faith in the doctor.

Presumption vs Promises

It is important to realize that true faith is based upon God's promises--not presumption. What is the difference? Presumption means taking a step into the unknown without the promises of God as my basis for action. For example, a man may jump off a tall building believing sincerely that God will send angels to break his fall and prevent him from "dashing his foot against a stone." But this man has made the tragic

mistake of confusing God's ability with God's promise, for though God is well able to save the man from harm, He has not promised to do so. When we step out by faith, we must be sure that we are walking in accordance with the promises of God and not just blindly hoping that "God will make it all turn out all right."

The great giants of faith listed in the Scriptures all trusted in the promises of God. Consider the following.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Romans 4:20-21

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Hebrews 11:11

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son....

Hebrews 11:17

James 4:2-3 tells us that if we pray from a basis of presumption rather than promises, we will not receive. Our motives and desires are selfish and wrong and we presume upon God to fulfill our plans rather than make ourselves available to fulfill His plans. When we pray from a yielded heart toward God, we must be willing to accept "no" as a valid answer to some of our prayers. Even in the "no" we must trust God's perfect wisdom and not presume that we know better than He.

The story is told of the woman who prayed that her sick child would not die. When he died, she told her friend, "I will never be able to trust God again." She failed to understand that faith is based upon God's promises. Unfortunately, God had never made a promise to her for the recovery of her child. Her prayer had been based on presumption.

The Importance of Faith

Basis for Pleasing God

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Basis for Prayer

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.
For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea
driven with the wind and tossed.

James 1:6

Basis for Victory

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the
world: and this is the victory that over-
cometh the world, even our faith.

1 John 5:4

Basis for Protection

....Above all, taking the shield of faith,
wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the
fiery darts of the wicked.

Ephesians 6:16

Basis for Abiding

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith
fail not: and when thou art converted,
strengthen thy brethren.

Luke 22:32

Saved by Faith

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and
that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Walk by Faith

(For we walk by faith, not by sight)....

II Corinthians 5:7

Justified by Faith

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

Romans 5:1

Sanctified by Faith

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts 26:18

Faith or Sin

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Romans 14:23

How to Increase our Faith

Looking to Jesus

Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith....

Hebrews 12:2

Our eyes must be fixed upon Him--not the circumstances.

Hearing the Word

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

Daily intake and review of God's promises are essential to a strong faith.

Giving the Spirit Control

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith....

Galatians 5:22

If we are being led and directed by the Holy Spirit, faith will be an inevitable result in our lives.

Trusting God's Promises

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Romans 4:20-21

As Abraham, we become strong by believing God's promises, putting God to the test, exercising our faith, and obeying God's command.

Exercising Faith

And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing ~~he~~ ^{he hath} defied the armies of the living God.

1 Samuel 17:32-36

Faith is like a spiritual muscle--it must be exercised in everyday circumstances to become strong for big tests. David, as a shepherd boy, learned to trust God to deliver him from the lions and bears who daily tried to steal his sheep. Because his faith muscle had been strengthened through these situations, he was able to believe God for the conquering of Goliath when no one else dared to try.

Hindrances to Faith

Doubt

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory

to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Romans 4:20-21

Abraham refused to doubt God.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Genesis 3:1

Satan's attack upon Eve was aimed at making her doubt God's Word..."Hath God said...?"

Fear

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

II Timothy 1:7

God does not give us a spirit of fear. Whenever we are fearful, we know it is not from God but from our adversary the Devil. God never leads through fear!

Worry

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye

have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Matthew 6:25-34

Unnecessary concern for provision or future events inhibits faith from developing. If we really believe God loves us and cares for us much more than the birds and the lilies of the field--why worry?

Sin

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me

Psalms 66:18

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Isaiah 59:1-2

Unconfessed sin can block God's answers to our prayers. We must ask God to search our hearts and convict us of sin. Then we must confess and forsake it for the walk of faith to bear fruit in our lives.

Summary

Faith is an exciting and wonderful gift from God. Through faith, the truths of the Scripture become our personal experience, and through faith we learn to know the God we serve deeply and intimately.

FAITH

Sees the Invisible

Believes the Incredible

Attempts the Impossible

1 THESSALONIANS 4

PRELIMINARY STUDY

Paul has been setting the stage for this chapter since the beginning of his letter. Do you recall how he has been speaking of his past experiences with the Christians at Thessalonica, and of their reputation for faithfulness to Christ? These will show up in your previous paraphrases--review them briefly before launching into these next instructions on how to live and on Christ's return.

Again read this chapter through several times.

Number of times read _____

DEFINITIONS

Study the definitions given. Look up the undefined words in a dictionary and record the definitions.

Vs. 1 Beseech

Vs. 3 Sanctification

Cleansing and setting apart for pure and holy living.

Vs. 3 Fornication

Vs. 4 Vessel

Body; self; or perhaps wife.

Vs. 5 Concupiscence

Vs. 13 Asleep

Dead.

Vs. 15 Prevent

Go before; precede.

WHAT DOES THE CHAPTER SAY?

Again in this chapter you will paraphrase whole paragraphs instead of single verses. Below is a paraphrase of the first paragraph. Rephrase the next two paragraphs in the same way.

Paragraph No. 1--4:1-8

Since you believers have already learned from us how to live a God-pleasing life, we urge you, as followers of Jesus the Lord, to live this way increasingly. You remember His orders that we passed on to

you. God's will is that you be set apart from the world and live pure lives free from sexual immorality. Each of you should know how to keep his body and relationships pure and honorable, not living in lust as the unbelieving world does. Do not sin and cheat others in such things for the Lord will punish you, as we warned you before. God has not called us to impurity but to holy living. So if you reject this commandment you are not disobeying man, but God, the One Who has put His Holy Spirit within us.

Paragraph No. 2--4:9-12

Paragraph No. 3--4:13-18

Does your paraphrase include all the chapter says? Have you used your own words? Is it clear and smooth?

SUMMARY

Summarizing, or squeezing the content of a passage into more compact form, is another approach to study you will be learning. Try it now on paragraph 2 (verse 9-12). First read the paragraph thoughtfully several times--either from the Bible or your paraphrase. Then try to put it in fewer words, perhaps about half the length it is in the Bible. The first part is summarized for you.

Summary of Paragraph No.2--4:9-12

God has taught you brotherly love, so I need not mention this.

WHAT OTHER SCRIPTURES SAY

Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. Since the Holy Spirit directed in the writing of the whole Bible, He uses one part to shed light on another. Finding cross references on various thoughts in the chapter is one of the most rewarding parts of the study.

Give the key thoughts of the following cross references, and find one cross reference for another important verse in the chapter.

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Cross Reference</u>	<u>Key Thought</u>
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3	I Peter 1:15	Be holy in everything.
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8	I Cor. 3:16	
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14 John 11:25

17 John 14:3

WHAT THE CHAPTER SAYS TO YOU

Someone boasted to Evangelist Dwight L. Moody how many times he'd been through the Bible. Moody responded, "It is not how many times you've been through the Bible that counts, but how many times the Bible has been through you!" Spiritual maturity is the result not only of knowing the Bible but of applying its teachings.

Read chapter four again prayerfully and list below some of the verses which you feel might have an application to your life.

Briefly tell how the verse applies.

Verse Brief Statement of Application

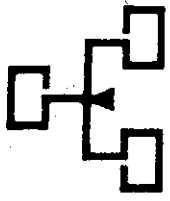
Now choose one of the possible applications you have listed.

What can you do soon to work this out in a practical way? _____

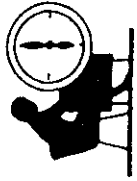


APPLICATION

MANAGEMENT



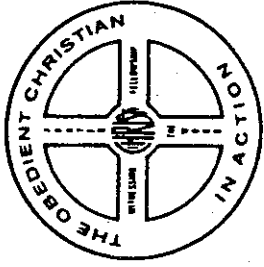
PERSONAL & SPIRITUAL MANAGEMENT AID



QUIET TIME
OBSERVATIONS

DATE _____

APPLICATION



BASICS

		CHECK	DESCRIPTION
SCRIPTURE MEMORY	CURRENT REVIEW		
	BACK REVIEW		
	NEW VERSES		
BIBLE READING			
BIBLE STUDY			
PRAYER			
WITNESSING			
FOLLOW UP			
EXERCISE			
SLEEP	WAKE UP		

MANAGEMENT

6 AM

Do List

Priorities

8

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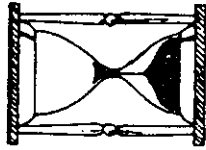
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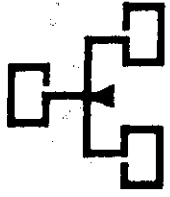
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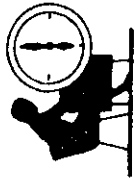
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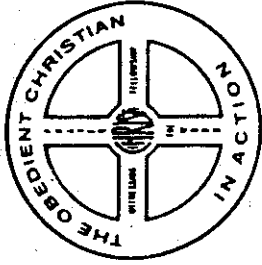
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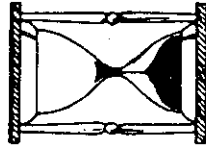
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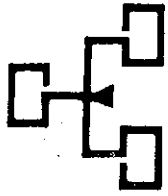
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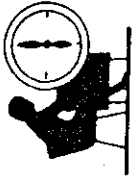
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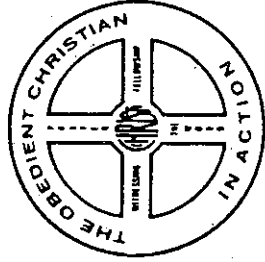
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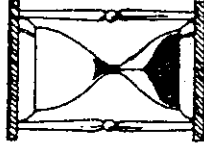
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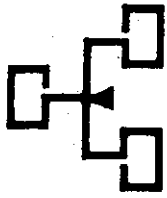
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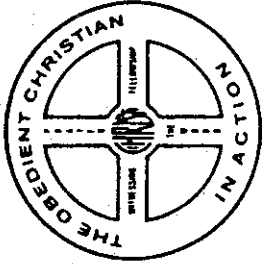


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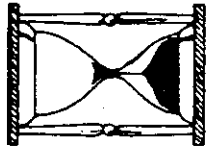
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The Holiness of God

But just as he who called
You is holy, so be holy in
All you do, for it is
Written: "Be holy, because
I am holy."

I Peter 1:15-16

God has called every Christian to a holy life. There are no exceptions to this call. It is not a call only to pastors, missionaries, and a few dedicated Sunday School teachers. Every Christian of every nation, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, influential or totally unknown, is called to be holy. The Christian plumber and the powerful head of state are all alike called to be holy.

This call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. Many Christians have what we might call a "cultural holiness." They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conforming to the character of God.¹

As used in Scripture, holiness describes both the majesty of God and the purity and moral perfection of His nature. Holiness is one of His attributes;² that is, holiness is an essential part of the nature of God. His holiness is as necessary as His existence, or as necessary, for example, as His wisdom or omniscience. Just as He cannot but know what is right, so He cannot but do what is right.

We ourselves do not always know what is right, what is just and fair. At times we agonize over decisions having moral overtones. "What is the right thing to do?" we ask. God, of course, never faces this predicament. His perfect knowledge precludes any uncertainty on what is right and wrong.

But sometimes, even when we know what is right there is a reluctance on our part to do it. The right action may involve sacrifice, or a blow to our pride (for example, when we know we should confess a sin to someone), or some other obstacle. But here again, this is never true with God. God never vacillates. He always does what is just and right without the slightest hesitation. It is impossible in the very nature of God for Him to do otherwise.

God's holiness then is perfect freedom from all evil. We say a garment is clean when it is free from any spot, or gold is pure when all dross has been refined from it. In this manner we can think of the holiness of God as the absolute absence of any evil in Him. John said, "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). Light and darkness, when used this way in Scripture, have moral significance. John is telling us that God is absolutely free from any moral evil and that He is Himself the essence of moral purity.

The holiness of God also includes His perfect conformity to His own divine character. That is, all of His thoughts and actions are consistent with His holy character. By contrast, consider our own lives. Over time, as we mature in the Christian life, we develop a certain degree of Christian character. We grow in such areas as truthfulness, purity, and humility. But we do not always act consistently with our character. We tell a lie or allow ourselves to get trapped in a series of impure thoughts. Then we are dismayed with ourselves for these actions because they are inconsistent with our character. This never happens to God. He always acts consistently with His holy character. And it is this standard of holiness that God has called us to when He says, "Be holy, as I am holy."

The absolute holiness of God should be of great comfort and assurance to us. If God is perfectly holy, then we can be confident that His actions toward us are always perfect and just. We are often tempted to question God's actions and complain that He is unfair in his treatment of us. This is the devil's lie, the same thing he did to Eve. He essentially told her, "God is being unfair to you" (Genesis 3:4-5). But it is impossible in the very nature of God that He should ever be unfair. Because He is holy, all His actions are holy.

We must accept by faith the fact that God is holy, even when trying circumstances make it appear otherwise. To complain against God is in effect to deny His holiness and to say He is not fair. In the seventeenth century Stephen Charnock said, "It is less injury to Him to deny His being, than to deny the purity of it; the one makes Him no God, the other a deformed, unlovely, and detestable God...he that saith God is not holy speaks much worse than he that saith there is no God at all."³

I still vividly recall how God first dealt with me over 25 years ago about complaining against Him. In response to His will, I had settled in San Diego, California, and had begun to look for a job. When several weeks went by without success, I mentally began to accuse God. "After all, I gave up my plans to do His will and now He has let me down." God graciously directed my attention to Job 34:18-19. "Is it fit to say to a king, 'Thou art wicked', and to princes, 'Ye are ungodly'? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they all are the work of His hands" (KJV). As soon as I read that passage I immediately fell to my knees confessing to Him my terrible sin of complaining and questioning His holiness. God mercifully forgave and the next day I received two job offers.

Acknowledging His holiness is one of the ways we are to praise God. According to John's vision of heaven described in Revelation 4, the four living creatures around God's throne never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). The seraphim in Isaiah's vision of God's glory also uttered this threefold ascription of God's holiness (Isaiah 6:3). When Moses was praising God for the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh's army, he also sang of God's holiness:

"Who is like thee among the gods, O Lord?
Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in praises, working wonder?"

(Exodus 15:11)

God is often called in Scripture by such names as the Holy One, or the Holy One of Israel.⁴ Holy, according to Stephen Carnock,⁵ is used more often as a prefix to His name than any other attribute. Holiness is God's crown. Imagine for a moment that God possessed omnipotence (infinite power), omnipresence (everywhere present), but without perfect holiness. Such a one could no longer be described as God. Holiness is the perfection of all His other attributes: His power is holy power, His mercy is holy mercy, His wisdom is holy wisdom. It is His holiness more than any other attribute that makes Him worthy of our praise.

But God demands more than that we acknowledge His holiness. He says to us, "Be holy, as I am holy." God rightfully demands perfect holiness in all of His moral creatures. It cannot be otherwise. He cannot possibly ignore or approve of any evil committed. He cannot for one moment relax His perfect standard of holiness. Rather He must say, as He does say, "So be holy in all you do." The Prophet Habakkuk declares, "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor" (Habakkuk 1:13). Because God is holy, He can never excuse or overlook any sin we commit, however small it may be.

Sometimes we try to justify to God some action which our own conscience calls into question. But if we truly grasp the significance of God's perfect holiness, both in Himself and in His demands of us, we will readily see we can never justify before Him even the slightest deviation from His perfect will. God does not accept the excuse, "Well, that's just the way I am," or even the more hopeful statement, "Well, I'm still growing in that area of my life."

No, God's holiness does not make allowance for minor flaws or shortcomings in our personal character. Well might we Christians, though justified solely through the righteousness of Christ, ponder carefully the words of the writer to the Hebrews: "Make every effort...to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Because God is holy, He cannot ever tempt us to sin. "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted

by evil, nor does He tempt anyone" (James 1:13). Probably none of us ever imagines that God is actively soliciting us to do evil, but we may feel that God has put us in a situation where we have no choice.

King Saul felt this way in his first major campaign against the Philistines (I Samuel 13). Before going into battle Saul was to wait seven days for Samuel. When he didn't come, Saul became anxious and took it on himself to offer the burnt offering. Saul felt he had no alternative. The people were fearful and had begun to scatter; the Philistines were assembling for battle; Samuel was overdue. Something had to be done! God had put him in a place where he had no choice, it seemed, but to disobey God's explicit instructions.

But because Saul disobeyed God's express will, he lost his kingdom (I Samuel 13:13-14). What about us? Do we sometimes feel we have no choice but to shade the truth a little, or commit just a slightly dishonest act? When we feel this way, we are in effect saying that God is tempting us to sin, that He has put us in a position where we have no alternative.

People under authority are particularly vulnerable to this temptation. Supervisors often put pressure on those below them to commit dishonest or unethical acts. As a young officer in the Navy I faced this temptation. For a few pounds of coffee to the right people, our ship could get "free" all kinds of valuable equipment we needed to do our job. "And after all," so the reasoning went, "it all belongs to the Navy." I finally had to stand up to my commanding officer, and in jeopardy to my Navy career, tell him I could have no part of that.

Because God is holy, He hates sin. Hate is such a strong word we dislike using it. We reprove our children for saying they hate someone. Yet when it comes to God's attitude toward sin, only a strong word such as hate conveys an adequate depth of meaning. Speaking of various sins in Israel, God says, "For all these things are what I hate" (Zechariah 8:17). Hatred is a legitimate emotion when it comes to sin. In fact, the more we ourselves grow in holiness, the more we hate sin. David said, "From Thy precepts, I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). Now if that is true of a man, think of God. As we grow in holiness, we grow in hatred of sin; and God, being infinitely holy, has an infinite hatred of sin.

We often say, "God hates the sin but loves the sinner." This is blessedly true, but too often we quickly rush over the first half of this statement to get to the second. We cannot escape the fact that God hates our sins. We may trifle with our sins or excuse them, but God hates them.

Therefore every time we sin, we are doing something God hates. He hates our lustful thoughts, our pride and jealousy, our outbursts of temper, and our rationalization that the end justifies the means. We need to be gripped by the fact that God hates all these things. We become so accustomed to our sins we sometimes lapse into a state of peaceful coexistence with them, but God never ceases to hate them.

We need to cultivate in our own hearts the same hatred of sin God has. Hatred of sin as sin, not just as something disquieting or defeating to ourselves, but as displeasing to God, lies at the root of all true holiness. We must cultivate the attitude of Joseph, who said when he was tempted, "How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

God hates sin wherever He finds it, in saint and sinner alike. He does not hate sin in one person and overlook it in another. He judges each man's works impartially (I Peter 1:17). In fact, biblical evidence indicates that God may judge the sins of His saints more severely than those of the world. David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), yet after his sin against Uriah, he was told, "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house" (II Samuel 12:10). Moses, for one act of unbelief, was excluded from the land of Canaan despite many years of faithful service. Jonah, for his disobedience, was cast into a horrible prison in the stomach of a giant fish for three days and nights, that we might learn not to run from the command of God.

In the deceitfulness of our hearts, we sometimes play with temptation by entertaining the thought that we can always confess and later ask forgiveness. Such thinking is exceedingly dangerous. God's judgment is without partiality. He never overlooks our sin. He never decides not to bother, since the sin is only a small one. No, God hates sin intensely, whenever and wherever He finds it.

Frequent contemplation on the holiness of God and His consequent hatred of it is a strong deterrent against trifling with sin. We are told to live our lives on earth as strangers in reverence and fear (I Peter 1:17). Granted, the love of God to us through Jesus Christ should be our primary motivation to holiness. But a motivation prompted by God's hatred of sin and His consequent judgment on it is no less biblical.

The holiness of God is an exceedingly high standard, a perfect standard. But it is nevertheless one that He holds us to. He cannot do less. While it is true that He accepts us solely through the merit of Christ, God's standard for our character, our attitudes, affections, and actions is, "Be holy, because I am holy. "We must take this seriously if we are to grow in holiness.

Footnotes

¹Holiness "is characteristically Godlikeness" (G. B. Stevens, in Hastings Bible Dictionary, as quoted by W. E. Vine in An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words [1940; single volume edition, London: Oliphants, Ltd., 1975], page 227). Charles Hodge, writing on the phrase in Romans 6:19, righteousness unto holiness, said, "The proximate result of obedience to God is inward conformity to the Divine image" (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans [1886; reprint edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955], page 209). A. W. Pink said, "Holiness...consists of what internal change or renovation of our souls whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God" (The Doctrine of Sanctification [Swengel, Pennsylvania: Bible Truth Depot, 1955], page 25).

²Attributes as applied to God refer to His essential qualities, and are inferred from Scriptures describing God. His attribute of holiness is taken from such passages as Exodus 15:11, Leviticus 19:2, Psalm 89:35, Isaiah 57:15, and I Peter 1:15-16.

³Stephen Charnock, The Existence and Attributes of God (reprint edition, Evansville, Indiana: Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1958), page 449.

⁴For examples see Psalm 89:18, Isaiah 40:25 and 43:14, Hosea 11:9, Habakkuk 3:3, Jeremiah 51:5, and Ezekiel 39:7.

⁵Charnock, Existence and Attributes, page 448.

INTEGRITY

Introduction

God has an unchangeable standard for all who would be disciples of Jesus Christ. This standard is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and those who seek to become useable vessels in God's hand must live their lives in obedience to it. One vital aspect to this standard is the concept of honesty and integrity.

Definition of Integrity

The dictionary defines integrity like this:

Soundness of moral principles and character; uprightness, honesty.

Integrity means living by the laws--both God's laws and those of society. Integrity presupposes that there is a standard and a desire to live by it. A person who lives by integrity will aim to do right and to wrong no one. His conscience will be clear both Godward and manward.

Paul's Example

Paul was imprisoned at the end of his life in Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders were accusing Paul because of his ministry to the Gentiles. When Paul was given the opportunity to speak to Felix, the governor, he said,

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

Acts 24:16

This passage perhaps best describes the meaning and application of the concept of integrity. Paul says here that he can look both God and man squarely in the eye and know in his heart of hearts that he has dealt with them in integrity (honesty and fairness). In order to see how Paul accomplished this, let us look at the passage more closely.

"Herein do I exercise myself...."

- Exercise means practice--it means we need to exercise like an athlete, practicing consistently and daily until it becomes like second nature.
- Exercise means discipline--it takes determination and steadfastness to exercise oneself in integrity. When everyone else is following his own sinful desires, it takes great commitment to obey God and His commands.
- Exercise means courage--we must learn to face our sin and call it sin. So often people call sin by other names--like, "little white lies" or "stretching the truth" when God views it as dishonesty, bearing false witness and lying.

Facing Sin

Unfortunately, most of us would rather cover our sins than face them and deal with them. The Scriptures are full of warnings against this and examples of men who didn't heed the warnings.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me....

Psalm 66:18

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Proverbs 28:13

If we refuse to face sin ourselves, God will one day force us to face up to our lack of integrity. This can be very painful. King David, for example, had to be confronted personally and harshly by Nathan, the prophet, before he faced his own lack of integrity and sin with Bathsheba. Today all who know Bible history know of this painful confrontation and of David's terrible sin (II Samuel 12). Refusing to face sin now only postpones the inevitable revealing of it by God.

"...to have always a conscience void of offense...."

Conscience and Offense

- Conscience--is that process of thought which distinguishes between good and bad and prompts us to choose the good and avoid the bad. It is that

faculty of our thought process which the Holy Spirit uses to show us God's will.

- Offense--is injury, hurt, damage or sin. God desires our conscience to be clear of any sin or hurt that we may have caused Him or other people. He therefore has provided forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ, and a life of victory through the power of His Holy Spirit. If we face and confess our sins to God and to one another and then follow the leading of His Holy Spirit at work within our conscience, we will be able to work in integrity all the days of our lives.

The Key: If a man is to walk in integrity, he must listen to the Spirit of God at work in his conscience.

Conscience and Integrity

Since conscience is basic to a walk of integrity, let us examine what the Bible tells us about conscience:

...After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

God has placed his law in our hearts. Basically, our conscience is God's programming us to know His will.

...for down inside they (the heathen) know right from wrong. God's laws are written within them, their own conscience accuses them, or sometimes excuses them...

Romans 2:15 (LB)

Even non-Christians have a conscience which has been programmed by God to respond to right and wrong. This is why so many people today suffer from guilt complexes--because they are operating against what their conscience tells them is right.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

John 8:9

In the story of Jesus dealing with the adulterous woman we can see vividly how conscience convicts guilty hearts. The people were quick to condemn the woman for her sin, but Jesus knew that each man's conscience would convict him of his own sin and that none could honestly condemn the woman. Conscience causes us to remember our sins and be convicted by them.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron....

I Timothy 4:2

Some people act against what their conscience tells them for so long that eventually their conscience becomes numb--seared--no longer sensitive to right and wrong. Conscience is a God-given safeguard against sin and we must care for it well by listening to it and heeding it. Otherwise it may become inoperative in our lives.

...the blood of Christ will purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Hebrews 9:14

When Christ cleanses us and forgives us, He makes our conscience sensitive in a new way to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As we learn to walk in obedience to God and are able to discern His will clearly in our lives, it is because we have become increasingly responsive to the voice of God in each situation in which we find ourselves.

Areas of Conscience that Must be Guarded

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

I John 2:15-16

John says there are only three major areas in which Satan can cause us to sin. If we analyze the many kinds of sin, we find that they all come under one of the three major areas of sin.

● Lust of the Flesh

NOTES

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart....

Matthew 5:27-28

Jesus clearly sets forth God's standard for moral purity. He says that sexual sin can take place in the mind as well as the body. If a person even lusts for another, he has already committed adultery in God's sight. Satan tries to make us compromise God's standard, he tells us that as long as we don't commit the act of adultery we are OK. But God's standard goes far beyond that into our thoughts.

A person whose conscience is void of offense toward God and man must guard his thoughts as well as his acts.

● Lust of the Eyes

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

Exodus 20:17

And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Mark 4:19

This has to do with seeing what is not ours and coveting it inwardly. Exodus 20:17 sets forth God's standard in this area. We are commanded not to covet anything that does not belong to us. Mark 4:19 warns us that the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust for other things choke the Word making it unfruitful. With materialism accelerating in our culture we must be careful that we do not allow ourselves to lust for the things our eyes see on T.V., in department stores and in the homes of our friends. The lust of the eyes is one of the oldest of Satan's devices to lure us into sin--perhaps even into dishonesty or stealing--to gain what we mistakenly think will make us happy.

● Pride of Life

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief....

. Proverbs 6:16-17

When we are not happy with our place in life and have put self on the throne of our lives, our integrity is endangered. In an attempt to elevate ourselves in the eyes of men, we may lie, backbite, slander, sow discord, or resort to other sins that injure our integrity. In Prov. 6:16-17 God lists several things that He hates: number one on that list is "a proud look." Pride is the starting point of most other sins because it means "I" am in control of my life instead of God. Existentialism is the philosophy that panders to the self-life today. The world's reasoning is "Do whatever feels good to self...nothing else matters." We must be very careful not to let the world's thinking squeeze us into its mold, but rather keep God pre-eminent in our thoughts and decisions.

Blessing of Integrity

The Bible promises wonderful blessings to the man of integrity.

The integrity of the upright shall guide them....

Proverbs 11:3

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity than he that is perverse in his lips and is a fool.

Proverbs 19:1

The first man walks in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

Proverbs 20:7

Questions to Evaluate Integrity

- How is your conscience--is it clear before man and God, or do you need to confess and ask forgiveness of the Lord and of another person?

NOTES

- Is your conscience sensitive to the Holy Spirit? Does it demand that you deal with sin instantly, or have you seared it to numbness by repeated disobedience? Do you need to ask God to cleanse and sensitize your conscience again?
- Do you exercise moral courage? Can you face your own sin and say simply, "I was wrong?"
- Can you be trusted to do right even when no one is looking or checking on you?

God demands that His disciples be men and women of integrity. It is a rare and wonderful quality in this day and age. Determine now to live this kind of life.

