

Integrity

Kind

Industrious

Respectful

Honest

Courageous

# Character Traits

Trustworthy

Loyal

Virtuous

Responsible

Discerning

Humble

Grateful

Perseverant

Forgiving

Self Controlled

Patient

## Character Traits

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Character is somewhat hard to define, but we almost always recognize good character when we see it, as well as its absence. Our character is more than just our reputation; that’s what others see about us. Our character is who we really are, when no one is watching. Having “Good Character” means doing the right thing, just because its the right thing. Abraham Lincoln summarized it this way, “Reputation is the shadow, Character is the tree.”

Peter in his second epistle states, *“His (Jesus’) divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. . . so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”* 2 Peter 1:3-4 In a sense, Peter says that Christian character traits make up who we really are. Peter continues by enumerating eight important Christian character traits, *“applying all diligence, in your **faith** supply **moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**, and in your knowledge, **self-control**, and in your self-control, **perseverance**, and in your perseverance, **godliness**, and in your godliness, **brotherly kindness**, and in your brotherly kindness, **love**.”* 2 Pet 1:5-8 (emphasis added)

**Faith**—the foundational characteristic on which others build. Hebrews 11:6 states, *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*

**Moral excellence** –virtue, intrinsic eminence, goodness and wholesomeness for the sake of being good

**Knowledge**– to come to know, recognize, realize, understand

**Self-control**– restraint exercised over one’s own impulses, emotions or desires

**Perseverance**–steadfastness, continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition

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**Godliness**— piety, devoutness, divine character

**Brotherly kindness**— tender affection and benevolence felt and expressed for fellow Christians in all places and to fellow-man

**Love**— universal goodwill exercised by deliberate choice for the good of the beloved, not drawn out by any excellence in its objects, an act of objective will

Peter continues, “if these (traits) *are yours and increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.*” 2 Pet 1:8-10 Good character doesn’t just happen, it typically requires deliberate action and hard work to develop. Peter doesn’t seem to give us an exhaustive list of Christian characteristics, but rather describes substantive traits that we are to assimilate.

Like putting together a jigsaw puzzle, each of us weaves a tapestry of character traits that ultimately defines who we are. Each of these traits links together with others to form an integrated whole. A weak, defective or missing trait is often readily apparent and can seriously jeopardize who we are and serve as a portal for Satan’s deceptive schemes.

Saul, the first King of Israel, looked every bit the part; he was a choice and handsome man, the most handsome man in all Israel, and was taller from his shoulders and up than any of the people. (1 Sam 9:2) But Saul didn’t prove to be a man of great character. He had hardly begun to reign when he usurped the

role of Samuel at Gilgal and offered a burnt offering. (1 Sam 13:8-13) For this seemingly insignificant act of self will and disobedience, Samuel informed the new king that his “*kingdom would not endure, the Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart.*” 1 Sam 13:14

Writers for this publication issue have selected eleven positive character traits that are important to cultivate in our lives. These aren’t meant to be an exhaustive list of traits or a definitive “must do” listing. However each of these are vital to developing strong character.

## Courage

Larry Weatherholt

“**T**he Lord is my light and salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?” Psa 27:1 Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary states that courage is the quality of mind which enables one to meet danger and difficulties with firmness; valor; the casting aside of fear. Everyone is afraid, at some time or other. We all experience the emotion of fear. Courage is being able to overcome our feelings of fear and stepping out to do what we know is right. I will be presenting just a few examples throughout the Bible of the different types of courage among the men and women who believed in the power and protection of God.

The human race would have vanished

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if it were not for Noah's boldness to continue the difficult task of completing the ark before the flood, most likely while his wicked neighbors mocked and opposed him. Facing one's fears can be daunting, for even Moses, who was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, was at first hesitant to do this (Ex 4:10-13). But in the end, Moses obeyed the Lord, stood against Pharaoh, and led the people out of bondage and toward the Promised Land. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb were the only ones out of 12 spies to give a good report of the land of Canaan and encouraged the Israelites to go up and take the land (Num 14:6-9). The fall of Jericho (Josh 6:1-21) is an example of how Joshua bravely followed God's instructions to gain victory. Joshua's strength, courage, military strategy, and knowledge that God was with him wherever he went (Josh 1:9) allowed Israel to conquer many kings and take over the whole land according to all that the Lord had said to Moses.

As Israel continued in their conquest of Canaan, they fell into several cycles of sin and the Lord allowed them to be oppressed by other nations. But as the children of Israel repented, God would raise up a deliverer for them. Ehud, a left-handed Benjaminite, delivered Israel from 18 years of Moabite oppression through a daring mission. While paying Israel's tribute to Moab, Ehud gained a private audience with Eglon, king of Moab by saying he had a message from God for him. As Eglon came close, Ehud pulled out his double-edged dagger from his right thigh and thrust the entire dagger into Eglon's belly and then escaped. The death of Eglon

rallied the Israelites and they overthrew the Moabites, gaining rest for the land of Israel for the next 80 years (Judg 3:12-30). Gideon, also a deliverer, first showed bravery by cutting down the altar of Baal and the Asherah and built in its place an altar to God. Also, Gideon showed amazing courage after sending away his force of 32,000 except for the 300 men who lapped their water. Armed only with trumpets and torches concealed in pitchers, he led his tiny force in the dark of night to quietly surround the Midianite army, which was as numerous as locusts. At Gideon's signal his tiny force broke the pitchers to reveal their flaming torches, sounded their trumpets loudly and shouted. Thinking their camp was surrounded by a superior army, the sleeping Midianite army was thrown into a panic and the Israelites were able to rout them completely (Judg 7).

As the Israelite army is facing the Philistines and their great champion, Goliath, no one under King Saul's command volunteers to challenge the giant. David, a young shepherd, was visiting his older brothers in the camp when he first came face to face with Goliath. King Saul thought David was too young to go up against Goliath, but David said that God delivered him from the lion and bear and would deliver him from the giant. David only takes his staff, sling, and 5 smooth stones to fight Goliath. As Goliath drew near to David, he said *"Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?"* David replied *"You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand,*

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*and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45-46). David hurls a stone from his sling and hits Goliath in the center of his forehead. Goliath falls on his face and David cuts off the giant's head as the Philistine army flees.*

These examples provide a good picture of courage. Note that the source of their courage was God. God empowered them to overcome and accomplish mighty deeds.

## Thankfulness

Russ Ward

**C**an you remember a time when you have been truly thankful? I mean a time where you were at a loss for words to express your gratitude or the words came forth but the expression of your face or the inflection of your voice spoke louder than the words offered. Shortly after the birth of my daughter I was attending a Wednesday night service by myself as my son was running a fever. At the close of service an announcement was made that a very close friend of our family had a daughter that had quietly passed away that day. Sherry was just under 30 years of age. She was born with a brain condition that did not allow her to mature past that of a year-old child. She had spent most her life in an assisted living facility. Her father and my Dad were best of friends, served as deacons together and were partners in our livestock operations living less than a mile from us, and I barely

knew her.

I remember coming home that evening and going straight to my daughter's crib where she was sleeping peacefully. My wife was settling my son down for the night and that is where she found me. I was on my knees with my head bowed down right next to her tiny frame softly crying in the dark and whispering a prayer of gratitude that my daughter had not been born like Sherry. I am not sure if it were youth, a shallowness of understanding, or a combination of both that had taken me past mourning for Sherry and her family that night and more in thoughts for that blessing in my life sleeping peacefully in my own home. This I do know that the gratefulness in my heart far exceeded any words I could have expressed. I also became acutely aware that there is both life and death, joy and sorrow occurring at the same time all over this earth and whatever the situation our lives should reflect gratitude for the provisions God provides us in these things. I am sure there have been and will be in the future opportunities for thankfulness and gratitude, but when I think of thankfulness in deep, heartfelt way my mind goes back to that night.

For Christians sincere thankfulness should never be far away from our hearts. We above all people should understand gratitude simply because of our close relationship with God. Our Father bestows upon mankind his every need for existence both in this physical life and in His spiritual life. Food, clothing, shelter, etc. have been graciously supplied to all. (Matt. 6:25-33) To the world he also gave His only son so that all would have the opportunity to obtain salva-

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tion. (John 3:16-17) However important these things are and how instrumental to our faith (which is the Core of our belief), I would like to challenge the depth of our understanding of thankfulness taking a different approach by comparing our thoughts to those that are identified as unthankful. We may just be surprised where we find ourselves from time to time.

What is the root cause of an unthankful heart or for that matter our own unthankful hearts from time to time? That would-be selfishness. Selfishness hardens the heart leading us down the path of greed & avarice, covetousness & desire, and pride & presumption; all pointing to a certain dissatisfaction expressed by, it is not enough, I deserve more, or it's all mine and I am responsible for its achievement. The thankless person is not relegated to or associated with an economic class of people rather it is associated with a condition of heart. It encompasses those who have no knowledge of God nor choose to obtain one (Rom. 1:21) as well as those who have known God yet have forgotten their understanding of the goodness God provides. (Heb. 6:4-6) Remember Jeremiah's condemnation of Judah because they had forgotten it was the goodness of God that had provided them with all blessings and, yet they said "*At last we are free from God! We don't need him anymore!*" (Jer. 2:31) Throughout the ages man has chosen to ignore God for the prosperity they have enjoyed, or they have cursed God for its deficit. In either case one can't presume to be a child of God unless they not only possess a heart of thankfulness but be able to express its existence in both manner and speech.

## Kindness

Craig Sweet

**M**ost of us have some sort of bank account. When the account has money in it, then we are secure and comfortable. When the bank account is empty or near empty, disconcerting thoughts occupy our minds and worry typically sets in. Similarly, many marriages use a virtual bank called the "love bank." The husband and wife make deposits of love into each other's "bank" when they do something that shows their love for the other person. Let's consider this line of thinking when dealing with kindness. We each have a kindness bank. There are two main differences in this type of bank from the other banks we mentioned. First, a lot of people can deposit and withdraw kindness from our banks. If we have been shown a great deal of kindness, we feel good and our bank is full. Secondly, and a significant difference from other types of banks, is that when we do something kind for someone else, we not only deposit into their kindness bank, but we also deposit into our own kindness bank as well. It feels good when we do kind things for others.

The Bible has several examples of individuals who often made kindness deposits for others. In Acts, there was a disciple in Joppa named Tabitha who was "*abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.*" Acts 9:36 She was known for all the tunics and garments that she made for other people. Her kindness went beyond just saying something nice to someone. She demonstrated her love for

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others by doing something for others.

The Biblical stories of Jesus overflow with acts of kindness. We find Jesus speaking of love, joy, healing, touching lives and making differences. In Matthew 8:1-4, while He was coming down from the mountain-side, Jesus is met by a leper. Lepers in Bible times were treated with contempt because they were considered unclean. The Old Testament had laws on how they were to be treated. They had to wear torn clothes and had to yell “unclean” everywhere they went. They had to live alone, outside of the camp. (Lev 13:45-46) This leper who met Jesus was confident that Jesus could heal him. Jesus demonstrated kindness to a person whose kindness bank account must have been near empty. Lepers were not to be touched, but He touched the untouchable. After Jesus confirmed the leper’s faith, He healed him. The former leper went away rejoicing with a full kindness bank account.

Jesus also spent time with the rejected. Consider tax collectors. Back in Jesus’ day, tax collectors were Rome’s henchmen to collect taxes in the local areas. Since they were hired by Romans, they were often thought of as the enemy to Jews. Tax collectors also added an excess surcharge to taxes which they kept for themselves. Do you remember the hated tax collector Zacchaeus? (Lu 19:1-10) The children sing a song about this “wee little man” who climbed up in a sycamore tree to see Jesus. Jesus made Zacchaeus climb down out of the tree, so he could go home with him. This small act of kindness toward Zacchaeus made a significant deposit into his kindness bank account. In gratitude, Zacchaeus repays all the people

he defrauded. A small act of kindness changed a sinner’s heart and then that kindness spreads to others.

However, there are times when people make withdrawals from our kindness bank which leaves us feeling hurt, sad or lonely. When someone says or does something that hurts or upsets us, they are making a withdrawal from our kindness account. Some people even try to say something hurtful because they are hurting, and they are hoping it will make them feel better. This would be equal to making a withdrawal from someone’s account to put into their own account. Did you know we are making withdrawals anytime we raise ourselves above others? Jesus taught, *“But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”* Mt 23:11-12 When we exalt ourselves, we are basically stealing kindness from those around us. Jesus teaches us to be humble. Robbing someone else’s kindness bank to fill your own will never satisfy you. Eventually, you will find that no one wants to make any deposits into your kindness account and eventually, your account will empty. And, when your bank is empty, you feel empty, hurt, sad and lonely.

When your kindness bank is empty, it is time to focus on filling others’ accounts. All day long, we are either making deposits or withdrawals from each other’s kindness bank by what we say or do. Christ commanded us to let our light shine. He said, *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* Mt 5:16 Doing good for others is the best way to show that we are

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following Jesus and when we do that, we are filling everyone's kindness account to overflowing. Peter wrote that applying all diligence in our faith, we should be showing and increasing our kindness which demonstrates our love for others. (2 Pet 1:5-8) It is time to get busy being the kind of person Jesus wants us all to be, actively filling the kindness bank accounts and shining our lights.

## Humble, Meek, Gentle

Jon Hall

As with all of the character traits included in this publication, the trait of being Humble, Meek or Gentle is easier for some and more challenging for others. The definition of these three words, although different, is closely related. To be humble is to be without pride and arrogance. To be meek is to be quiet, gentle or submissive. To be gentle is to be kind or tender. So it goes without saying, that an arrogant person, one who is not humble, would not likely be a quiet, submissive or kind person, who puts others before himself. The question for this article is whether the Christian really needs to possess these qualities, and if so, what exactly does the idea of being humble, meek, or gentle involve?

The answer to the first question is simple and straightforward. Yes! 1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6 provide us the ultimate reason to be humble. Here we find that God *"resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* An individual without pride and arrogance is one who will be more likely to accept their need for a God who saves by grace, through our faith. (Ephesians 2:8) The arrogant per-

son has no need for God, and therefore is not likely to put their faith in someone they don't need. The arrogant person already has all the answers; has it all figured out, and will find a way to make it on their own. Similarly, in 2 Chronicles 7:14, Solomon is told that God will hear those who will *"humble themselves... and turn from their wicked ways."* The end of this verse states that God will not only hear them, but will *"forgive their sins."* The humility discussed in these two instances is that which is between us and God. Are we a spiritually humble people, willing to admit our weaknesses and our need for the assistance only God can provide? Or are we a stubborn people, unwilling to admit that we are not strong enough to handle all the difficulties of life and the temptations from Satan; without the help of our loving God.

Another important reason for the Christian to have a humble, meek and gentle character is that Christ, our perfect example, demonstrated these qualities. Philippians 2:5-8 tells us that Christ, even as God, humbled Himself *"to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* Christ tells us in Matthew 11:29, that he is *"gentle and lowly (humble) in heart."* Why should the example Christ left matter? Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:1 to *"imitate him, just as he imitated Christ."* Paul accepted Christ as his ultimate example and instructed us to imitate our Lord and Savior in all ways.

Understanding the importance, as Christians, to be a humble, meek and gentle people; what does this imply for us in our daily lives? First, having these qualities means that we will not be a people who praise ourselves or seek recognition for our actions. Proverbs

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27:2 tells us to *"let another man praise you, and not your own lips."* While it is true that our lives should be praiseworthy, we should not be conducting ourselves with the purpose of being praised by men. When others see our good works, assuming we are about "good works" we should remember that it is for the glory of God, not ourselves.

Next, having these qualities means that it will be of no importance, who we know, or who we associate with from a worldly perspective. Romans 12:16 tells us *"not to set our mind on high things, but to associate with the humble."* For many, this life is all about who they know and how people view them because of their associations. Our parents most likely told us; and if we are parents, we've most likely encouraged our children not to worry about being part of the in crowd; being one of the popular kids. Do we apply this principle as adults? Do we worry more about who we associate with at work based on their status in the company, or how we might be viewed because of our relationship with them? Or, do we focus more on associating with the humble, meek and gentle; those more likely to have a similar spiritual focus in life.

Finally, having these qualities will create in us a people more concerned about our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, than we are about ourselves. Philippians 2:3-4 tells us to *"esteem others better than ourselves, and to look out for the interests of others, and not just our own interests."* When we know that a brother or sister needs help, do we worry more about our own schedule and our own needs, or do we put them above ourselves? An interesting result of helping oth-

ers in need, physical or spiritual, is that we are benefited in the process, and often more than we realize. When our brothers and sisters are in need, they should be absolutely overwhelmed with help; to the point that they would end up having abundance. It shouldn't be about how much money I want for my new car, or for Christmas, or for retirement in 20 years. It should be about what someone else needs and how we can give of ourselves, as those who claim to love our Christian family. This involves more than words, more than saying that we'll pray for someone. This involves actions. James 2:14-16 says: *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?"* This teaching about our faith uses a common sense example about how our words, while encouraging sometimes, will have no value without the appropriate actions to follow.

## Responsible

Sandy Clark

**B**eing a responsible person is a basic trait of Christians. The word responsible can be used in several different ways. One way it is used is to describe someone who is accountable or answerable for things within one's power, control, or management. Someone who is capable of

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rational thought or action and has the capacity for moral decisions is responsible (accountable or answerable) before God. It is the realization of the fact that we have sinned and we are lost without the saving blood of Jesus that prompts a responsible person to obey the gospel. Some religions in the world teach that a person is predetermined before birth to be a Christian or not, to be saved or lost, and there is nothing the individual can do to change that predetermination. Romans 1:16 says that the gospel is *“the power of God for salvation to every-one who believes,”* not just for some who have already been chosen for salvation. The world says that nothing a person does can change his destiny, but Romans 2:6 says that God *“will render to every man according to his deeds.”* If we can do nothing to change our eternal destiny, why does the word of God tell us in 2 Peter 1:4 to diligently work to add certain qualities to our lives that we might become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world? Obviously, each person is responsible for his own actions.

Another use of the word responsible is to describe someone who is reliable or dependable. Responsible people generally have the ability to see needs and respond to them. Moreover, they are reliable in that they will do what they say they will do. They don't require constant supervision. You can depend on them to do the job to the best of their ability. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,”* and this work ethic defines responsible people. The Bible has many examples of people like this.

The excellent wife in Proverbs 31:10-31

is a very responsible person. She takes good care of her family, manages her household well, and is generous to the needy. She is industrious, rising while it is still night to give food to her household and portions to her maidens. She helps with the financial needs of her family by purchasing a field, planting a vineyard, making and selling linen garments and belts. She speaks wise and kind words and is good to her husband and children.

Moses carried a very heavy weight of responsibility. God called him to lead millions of people for more than forty years. To say the people were uncooperative would be an understatement. They murmured continually against God and against him, and they undermined his leadership. He left them alone for a while and they built a golden calf and worshiped it! It would be hard to help people who fight you every step of the way, but with God's help, Moses did it. He got them to the borders of the promised land and fulfilled the responsibility God gave him.

Because God doesn't tell us to do things that we can't do, there must be ways to become a responsible person. How can Christians further develop the trait of being responsible? First, we have to count the cost of any endeavor. Costs may be physical, financial, mental or emotional. In Luke 14:28, Jesus said, *“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it?”* Organization, planning and forward-thinking go hand-in-hand with responsibility. Knowing what resources are available is critical.

Knowing your limits is also critical. As

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much as we may want to handle everything and tackle every problem, it's just not humanly possible. No one is indispensable and we can't fall into the trap of thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Moses had to delegate the day-to-day judgments to capable men to handle. Remember that sometimes when we say no to a project or task, someone else has an opportunity to step up to the plate. Let's not pass up a chance to let someone else develop or hone their skills. Galatians 6:5 says, *"each one shall bear his own load."*

Trying to do it all can lead to "burn-out." Jesus understood the value of withdrawing to rest for a little while. Mark 6:31-32 tells us *"And He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.' (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves."* Galatians 6:9-10 reminds us, *"And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."* We have to learn how to use the opportunities and resources we have been given by God without wearing ourselves out in the process.

Being responsible is a good thing. Responsible people take care of themselves and others to the best of their abilities, and that is a trait that can be learned. More importantly, people who take responsibility for their own actions and obey the gospel look forward to eternity in heaven.

## Truthfulness/Honesty

Steven Baxley

**I**n Ephesians 4, Paul gives a series of instructions to Christians as to how exactly they are expected to live in Christ. In verse 25, Paul writes: *"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."* Christians are to put away falsehood, and speak the truth. This is a foundational trait to developing the kind of character that God wants us to possess.

When Jesus was on trial, He spoke of truth. Pilate responded with the question: *"What is truth?"* John 18:38 Pilate's question reflects an attitude that was common in those days, and is common today as well: that truth is not objective, but rather subjective. It is relative to the individual. It cannot be known in any absolute way. This worldly concept of truth is contrary to what is revealed in the Scripture. The Bible makes the claim that truth is something that doesn't change and can be known objectively by men.

God is the ultimate source of all truth. Jesus said of Himself in John 14:6: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."* The Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of truth" by Jesus (John 14:17 and 15:26). The truth is found in the words of God Himself (John 17:17). Truth is intimately a part of His very being. In fact, it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18) since it is contrary to His character. Thus, God takes a very strong stance against falsehood: *"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his de-*

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*light.*” Proverbs 12:22 Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things that are abominable in God’s sight. Among them are “*a lying tongue*” (vs. 17) and “*a false witness who breathes out lies*” (vs. 19). The very first lie every recorded in Scripture is Satan’s statement to Eve contradicting what God had revealed (Genesis 3). Lies are of Satan, the truth is of God.

However, truth is not always very popular. It is often not what people want to hear, and as a result, the telling of truth can often be inconvenient. Many people think that hiding the truth, telling a half-truth, or even something that isn’t true at all is better than telling the truth and risking the consequences. Sometimes, people simply love falsehood and darkness far more than truth and light (John 3:19). At times, people react with hostility against those who are truthful. As Paul wrote to the Galatians: “*Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?*” Gal 4:16

As people dedicated to knowing and following God, Christians should love not only true things, but also the abstract concept of truth itself. It is valuable beyond our ability to always understand: “*Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.*” Prov 23:23 Truth is so important that once found and possessed, it should never be sold or lost.

What makes truth so vitally important? It marks the border between what causes a person to be lost and what can save him. Gentiles were without God because they had rejected the truth: “*they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Crea-*

*tor.*” Romans 1:25 Jesus proclaimed the liberating value of the truth: “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” John 8:31-32 Truth frees us from the slavery of sin and the death that results from it. This is why truth must be important to us as Christians. As Bill Muehlenberg writes in his blog CultureWatch: “Christianity is about the truth. When we minimize or downplay truth, we no longer have biblical Christianity. People today are dying for a lack of truth. We must offer truth to people like we would offer food to a starving man.”

Since truth plays such an important role, it is important that those who seek God recognize not only the importance of truth itself, but also the importance that is placed upon Christians to be truthful and honest people. It isn’t just that Christians who lie are guilty of sin, but it is also the reality that Christians demonstrating truthfulness and honesty reflect the character of God. Would we be able to trust God if he handled the truth the way we do all too often? Would we even want to serve a God for whom truth was something that could be discarded when it became inconvenient?

As saints, we need to demonstrate truth and honesty in the words that we say to those inside the Church and outside the Church, in our business dealings with others, and also in our dealings with our government. We serve the God of truth, let us always strive to be people of the truth!

## Integrity

Bob Jobe

**I**n Webster's Dictionary, integrity is defined as moral soundness, honesty, and uprightness. *"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out."* Prov 10:9 When I was growing up in rural Mississippi, individuals made transactions verbally worth thousands of dollars. Their "word was their bond."

In the Old Testament, **Job** was known as a man of integrity. *"And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'it may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually."* Job 1:5 God testified of that fact in Job 2:3. *"And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?' Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.' And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord."* Job 1:8-12 God allowed Satan to inflict all kinds of trouble upon Job including the death of his children, boils upon his body, faulty advice from

his wife (Job 2:9) and three friends. Throughout these difficulties Job maintained his integrity. *"In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong."* Job 1:22

*"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.' Then Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.'" Job 2:1-6 In Job 31:6, Job says "let me be weighed in a just balance and let God know my integrity!"*

**David** was a man after God's own heart and many of his Psalms show his choice to maintain his integrity before God. Psalm 7:8; 25:21; 26:1; 26:11. Many of the Proverbs deal with the value of integrity and the failure because of the lack of it. Proverbs 2:7; 10:9; 11:3; 20:7, 18. David suffered a loss of integrity in his episode with Bathsheba and the death of her husband. *"In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they rav-*

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*aged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house." 2 Sam 11:1-4 "The messenger said to David, 'The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.' David said to the messenger, 'Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him." When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." 2 Sam 11:23-27*

During the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson, a local man by the name of Billie Sol Estes was convicted of fraud for selling fertilizer tanks in West Texas that did not exist. His claim to be a member of the Church of Christ did great harm to the Lord's

Church during that time and even now. This example shows how individual Christians must maintain their integrity for their own benefit and for the reputation of the church as a whole. *"Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works and in your teaching show integrity, dignity."* Tit 2:7-8

## Patience

Ron Gray

**P**atience is a rare commodity in this internet age. We have become accustomed to immediate answers to any questions that may arise. The ability to purchase anything that "strikes our fancy" without delay and without cash in hand has become the new normal thanks to online purchasing, ready shipping, and credit cards. The ancient days of mail orders and waiting weeks for fulfillment are just a distant memory. Even the postal service that carries a letter across the country to friends and family for less than a half dollar is now called "snail mail." They have not suddenly become sluggards; we have raised impatience to an astounding new level!

We do not like to wait. We become upset at slow moving traffic, railing at the occupants of cars ahead of us who often are simply hapless drivers sharing in our same predicament.

If you take the time to look at your daily life with all of its duties, requirements, and restraints, you may see little or no room for patience. But, we as Christians need to consider the fact that in the eyes of the Lord patience is *not* optional.

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Our God wants His children to have *patience*. He tells us how important this is in the context of 1 Peter 1:6. And, so that we may know just what is required of us, let's have a look at the definition of the word. Patience - "The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset."

We may *think* we have patience because we "tolerate delay," but what about the second part of that definition? Can we accept any situation "without getting angry or upset?" Let's look at a few examples of patience that we see in the Bible. We know all about Job, who is the physical representation of patience in most of our minds. However, I would like to look beyond Job in this writing. Perhaps some of these examples will help us to see how we might improve our abilities in this matter.

God Himself has plans for mankind and even though He spoke the universe into existence in an amazing six days, He has demonstrated His longsuffering (His patience) in many instances throughout the Bible. *"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* 2 Pet. 3:8-9

In Genesis chapter 6 we read: *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to His*

*heart. So the Lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land...'"* Here God is grieved in His heart and is ready to destroy the source of that grief, mankind. Yet, in order to save a remnant — one family — God allows the patriarch, Noah, enough time to build an ark of massive proportions! *"God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water."* 1 Pet 3:20

Our God gave sinful man decade after decade — more than enough time — to repent and turn to salvation. But, instead of listening to Noah's message of redemption, they mocked the preacher and rejected his God. The Lord had patience with man in the days of the flood and that same patience (longsuffering) is in effect for us today. Our day of reckoning approaches just as it was in Noah's time.

Another example that we might consider is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She knew that her firstborn was the Son of God, but patiently watched in love as she found out just what that would mean to all of mankind and how she would be affected. Throughout her son's life, Mary patiently, *"treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."* Luke 2:19.

Patience played a huge part in the life of Christ. Could He not have come to earth as a full grown man and *immediately* begun the important work of bringing salvation to the lost? Part of His sacrifice for mankind was leaving a home in heaven and patiently living day by day the same kind of life that we live,

from infancy to adulthood. Because He was willing to bear that burden, we can be assured that when we go to God in prayer, stressed by the challenges that we face, Jesus our High Priest can truly say, "I know what you are going through."

*"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* Heb 4:15 KJV.

Impatience can bring about many troubles, some of which can have a lifelong impact. We know the story of Abraham and Sarah, found in Genesis 16. God promised them a son in their old age. As even more time passed, Sarah decided to "help" God fulfill that promise. She gave her handmaid to Abraham as a surrogate mother and Ishmael was born. Trouble and jealousy ensued. All of this was unnecessary since God is faithful to do what he has promised, in His own good time.

We can have lives of peace when we trust in God and exercise patience, prayerfully accepting what comes our way. This does not mean that we sit quietly waiting for miracles. We must be knowledgeable of God's word and wise enough to put it into practice in our lives every day with patience, knowing full well that our God will stand firmly with us.

## Forgiveness

Ephriam Davis

**W**ebster's dictionary defines for-giveness as "*the act of forgiving.*" It more clearly defines the root word forgive

as 1.a) *to give up resentment of or claim to requital for an insult*; 1.b) *to grant relief from payment of a debt*; 2.a) *to cease to feel resentment against an offender*; 2.b) *pardon one's enemies*. These definitions, for the most part, are consistent with scripture from which most of us have a contextual knowledge of the word forgiveness as it occurs 7 times in 7 different verses, while the root word forgive occurs 56 times within 48 verses in the KJV.

While a multitude of physical evidence all around us shows a creator clearly exists, (Psa 19:1, Rom 1:20-21) it is no secret among the faithful that we can only barely start to know Him and His character of forgiveness through a diligent study of and meditation on the scriptures. (2 Tim 3:14-17, Phil 4:8) Jehovah reveals this characteristic in a most amazing way in one *verse in the context of a particular passage*, "*...Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will **forgive** their iniquity, and I will **remember** their sin no more.*" Jer 31:31-34 ASV The combination of the phrases as emphasized by the two key highlighted words, express His willingness and amazing demonstrated ability to not only just forgive, but to also forget. Many of us might think that it is sufficient to just forgive those who have offended or wronged us. However, can we honestly say we have truthfully forgiven another, if we repeatedly bring up the same past issue(s) at every opportunity? How can we say we have forgiven another if we keep a running and ready-list of all past wrongs? Please note once

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again, He first expressed His willingness to both forgive and forget. The point here is that if we say that we want to be like the LORD and do His will, forgiveness is effectively a “two sided coin.” The LORD clearly taught, that if we are un-willing to forgive others, He would be un-willing to forgive us. (Mark 11:6) It may take significant effort for us to forget. Therefore we should certainly pray about it as we strive to learn and do it, since our eternal souls depend on it.

The importance of the idea of the willingness to forgive is clearly taught elsewhere in scripture. Peter seemed to take comfort in the thought that that one would certainly be pleasing the LORD by going “above and beyond the call of duty” when he asked, ... *“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, ‘I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”* (Mat 18:21-22 KJV) Christ provides additional commentary on this point when He said, *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”* Lu 17:3-4 KJV The willingness to forgive in these contexts of course is not literally bound to 7 or even as many as 490 occurrences of an offense. Each of us has weaknesses that we struggle with and strive to overcome. The LORD actually wants us to be willing to forgive others as much as necessary.

From another biblical perspective, while we know that through the redemptive blood of Christ, that He forgives and forgets our

repented sins, (Eph 1:7, Col 1:14) but we sometimes struggle with forgetting the fact that we have been forgiven. We perhaps can see some evidence of this line of thinking in the inspired words of David when he prayed, *“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”* Psa 51:2-4 KJV But, we also know from scripture, prior to this point in time, that the LORD had already “put away his sin” even though there were still painful consequences to bear. (2 Sam 12:13-14 KJV)

Finally as we close, we site two Biblical examples of those who were willing to forgive and did forgive. First, remember how Joseph suffered because of the wickedness his very own brothers brought upon him, and the plan they subsequently deployed to “hide the truth” from Jacob”, their father. (Gen 37:18-34) In the end, his brothers sought forgiveness, although with another twist of “orchestrated deceptiveness.” But Joseph, much to his brother’s surprise, did not react as they had feared, but was willing to forgive. (Gen 50:15-21) Second, remember Jesus Christ, our ultimate example. Determined to fulfill His Father’s will over His own, He prayed fervently in garden of Gethsemane, and went to the cross to shed His blood for the forgiveness/remission of the sins of all mankind and our eternal souls depend on it. (Mat 26:36-42, Heb 9:22-28)

## Respectfulness & Honor

Gary Mangus

**R**espectfulness and **Honor** are similar character traits. For example if you show **honor** to someone you have demonstrated **respectfulness** also. Christians must continually strive to exhibit these in our daily walk with God.

**Respectfulness** is the characteristic of being **respectful**. **Respectful** is marked or characterized by respect or deference; as in a **respectful** manner or behavior.

**Respectful** behavior has the basic idea of deference in our active relationship to others. The apostle Paul tells us to “*esteem others better than ourselves.*” Phil 2:3 In doing so, we consider the interests or needs of others first. When we **respect** someone we take notice of them in a favorable way. Yet, if we just think it, and do nothing - what good is it? Instead your actions should show that you **respect** them: a loving smile, being a good listener, showing interest, concern, encouragement, or willing to do things for them.

This active **respectful** conduct that Jesus wants us have is described by the apostle Peter in his instructions to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-2; “*Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your **respectful** and pure conduct.*” Here Peter is telling wives the best way to communicate to their husband is to live as a Christian servant in a pure and **respectful** manner. Peter also instructs them in verse 4 to, “*let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable*

*beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.*” By letting their “light shine” they are communicating to their husband. I suspect that most of us have been touched and encouraged by a humble, faithful, loving, and **respectful** sister in Christ. In a similar manner we can emulate their behavior and let our **respectfulness** shine also.

**Honor** means to prize, that is, fix a valuation upon; by implication to revere: - **honor**, value, esteem. Here are some verses from Proverbs that give some insight to **honor**: 15:33 “*The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before **honor.***” 21:21 “*Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and **honor.***” 29:23 “*One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain **honor.***”

When we have **respectful** fear of the LORD we awe Him and want to please Him. We **honor** God when we obey Him. In John 15:7-8 Jesus says, “*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*” Thus God will **honor** us if we have humility, fear and revere Him, pray and study the bible for wisdom, strive for kindness and righteousness. When we glorify God by bearing fruit, we **honor** God and Jesus.

Who should we **respect** and **honor**? -- God, Jesus, brothers and sisters in Christ, our mother and father, our neighbors, everyone. 1 Peter 2:17 states: “***Honor** everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, **honor** the*

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emperor.” And thus we must also **honor** the President and any government authority. Paul states in Romans 13:1, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” In addition we are instructed in Romans 12:10 to “love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing **honor**.” In Matthew 19:19 Jesus told the rich young man he must keep the following: “**Honor** your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” When you love your neighbor you also **honor** your neighbor.

The family home is the setting where our children should learn **respect** and **honor** from the daily life displayed by their parents. We teach them that it is a commandment to **honor** their parents. However, it certainly is easier to **honor** a father who openly **respects** and loves his wife. Dad sets the example for the family by showing **honor** to the woman God gave to be the mother of his children! Peter instructs husbands to “live with your wives in an understanding way, showing **honor** to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” 1 Pet 3:7 A husband should give his wife the clear impression she is very special to him. Proverbs 31:29 illustrates how a husband praises his wife “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” Wives must **honor** their husbands. Eph 5:33 Proverbs 31:25-27 illustrates an **respectable** and **honorable** wife: “Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens

her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.” When children see Mom **honoring** Dad, and Dad praising and **honoring** Mom, then **honoring** their father and mother comes much easier for them (Eph 6:2-3). Children **honor** their parents when they love, obey and speak with **respectfulness**.

We must let our **respectfulness** and **honor** shine as part of the salt of the earth as Paul states in Romans 12:17-18; “Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is **honorable** in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” We should strive each day to train our heart to be humble, to **respect** and **honor** everyone.

## Loyalty

Delilah Zeigler

**D**ictionary.com defines loyalty as the state or quality of being loyal; faithfulness to commitments or obligations; faithful adherence to a sovereign, government, leader, or cause. I often associate this character trait with feelings I have towards my country, my spouse, or even my favorite team. We express loyalty to our nation by pledging “allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.” My grandmother, who showed faithful devotion to her husband for sixty-nine years, is a wonderful example to me of loyalty in the marriage relationship. We even participate in unswerving loyalty to

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our favorite team on the field as we join thousands of fans standing and cheering regardless of the score. Loyalty conjures up strong personal emotions such as dedication and proud allegiance. However, these same words: allegiance, faithfulness, dedication and devotion, should also describe our loyalty in serving our heavenly Father.

The Old Testament contains several examples of loyalty. One example is in the book of Ruth. After her husband's death, Ruth expressed her devotion and loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi. *"But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'"* Ruth 1:16 Ruth eventually met and married Boaz, a result of her loyalty to Naomi. This significant marriage was the beginning of the lineage for King David. A second example of loyalty and faithfulness in the Old Testament is in Daniel 3 where we can read about the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These three men were faithful to God despite the orders from King Nebuchadnezzar to bow down and worship the golden idol that he set up for his people. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were unswerving in their obedience to God and their loyalty to Him saved them from a fiery death. The sixth chapter of Daniel contains another example of faithfulness and devotion. The king of the land signed an order that prevented anyone from praying or making petition to any "god" (except him) for thirty days. However, Daniel's obedience and loyalty to his One True God stayed strong and he continued his daily life in pray-

er making his petition and pleas to God three times a day. As a result, Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, but we know from verse 21 that Daniel was not harmed. *"Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you O king, I have done no harm."*

The most significant piece of our Christian life is faithfulness to God. Our faithfulness is a commitment to God requiring obedience and undying devotion to keep His commandments. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless (loyal) to Him."* Being faithful to God gives us great peace and assurance that we will receive the reward of eternal life in Heaven. Revelation 2:10, *"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested and will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* If we are faithful to God, He will bless us in all we do, just as He blessed Ruth, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel. Let us search our hearts and make sure we're loyal and faithful to God.

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**North Beach church of Christ**  
**7025 N. Beach St.**  
**Ft Worth, TX 76137**  
**www.nbcoc.org**  
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