

## Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

Next to salvation, the understanding and development of Godly character in one's life is one of the most important undertakings a person can pursue during his/her lifetime.

### **Character Quality: What is it?**

A Character quality is a habit - good or bad – which is developed through repeated practice.

All Christians are here on this earth to learn how to:

- Deepen our relationships with God, ourselves and others.
- Be effective ambassadors for Christ to a fallen and hurting world.
- Become the best possible Christ-followers they can be, and when our time here on this earth is up, they will joyfully hear those awesome words, “Well done thou good and faithful servant. Come on in.”

Most serious Christians want to be more Christ-like, but may have no real honest-to-goodness overall plan that would help them get there on a growing, daily, and consistent basis. Most journeys to holiness and deeper relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit seem to be a random hit and miss proposition: a kind of disjointed zigzag pathway to becoming a person with high Godly Character.

But with the “discovery” of “Character Qualities” (that were there all the time) each Christian can now have a clear plan of developing those qualities in life that will help transform them into the persons of high character quality and put them as Christians on a great pathway of becoming Christ-like in their thoughts, words and actions.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Developing high quality character traits:

- HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR SALVATION – SALVATION IS A GIFT.
- DOES NOT automatically make you Christ-like, unless Christ is your role model.
- DOES MAKE you a more consistent, dependable person.
- DOES INCREASE your chances for a better natural life while here on this Earth. Your “engine” of life runs better in the natural.

Study the List of 49 Character Qualities below and you will readily see that practicing these qualities will help you become the best possible person you can be. You NOW have 49 more great tools, great habits to add to your repertoire of Christ-like practices. Christ possessed each of these qualities to the highest degree.

To realize the importance of developing these character qualities, see which ones are NOT NECESSARY for you becoming the best you possible! If you don't have the quality you want, you have the quality that you may not want!

Being RLI graduates, we know that there are spirits that we DON'T WANT and that we have the power to recognize, repent, and cast them out! This gives the Christian the ability to develop positive Character traits easier than a non-Christian! Praise God!

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Not only are Christian character traits critical for developing Christ-likeness, but they are also critical for becoming the best human being possible! CHRISTIANITY AT ITS BEST! HUMANITY AT ITS BEST IS ELEVATED TO THE CHRISTIAN LEVEL!

By studying, understanding, and making each of them part of you over time, you will definitely become a better person, a better Christ follower, husband/wife, mom/dad, worker, pastor, evangelist, friend, etc.

Your RG manual lists 12 Character Traits for you to evaluate in your life on pages 60-62. They are great suggestions for you to discuss in your small group. Even tonight each of you may want to choose a different 12 to work on and discuss. No two persons are the same and we are all on different levels in our Character development.

### 49 Character Qualities

**Alertness** vs. Carelessness

Being aware of what is taking place around me so I can have the right responses.

**Attentiveness** vs. Distraction

Showing the worth of a person or task by giving my undivided concentration.

**Availability** vs. Self-Centeredness

Making my own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I serve.

**Benevolence** vs. Selfishness

Giving to others' basic needs without having as my motive personal reward.

**Boldness** vs. Fearfulness

Confidence that what I have to say or do is true, right, and just.

**Cautiousness** vs. Rashness

Knowing how important right timing is in accomplishing right actions.

**Compassion** vs. Indifference

Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others.

**Contentment** vs. Covetousness

Realizing that true happiness does not depend on material conditions.

**Creativity** vs. Underachievement

Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective.

**Decisiveness** vs. Procrastination

The ability to recognize key factors and finalize difficult decisions.

**Deference** vs. Rudeness

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Limiting my freedom so I do not offend the tastes of those around me.

**Dependability** vs. Inconsistency

Fulfilling what I consented to do, even if it means unexpected sacrifice.

**Determination** vs. Faintheartedness

Purposing to accomplish right goals at the right time, regardless of the opposition.

**Diligence** vs. Slothfulness

Investing my time and energy to complete each task assigned to me.

**Discernment** vs. Shortsightedness

Understanding the deeper reasons why things happen.

**Discretion** vs. Simplemindedness

Recognizing and avoiding words, actions, and attitudes that could bring undesirable consequences.

**Endurance** vs. Discouragement

The inward strength to withstand stress and do my best.

**Enthusiasm** vs. Apathy

Expressing joy in each task as I give it my best effort.

**Faith** vs. Presumption

Confidence that actions rooted in good character will yield the best outcome, even when I cannot see how.

**Flexibility** vs. Resistance

Willingness to change plans or ideas without getting upset.

**Forgiveness** vs. Rejection

Clearing the record of those who have wronged me and not holding a grudge.

**Generosity** vs. Stinginess

Carefully managing my resources so I can freely give to those in need.

**Gentleness** vs. Harshness

Showing consideration and personal concern for others.

**Gratefulness** vs. Unthankfulness

Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefited my life.

**Honor** vs. Disrespect

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Respecting others because of the higher authorities they represent.

### **Hospitality** vs. Loneliness

Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, or conversation to benefit others.

### **Humility** vs. Arrogance

Acknowledging that achievement results from the investment of others in my life.

### **Initiative** vs. Idleness

Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it.

### **Joyfulness** vs. Self-Pity

Maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with unpleasant conditions.

### **Justice** vs. Corruption

Taking personal responsibility to uphold what is pure, right, and true.

### **Loyalty** vs. Unfaithfulness

Using difficult times to demonstrate my commitment to those I serve.

### **Meekness** vs. Anger

Yielding my personal rights and expectations with a desire to serve.

### **Obedience** vs. Willfulness

Quickly and cheerfully carrying out the direction of those who are responsible for me.

### **Orderliness** vs. Confusion

Arranging myself and my surroundings to achieve greater efficiency.

### **Patience** vs. Restlessness

Accepting a difficult situation without giving a deadline to remove it.

### **Persuasiveness** vs. Contentiousness

Guiding vital truths around another's mental roadblocks.

### **Punctuality** vs. Tardiness

Showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time

### **Resourcefulness** vs. Wastefulness

Finding practical uses for that which others would overlook or discard.

### **Responsibility** vs. Unreliability

Knowing and doing what is expected of me.

### **Security** vs. Anxiety

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Structuring my life around that which cannot be destroyed or taken away.

**Self-Control** vs. Self-Indulgence

Rejecting wrong desires and doing what is right.

**Sensitivity** vs. Callousness

Perceiving the true attitudes and emotions of those around me.

**Sincerity** vs. Hypocrisy

Eagerness to do what is right with transparent motives.

**Thoroughness** vs. Incompleteness

Knowing what factors will diminish the effectiveness of my work or words if neglected.

**Thriftiness** vs. Extravagance

Allowing myself and others to spend only what is necessary.

**Tolerance** vs. Prejudice

Realizing that everyone is at varying levels of character development.

**Truthfulness** vs. Deception

Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts.

**Virtue** vs. Impurity

The moral excellence evident in my life as I consistently do what is right.

**Wisdom** vs. Foolishness

Seeing and responding to life situations from a perspective that transcends my current circumstances.

To show what God thinks about Character traits and the need to develop them, you don't have to go any further than Proverbs, especially reading from the Message Translation.

The following excerpts are taken from Proverbs 1-3. Proverbs emphasizes character and its benefits for developing them.

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### Proverbs 1

#### *Start with God*

<sup>7</sup> Start with GOD—the first step in learning is bowing down to GOD;  
only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.

<sup>8-19</sup> Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you;  
never forget what you learned at your mother's knee.  
Wear their counsel like flowers in your hair,  
like rings on your fingers...

### Proverbs 2

#### *Make Insight Your Priority*

<sup>1-5</sup> Good friend, take to heart what I'm telling you;  
collect my counsels and guard them with your life.  
Tune your ears to the world of Wisdom;  
set your heart on a life of Understanding.  
That's right—if you make Insight your priority,  
and won't take no for an answer,  
Searching for it like a prospector panning for gold,  
like an adventurer on a treasure hunt,...

### Proverbs 3

#### *Don't Assume You Know It All*

<sup>1-2</sup> Good friend, don't forget all I've taught you;  
take to heart my commands.  
They'll help you live a long, long time,  
a long life lived full and well.  
<sup>3-4</sup> Don't lose your grip on Love and Loyalty.  
Tie them around your neck...

## **A Sample of Character Quality Journey and The Results**

### **- Ben Franklin's Journey -**

Benjamin Franklin was an author, a painter, an inventor, a father, a politician, and the first American Ambassador to France. He invented bifocals, swimming flippers, lightning rods, and the Franklin stove. He founded a public library, a hospital, insurance company and a fire department. He helped write the *Declaration of Independence* and the *U.S. Constitution*. He wrote an autobiography in the middle of his life, and, shortly before his death in his 80's, he completed his memoirs.

Franklin was truly a Renaissance man. He was one of the greatest citizens and thinkers the world has ever seen.

But Franklin was not always a great or successful man.

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- At the age of 17 he ran away from home in Boston, estranged from his family because of an argument he had with his brother.
- He tried to be successful in business but failed, not once but twice.
- He was the father and single parent of an illegitimate son whose mother abandoned the child to Franklin. She was unable and unwilling to live with Franklin and the child.
- As a young adult Franklin was by almost any measure (and especially his own measure) a dismal failure.
- His life was confused, difficult and not at all satisfying to Franklin or to anyone else.

He decided to change.

Benjamin Franklin sat down and made a list. The list consisted of twelve characteristics, values and virtues to which he aspired. He called his list "Virtues". Franklin's list of virtues looked like this.

### **Franklin's List of Defined Virtues:**

1. **Temperance** – Eat not to dullness; drink not to elation.
2. **Silence** – Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. **Order** – Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. **Resolution** – resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. **Frugality** – Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; that is, waste nothing.
6. **Industry** – Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. **Sincerity** – Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; speak accordingly.
8. **Justice** – Wrong none by doing injuries; or omitting the benefits of your duty.
9. **Moderation** – Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. **Cleanliness** – Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.
11. **Tranquility** – Be not disturbed at trifles or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. **Chastity** - Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

Franklin then took his list to a respected friend who happened to be a Quaker. Franklin explained to his Quaker friend that he, Franklin, was disappointed in the progress in his life to this point and that he intended to turn his life around. From now on Franklin intended to live his life according to his list of virtues. Each day he would read the list and each week he would focus on a different virtue, repeating the process over and over again until he had become one with his virtues.

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Franklin's Quaker friend asked him one question. "Ben, are you serious? Because you sure aren't these things now."

Franklin explained that he was indeed serious and that he knew he was far from these virtues now. But he aspired to become one with the twelve virtues he had listed and described.

His Quaker friend went on then to say. "Ben, if you are serious you need to add a thirteenth virtue, Humility. Because you don't have any."

History speaks for the success of Ben Franklin had in developing what he considered to be the most important character traits.

You may want to follow his simple yet most effective Character Development Program.

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* 95

FORM OF THE PAGES

Temperance.							
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# Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

## 6 Steps to Developing Good Character

1. Understand the Quality
  - a. Give illustrations from History, contemporary lives, nature, etc.
2. Grasp its Actions
  - a. Describe the character quality in terms of thoughts, words and/or behavior that are representative of those that result when a person possesses this quality.
    - i. The final goal is behavior implementation - not just knowledge.
      1. Enthusiasm in action
        - a. Smile.
        - b. Be an energy giver to others.
        - c. Treat every job assigned is important.
        - d. Give everything you do 100 percent.
        - e. Don't be discouraged by failure – keep going.
3. Realize its Benefits
  - a. Know the benefits of this character trait:
    - i. Benefits of good character in General
      1. Helps us reach full potential.
      2. Enhances self-acceptance, self-confidence and self-satisfaction.
      3. Increases productivity and accomplishments.
      4. Improves relationships.
      5. Benefits and encourages others.
      6. Contributes to success.
    - ii. Benefits of this particular character quality, e.g., Enthusiasm – Provides a renewed excitement to life – to both the giver and those impacted by the energy given.
4. Practice its Actions
  - a. Practice the habit on a regular basis, e.g., like Ben Franklin did.
  - b. Think of the benefits you will receive. Actual application of Character Change
  - c. In the book Making Character First – The results of building character are listed on Page 30.
    - i. Workers Comp dropped 80%.
    - ii. Personnel problems dropped significantly.
    - iii. Morale and productivity soared.
    - iv. Bad people either changed or quit!
5. Encourage It in Others
  - a. Encouraging the quality in others is beneficial not only to the recipients but is especially beneficial to the person doing the encouraging.
  - b. Encouraging others will keep your awareness of the character quality sharp. Actively communicating about it will possibly help you gain a new understanding of the quality, and encourages you to keep actively developing the quality in your own life. In the case of enthusiasm, remember how infectious it can be!

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Encouragement may be focused on a single individual, on a group of individuals (a family, for example), or on an organization of individuals (a business, school, religious assembly, etc.).

Four common facets of encouragement include:

- Model. Demonstrate the character quality or an intermediate stage in a sequence of steps that will result in a desired habit.
- Remind/Emphasize. Bring to mind the importance of developing the character quality - by personal communication or attitude, etc.
- Expect/Require. By attitudes, words and/or actions make clear the expectations/requirements and, if required by policy or requested voluntarily, hold other(s) accountable for developing the quality.
- Recognize. Affirm and bring attention to the display by an individual of a good character quality, thereby encouraging both the individual and others. Similarly, affirm the achievement of steps in a sequence which will, when complete, result in the development of an intended good character quality. (These comments are provided by Character First)

### 6. Be Encouraged

- Explicitly invite one or more persons to encourage you in developing character qualities, lovingly holding yourself accountable to practice options. When a colleague hears you grumbling about deadlines, for instance, ask her to remind you that renewed enthusiasm will help you get back on course.

## Good Character and the Christian Faith

For the individual committed to the tenets of the Christian faith there are significant additional considerations and benefits.

### Character qualities of Jesus Christ

The 49 character qualities, as mentioned earlier, are ones which have been recommended down through history. While found both in religious and non-religious settings, it is specifically noted here that these character qualities are character qualities of Jesus Christ.

### Christian Motivation for Sharing Character Qualities

Since these character qualities apply to humanity at its best, and that each individual will benefit by practicing and growing in them, Christians should be motivated to encourage every person to practice the character qualities - regardless of the person's religious beliefs or state. It is a matter of "loving our neighbor". Practicing good character is a matter of loving God, self, and others.

# Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

## Added Motivations and Benefits for the Christian to Practice Good Character Habits

### 1. Brings pleasure to God.

This follows by noting that:

- The great commandment and highest priority of life is to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"* and *"to love your neighbor as yourself."* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Mark 12:29-30)
- The key way by which the Christian demonstrates his love to Him is through obedience to Him (e.g., *"he who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me"*, John 14:21)
- He commands us to *"be holy as I am holy"*, i.e. have character like Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:16). Thus the Christian in practicing good character is endeavoring to be holy, in obedience to God's word; this obedience, in turn, demonstrates love to the Lord, which brings him pleasure.

### 2. Promotes relational and experiential intimacy with Jesus Christ.

This follows by noting that:

- Knowing God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ experientially and relationally is eternal life - the highest quality of life we can experience while on this earth. (John 17:3)
- Making every effort to keep adding goodness (practicing Christ-like character) to our faith will promote this knowledge (2 Peter 1:3-9).

### 3. Is Valuable in every way in this life

- This is a direct promise from Scripture: *"... Train yourself in godliness (Christ-like character and conduct) ... [which] is of value in every way in this life..."* (1 Timothy 4:7-8).
- Often we cannot see or measure either the immediate, long-term or expanse of the effects of a single act or a habit of practicing good character - on ourselves, others or the Lord. But here we are reassured by the One who knows all, that practicing good character has great value.

### 4. Is Valuable in the life to come.

- This is a direct promise from the same Scripture: *"... Train yourself in godliness (Christ-like character and conduct) ... [which] is of value in every way in ... the life to come."*

## Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

### Christians Have Added Strength for Developing Good Character Qualities

A character quality is a habit, which like other habits can be developed by making decisions and taking actions that reinforce the habit. This development requires desire, determination, attentiveness and endurance.

In one's own strength one can indeed make progress. However, the Christian operating under the Lordship of Jesus Christ has the invaluable added benefit of God's grace (power – The Holy Spirit) to help. For, as spoken through the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) Such power is invaluable in developing all character qualities.

For some character qualities, however, this power may be indispensable. For example, dependability can be defined as "fulfilling what I consented to do, even if it means unexpected sacrifice". Being willing to habitually sacrifice one's selfish interests, resources and other matters to fulfill an expectation or promise made to another, may be more than a person is able or willing to do - without the power of the Lord.

This teaching can be found on youtube at

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RLtestimonies/playlists>. Look for Week 5 - Root Group Character Qualities - Mike Kelly.avi.

Below are websites that might interest you in your adventure into Character.

<http://www.school-for-champions.com/character/resources.htm>

<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/64663.htm#>

[http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/exp\\_virtue.html](http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/exp_virtue.html)

<http://iblp.org/seminars-conferences/basic-seminar>

Material was taken with permission from [www.Charactercincinnati.org](http://www.Charactercincinnati.org).

For further information on Character and developing it in your life, go to [www.characterfirst.com](http://www.characterfirst.com)

There are a great number of resources for developing your character qualities online. One that I like is [www.charactercincinnati.org](http://www.charactercincinnati.org). They work on 1 character quality/month. I personally like the Ben Franklin approach.

## **Week 5 – Godly Character Traits**

### **Breakout Questions**

1. Why are character traits important to study and emulate?
2. What would your life be like without this/these traits?
3. What would your life be like with this/these traits?
4. How can you engage with the Holy Spirit to have more of this trait?
5. Review the 12 traits. (Alertness, Compassion, Endurance, Enthusiasm, Forgiveness, Honor, Humility, Patience, Punctuality, Self-Control, Obedience, and Wisdom.) Make a list of the top 6. Share why you made your choices.
6. What traits do you need to work on?

### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:**

1. Complete any questions that were not answered during the small group discussion.
2. Continue to ask the Holy Spirit what Godly Character Traits you need to work on today.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out the scriptures that will help you develop a particular trait. Meditate on those scriptures and spend time making declarations based on scriptures.

## Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

Alertness

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Compassion

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Endurance

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Enthusiasm

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## Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

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Forgiveness

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## Week 5 – Godly Character Traits

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Punctuality

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