



What the God-Story says about growing strength of character in becoming a mature Christ-follower!

*"...until we all attain to the unity of the faith,
and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a
mature man, to the measure of the stature
which belongs to the fullness of Christ!"*

- Ephesians 4:13 -



Why Character?

Shortly after coming to know Christ as my Savior I jumped in - leading home Bible studies, promoting christian activities, and attempting to provoke others in their personal knowledge of God's Word. I was consumed with a desire to be used by Christ .

It soon became apparent, however, that my zeal far outweighed my knowledge for following my Lord Jesus Christ. Though I tried hard to be a good example and avoid hypocrisy I lacked the depth of character that comes with obedience, testing, age, and experience.

30 years have passed and I have come to realize that “elder” means older in age and experience as much as it reflects spiritual maturity. Older can also mean “fossilized” and rigid. I am talking about experience gained walking with God, not merely being religious or bending our image of God to fit our desires for ourselves.

I have paid dearly for some of my gray hairs both for the cause of Christ and also in the cause of myself. Yet I have no regrets that these “character qualities” of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 have been my aspiring standard these many years. They have helped me to embrace what it means to follow Christ in a very practical and deep way. They have also helped me to discern my progress in dying to self and living to God.

We offer these character studies with a sincere desire to encourage Christ-like character in the men and women who would share responsibility in the twenty-first century church. Selah!

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FOURTH STREAM FINDING HOPE

QUALITY CHARACTER!

Whether or not you aspire to the office of an overseer (elder), the qualifications displayed in Titus and Timothy can bring great strength and richness to your household. Take the time to consider each one and implement them as a standard for personal evaluation! May we be the kind of men and women who reflect reliance upon God's Word, being Spirit led, and who desire God's order and holiness in our lives! (Titus 1; 1 Timothy 3)

- ☐ Temperate
- ☐ Not Quick-tempered
- ☐ Not Self-willed
- ☐ Prudent
- ☐ Not Addicted to Wine
- ☐ Not Pugnacious
- ☐ Uncontentious
- ☐ Gentle
- ☐ Loving What is Good
- ☐ Respectable
- ☐ Hospitable
- ☐ Free from the Love of Money
- ☐ Not a New Convert
- ☐ Able to Teach
- ☐ Just
- ☐ Good Reputation
- ☐ Husband of One Wife
- ☐ Manages Own Household Well
- ☐ Above Reproach
- ☐ Devout
- ☐ Holding Fast the Faithful Word



THE QUALITIES AT A GLANCE

Here is a brief description of each quality. A more in-depth treatment follows.

Temperate

Moderate, well balanced, calm, careful, steady, and able to rule others because [he rules himself](#). An example of a temperate man was Dr. Luke, "...having investigated everything carefully from the beginning." (Luke 1:3)

Not Quick-Tempered

One who flies off the handle or gets [angry quickly](#). An example of a quick-tempered man is King Saul (1 Samuel 20:30-33).

Not Self-Willed

One who is stubborn and tries to have his own way. This person is insensitive and seeks to [force](#) his own ideas and opinions on other people. An example of not being self-willed is seen in Daniel and his three friends who did not force their own ideas regarding wine and rich foods on others in their group (Daniel 1:10-13).

Prudent

Clear judgment, common sense, a man who can make [righteous decisions](#), not given to quick and superficial decisions based on faulty judgment. An example of a prudent man was King Solomon. "When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice." (1 Kings 3:28)

Not Addicted to Wine

The same inspired author who advises Timothy to use a little wine for the sake of his stomach and frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23) also declares that one who fails to practice [moderation](#) has no right to be an elder. An example of those who were guilty of the sin condemned here were the believers at Corinth, "one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:21).

Not Pugnacious

Literally this word means "[not a striker](#)." This can be in reference to either physical or verbal striking. An example of a pugnacious spirit would be James and John who wanted to call down fire from heaven on some Samaritans who rejected Jesus (Luke 9:54).

Uncontentious

This word goes even deeper than pugnacious. It describes a person who does not necessarily strike out physically or verbally but one who subtly, behind the scenes, seeks to [divide through innuendo](#), gossip, or selfish argumentation. An example of contentious people would be the false teachers described in John 16, "These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage."

Gentle

The opposite of pugnacious is one who is characterized by forbearance and [tenderness](#). Though he never compromises with respect to the truth of the Gospel he is willing to yield when it comes to his own rights in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 6:7: "Why not rather suffer wrong?" The word "yielding" corresponds with the root idea of gentle. An example of a gentle man was Joseph who was forbearing and tender to the brothers who sold him into slavery (Genesis 50:15-21).

Loves What Is Good

Must be the kind of person who desires to do and see the will of God accomplished in [everything](#) and everyone. An example here would be Paul, “my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is for their salvation” (Romans 10:1).

Respectable

This is the same root word that is used to describe clothes or outward appearance in 2 Timothy 2:9. When applied to character it means [orderly](#) in life where everything isn't a mess within. It is much easier for people to show respect to a leader if he is responsible. A good example of a man who had an orderly life and was highly respected as a leader and administrator was Nehemiah, the builder of Jerusalem's walls (Nehemiah 2:4-18).

Hospitable

This word literally means a [friend of strangers](#). He meets us at our point of need physically, emotionally, and spiritually. An example of a hospitable man would be Abraham as he showed hospitality to the three strangers in Genesis 18:1-8 or of Onesiphorus whom Paul said “often refreshed me...” (2 Timothy 1:16). This is an important requirement because it shows care for people.

Free From the Love of Money

Not a lover of silver or stingy with his material possessions or blessings. He is not under the [influence](#) of affluence. He must be far removed from making the acquisition of earthly treasure his chief goal in life even though the means employed may be honest. This is a character requirement because it indicates better than anything else wrong priorities in life (Matthew 6:25). An example of one who was not free from the love of money was Judas (John 12:6), the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21-22), and Demas who “loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10).

Not a New Convert

Not a baby in Christ. He must have been a Christian [long enough](#) to demonstrate the reality of his conversion and the depth of his maturity. This will hopefully prevent him from becoming puffed up with pride. An example of not a new convert would be the Apostle Paul who probably spent three years in the desert of Arabia after his conversion before he did any work in his hometown of Tarsus and Antioch, and was not commissioned to go on his first missionary journey until ten years after his conversion (Galatians 1:17-18; 2:1).

Able to Teach

This is not the same thing as the gift of teaching but rather one who is qualified to teach. The minimal requirement here is seen in Titus 1:9 “holding on to the faithful word which is in line with sound doctrine in order that he may be able both to [encourage](#) by means of his sound teaching and [refute](#) those who contradict it.” An example of a man who was able to teach was Apollos who was a gifted orator, mighty in the Scriptures, and instructed in the ways of the Lord, but was still willing to be taught by Priscilla and Aquila in order to learn the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26). Apollos clearly shows us that to be able to teach, one must also be teachable. Another good example of one who was able to teach was the Apostle Paul about whom we are told “his personal appearance is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible” (2 Corinthians 10:10).

Just

Fair and impartial and able to make objective judgments based on [principle](#). An example of being just is seen in 1 Corinthians 6:1-7 where believers should be able to justify or fairly judge those among them who require a judgment to be made.

Good Reputation Outside the Church

Unbelievers must also respect his character and integrity. Often such “outsiders” know more about the man in question than do the members of the church. Besides, the church seeks to exert a powerful influence for good upon the world by leading sinners to Christ. An elder's bad reputation with the world will not be of any help in achieving this purpose. An example of a man who had a good reputation with those outside was Cornelius who was “well spoken of by the entire Jewish nation” (Acts 10:22).

Husband of One Wife

Six possible interpretations here:

1. Prohibition against polygamy view.
2. Necessity of marriage view.
3. Prohibition of remarried widower's view.
4. Faithfulness to one wife view.
5. Prohibition of divorce at any time in life view.
6. Faithfulness to one wife and prohibition of divorce while a believer view.

An example of a husband of one wife was the prophet Hosea who was married to a woman named Gomer who lived the life of a harlot. In spite of her adultery Hosea still **loyally loved** her (Hosea 3:1-3).

Manages His Own Household Well

Presides over or manages in every area -- this would include an **orderly** household where the husband is submitting to Christ, the wife respects her husband and the children obey the parents. The home is a proving ground for a man's ability to give oversight. He will treat the church like he treats his family. An example of one who manages his own household well would be Philip the evangelist who "had four virgin daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9).

Above Reproach

The over-arching qualification with all others is contained in this one. It means you "can't get a handle on a flaw in his character." An example of a man who was above reproach was Job: "...there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, **fearing God** and turning away from evil." (Job 1:8)

Devout

Holy and **separating** from sin. An example of this quality is seen in Simeon, a man who was "righteous and devout" (Luke 2:25).

Holding Fast the Faithful Word

Stable in his faith and not hypocritical by teaching one thing and **living** another. An example of those who did not hold fast the faithful word were the scribes and pharisees about whom Jesus said, "therefore all that they tell you do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say things, and do not do them" (Matthew 23:3).

MY SNAPSHOT EVALUATION:

List the areas and issues where someone could get a handle on a flaw in your character (above reproach). Be honest with yourself!

What can you do to grow in these areas to become more like Jesus?

You may wish to seek some practical insights from someone experienced whom you respect!



MY PERSONAL CHARACTER QUALITY EVALUATION!

Are you still a child in Christ even though you may have been a believer and follower for a number of years? Be as honestly transparent as you know how as you think your way through this process.

Circle the number that best represents your self-evaluation of each of the qualities that follow (rating from dissatisfied (1) to satisfied (7)).

1. How do you evaluate your reputation as a Christ-follower among believers?
Are you a man of your word?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
2. How do you evaluate your overall relationship with your wife? If you are not married how well are you handling your sexual and companionship needs and desires?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
3. What kind of overall perspective do you have on your spiritual life? Have you developed a measured philosophy of life? Does it reflect TEMPERANCE?
Are you calm? Do you rule yourself?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
4. Are you PRUDENT? Do you exercise common sense and biblical principles with your time, talents, and treasures?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
5. Are you RESPECTABLE? Do you have a well-adjusted life, adorning the Word of God? In what areas are you a mess?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
6. Are you HOSPITABLE? Do you use your home as a means to show kindness to other members of the body of Christ and unbelievers? Are you friendly?
Do you use your resources for the benefit of others?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
7. Are you ABLE TO TEACH? Do you have that quality of life that enables you to communicate the Word of God to others in a non-argumentative, clear manner?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
8. Are you ADDICTED TO ANYTHING THAT IS CONTROLLING YOUR LIFE?
Are you doing anything that is causing a weaker Christ-follower to stumble and sin against God (lust, drugs, alcohol, food, etc.)?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
9. Are you SELF-WILLED? Do you always have to have your own way?
Do you pout?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

10. Do you LOSE YOUR TEMPER easily? Do you harbor feelings of resentment over a period of time? Do you fly off the handle?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
11. Are you a PUGNACIOUS-type person -- one who verbally or physically strikes out at others because of angry feelings?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
12. Are you CONTENTIOUS? Do you purposely take the opposite point of view from others, stirring up arguments and destroying the unity in the group? Or, are you a peacemaker, striving to create harmony and unity?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
13. Are you a MILD-MANNERED and GENTLE person, reflecting meekness, forbearance and kindness?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
14. Are you FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY? Do you seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness? Are you preoccupied with things or making ends meet?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
15. Do you have your HOUSEHOLD IN ORDER? That is, do your wife and children love and respect you and are they responding to your God and Savior and His claim on their lives? Is your household controlled and orderly?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
16. Do you have a GOOD REPUTATION with non-Christ followers? Do they respect you even though they may disagree with your views? What do your neighbors say about you? Your co-workers?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
17. Do you PURSUE AFTER WHAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT? Do you desire to associate yourself with truth, honor, and integrity and reject embracing things that have any appearance of evil?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
18. Are you JUST? Are you able to make objective decisions and be honest in your relationship with other people without showing partiality?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied
19. Are you HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD? Are you consistently and radically committed to living out your faith and calling out hypocrisy?
Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

RETROSPECTIVE

The content of these pages is based upon Gene Getz' book Measure of A Man, which was very helpful to me as I established in my faith. As a young man this process was very daunting. But once I realized that these qualities formed a picture for the END result of my growing faith, I began to [relax](#) and [ask God](#) to reveal my challenges one at a time. I have observed His patient kindness, honoring my request to set me free to be this kind of person!

TEMPERATE

Becoming mature as a Christ-Follower includes arriving at a solid world view. Becoming a sensible (temperate) person means I will need to grow in the ability to manage my personal values, opinions and actions - especially things that really push my buttons. This is key to my effectiveness in fishing for men.

What are the things that animate you to the edge of your self-control?

What light does 1 Peter 4:7 shed on the idea of being temperate?

What does 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 indicate about ruling ourselves?

The quality of being temperate pertains to an individual who is in control of his faculties. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8, the word temperate or sober means that a person is to be [safe](#) or sound in mind. Mature Christ-followers must be self-controlled in the exercise of their opinions, thoughts, and emotions. Everything we do and say should be for the building up of those around us. That doesn't leave much room for thoughtless words! Such an outward expression of temperance can only be exhibited by one who adopts a "moderate" approach in their thinking.

How do we think moderately and maturely and not lose who we are in the process?

To establish and maintain temperance requires the learned ability to hold to what is sound in doctrine, to discern the correct or proper position in my daily life. An individual who is temperate must reject extremes. This involves self-denial and self-control.

Titus 2:2 “Older men are to be temperate...”

What do you think this looks like in an older man?

If you were going to name a man you know who has this quality, who would it be?

In what ways would you ascribe this character quality to yourself?

Titus 2:6 “Likewise urge the young men to be sensible.”

What do you think this looks like in a younger man?

Titus 2:4-5 “Older women are to be reverent in their behavior...teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women...to be sensible.”

If you were going to name a woman you know who has this quality, who would it be?

Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:13 that “if we are of sound mind, it is for you.” When we choose a sound mind it not only benefits us, but we bless others. It is apparent from the God-Story that each member of His body is to seek temperance for the good of the body as a whole. The Corinthians lacked this quality and refused to be “safe in mind” and did not exhibit sound judgment or moderation in approach, even though they were very “gifted.”

In what ways would you consider yourself growing in the area of temperance? Mature?

NOT QUICK TEMPERED

This quality is translated as [impatient](#), [short-tempered](#), [quick tempered](#), and [hot-tempered](#). This picture literally means “not given to outbursts of anger or wrath.” Such outbursts frequently have as their source [inward indignation](#) which sometimes even results in taking revenge.

What would others say about your temper - especially people who know you?

Why is this an important quality for an aspiring leader? How would it impact our relationships?

[Anyone who angers you conquers you.](#) We are not to be conquered but rather be “more than conquerors through Christ.” The man who is conquered rather than a conqueror sets a poor example to others. Anger of this kind is almost momentary madness, so it is wise to control your passion, or it will control you.

A second reason this quality is such an important one is that it is one of the [barometers of a person's overall maturity level](#). A person can often be measured by the kinds of things it takes to get his or her goat.

What are the things that seem to “get your goat?”

Can you think of any personal situations where you have seen others hurt either directly or indirectly by the angry temper of another?

Anger over any injury can cause more injury than the injury itself. Others can be quickly hurt emotionally by one who is “quick tempered,” ultimately damaging those around us. This can cause others to stumble in the faith and suffer spiritual setbacks. So temper your temper!

Several passages of Scripture bring out the serious nature of being “quick tempered.”

What do we learn about being quick-tempered from Matthew 5:22?

From James 1:19, 20?

Examples of individuals who were “quick tempered” in the Bible are:

Herod: “When he saw that he was mocked by the wise men, was insanely angry and ordered that all the children two years of age or under in Bethlehem be killed, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.” (Matthew 2:16)

James & John: (sons of thunder...Mark 3:17) “When these two saw a village in Samaria reject Jesus, they responded, ‘Lord, should we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them just as Elijah did?’ Jesus responded with the correction that they were totally missing the point on who they were as representatives of God (Luke 9:54-55)

Some questions to ask yourself:

1. Do you frequently have outbursts of anger that are directed at the “stupidity” of others? Describe them.

2. Would your spouse and children say you have a short fuse in the privacy of your home?

3. Do you have a perfectionist mentality that quickly erupts into disgust or anger toward those who don't measure up to your personal standards?

NOT SELF-WILLED

The term “self-willed” describes an individual who desires to please one’s self. This is in direct contrast to “prove what the will of God is” (Romans 12:1-3).

How does one “prove the will of God?” (Romans 12:1-3)

Why would a self-willed person be prone to deception?

The quality of not being self-willed (Titus 1:7) means that a mature believer must overcome the desire to [please himself](#). Self-pleasing involves seeking after self-gratification - the obsessions of pleasing our passions and the desires of what we see with our eyes, as well as the pride or arrogance of life (1 John 2:16). Each Christ-follower must choose (on a daily basis) between submitting to the pleasures of self or serving Christ.

The [choice](#) is clearly between delighting in doing the will of God by knowing and obeying His law (Psalm 40:6) or indulging our flesh (2 Peter 2:10). Check out these references!

How does this look in an average day of making choices?

What does Ephesians 5:17 teach about the choice to be or not to be self-willed?

According to Matthew 7:21 and Mark 3:35, how is the will of God found in a Christ-followers life?

The desire of the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-24) to retain his wealth is an example in the scriptures of an individual who would not fully submit himself to his Lord's will. He could not forego the pleasure, comfort, and identity he found in his riches.

Why is this such a struggle for most human beings? What was Jesus really asking of this young man?

In which area of your life is it hard for you to say no to yourself?

Are there specific earthly rights or pleasures which you protect and feel you deserve?

When tempted which way do you initially gravitate: "my will" or the "will of God?"

PRUDENT

This word which refers to this quality contains the idea of one who has clear judgment, understanding, practical wisdom, and who is not given to quick and superficial decisions based on faulty judgment. The word is used of God in Ephesians 1:8, of the man of the world in 1 Corinthians 1:19, of a government official in Acts 13:7, of older men in Titus 2:2, of young women in Titus 2:5, and of elders in 1 Timothy 3:2. It is a common biblical idea or quality.

It is translated in various versions of the Bible as prudent, sober, self-controlled, sensible, thoughtful, and discreet.

From Titus 2:11-12, we discover that prudence should be a characteristic of our life-style as believers because of what God's grace has taught us: "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly (prudently), righteously, and godly in the present age..."

An example of a prudent man was King Solomon during the early years of his reign. "When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice (2 Kings 3:28)."

Are the majority of your closest friends people who seem to have difficulties on a regular basis in such areas as maintaining quality relationships with their spouses, children, fellow workers, boss, neighbors, others in the church? Read Proverbs 13:20 for some insight.

Do your closest friends seem to have frequent problems with emotional ups and downs and act kind of "out there"? Read Proverbs 17:27-28 for insight.

Do you frequently overextend yourself financially or have difficulties keeping to your family budget? Check Proverbs 15:21 for some thoughts.

Would you be spoken of as someone who uses their time wisely? Why or why not?

Two ways to attain a prudent spiritual walk are to “ask God who gives to all men generously” (James 1:5) and walk with wise men...it may rub off (Proverbs 13:20)!

How can a person determine if they experience the quality of prudence?

Are people frequently able to sway you after you have made a decision? (Proverbs 14:15)

Is it rare or common for people to seek you out for advice? (Proverbs 12:26)

Do you have difficulty accepting either positive or negative input and counsel?

Do you tend to make decisions on the basis of your feelings or principles from the scriptures. Are you careful to ascertaining facts of a situation? (Proverbs 13:10, 16)

NOT ADDICTED TO WINE

The same inspired author who advises Timothy to use a little wine for the sake of his stomach and frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23) also declares that one who fails to practice [moderation](#) has no right to be an elder.

It appears that this phrase can be paraphrased as “staying near wine.” “One who tipples” is likened to a bartender or “one who drinks liquor continuously...especially in small amounts” (Webster). Given to wine relates to a habit or excess...something which no temperate or self-controlled leader could be involved in or he would cease to be above reproach. For a Christ-follower, being under the influence of wine is just as undesirable as for the leader (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). Vincent translates the word as “quarrelsome over wine,” indicating an improper place of wine or strong drink in one's priority list.

Wine was used throughout Old Testament times (Judges 9:13; Deuteronomy 32:14; Ezekiel 6:9, 7:22; Daniel 5:1,2,4,23; Numbers 28:7, 14; Isaiah 5:11). [What do you learn about its use?](#)

Other uses of wine or strong drink for various purposes (not all profitable) are seen in Judges 9:13; Psalm 104:15; Ecclesiastes 10:19; Isaiah 24:9; Genesis 14:18; 1 Samuel 16:20; and 2 Chronicles 11:11.

[What do you learn about the use of wine?](#)

That the wine of the New Testament times was the same type of potentially intoxicating substance is indicated in Acts 2:13 and Ephesians 5:18. The Biblical issue does not appear to be one of abstinence but of control. The strongest argument for a choice of abstinence is found in a consideration of priests and Nazrites (Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3; Judges 13:4,7,14; Luke 1:15).

[What do these passages add to the wine and strong drink discussion?](#)

The Bible has much to say about the excessive use of wine and/or strong drink (Proverbs 20:1, 21:17, 23:20-21, 29-35; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 5:11,22,28:7-8, 56:11,12; Hosea 4:11; Micah 2:11; Habakkuk 2:5). The scriptures also espouse a [tempered use](#) of wine (Esther 1:10; Psalm 104:15; Ecclesiastes 10:9; Zechariah 10:7).

We know clearly from Scripture that anything that controls us and keeps us from godliness is unprofitable. We encourage the weak or undisciplined to flee wine as any other potential "youthful lust." Any use of wine or strong drink should be viewed in the light of 1 Corinthians 8:8-13 and Romans 14:13-21. This issue should be seen as a serious one and great care should be used in any consideration of use of wine.

[What do these passages indicate about our subject?](#)

As we leave this subject, don't ignore other vices that seek to make us intemperate. Overweight, over commitment to leisure, sexual pre-occupation, addiction to pornography, laziness...anything that "addicts our appetites" should be fled as "youthful lust" just as any abuse in the use of alcohol or drugs.

[Some things to consider...](#)

1. Do you use alcohol indiscriminately?

2. Are you ever intoxicated?

3. Are you preoccupied with regular use of wine and alcohol?

4. Do you stumble in the presence of others who practice a moderate use of wine?

5. Is your position on usage of wine consistent with the Biblical view?

6. What things "addict" you?

NOT PUGNACIOUS

1 Timothy 3:3 links the character of pugnacity with self-control, since the qualities of addiction to wine and pugnaciousness are joined by the conjunction “or.” They are also jointly contrasted to gentleness, uncontentiousness, and freedom from the love of money by the conjunction “but.” [To consider pugnacity is to consider self-control in human relationships.](#)

Early usage of the word “pugnacious” described one who is quarrelsome or a smiter or one who “flattened out something by repeated pounding.” The objective of a pugnacious person is to mold or shape the conscience of another through repeated blows. This action can be either physical or verbal.

Although God is not pugnacious, the meaning of this word is communicated in His actions toward Pharaoh in Exodus 3:20. Pharaoh's conscience was molded through repeated plagues - all used to change his attitude. [What do you learn about God from these plagues?](#)

Examples of pugnacious individuals include the herdsmen of Gerar who quarreled with Isaac over the wells in the valley - Genesis 26:18-22. [How did Isaac respond to this?](#)

Ananias, the high priest in Acts 23:2-3, ordered Paul struck to subject him to their law. [Why is this lack of self-control so telling?](#)

Euodia and Syntyche are exhorted in Philippians 4:2 to change their behavior from conflict and strife to harmony. [Why was this request made and what was the hoped for result?](#)

A noteworthy example of being pugnacious the Corinthian church is described in 2 Corinthians 12:20-21. [How were they struggling to control themselves?](#)

[Proverbs cite several factors leading to a pugnacious spirit.](#)
What do we learn from 15:18 and 29:22-23?

16:28?

18:6-8?

NOT PUGNACIOUS CONTINUED:

Other Proverbs to consider are 6:12-19, 17:14, 20:3, 26:17-28.

What do we learn about this quality from these additional New Testament references 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 1 Timothy 6:3-5,20-21? James 3:13-17?

Philippians 2:3-4 exhorts believers to not act from selfishness but to look out for the interests of others. Why is this so key?

Romans 12:18 instructs us to be at peace with all men. What does this quality have to do with harmony in Christ's body?

According to 2 Corinthians 13:5 we are to "test ourselves to see if we are in the faith." What does this look like in your life?

When I give corrective criticism do I go beyond helpful admonition (overkill)?

Is my motive to help people become more like Jesus or more like me?

Would I be ashamed to have people repeat to another what I have said about them?

Do I have pet doctrines which I enjoy arguing from an arsenal of proofs?

Is my anger easily engaged during discussion by actions or attitudes of others?

Do I crave recognition from others for the things I do?

UNCONTENTIOUS

This word is translated as kind, avoider of quarrels, not quarrelsome, not a controversialist, peaceable, and not a brawler.

This word literally means “not fighting.” While an elder, like all believers, is to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), he is not to be a contentious man. He must be on his guard against stirring up strife by any word or action.

When comparing this word with “pugnacious,” it should be noted that “contentious” is a less overt but more covert form of the idea behind “pugnacious.” It describes the person who does not necessarily strike out physically or verbally, but one who subtly, behind the scenes, seeks to divide through innuendo, gossip, or selfish argumentation. How appropriate that the positive quality of “gentle” is placed between pugnacious and uncontentious (the reason being it contrasts both qualities).

Several examples of contentious persons may be found in Scripture:

“Each one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”
(1 Corinthians 1:12)

“These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts, they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.” (Jude 16)

“...instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering God's provision which is by faith.” (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

The following questions are designed to help you discern this quality in your own life or the life of those aspiring to leadership:

1. Do you periodically find yourself calling either those in authority or friends you know will agree with you to give them your position on an issue as you subconsciously seek to win their support?
2. Do you frequently find yourself taking the opposite position of other wise men and open yourself up to the charge of being argumentative?
3. Do you sometimes “strain at a doctrinal gnat” but “swallow a camel” when someone says something you don't entirely agree with? (This can take the form of going up to a third person and saying -- “Did you agree with THAT? I certainly don't!”)

GENTLE

The quality of being “gentle” is reflected in the attitude and the actions of a mature believer. The term is applicable to all of an individual's personal relationships with both believers and non-believers.

In 1 Timothy 3:3 the word in the original language means that an individual should act in an appropriate or suitable manner, which avoids the extremes, initiating interactions with or responding to others. The quality of being gentle necessitates our actions be controlled exhibiting both patience and moderation.

A key to understanding and developing this capability in our relationships is the awareness that our attitude toward others governs our actions. The Greek root word from which gentleness is derived describes the desired attitude: “to yield, to give your place to, resemble, to be like.”

From this definition, it can be seen that the expression of gentleness requires an individual to consider and understand the position of those with whom he interacts. It is necessary to place the needs, desires, or wants of our brothers before our own. By doing so a mature believer can gain a proper view of the situation and will be able to act in an appropriate or suitable manner.

It is apparent that the expression of gentleness does not imply a lack of strength or power but actually indicates reliance on the greater inner strength which is granted to us by God.

In the Old Testament, the quality of gentleness is applied by David to God the Father in Psalm 18:35: “...and Your gentleness makes me great.” In 2 Corinthians 10:1, Paul applies the quality to Jesus Christ: “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...” This quality which is attributed to both God the Father and God the Son is also commended to each believer in Titus 3:2 - “...to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.” James 3:17

As we seek God's wisdom, we find that this quality is present: “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.” James 3:17

The ruling of James at the Jerusalem council, as described in Acts 15 is an example of a mature believer who acted in a “gentle” manner in the first century church. The letter of the Apostle Paul to Philemon is an expression of gentleness and love.

Points to consider...

1. When dealing with others are you preoccupied with your own rights?
2. Do you stop to consider in advance how the other individual feels and thinks?
3. Do you respond in love or react in the extreme?
4. Do you reach understandings with others in areas of disagreement?
5. Do you generally dictate to your loved ones or do you jointly come to understandings?

LOVING WHAT IS GOOD

A leader in God's Kingdom must be someone who truly enjoys seeing good things in his own life and in the lives of others. It is more than a passive enjoyment, but a deep, heartfelt love of seeing good come about in people's souls.

Jesus loved to see people come alive to God. Though He probably enjoyed seeing the power of God do miraculous things, He was much more moved when a man or woman's spiritual blindness was lifted.

We all know that it is better to be positive than negative, and that it is better to laugh than to sulk. But "loving what is good" goes way beyond a positive mental outlook and speaks of a heart that is hungry for good things. It tells us that we may find a place of peaceful living that transcends a merely untroubled life.

Philippians 4:8 is probably the most succinct relational passage in the God-Story when it comes to how our heart-choices in life should look. It forms an excellent evaluation for our choices for media, meditation, and relationships.

"Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good reputation, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell (attach your heart) to these things."

Can you imagine what it would be like if we lived in a world where this was the standard for living? It would be incredible!

The next pages describe some practical aspects of moving from your "old heart" to a "new" way of living. We will consider the subjects of finding peace, experiencing healing of the heart, and how to help ourselves and others listen to our "new hearts!"

All of this helps us to "love what is good!"

RESPECTABLE

The Greek word “kosmos” used in 1 Timothy 3:2 is variously translated as follows: *Of good behavior, man of a disciplined life, orderly, and respectable.*

Webster's and World Book Dictionaries define respectable as: worthy of respect, esteem or note, estimable, respected, of consequence or repute, having a good reputation or character, decent in behavior or character, conventionally correct in conduct, presentable, moderately excellent.

All this speaks of a well-ordered, impeccable life-style.

Some Old Testament examples are Joseph, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and Nehemiah.

Three important men recognized Joseph's respectable, well ordered life-style. Potiphar “left everything he owned in Joseph's charge -- he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate (Genesis 39:6).” The chief jailer “committed to Joseph's charge all the persons who were in the jail so that, whatever was done there, he was responsible (Genesis 39:22).” Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have set you over all the land of Egypt -- without your permission, no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land (Genesis 41:44).”

The respectable, well-ordered life-style of Daniel and his three companions found “favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials...so he listened to them...and the king talked with them and...no one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service (Daniel 1:9-19).”

The story of Nehemiah's concern, prayer, planning, and perseverance testifies to his respectable, well-ordered life-style.

The Apostle Paul, a classic New Testament example, could rightly tell the Corinthians to imitate him and to do all things decently and orderly because he shares how he disciplined himself to maintain respectability. He prayed that the Colossians would walk (or behave) in a worthy (respectable) manner. He exhorted the Thessalonians and the Ephesians also to walk in a worthy manner. He further challenged the Ephesians to walk (or behave) in love, as children of light, carefully and wisely.

Peter urges believers to “keep your behavior excellent.”

Some questions for self-evaluation:

1. Am I clean and neat?
2. Do I dress appropriately and tastefully?
3. Am I kind and considerate?
4. Am I genuine (not hypocritical) and consistent?
5. Am I honest, dependable, and conscientious in business?
6. Do I pay my bills promptly and avoid the credit trap?
7. Do I keep my yard mowed, sidewalks shoveled, house painted, and car washed, etc.?
8. Am I prompt for appointments and considerate of other's time?
9. Do I plan and use my own time wisely?
10. Am I diligent in perseverance and do I follow through on projects and assignments?
11. Do I have a disciplined mind and life-style and am I single-minded?

HOSPITABLE

"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." - Leviticus 19:33, 34

And so God commanded the Israelites to be hospitable, for the word literally means "lover of strangers." Two important points need to be recognized from this passage concerning the Israelites' responsibility to strangers -- first, how they were to treat strangers: "You shall love them as yourself." And second, why they were to be hospitable: "For you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Because the Lord their God had demonstrated His love for them by bringing them out of their slavery in Egypt, the Israelites were to remember and demonstrate this love by being a "lover of strangers" in their own land.

Remembering and demonstrating God's love remains with us today in the command to be hospitable (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9) because we are no longer "strangers to the covenants of promise...in Christ Jesus."

"...remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you, who formerly were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

-Ephesians 2:12, 13

Jesus quoted Leviticus 19 when pressed by the Pharisees concerning "Which is the greatest commandment in the law." Matthew 23:36-40. He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." In the context of Leviticus 19, this command was given both in reference to "the sons of your people" (vs. 18) and to resident aliens, or strangers (vs. 34). Clearly from scripture we know that hospitality is the means by which we demonstrate God's love to others. Whether believers or strangers we must remember that "he delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son..."

- Colossians 1:13

Jesus also delineated exactly how to demonstrate His love. Feeding the hungry, giving the thirsty drink, inviting in the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and going to those in prison were used as examples to prove that the righteous really know Him. Matthew 25:35-46. Also, we are told that we are acting faithfully when we accomplish (anything) for one another, especially when they are strangers.

- 3 John 5-8

In regard to elders and maturity in this area, it is clear that this quality is made apparent by the demonstration of love to others. It is easy to talk about God's love but maturity acts! Practically speaking hospitality is the willingness to freely share our homes, possessions, food, money and time, and to do so unbegrudgingly. It is also clear from Scripture that one who is hospitable takes the initiative (Philemon 4-7). It is done in obedience to God presupposing human need. Everyone has needs whether they are emotional, physical, or spiritual.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

- Romans 5:8

Questions we must challenge ourselves with concerning the quality of hospitality:

1. Do I gladly use my home or do I consider it my private domain?
2. Am I overly anxious about things being damaged by others' use?
3. Do I plan, using time and money wisely, to be hospitable?
4. Do I have a reputation as a "lover of people"?
5. Do people regularly share meals with my family?
6. Can I list instances where people have been encouraged by my hospitality?
7. Do I respond to pressing needs?
8. Do I spend time "encouraging the fainthearted" whether they are in prison, hospitals, or next door?
9. Have my neighbors been inside my home?
10. Is a great majority of my time and money spent on self interest?

Your Life as an Insider

One of the incredible things about God is that no two humans ever born are exactly alike. This means that our life-paths are all going to be different when it comes to our relationships. This is a very powerful part of the human family. When this uniqueness is used for the purposes of God and for the benefit of others, men and women find their place not only within the will of God but also the heart of God.

People who want to be “used” by God go to great lengths to find dynamic, useful, and compatible situations in which to express our passions. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with this, it is secondary to the love and enjoyment we should experience through knowing God. I believe that if a person never found a dynamic “ministry” opportunity and simply devoted himself or herself to those people and situations God has already or continues to bring into our lives, our productivity and peace with what we do would be huge!

According to many passages we are already equipped to serve God in this way when we come to know God. This does not take the place of discipleship, teaching, shepherding or training. But if we believe that God Himself is the power for delivering men’s souls, wouldn’t our submission to Him be much more important than any training we might receive?

Jim Peterson and Mike Shamy have written a book entitled [The Insider](#). We recommend this book for a more complete treatment of this subject. It is available from NavPress. But for our purposes here, let me paint a quick picture.

“Sharon and James became believers in a reading group in their neighborhood. Their neighbors, Alex and Rhonda, had shown great kindness to them a year earlier when they had lost their first child to a miscarriage in their fourth month. Rhonda had bought meals and comforted Sharon, and James and Alex had engaged in several backyard discussions during the time Sharon was recovering from their loss.”

“Over time Sharon and James expressed interest in spiritual matters and the four began reading the book of John. Several months later Sharon and James embraced Jesus as their Savior and dedicated their lives to His honor.”

“The new believers were encouraged to show the same care and concern for those in their sphere of living that had been shown to them. Church attendance was placed second to active involvement with their neighbors. Weekends were spent sharing meals and pursuing opportunities with co-workers, neighbors, and extended family. Every Friday night a group gathered in Sharon, James, Alex and Rhonda’s home to sing a few songs, pray for neighbors and personal needs, and to talk about what each person was learning from God through prayer and reading His Word.”

“The two couple’s relationship began to grow and extended to other people with like minds with children who were the same age. They stuck together through thick and thin and many years later saw the fruit of many people coming to know Christ and carrying on this pattern of open hearts, open homes, and open lives.”

In principle this is a Kingdom picture that should be more normal than an exception. It’s not that church and church life are wrong (I have been a pastor in a local church for 28 years). It just seems more on target to shift spiritual life into people’s homes, personal lives, and then more naturally out into the community. Rather than view this as a criticism my hope is that it will be taken as a liberating principle that will not only energize people’s lives, but American church-life as well.

Fourthstream.com hosts some Insider stories that may help you “paint the picture” more fully. Look under Curious Journey in the masthead.

FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY

"Either we serve God and use money or we serve money and use God." Yet, few Christians deliberately dedicate their lives to materialism. Jesus told us that wealth is deceitful and its bondage subtle. Like the flypaper and the fly, the fly lands on the sticky substance thinking "my flypaper" only to discover that the flypaper says "my fly."

The word money (Hebrews 13:6, 1 Timothy 6:10) and the word mammon (Matthew 6:24) are similar in that a shared synonym is the word "avarice." An avarice (Webster) is "Excessive, insatiable desire for wealth or gain." In defining the specifics of "the love of money" to determine what freedom from that love truly is, we focus on two points of emphasis from the previously mentioned passages:

In Hebrews 13:5, it is emphasized that being "content with what we have" short circuits our nature of avarice. In 1 Timothy 6:10, we note the "all sorts of evil" that identify a man who has an avarice for cash.

Money in itself is not evil but the love of it is "greed, which amounts to idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Money is the focal point of this world's system because it represents things and power which the children of this world eagerly seek. All Christians and certainly elders are to be hungry for God's kingdom far above temporal riches.

Some examples of people who were not free from the love of money are Balaam (Numbers 22), Achan (Joshua 7), Gehazi (2 Kings 6), Judas (John 12:6), the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-21), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and Demas (2 Timothy 4:10). Some examples of people who were free from the love of money are Elisha (2 Kings 5), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 5:14-16), and Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37).

Here are some suggestions on "being content with what you have" and identifying some of the "sorts of evil."

1. Are you caught in the "credit trap?" Have you been trapped by the "we want it now" philosophy to the point where you'll "pay for it never?"
2. Are you so into financial planning and concerns that you are consumed?
3. Do you often quarrel with your spouse about money?
4. Do you spend a lot of time meditating on what your neighbors have and/or what the world is selling?
5. Do you buy something new even when the one you have is good enough?
6. Have you confronted the fact that riches are a bottomless pit?
7. Have you set such high financial standards for acquisition that you must give your time and energy to "foot the bill" for your "tastes?"

Money can buy...a bed but not rest...food but not satisfaction...luxury but not contentment...stocks but not security...a house but not a home...a church but not a Savior.

But what money cannot buy, God offers as a free gift.

NOT A NEW CONVERT

When approaching the solemn office of an elder we cannot afford to lay hands on any man who will be inadequate in discharging the duties of his office. He must be mature.

A recent convert (neophyte) is one who is newly planted. The implication is one of a man who is so freshly planted in the faith that he has not had adequate time to germinate and grow.

The office of an elder is a demanding one. Without the proper roots an elder will not have stability. He will be vulnerable to attack both from without and within. Someone once said "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." The road an elder chooses is a fine work but is accompanied with traps and snares placed by a cunning adversary. A new convert simply will not be adequate for these things. It is a grave disservice to lay hands too quickly on a man for the purpose of leadership. It will eventually harm both himself, the leadership, and the body of Christ (1 Timothy 5:22).

An example of not a new convert would be the Apostle Paul who probably spent three years in the desert of Arabia after his conversion before he did any work in his hometown of Tarsus and Antioch. He was not commissioned to go on his first missionary journey until ten years after his conversion (Galatians 1:17-18; 2:1). John Mark was an example of a new convert in Acts 15:38. When the going got tough John Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas. This was, however, the same John Mark that would years later pen the gospel of Mark.

The chief problem of a new convert is that he may "become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil." The basis of this is pride but may be evidenced in love of money (1 Timothy 6:9) and strife among Christ-followers (1 Timothy 6:4).

In conclusion, a new convert is someone who can be swayed by the desires and concerns of this life.

Any strong leader of God's people has been tested by time and service. There should be no question concerning a man's maturity when hands are laid on him for the office of elder.

[Here are some questions you can ask when searching your own life...](#)

1. Do I have consistent control over my tongue?
2. In what ways has God broken me?
3. Do my emotions rise and fall in response to difficult situations?
4. Am I a stable "workman" in the Word?
5. Am I pre-occupied with religious externals?
6. Am I pre-occupied with thoughts about myself?
7. Have I overcome the natural tendency to live a "double life?"

ABLE TO TEACH

This is not the same thing as the gift of teaching but rather one who is qualified to teach. The minimal requirement is seen in Titus 1:9..."Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

An example of a man who was able to teach was Apollos who was still willing to be taught by Priscilla and Aquilla in order to learn the way of God more accurately. Apollos clearly shows us that to be able to teach one must also be teachable. Another good example of one who was able to teach was the Apostle Paul about whom we are told "his personal appearance is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10).

To be specific, it appears that "able to teach" is to be able to communicate learning, being experienced at clear, accurate presentation of the truth in such a way as to provoke believers in godliness. A good test for "able to teach" are Christ-followers who are "able to live" the truth of the Word.

Acts 1:1 reveals ability in consistent application.

John 14:26 reveals ability to be led by the Spirit.

Mark 6:34 reveals ability to have proper motives and ability to assess needs properly.

2 Timothy 2:24 reveals ability in carnal adversity (refusing speculations and giving gentle correction).

How can I discern my ability to teach?

1. In what ways am I displaying concern and compassion for others to the point of setting aside my self-interests?
2. Am I sensitive to consider needs in others or oblivious until issues are common knowledge?
3. Is my instruction of others characterized by the fruit of the Spirit?
4. Is my "preaching" consistent with my "practice"?
5. Am I purged of and able to identify "foolish speculations"?
6. Do I know how to "gently correct"?
7. Do people have difficulty in understanding what I mean because of clarity in presentation?
8. Am I able to be specific in helping others to apply the truth?
9. Do others recognize my ability to teach and seek my instruction and counsel on issues?
10. Does my instruction and counsel consistently pan out?
11. Is my heart swept away by truth?

Being able to teach is a character quality that makes one useful in building up others. An leader must have his or her senses trained in knowing and communicating the truth.

JUST

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets, Joseph (Mary's husband), John the Baptist, Simeon, Joseph of Arimathea and Cornelius were all referred to in the Scriptures as just, or righteous. What gave these men and women this distinction? What does being just mean? The word means equitable in character or acts, dealing fairly with all men. It is used in the God-story to denote innocence of evil and holiness in life-style. Webster defines just as acting or conforming to what is upright and good. This definition presents an interesting paradox when reviewing the above list of people's imperfections.

How does one gain a reputation for being just as did these men and women? "The just shall live by faith" declare the Scriptures! (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) And this faith, as taught in Hebrews and especially the book of James, is one that results in obedience or good works. (Hebrews 11; James 2:14-26) These men and women were ones who trusted God and, as a result could be trusted themselves. Trusted, that is, not to "shrink back" in pursuing God. They were not ones "doubting" and so "like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind." They were steadfast in their walk with God, and in spite of human weakness and sin believed God and were not "tossed here and there by waves."

In these examples we have a description of what a "mature man" is like, one who would qualify as a spiritual leader. He is to be a man who trusts in God and puts no confidence in the flesh, understanding that apart from God he or she is "but dust." We are to be those who, in spite of our failure, sin, and weakness in pursuing God, do not have a reputation for shrinking back from our walk with God. We are to be trustworthy and dependable in that our faith is steadfast, not having an on-again, off-again Christian life.

Some questions for you to consider:

1. Am I objective as opposed to subjective and emotional?
2. Do people trust me? Can I be trusted?
3. Do people respect my judgment?
4. Am I able to give Bible-centered counsel?
5. Is my God life spasmodic and irregular or is there consistent direction?
6. Do I have a tendency to jump the latest doctrinal bandwagon, or am I careful about truth in people's lives" (1 Timothy 4:15)?

GOOD REPUTATION

When Paul writes to Timothy concerning reputation with those outside the church two results of a poor reputation are given: a fall into reproach and a fall into the snare of the devil. Not only do these results effect the church but a poor reputation can grow to serious spiritual problems as well.

Reputation deals with a record or report of testimony given concerning an event or person (1 Timothy 3:7). The validity of the testimony is substantiated by the length to which one would go to defend his report (example -- Steven, Acts 22:20). Reputation depends on a true report from witnesses outside the church as well as believers within.

An example of those without good reputation is found in Titus 1:10-14. A poet, a Cretan himself, gave a true testimony of their character. Verse 12 -- "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Paul told Titus to "reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith." He did not want disgrace or reproach to fall upon the church because of their lazy reputation. Likewise, he desired that they would be sound in the faith, not fallen into the snare of the devil, turning away from the faith.

Reputation must be confirmed by two or three witnesses (2 Corinthians 13:1) particularly in the case of an elder (1 Timothy 5:19).

The consequences of a poor reputation are twofold -- a fall into reproach and a fall into the snare of the devil. According to Proverbs 14:34 sin results in reproach -- literally defamation or disgrace. The word reproach reflects that someone has derived pleasure or advantage from the situation. Those who oppose the church may then hold believers in disgrace. The snare of the devil, a trap (as fastened by a noose), indicates the ease with which a believer can be snagged. 1 Timothy 6:6-16 reveals a desire for riches as a common snare.

2 Corinthians 8:21 -- How can we regard what is honorable not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men?

1. Do I have any unresolved conflicts with any of my neighbors?
2. Am I known as one who works hard at my work?
3. Do my co-workers see me as a faithful worker?
4. Do windfall hopes and get-ahead schemes draw me to involvement?
5. Does my haughty attitude cause others to seek sin in my life for condemnation?

HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE

1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 include the quality of being the husband of one wife. Many different interpretations of this passage have been proposed by serious Bible students. In order to maintain a reputation above reproach in the area of marriage the proper interpretation must be confirmed and applied.

The Greek words literally mean the elder must be a one-woman man. By the fact that this phrase is in the text one interpretation would be that the elder must be married. If we assert that all elders must be married, we then discount the Apostle Paul who stated in 1 Corinthians 7:7 that he desired all to be as himself -- enjoying the gift God gives: marriage or singleness. Also Matthew 19:10-12 which says only those who can't accept singleness ought to do so. The 1 Corinthians 7 text would also negate the possible interpretation that a remarried widower could not be an elder. 1 Corinthians 7:8,9 instruct widowers that it is not a sin to remarry.

The words husband of one wife or "one-woman man" demand the prohibition of polygamy interpretation. In Genesis 2:18-24, the word wife is a singular voice. Also, the view that the elder must be faithful to his wife alone is required from the wording in the Greek. The primary question concerning this character quality refers to the issue of divorce. May an elder be a divorced man, and if so, what are the qualifications for that dissolution of his past marriage? If we assert that an elder can never have been divorced at any time in his life, we deny the truth in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. All things that were done prior to becoming a child of God are passed away and all things become new. Therefore, a divorce which occurred before conversion to Christ would not disqualify an elder. If it did any sin prior to conversion could be used as an accusation against one's character.

All of the possible views culminate in the last: An elder must be faithful to his wife and he may never have had a divorce while a believer. Matthew 19:1-12 establishes that in cases of sexual immorality on the part of the mate a man could divorce his wife without committing adultery as a result of the divorce. However, since the standard is to be a man above reproach, no one being able to get a hold of a flaw in his character, there ought never to have been a divorce while a believer. Questions of character arise concerning a husband whose wife sleeps with another. Is a mate void of any responsibility in view of their spouse's behavior? Leviticus 21, 22 and Ezekiel 44 talk about the strict requirements for the Levitical priests in Israel. Leviticus 21:8 states that the priest is to be holy for God who sanctifies him is holy. God's standards are no less for us today. Sin is forgiven in its entirety, but the consequences must be carried.

Since the issue is one of character, observations of the elder must be standard according to knowledge. Has the man ever been divorced as a believer? Is he faithful to his wife alone? Also, does he fulfill his responsibilities as a husband in view of specific scriptures relating to marriage? Is he...

Covering his wife?	Ephesians 5:23
Loving his wife?	Ephesians 5:23
Washing his wife with the Word?	Ephesians 5:23
Understanding his wife?	1 Peter 3:7
Granting her honor as a fellow heir?	1 Peter 3:7
Embittered against his wife?	1 Peter 3:7

ONE WHO MANAGES HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD WELL

1 Peter 5:2 teaches that we are to care for and feed “my sheep.” Managing a household specifically deals with an leader's ability to care for those under his care. How well a man will care for the church will depend upon his leadership ability and should be worthy of the respect and obedience of those under him. According to 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and Titus 1:6 this can be easily determined by how well he has fared in his home.

The King James version uses the word “rule” when referring to leadership in the home in 1 Timothy 3:4. The same word is also used in Romans 12:8 and 1 Timothy 5:17 when referring to the spiritual gift and the office of leadership. So the scriptures clearly connect the ability to lead in the home with that in the church. “To preside by practice” is the literal meaning of the word “manage” used in the NASB and points to the leadership-by-example principle taught in 1 Peter 5:3. The example he is to set while he “stands before” people is that of engaging in good deeds (Titus 3:8, 14; Hebrews 10:24; Ephesians 2:10).

As we have said, a primary factor for a man to qualify to manage the church of God is that he manage his family well. We know he is to love his wife sacrificially by washing her in the Word (Ephesians 5:25-27) and raise his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). The elder is required to do it well and with dignity (1 Timothy 3:4). These two words give clues in how to determine what kind of job he is doing. He is to lead with uprightness and honesty. The tangible result is children who are respectful and obedient rather than rebellious or intemperate (Titus 1:6).

Some important considerations for this qualification:

1. Do I know and accept God's discipline in my life?
2. Are my wife and children secure and assured of my love and care for them?
3. Does my wife feel valued and important in our life together?
4. Are we agreed upon a Biblical, effective plan of discipline for our children?
5. Do our children willingly follow-through on our directives or do they consistently question them?
6. Do I know and am I committed to what God requires from me in order to teach my children? (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)
7. Am I diligently teaching my children the God-Story?
8. Am I fulfilling my Biblical responsibilities to my parents?

ABOVE REPROACH

This is an overreaching qualification with all other qualifications contained in this one. To be "above reproach" means you won't be reproached in any area of your life under the light of an impartial judge. You will not be able to get a handle on a flaw in the character of a man who is "above reproach." Enemies may bring all kinds of accusations but these charges are proved to be empty whenever fair and Biblical methods of investigation are applied. This man not only has a good reputation but deserves it.

This same word is used in 1 Timothy 5:7, "Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach." The expression, "these things" refers to the entire paragraph (verse 3:6). Timothy must see to it that the church honors really dependent and deserving widows (verses 3 and 5); that children and grandchildren do their duty to their parents (verse 4) and that everyone knows how to distinguish between the widow who should be honored and the widow who should not (implied in verses 5 and 6). If all the interested persons obey these commands, they will be "above reproach" both from the world's perspective and the perspective of the church.

This word is also used in 1 Timothy 6:14: "That you keep the commandment without stain or reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." The commandment is love. Often in the New Testament that word commandment is used in an indefinite way -- it is not explained. It is assumed that the readers in each case will understand which commandment it is that is referred to. Even in this verse -- "Keep the commandment" -- which one? The context doesn't help us answer that. Look at 1 Timothy 1:5: "Now the end of the commandment..." -- Which one? The context throws no light on the matter. Look at 2 Peter 2:21: "...to turn from the holy commandment" -- which one? Peter's context does not clarify here. Note 1 John 2:7: "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning...again a new commandment I write unto you..." -- Which one? Among those first believers, there was one particular commandment which they would all recognize as what was meant.

Jesus in Matthew 22:35-40 was asked, "Master, which is the great commandment?"..."This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it..." which one? The context does help us here -- "You shall love...You shall love..." The nature of the commandment in 1 Timothy 6:14 is the same in all the above passages -- a life of love. Paul instructs Timothy to keep this commandment "without stain or reproach." So often other people, and indeed our own conscience, accuse us of a lack of love in our thinking, speaking and actions. One of the most accurate and biblical definitions of love is that which seeks the will of God in the one who is loved. God is love and this means that He seeks His own will or glory. God loves the world, meaning that He seeks to have His will followed by the world. God loves the world, meaning He wants the world to know His will and it is His desire that the world believe in His Son. We are to love one another and endeavor to see that the will of God is encouraged in each other.

Love is a big part of being above reproach. Love for God, and love for my brothers and sisters in Christ.

(continued)

In light of all that has been stated how can we know if we are above reproach? The answer can be seen from 1 Timothy 5:7 and 6:14. If we are really honoring or loving dependent widows, if children and grandchildren are doing their loving duty to their parents, and if we keep "the commandment" which is love -- then we will be above reproach. If you are actively seeking the will of God in the object loved in all your attitudes and actions -- no one will be able to get a handle on a flaw in your character -- they won't want to because a person who truly loves in this sense nearly always finds favor with God and man. He or she always finds favor with God and His Word!

[This is why Jesus was able to say to His opponents:](#)

"Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). They couldn't get a handle on any flaw in His character because as the Lord Jesus said, "Behold I have come to do Your will" (Hebrews 10:9) and "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). If you make God's will your own will and seek the will of God in the person loved, then you will not be able to say with Jesus "Which of you convicts me of sin" but you will be able to say, "Which of you convicts me of not being above reproach?" Biblical examples of men who were above reproach are Job: "there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8); Simeon: "And behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and this man was righteous and devout..." (Luke 2:25); Paul: "You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers" (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

My thoughts on the subject of being above reproach as they relate to my life:

DEVOUT

This appears to describe a person who has a deep commitment to something greater than himself. A devoted person would be one who has intentionally designed his or her life to be principled. There will be a deep desire to find a lifestyle that is honoring to God and useful to His purposes.

[Some excellent examples of being a devout person in the God-Story:](#)

Daniel and his friends Shadrach-Meshach-Abednego in Chapters 1 and 3 of Daniel. It is always refreshing to find men and women who are willing to stand in the face of insurmountable odds. This is why we love heroes. Even more precious is a person who is a silent hero - who holds to their devotion when no one else will see, notice, or care. This is true, enduring devotion. It is not based upon what we will receive but who will be honored.

Fortunately the Bible is full of examples of imperfect men and women who were able to grasp the concept of devotion and see devoted fruit grow from their lives. Devotion is more than good performance, it is a condition of heart.

Devoted people are incredibly stimulated by others who have the same devoted hearts. Whenever you can associate with others who have such a heart it will only encourage your own.

[Some thoughts that can help you to learn to be a devoted Christ-follower:](#)

1. Are you committed to modifying your life to reflect being useful for the Kingdom of God?
2. Do you invest your earned dollars in building the Kingdom?
3. Do you see your personal skills and gifts as belonging more to you or to God?
4. When you evaluate your time - where is your treasure? Where is your heart?
5. How far are you willing to go to please your Creator?
6. Are your friendships helpful or a hindrance to your choice to be devoted?

HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD

The scriptures are a marvelous document. They claim to provide “all things pertaining to life and godliness” and really are God’s love letter to the world. Maturing men and women of faith will embark upon a journey to understand and hold to the teaching of the faithful Word. Jesus Himself told us that if we “continued in His Word, we were truly be His followers - and that we would know the truth - and that His truth would set us free.

A person who “holds fast the faithful Word” is one who is stable in faith and not hypocritical by teaching one thing and living another. It seems that one who is "able to teach" will be able to exhort and refute life-styles which are inconsistent with the faithful Word. An example of those who did not hold fast the faithful Word were the Scribes and Pharisees about whom Jesus said, “Therefore, all that they tell you do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not do them” (Matthew 23:3).

Another dimension of this quality is reflected in the adverse circumstances described in 2 Timothy 2:24 where one who is “able to teach” refuses, refutes, and provides gentle correction based upon the Word of God. He or she appears to be able to encourage someone to pursue godliness as well as provoke someone to forsake ungodliness. The ability to instruct as well as correct is key. Holding fast means to “adhere to and to care for” in all personal and relational circumstances. What do these three passages from Paul’s letter to Timothy reveal about holding fast the faithful Word?

2 Timothy 1:13

1 Timothy 1:19

1 Timothy 3:9

This kind of person has benefitted from the instruction of others who are able to teach - whether those in the inspired scriptures (such as Jesus or Paul) - or solid, mature people from our own life. It appears that one must be “teachable” in order to be someone who teaches this way. Becoming solid in the Word is a noble goal for someone who wishes to be God’s man or God’s woman in the 21st century church.

What are the associated characteristics of a man or woman of God who holds to the trustworthy (faithful) Word which reflects sound doctrine?

1 Timothy 1:10

2 Timothy 1:13

2 Timothy 4:3

Titus 1:9

Such a person seems to be able to help another to a mature understanding and conclusion through instructive encouragement as well as giving correction along the way. He does so by exhorting (calling near, inviting...2 Timothy 4:2) as well as convincing, admonishing, or refuting those who contradict. These people (contradictors) are those who repeatedly vibrate, agitate, excite, and stir up people.

How can I discern my ability to hold fast the faithful Word?

In what ways (in public and in secret) am I a hypocrite?

How is my lifestyle consistent (or inconsistent) with authentic standards?

How familiar am I with Christ's and the apostles' standards? Are they part of my life?

How do I measure up in faith and love for God and His saints?

Do I have a good (clear) conscience?

Am I holding to the mystery of the faith? Do I know what it is?

Am I able to discern "fictitious teaching"?

Is my speech consistent with what the Scriptures teach?

Am I able to confront those who speak myths?

In what ways do I encourage other believers to pursue lives consistent with sound teaching?

BECOMING A MAN OR WOMAN OF GOD WHO “HOLDS FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD”

How can you be sure you are on the road to becoming a man or woman of God who knows how to “hold fast the faithful Word?” The answer is simple: engage the scriptures with your whole heart. The bible - and your soul - are the two most precious resources God has placed in the world!

By giving attention to the passages listed in the following nine major areas of the bible’s teaching on “sound doctrine” you can make great strides in building your foundation of faith.

There are nine areas of enquiry before you in this section:

ALMIGHTY FATHER

THE GOD STORY

THE REALM OF ANGELS

MAN, CREATION’S CROWN

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

GOD’S SAVING GRACE

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE CHURCH

FUTURE THINGS

Here is a sky-high view of much of what the God Story teaches us about our heavenly Father. It is able to send us in 17 different directions with thousands of nuances of deeper thought.

Look up each passage and use it as a springboard to answer the question: “what is it that I know for sure about my Heavenly Father?”

God is the Father Almighty (1), Creator of all that exists (2). I believe by faith in the authority of His absolute Word (3), that as we are all created by Him, we are all responsible and accountable to Him (4).

He is in all aspects perfect (5), and has revealed that perfection in His attributes (6), names (7), and decrees (8). There is sufficient revelation in nature (9) to hold us accountable to God. There is sufficient revelation in Scripture (10) to produce faith and provide salvation (11) and insure eternal death (12) for those who reject the truth.

He is three in Person (13); Father Creator, Rescuer Son, and Holy Spirit Guide, yet One in essence (14). All three are One, having the same nature, attributes, and perfections and are worthy of precisely the same reverence, confidence, and obedience.

Because He has no beginning or end (15), Lord God reigns infinitely majestic above all (16) that man can perceive or accomplish. He is Eternal King of Kings and Lord of Lords! (17)

I believe and bow before and worship You Lord God!

- 1...Genesis 1:1 (Elohim) Psalm 24 (Earth's owner)
- 2...Acts 17:24-28 (Lord over heaven and earth) Psalm 29:10 (Flood King)
- 3...Hebrews 11:1-3 (Creator Lord over matter) 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (Lord over everything)
- 4...Romans 3:19 (Over the entire world) Revelation 20:14-15 (Over death and the grave)
- 5...Leviticus 11:44 (He IS perfection) Matthew 5:48 (We are perfected through forgiveness)
- 6...Psalm 89:8 (Who is like You?) Mark 4:41 (Who is this?)
- 7...Exodus 3:13-15 (His Name is Holy) John 8:56-58 (His Name is Holy)
- 8...Isaiah 40:13,14 (His own consultant) Romans 11:33-36 (Unsearchable - no reaching His depths)
- 9...Romans 1:20 (He decrees and proves what is true) John 8:31-32 (His truth brings freedom)
- 10...2 Timothy 3:16,17 (He anchors us) 2 Peter 1:19-21 (He sets our course) Psalm 19 (He invites all)
- 11...Romans 10:8-13 (His work - my heart) Ephesians 2:19-22 (A dwelling of God)
- 12...Revelation 22:18,19 (How we respond matters) 1 John 3:14 (Death to Life)
- 13...Matthew 28:19 (this is the Name) 2 John 9 (Abide in One - abide in both)
- 14...Deuteronomy 6:4 (He Is the One True God) John 10:30 (There is only One)
- 15...Psalm 90:1,2 (He is our dwelling place) John 15:15 (We are His Friends)
- 16...Isaiah 40:21-26 (He is high and lifted up) Isaiah 40:27-31 (He is connected to His created ones)
- 17...Philippians 2:9-11 (Every knee will bow) Revelation 21:1-5 (His Bride will be married to Him)

If God has spoken, it is certainly through the Hebrew Law, prophets, and Psalms. All other religious writing dim when compared to God's Word revealed in His God Story. When Scripture is allowed to interpret itself, there is little wiggle-room as to meaning.

Look up each passage and use it as a springboard to answer the questions: "has God spoken and what has He communicated?"

God has specifically, historically, and infallibly revealed Himself through the Creation (1), the Living Word (2), and the Written Word (3). We as sons of the first Adam are accountable to these writings (4), and as sons of the Second Adam (5) carry even greater responsibility for all that God has spoken (6).

God has faithfully inspired (7) all that we need to come to faith (8), and through His preserving hand delivered infallible words in the original manuscripts (9). His Word is the absolute, mediated authority (10) to be searched, interpreted (11), and obeyed through the illumination of the Holy Spirit (12).

We have searched (13) and are confident (14) that the sixty-six books of the so-called Old and New Testaments are in this manner the very Breath of God (15), and believe Lord God that You have delivered a written Word without error (16), just as you have provided a Living Word, the Lord Christ, without sin (17).

I search O Lord and desire to be set free by the Words of Truth! (18)

- 1...Romans 1:20 (clarity of God vision for all) 2 Timothy 3:16 (reliable) 2 Peter 1:19-21 (original)
- 2...Hebrews 1:2,3 (Who is the Word of God?) Hebrews 4:12-13 (powerful and active)
- 3...Hebrews 1:1 (God's Word from God) Jeremiah 15:16 (our spiritual food)
- 4...Romans 3:19,20 (every soul is accountable to God) Matthew 5:17-19 (will not pass away)
- 5...1 Corinthians 15:45 (two Adams) 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 (death and forever life)
- 6...2 Timothy 2:15 (my strength) Joshua 1:8,9 (my name)
- 7...2 Timothy 3:16,17 (my preparation) Revelation 22:18,19 (faithful following) Job 42:7 (accuracy)
- 8...1 Peter 1:3,4 (a living hope) 2 Peter 1:3 (everything we need)
- 9...Jude 1:3 (vigorously contend)
- 10...John 10:35 (cannot be broken) Luke 21:33 (not pass away) Hebrews 4:12,13 (living and active)
- 11...2 Peter 1:20,21 (scripture interprets scripture) Acts 20:27 (whole counsel of God)
- 12...1 Corinthians 2:10-13 (Spirit taught) John 16:13-15 (full disclosure)
- 13...John 5:39 (eternal life) ; Acts 17:11 (examine and search)
- 14...Romans 15:4 (hope) Hebrews 10:35 (great reward)
- 15...2 Timothy 3:16 (God breathed)
- 16...2 Peter 1:19-21 (if God has spoken...) Hebrews 1:1-2 (everything is here)
- 17...Hebrews 4:1-16 (perfect High priest) 1 Peter 2:9-10 (mercy) Revelation 20:6 (we will reign)
- 18...John 8:31,32 (you shall be free) John 8:36 (truly free)

God has created the angelic realm (1) and man's existence is deeply related to that of the angels (2). The host of angels was created unimaginably vast and sinless. They are represented by archangels of which three are named: Satan, Michael, and Gabriel. These are apparently distinct from the Angel of the Lord who has a special place in communicating with man (3).

Satan, son of the morning, was the most beautiful of God's angelic creation (4). His sin of pride caused him to become Satan, and a great company of angels followed him in this rebellion against the Father (5). These now reside as demons in the kingdom of Satan to do his will and share his fate (6).

Satan is the originator of sin (7) and under the permission of God tempted Adam and Eve and Job into transgression (8) and continues to tempt their offspring (9). He appears deceptively as an angel of light (10) counterfeiting the works of God to tempt and accuse man (11). He is immensely powerful and is subjected completely only to the power of God. (12) He was judged at the cross (13), his sentence to be executed at a time yet future when he will be bound, loosed, and then cast into the lake of fire for eternity (14).

Those angels who kept their glorifying design and did not follow Satan's rebellion remain eternally before the throne of God where they protect and proclaim His holiness (15). Others go out as ministering spirits to serve those who will be heirs of salvation. (16)

We believe that man was created lower than the angels; and that in the incarnation, Christ subjected Himself to this lower place that He might with Himself lift us above the angels (17). We believe, O Lord, that though Satan's power is great it is subjected in every way to the will of our Creator, so that we may live wisely (18) and without fear (19).

I search, O Lord, and desire to reject the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life, (20) and join with the heavenly host in placing you above all rule and authority, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! (21)

- 1...Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:9
- 2...Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 1:12
- 3...Genesis 22:11; Hebrews 1:14
- 4...Ezekiel 28:11-15; 1 John 2:15-17
- 5...Isaiah 14:13-17; Luke 10:18
- 6...1 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6
- 7...Ezekiel 28:15; John 8:44
- 8...Genesis 3:1-19; Job 1,2
- 9...1 Corinthians 7:5; Revelation 20:2-3
- 10...2 Corinthians 11:14; Isaiah 5:20
- 11...Revelation 12:9,10; 2 John 7
- 12...Jude 1:8-10; Mark 8:33
- 13...Colossians 2:15; Colossians 1:20
- 14...Revelation 20:1-3,10; 2 Peter 2:4
- 15...Ezekiel 1:4-21; Revelation 5
- 16...Hebrews 1:14; Matthew 18:10
- 17...Hebrews 2:9; 1:4; Revelation 20:6
- 18...2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11
- 19...Luke 22:31; 1 John 4:18
- 20...1 John 2:15-17; Philippians 2:15
- 21...Colossians 1:16-18; Isaiah 14:13,14

Even though we know much about the history and nature of mankind, there are many seemingly unanswerable questions which are posed by science, philosophy, and theology. What if, rather than being competing disciplines, these three human pursuits are on a course for 100% agreement? How cool would that be?

The Bible teaches us that the eternal part of us is our soul. Worth investigating, is it not?

Mankind was created in the image of God (1) as the crown of God's earthly creating activity. He was created to please God and enjoy Him forever (2).

I believe according to the authority of the Scriptures and the consistent testimony of history that man is fallen as a race (3) and headed down the path of destruction (4). This spiritual death and alienation spread to all men through the sin of Adam and Eve (5) who, as agents of the human race, reflected in every way the nature and responsibility of all men.

As a result we have become sons of the devil (6) apart from the regenerating work of God through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ (7). We grope until such a time as those who believe come to faith (8) and find hope in the resurrection from the dead and immortality through the Gospel (9).

Every "child of Adam" is born into the world with a nature devoid of divine life and is essentially and unchangeably evil apart from the work of divine grace (10).

I cling to you, O Lord, knowing that I am truly lost and spiritually dead in my sins apart from your redeeming grace in the Lord Jesus Christ (11)!

1...Genesis 1:24-31; 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

2...Matthew 22:34-40; Revelation 22:1-5

3...Romans 3:9-23; Ephesians 2:12,13

4... Matthew 7:13,14; Revelation 20:11-15

5...Romans 5:18,19; 1 Corinthians 15:22

6...John 8:44; Ephesians 2:1-10

7...Romans 5:6-11; John 3:14-16

8...Acts 17:22-28; Hebrews 11:1-3,6

9...1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 20:4-6

10...Psalm 51:5; Acts 4:5-12

11...Ephesians 2:1-10; Acts 16:19-34

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

FOURTH
STREAM
FINDING HOPE

Jesus is the Son of God and as such is the King over the earth. We believe and work hard to see His Kingdom flourish in and through our lives.

The Lord Jesus Christ is incomparably the pre-eminent Person of history. He is fully God (1), fully man (2), fully Proven (3), fully Sinless (4), and fully Lord (5) of all God has created (6)!

In His merciful lovingkindness (7) and eternal purpose (8), God gave his only Son (9) to be a mediator and bring man back to Himself (10). The Lord Jesus Christ is prophet (11), priest (12) and king (13) over the entire earth. He is Head and Savior of the Church (14), the Heir of all things (15), and the great righteous Judge of the whole world (16). From eternity God ordained a people to be His children (17), and, in time, these children are being redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified (18).

Christ was born incarnate by his own will (19) for the express purpose of saving His children (20), and took upon Himself the nature of man (21), yet He, himself, was without sin (22). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (23), and so was the prophesied seed of Abraham and David (24) according to the Scriptures. Because He appeared as both God and man He has become the only qualified advocate between God and man (25).

The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the requirement of the law on our behalf and fulfilled it (26) taking our personal punishment upon Himself (27). He endured grief and pain that we cannot imagine (28) and was crucified (29), died (30), was buried (31), remained in the grave three days (32), rose from the dead (33), ascended into heaven (34), and sits at the right hand of God the Father making intercession (35). He shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world (36)!

In His great grace and perfect sacrifice, He satisfied the requirements of the just character of God (37), insured our reconciliation (38), and everlasting inheritance in heaven for all whom the Father had given Him (39).

I give thanks to you, O Lord, and embrace the "good news" of your Gospel with a peaceful and hopeful heart of praise (40)!

1...John 8:58; Colossians 2:9

2...Hebrews 5:7-9

3...1 Corinthians 15:16

4...Hebrews 4:15

5...Revelation 5:5

6...Philippians 2:9-11

7...1 Peter 1:3; Ps. 103:6-14

8...Hebrews 13:20; John 17:5,24

9...John 3:16

10...Hebrews 5:9

11...Acts 3:22

12...Hebrews 5:5,6

13...Psalm 2:6; Luke 1:32,33

14...Colossians 1:16-20

15...Hebrews 1:2

16...Acts 17:31

17...1 Peter 2:9, 10

18...Romans 8:30

19...John 1:1-18

20...Luke 19:10

21...Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14-17

22...Hebrews 4:15

23...Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:18-25

24...Matthew 1:22,23; Luke 1:27-35

25...1 Timothy 2:5

26...Romans 8:1-4

27...Isaiah 53:4-6

28...Hebrews 5:7-9; Luke 22:39-46

29...John 19:16-22

30...John 19:30-37

31...Matthew 27:57-66

32...John 2:19-22

33...John 20:1-18

34...Acts 1:9-11

35...Hebrews 10:12

36...Revelation 19:11-21

37...Colossians 2:13, 14

38...Romans 5:11

39...John 17:9; Ephesians 1:3-14

40...Romans 8:31-39

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

FOURTH
STREAM
FINDING HOPE

The offer of salvation is extended to all of Adam's offspring with a call to place faith in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (1). If we embrace our need (2), consider Jesus and His work on the cross (3), confess our sin (4), and believe we may find eternal life (5)!

WE HAVE BEEN MADE RIGHT BY GOD

Though created innocent and free to choose good and evil (6) mankind sinned (7) and lost all ability to will to do any spiritual good regarding salvation (8). As we are dead in our sin (9) we are unable by our own strength or will or human status to convert ourselves (10). When we come to Christ, we are freed from the bondage of sin (11) and once again freely choose to honor God through our new nature (12).

God in His great mercy chooses to redeem His chosen ones (13) and calls us by His eternal power and grace (14). The number justified by His grace (15) will be the exact number glorified in Heaven (16). He pardons our sin (17) not on the basis of personal merit (18) but His great grace as He fulfills the requirement of the Law through Christ (19).

God decreed eternally to pardon all of His chosen ones (20), and paid the greatest possible price imaginable to buy back our souls: HIS OWN DEAR SON (21). This salvation is brought about at such a time as we place faith in the forgiving and resurrecting authority of Jesus (22). We are adopted as God's dear sons and daughters and enjoy the full liberties, privileges, and responsibilities of children of God (23).

WE ARE BEING SET APART BY GOD'S WORK IN OUR LIVES

By His Word (24) and His Holy Spirit (25) dwelling within us, the dominion of sin in our lives is broken (26) and we enter into open conflict with the desire to sin (27). Our choices not to sin (28) and to obey Christ result in honor to God and the blessings of obedience to us (29). It is God's expectation in light of His great Gift that we should joyfully engage in this conflict (30), trusting God's Holy Spirit to lead us in all of our ways (31).

No one is brought into or kept in the Kingdom of God through the working of good works. The one who loves God finds his assurance in obedience to the truth (32) and without that obedience is guaranteed no such assurance (33). Our salvation was not bought on the basis of our works nor is it kept by them either (34). God forbid that grace should abound through our sin (35), but the one who loves God will serve God (36). Nothing can snatch a "made righteous" soul from the hand of God (37).

WE WILL BE DELIVERED INTO ETERNAL LIFE BY THE POWER OF GOD

I thank you, O God, for Your great gift revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ (38)! I hold fast to You and long for the day I will be with You forever (39)! I believe by faith in the authority of the Living and written Word that I shall worship You forever and ever, Amen! (40)

1...John 3:16; Acts 17:21-31
2...Romans 3:9,23
3...John 1:14-18
4...1 John 1:9
5...Acts 2:37-41
6...Genesis 2:15-17
7...Romans 5:12,15, 17
8...Romans 1:18-23; 3:9-18
9...Ephesians 2:1,5
10...John 1:12,13
11...Romans 8:1,2
12...2 Corinthians 5:17
13...Romans 8:28-30
14...John 6:44; 1 Peter 1:20

15...Romans 8:30
16...1 Peter 2:4,5
17...Colossians 2:13
18...Romans 2:11-16
Ephesians 2:8-10
19...Romans 8:3,4
20...Ephesians 1:4
21...John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:19
22...Romans 10:8-10
23...Romans 8:15-17
24...John 17:17
25...John 16:13-16
26...Romans 6:12;
Colossians 2:13,14
27...Romans 7:19-23

28...1 John 2:15-17
29...1 Corinthians 3:10-15
30...Hebrews 12:1,2
31...John 14:26
32...1 Peter 1:22
33...1 John 3:18-22
34...Ephesians 2:8-10
35...Romans 6:1,2
36...1 John 3:7-10
37...Luke 22:31
38...Romans 8:31-39
39...1 Thessalonians 4:17
40...Revelation 22:1-5

THE HOLY SPIRIT

FOURTH
STREAM
FINDING HOPE

The Holy Spirit is the divine third person of the true godhead (1). He is eternal (2), possesses and imparts life (3), and can be called the truth (4). His divinity is demonstrated by his universal presence (5), mighty power (6), and infinite knowledge (7).

The Holy Spirit has been present in the world since the very beginning (8). His ministry has been, among other things, to reveal sin (9), to fill (10), come upon (11), guide (12), speak through (13), provide leaders (14), empower (15), and strive with men (16).

His present-day ministry in the life of the Christian believer involves regeneration (17), indwelling (18), baptizing (19), sealing (20), filling (21), giving gifts (22), and producing fruit (23). His presence is the trademark of the genuinely authentic Christian (24) whose faith rests on the power of God (25).

His present-day objective regarding the unregenerate world is to convict it of sin, righteousness, and judgment (25). He does not work according to His own initiative but discloses Jesus (27).

In the future He will signify the beginning of the tribulation by being removed in order that the Anti-christ may be revealed (28).

In the life of the church, the Holy Spirit empowers and fills it (29), appoints church leaders, and makes them overseers of the flock (30). The Spirit sends out missionaries (31), directs and comforts (31), and sets believers apart for God's purposes (32).

Lord, may your Spirit reveal the depths of the Father's heart toward us that we can fully receive the things you have freely given us (37)!

1...Acts 5:3-4

2...Hebrews 9:14

3...Romans 8:2; John 6:63

4...John 16:13; 1 John 5:7

5...Psalms 139:7-13

6...Luke 1:35

7...1 Corinthians 2:10-11

8...Genesis 1:2

9...John 16:8; Micah 6:8

10..Exodus 31:3; Acts 2:4

11..1 Samuel 16:13; Acts 11:15-18

12..Nehemiah 9:20; Acts 15:28

13..2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 16:6,7

14..Numbers 11:16-30; Acts 20:28

15..Ezekiel 7:12; Acts 1:8

16..Isaiah 6:9; Acts 28:25

17..Titus 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13

18..John 14:16-17; Psalms 51:10-13

19...1 Corinthians 12:13

20...2 Corinthians 1:22

21...Ephesians 5:18

22...1 Corinthians 12-14

23...Galatians 5:22-23

24...Romans 8:9

25...1 Corinthians 2:1-5

26...John 16:8-11

27...John 16:13-14

28...2 Thessalonians 2:3-8

29...Acts 2:4

30...Acts 20:17, 28

31...Acts 8:29; 9:31

32...Romans 15:16

33...1 Corinthians 2:10-16

THE BRIDE

FOURTH
STREAM
FINDING HOPE

The Word teaches us that His Church through the centuries is being prepared as a bride for the Son. What a cool culmination of our lives of faith! Let's take a look at the things we learn about His "bride!"

The living instrument through which the living Lord Jesus Christ is represented on earth is called His Church (1). It consists of all those who have placed their faith in God the Son alone for salvation from sin, death, and hell (2). Each member has been placed by the Holy Spirit into the church which is also called the body of Christ. Christ being its head (3). Her purpose is to know God (4), make disciples (5), and become mature in Christ (6) which is practically manifested by increasing faith in God (7), hope in the future of God's ultimate redemption (8), and a love for all the saints (9). She is a living organism empowered by divine initiative (10).

The church is also an organization with leaders to whom God has given charge over local gatherings of believers (11). These men are called elders and shepherds over God's flock (12) and must give an account to God for the souls that are placed in their care (13). Added to these men are deacons who tend to the physical needs of the flock while providing support to the elders (14).

The church observes two ordinances; one which is initiatory, called baptism (15), and another which is commemorative called communion (16). These rites initiate one into the Christian life (14) and help to maintain the foundation on which the church was originally established (17).

Truth, both written and living, is a primary trademark of the church (18). She was established on the truth (19) and is also its pillar and support (20). She is opposed to darkness and evil in any form and of any kind, both in the lives of its members as well as in the world where she is called to be salt (21) and light (22).

I thank you Lord God for giving me connected life and identity as a living stone as a part of Your Son's Bride (23).

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Ephesians 3:1-3 | 13. Hebrews 13:17 |
| 2. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:3-6 | 14. 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6 |
| 3. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Exodus 20:3 | 15. Acts 2:37-42 |
| 4. Philippians 3:8-10 | 16. 1 Corinthians 11:20-34 |
| 5. Matthew 28:28-30 | 17. Matthew 28:28-30 |
| 6. Ephesians 4:11-16 | 18. Colossians 1:19-20 |
| 7. Ephesians 1:15 | 19. John 17:17-19 |
| 8. Colossians 1:3-5 | 20. Matthew 16:13-20; John 14:6 |
| 9. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 | 21. 1 Timothy 3:15; Matthew 5:13-16 |
| 10. Acts 1:6-11 | 22. 1 John 1:5-10 |
| 11. 1 Timothy 3:1-11; Titus 1 | 23. 1 Peter 2:4,4; Revelation 19:7,8 |
| 12. 1 Peter 5:1-4 | |

THE FUTURE

FOURTH
STREAM
FINDING HOPE

In the final days prior to the coming of God's Kingdom (1) men will undergo punishment for rejecting God's provision of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus Christ (2). This period is known as the great tribulation (3) and shall be a time when all nations will be judged (4). The time leading up to the great tribulation will be characterized by a total disregard and general unawareness of Christ's return (5), sudden destruction of life (6), a falling away from the true faith (7), seducing spirits (8), and unbridled depravity (9). At the conclusion of the tribulation period Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, will return from heaven (10) to set up an earthly, thousand-year reign (11).

At the beginning of Christ's earthly reign Satan and his hosts shall be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for the duration of the millennial period (12). With the completion of the millennial reign Satan will be released for a short period of time to deceive the nations one last time (13). After this, he will be judged and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night forever (14). Following this unbelievers from all ages of time, circumstance, and position will appear before the Great White Throne to receive the penalty described by their unbelief (15). A new heaven and earth shall appear and a new Jerusalem will arrive as the Father makes all things new (16).

As believers who have escaped the wrath to come (17), we are to consider our lives in light of the imminent return of the Lord (18), and be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless (19).

Come Lord Jesus! I wait for the privilege of living forever through faith in Your Name!

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| 1. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 | 11. Revelation 20:4-6 |
| 2. Matthew 24:21-22; Daniel 9 | 12. Revelation 20:1-3 |
| 3. Matthew 24:29-35 | 13. Revelation 20:7-9 |
| 4. Isaiah 26:21,27 | 14. Revelation 20:10 |
| 5. Luke 17:26-30 | 15. Revelation 20:11 |
| 6. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 | 16. Revelation 21:1-9 |
| 7. 1 Timothy 4:1 | 17. Revelation 3:10-13 |
| 8. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 | 18. Revelation 22:20 |
| 9. Revelation 19:11-16 | 19. 2 Peter 3:9-14 |
| 10. Acts 1:11 | |

WHAT THE GOD STORY SAYS ABOUT ELDERS

While the Story precludes women from serving as elders, the Church rests heavily on older women of character - fellow-heirs of the grace of life! We serve with many women of excellence, prayer, giftedness, and absolute companions in the Gospel.

Leaders and leadership office (elders, deacons) were given to the church by Christ (Acts 20:28) and pursued in Paul's teaching and direction to the church (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1) with definite responsibilities (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; Ezekiel 33:6; Jeremiah 3:15; and 1 Peter 1:1-5).

They are appointed by God (Ephesians 4:11; Titus 1:5); recognized by the congregation (Acts 14:23); submitted to (Hebrews 13:7,17); submitted (Ephesians 4:18-21; 1 Peter 5:5); set apart (Acts 14:23; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 5:22) and given to lead through delegated authority (not arbitration) and shepherding concern (1 Timothy 2:1-6; Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-11). They were to be men of character described in Timothy and Titus.

Elders are scripturally qualified men who are recognized as those capable and effective in shepherding, leading, and overseeing the flock of God.