DEVELOPING CHARACTER

Climbing To Heights Through The Power Of The Gospel
Developing Character
Roger E. Dickson

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rdickson@mweb.co.za
www.africainternational.org
www.blog.africainternational.org
Facebook: Africa International.org
Philadelphia, Western Cape, South Africa
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Scripture quotations from International King James Version
Cover theme: Challenged, (Mountain range in Namibia, R.E.D.)
DEVELOPING CHARACTER

Christianity is more than a set of doctrine rules by which we guard ourselves from following after the imaginations of men. It is a lifestyle. Jesus wanted us to have an abundant living in this world. In order to have this, we must incorporate into our behavior His principles of living. When we live as Jesus would have us live, then we will understand that life is not as bad as we have made it out to be. We will understand that there is a fullness of life that God intended we have while on this earth. It is for this reason that we must view the Bible as a textbook on life. It is a guide for the development of our character in order that we have the abundant life about which Jesus spoke and promised the disciple.

Chapter 1
LAUNCHING INTO ADVENTURE

Every person must deal with helping others, and thus serve in helping the communities in which he or she lives. One is a good community person only when he or she has a good reputation of helping others to lead a better life. As a nation, we must seek leaders who have characters of good moral and ethical conduct. Some have claimed to be leaders, but have manifested wrong behavior in their business dealings and the affairs of their communities. It is for this reason that we as citizens of our nation must focus on how we can influence for the good those people around whom we live.

A happy community exists when individuals live together with one another.

THE CENTER OF THE COMMUNITY

The center of any community is the family. Good families produce good citizens for every community. Men and women can live together in peace and harmony when families function according to basic principles that enhance family relationships. In order to maintain peace and harmony in any society, nations must rise up to focus on producing better families. In order to build great families, husbands and wives and fathers and mothers must develop parental skills that lead to the establishment and maintenance of healthy family living. Any nation that seeks to be united on the foundation of moral living must first encourage the development of solid family structures within society.
in a peaceful relationship of neighborhood interaction. Those who believe in God should lead in being the best citizens in any community because of their skill to live in harmony with others. Learning personal skills in order to live in harmony with others will build great communities. Developing our characters makes it possible for us to dwell peacefully with others. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every individual of the community to develop his or her personal character in order to be a productive individual in the community and nation.

The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on our communities is only a symptom of our failure to develop morals in our citizenship. HIV/AIDS manifests the failure of the family that has deteriorated into social chaos in many societies.

It is necessary, therefore, that we medically deal with the devastating effects of social diseases as HIV/AIDS. However, in order to be effective and successful with such social curses, the battle to save our communities from social diseases must go beyond condoms and “safe sex.” The only true and abiding answer to social diseases are morals that are greater than man himself. These morals must be taught to and practiced by everyone in our community, starting with our families and our leaders.

In reference to sexual relationships, God’s morals mean abstinence from sexual activity outside the bond of marriage. As a young person, you must understand that if you violate the moral law of abstinence outside marriage, you will reap the consequences of your action. We can save our communities from the bad consequences of immorality only by practicing moral principles in our lives. The only true deliverance from the curse of social disease pandemics as HIV/AIDS is abstinence from sexual immorality outside the bond of marriage.

Those who refuse to learn from the mistakes of vanished nations in the past are doomed to repeat and relive that which destroys nations. But we must commit ourselves not to repeat past failures. It is the duty of every citizen to recognize and implement in his or her life those character principles that lead to a better life. It is the responsibility of religious institutions and schools of every nation throughout the world to train the minds of its citizenship. People must be trained to conduct themselves with good moral and ethical behavior in their relationships. It is the responsibility of every society to focus the minds of ev-
ery generation on principles that build na-
tions.

Religious leaders must help the reli-
gious institutions and schools of the na-
tion not to repeat those things that lead
to the destruction of our communities. Civc and religious leaders must seek to
focus the citizenship of a nation on un-
changing principles that have always
built better nations. In doing this, com-
munities within nations can build dy-
namic environments in which citizens
can live in peace, and thus, become pro-
ductive participants in a democratic so-
 ciety.

If we seek to develop a nation that is
united under belief in God to whom we
all will give account, then we will be mo-
tivated. We will be motivated to do what
is right to establish within our societies
principles that will produce the kind of
citizenship that builds nations. There-
fore, as you study through moral and ethi-
cal principles that lead to the develop-
ment of a great person, you must realize
that you have a great responsibility as a
citizen of your nation to build your na-
tion on morals and ethics that will lead
everyone to a better life.

Great nations are the result of dignified individuals
who seek to dwell together in peaceful unity
that is based on the moral integrity of all citizens.

It is the responsibility of every citi-
en of every nation of the world to strive
to build a unified nation of peace. Na-
tions are built on the good characters of
individual citizens. Therefore, it is the
responsibility of every citizen to develop
his or her char-
acter in order to
develop a great
 nation. It is thus
the task of reli-
gious and civic
leaders to chal-
lenge people to
develop good
moral characters.

Someone once said, “A good char-
acter is more valuable than gold.” Our
lives are built around our character. Good
characters produce good lives. Un-
healthy characters produce many unfor-
tunate consequences that destroy lives.
Therefore, we must be diligent to chal-
lenge one another to live the best lives
we can that are based on good moral and
ethical principles.

We must be encouraged to be pro-
ductive citizens in our communities. If
you follow good principles for character
development, you can have a happy fam-
ily and peaceful community life that is
based on moral and ethical principles that
Our success in life will depend on how we relate to other people. **The better we relate with others, the better we will succeed in life.** When one develops his or her character, he or she can better live with family and friends. Good character development makes it possible for us to live in harmony with our neighbors. When we learn and practice skills of how to relate with others, we will succeed in life as a productive citizen of the community.

influence others to do good. And by having a positive influence on others, you will be an encouraging leader in your community.

A. Character and religion:

Our character is not our religion, though our religious beliefs will affect our character. Our beliefs affect our character development if we understand that we will give account to God for our behavior.

Every person has a character regardless of his or her religious beliefs. It is for this reason that **every person must seek to develop a good char-**

acter in order to be a good citizen of any society. We must focus on being a person of integrity in order to be honorable citizens in our communities. Character development is absolutely necessary for developing a life that is rich with success and good relationships.

B. Character and conscience:

Everyone has a conscience. If we do not do that which we think is right, we hurt or violate our conscience. A good character that originates from a God-trained conscience moves us to do right in order that we not violate our conscience. In order to define and develop a good conscience that is based on eternal moral and ethical principles, we must look for moral and ethical principles that originate from God.

Everyone has developed in his or her life that which he or she considers to be right. We seek to do good according to what we believe is right. **Character development is knowing and practicing correct principles by which we can determine what is good or bad.** We develop our conscience with good moral and ethical principles in order to guide ourselves to do that which is right.

**Our character determines how we**
will respond to every situation in life. Our character, therefore, is manifested by our encounters with people and situations.

- Good characters will make the best of bad situations.
- Bad characters will often make the worst of good situations.

It is necessary to develop our characters so we know how to interact in all situations of life, whether good or bad.

C. Character building rules:

God’s standards upon which good characters are built have been time-tested and accepted as true and good by men of all ages. Because we are the creation of God, God has placed within us a conscience to do right and good to our fellow man. God is the source from which good character principles can be discovered. Upon His principles great characters are built. We assume that God knows best concerning the development of our characters for successful living because He is our Creator. He created us, and then created principles for abundant living.

Research Thought

In 1844, a deceased citizen gave the city of Philadelphia in the state of Pennsylvania in America a large sum of money in his will. The money was to be used in teaching orphans the “purest principles of morality.” However, the heirs of the deceased man wanted his money for themselves. As a result, they sued and the case went before the Supreme Court of the United States. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the directions of the deceased person’s will. In addition, the Court ruled that the New Testament be used as the textbook for teaching orphans moral principles. The Court stated, “Where can the purest principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfect as from the New Testament?” (Vidal vs Girard’s Executors; 43 U.S. 127, 200 [1844]).

D. Nation building:

Almost all religions teach the same principles for moral, ethical and character development. Many religious faiths of the world accept the Bible as the primary source of moral and ethical
principles in developing our characters. In fact, the first president of the United States, George Washington, said, “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.” The great educator, Noah Webster, once said, “The Bible must be considered as the great source of all truth by which men are to be guided in government, as well as in all social transactions.”

William Lyon Phelps once wrote, “Western civilization is founded upon the Bible; our ideas, our wisdom, our philosophy, our literature, our art, our ideals come more from the Bible than from all other books put together. It is a revelation of divinity and of humanity.”

Though the Bible has been used as the foundation upon which many civil constitutions have been developed, God does not intend that the Bible be used directly as the actual constitution for any government. He only desires that men in writing their constitutions for civil government be guided by His principles for national building.

Good constitutions are based on timeless moral and ethical principles by which God seeks to build every nation of the world for all history.

Nations that have a common moral and ethical behavior will be nations with societies that work for the upliftment of the nation as a whole.

E. Character and success:

It is true that social upliftment and success is determined by relationships. This is true simply because success depends on our ability to interact with other people. Since our relationships with others is determined by our character, then our success depends on how well we develop our characters. A good character helps us to get along with our friends, our family, our business associates, and the people of our community. The better we get along with others, the more successful we will be.

When we maintain a proper relationship with others, we will be successful in life. But also, we will be a success in everything we do because others will gladly work and associate with us in our efforts to accomplish our goals for life. If you want to be a successful person, you must focus on developing your character.

Learning to develop your character is an adventure in learning skills that makes us better people. It is a discovery in learning some of the most important principles that have ever been made concerning our purpose and work of life.
Those who concentrate on developing qualities of character in their lives will be socially and economically uplifted in society. For this reason, it should be the goal of everyone to become a person who is known for having good character qualities. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10) The fact that we want to have the abundant life about which Jesus spoke must motivate us to be the best we can be. Once we are motivated to develop good characters, we will discover that life is truly blessed for the one who wants to live in service to others. You must make it a goal of your life to discover character skills that will help you to be a better person.

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in character.
If there is beauty in character, there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

A Chinese Proverb

Chapter 3
CHARACTER IN HUSBANDS AND WIVES

In our homes we mould good characters.
With good characters we shape our society.
With our society we shape and build a strong nation.

When God created man and woman, He intended that it be natural for them to live together in the loving marital relationship of a husband and wife. In the covenant of marriage, God gave the right to the husband and wife to bear children. In bringing children into the world, God gave the responsibility to the father and mother to create a loving environment in which children could be trained to be good citizens of community and country.

The character and behavior of the citizens of all societies depends on the relationship that is established between a man and woman in marriage.

Good relationships in marriage establish an environment in which children can develop into being positive and productive citizens for social development. Therefore, it is necessary that good marriage principles be learned in order to establish a good relationship between a husband and wife.

The foundation for good communities depends on the good relationships that are established between men and women in marriage. If the relationships between husbands and wives are not es-
tablished upon fundamental principles of moral stability, society as a whole pays the price. **Almost all problems in any society are directly linked to problems in the home.** And since the home is the responsibility of husbands and wives, the solving of community problems must focus on solving problems in husband/wife relationships. In order to save our children from great heartache in life, fathers and mothers must accept the responsibility of creating a loving home environment for the development of their children.

**A. Focus on responsibility:**

The headship of the husband is for the purpose of establishing a center of reference in the home. This center of reference is for the purpose of giving spiritual leadership for the family. However, the husband must express a loving attitude toward his wife in order to establish his headship. If he does not express a loving relationship toward his wife, he has failed to offer to the family the spiritual leadership that God intended for the family.

It is important that fathers provide an example of how loving relationships are maintained in society. Mothers must provide an example of how citizens are to submit to authority in society. Because of the challenges that face the family in our world today, we must establish in our families those principles that will preserve our societies. We must learn how husbands and wives can relate to one another in marriage. We must do this in order to establish peaceful societies wherein all citizens can live in harmony with one another. **The first principle in creating good families is that we must make a decision to learn skills that produce healthy family relationships.**

- A husband who loves his wife is NOT physically and mentally abusive toward his wife, and thus he will train up his sons NOT to be abusive toward their wives.
- A wife who maintains her submissive role in relation to her husband will NOT present to her children an example of rebellion toward authority.
- Children who have learned submission to authority in the home learn submission to the authority of civil government.

In healthy family relationships, the commitment of husbands and wives is first to one another. Their commitment to love one another is an example to the children concerning the strength of commitment that is needed in a family in order to make a family strong. This commitment is needed in order to maintain a healthy husband and wife relationship. The future of our children is preserved by husbands and wives who commit themselves to one another: Children learn commitment from their parents.
B. Example of submission:

Children must grow up in an environment that illustrates the spirit of submission. One of the responsibilities of a wife is to illustrate a submissive attitude to a loving husband. The Bible says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord” (Ep 5:22). The husband must also show a spirit of submission to the wife since the Bible also teaches, “Submit to one another” (Ep 5:21) The wife is the keeper of the home, and thus, the husband must submit to her responsibility as the keeper of the home (Ti 2:5). When there is mutual submission between the husband and wife, children grow up in an environment where they learn submission to the needs of others.

Submission on the part of the wife should not be viewed as a negative position or work. She is not emotionally or intellectually inferior to the husband. Submission of the wife to the husband is not a manifestation of inferiority. On the contrary, wives must lead the children in the family with spiritual and emotional strength. Submission is a specific and positive work in the husband/wife relationship because the children of the family are following the submissive example of the wife.

The wife’s role is a teaching example for the children concerning how they should submissively relate to authority. By following the example of their mother, children learn how to behave in reference to authority in society. When they graduate from the care of their father and mother, they go into the world with a spirit of submission to authority.

C. Source of security:

Almost all faiths of the world teach that in the union of marriage the husband is the head of the wife. However, we often misunderstand the meaning of the husband being the head of the wife. When we think of the husband’s headship in the family, we often think only of his control of the family. In many ways, the husband is in control. But there is more to the headship by the husband than just control.

Because of his love for his wife, the husband is to be the spiritual and emotional center of reference for his wife and family. When a wife finds a fountain of spiritual and emotional care in the husband, then one finds security. Husbands thus earn the right to their headship by being a source of spiritual and emotional security for their wives.
D. Example of love:

When a husband provides security for the wife and family, then it can be said that he truly loves his wife. The Bible teaches, “Husbands, love your wives .... Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it ...” (Ep 5:25-28).

GOD-FEARING HUSBANDS

The Bible teaches, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Any God-fearing man who does not care for his wife is worse than an unbeliever who does not know better. Those who believe in God are to be a people of love. The love of God has changed their thinking and behavior. Therefore, if a husband who believes in God does not care for his wife, he is worse than those who do not know better because of a lack of knowledge of what God requires of husbands.

Loving husbands are committed to caring for their wives. An unloving husband will often be a tyrant who mentally and physically abuses his wife. But a loving husband behaves differently. Love is the guarantee that the husband’s headship toward his wife is controlled and conducted with all dignity. Love guarantees that the husband will care for his wife.

By manifesting care, concern, provision and protection of his wife, the loving husband establishes an example of how children are to treat their future wives. Children who grow up in single parent families, or are orphans, may have a difficult time in adjusting to God’s direction concerning the responsibility of a husband toward a wife. But by learning from the example of good Christian families in the community, one can learn good family skills. The Bible is also full of family principles and skills.

Regardless of one’s childhood, one can learn how to be a loving husband or wife. If you seek to be a husband, you must make a commitment of giving yourself to your wife for life. This is the spirit of love. Husbands who set a sacrificial and loving example of character for their children will produce children of loving characters. These children will mature into great citizens.

E. Legacy of honor:

The Bible instructs that husbands give honor to their wives. It is written, “Likewise, husbands, dwell with your wives with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as heirs together of the grace of life, so that your prayers not be hindered” (1 Pt 3:7) A loving husband has an understanding heart. His understanding heart makes
it possible for him to live with his wife. He gives honor to the wife by not doing the following to his wife:

- He does not reject her.
- He does not belittle her.
- He does not refuse to support her.
- He does not criticize her.
- He does not argue with her in the presence of her children.
- He does not embarrass her in the presence of her friends.

On the other hand, an honorable husband does the following for his wife:

- He seeks to build her self-image by giving her respect.
- He recognizes that she needs support since she is physically weaker than he is.
- He continually gives her praise for the good she does.
- He respects her counsel as a partner in marriage.
- He spiritually and emotionally provides for her well being.
- He protects her from harm that may come from influences outside the family.

Because she is emotionally tender, the husband recognizes that his wife needs his strength. Husbands who are committed to their wives will seek to lead their wives with the dignity of God’s love. If fathers are to pass on to their children the character of an honorable husband, they must be spiritual leaders in the marriage relationship by giving the wife honor for her position and work.

F. Loving one another:

William Penn once wrote, “Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love.” The extent of the husband’s love for his wife is explained in the words of the Bible that husbands “ought to love their own wives as their own bodies” (Ep 5:28) As one should take care of his own body, so he should take care of his wife. It is for this reason that drunkards or drug addicts cannot love their wives as they should. They do not take care of their own bodies, and thus, they do not take care of their wives.

The Bible teaches, “He who loves his wife loves himself” (1 Co 15:33) A man who does not manifest love toward his wife usually has low self-esteem of himself. He does not think much of himself, and thus, he seeks to exalt himself over his wife by degrading her and other people.

A truly loving husband seeks to care for his wife. He seeks to make sure that her emotional and physical needs are cared for as he would care for himself. He nourishes and cherishes his wife. Men who are confident and have great

Honorable Husbands Leave A Legacy Of Honorable Children.
self-esteem will love their wives as God would have them. They do not manifest their own lack of confidence in themselves by belittling their wives.

G. Commitment to one another:

A husband must commit himself to his wife. The Bible says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh” (Ep 5:31). In marriage, a man and woman assume responsibility first to serve one God, and then to serve one another. The husband must commit himself to only one wife. The level of commitment that God intends that a man give to his wife can be accomplished with only one woman. When a man makes this level of commitment in marriage, then in the eyes of God, the man and woman become one. In marriage, two people bring their worldly goods together into one ownership. But they also bring their two personalities together to create for both a new world in which the two exist as one in the eyes of God. It is for this reason that a man must leave his parents and cleave to his wife in order to nourish and cherish only her as his wife.

The Bible also teaches, “Let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Co 7:2). The responsibilities that God requires of a husband in marriage cannot be carried out with more than one wife. The same is true of the responsibilities of a wife to a husband. When a man seeks to have more than one wife, then he cannot fulfill all that God requires of him in relation to nurturing a relationship with his wife.

H. Sanctity of marriage:

Concerning marriage, the Bible teaches, “Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see that she respects her husband” (Ep 5:33). When a man and woman marry, they are spiritually joined together as one in the eyes of God. In this union there is mutual respect for one another because the two are joined as one. Because God joins the two as one in a spiritual sense, He never intended that a man be joined to more than one woman.
A husband and wife gain respect for one another as they consider and value one another. As the husband grows in love for his wife, she grows in respect for him. The respect of the wife is thus earned by the husband’s love for his wife. An unloving husband gains no respect, neither from his wife nor from those who know him. King Solomon correctly said of husbands, “Rejoice with the wife of your youth .... For this reason, a husband should live joyfully with his wife” (Pv 5:18; see Ec 9:9).

I. One sexual partner for life:

Sexual intercourse is a beautiful treasure that is to be discovered only in the union of marriage. It is an emotional and physical action wherein a husband and wife give themselves to one another, and thus, initially establish and subsequently continue to reaffirm their marriage covenant. The Bible speaks of this relationship in the following manner:

Let the husband render to the wife due affection, and likewise also the wife to the husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise also, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except by agreement for a time so that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer. And come together again so that Satan not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Co 7:3-5).

J. Committed to the home:

Older Christian women are to “encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, pure, workers at home, good, subject to their own husbands so that the word of God not be blasphemed” (Ti 2:3-5).

Wives and mothers who assume the great responsibility of keeping the home, gain for themselves great honor. Their honor is in manifesting true servanthood, toward their families and toward others. The mother’s servanthood is copied by her obedient children who go out into the world as servants to the needs of others. Therefore, the term “housewife” or “homemaker” is a designation that carries with it great honor. The great honor is in the fact that a woman has accepted the responsibility of training her children who are the young citizens of a nation’s future. Through the nurturing of children, it is our mothers who will determine the future of our country.
Chapter 4

CHARACTER IN FATHERS AND MOTHERS

The testimony of a good father and mother is manifested in the lives of their children.

God’s pattern for fathers and mothers is that they teach and demonstrate in their lives honorable ways of life for their sons and daughters to follow. Through the father’s loving relationship with the mother of his children, he sets an example of how one should care for others. Because of his love for his wife, he demonstrates to his children how they must behave toward their future wives. The mother’s loving concern for her husband and children produces a home environment where happiness is guaranteed for future families.

**Fathers** must lead in establishing correct family relationships. In the father’s relationship with his children, he gives an example of loving understanding and tender care for the innocent. **Children with loving fathers grow up without being hard and harsh in their relationships with others.** They show respect for authority and the lives of others. A father’s relationship with his children, therefore, establishes the attitudes of the men of society in their relationships with one another.

As a provider for the family, the father gives an example for the sons as to how they are to take care of their future wives and families. He gives an example of how one is to assume the responsibility of caring for others. Those who have grown up without the righteous example of a father or mother must take special care to learn from God what is required of fathers and mothers.

In his loving relationship with his wife, the father leaves with his daughters an example of how their future husbands should treat them. Future husbands or wives who grow up under the care of a godly father will have to help their future spouses who have not had this privilege. Many young men and women have not grown up in loving families. As a result, when they are married, they need the help of loving spouses who have had the privilege of a good family. With help from a spouse, they can learn the responsibilities by which husbands and wives should conduct themselves in marriage.

Since both sons and daughters form their personalities and characters after their parents, it is very important that the father conduct his life according to God’s principles for fathers. Those who have
not had the opportunity of growing up under the nurture and admonition of an earthly father must turn to our heavenly Father for direction. The relationship that our heavenly Father has maintained with His people throughout history is the best example of how earthly fathers are to relate to their children.

**Mothers** establish an example of how one should be a keeper of the home. It is God’s plan that the mother be the keeper of the home for the sake of preserving society with children who believe that the home is a precious institution. It is her responsibility, therefore, to maintain the home after the principles of Divine instruction. Her example of godly living establishes a pattern that is to be followed by the children. It is important that mothers conduct their lives after Divine principles for home building in order that they direct the children of the family to honor God in all things.

It is unfortunate that many children grow up in the world without either a father or mother. This does not mean, however, that one’s life cannot be great in the eyes of God. When one becomes a believer in God, he or she must discover principles by which one can be a great father or mother by making God his or her Father. You can be a great father or mother by establishing religious principles in one’s life.

Here are some important principles for family direction that have been around for centuries. These are things that parents must give their children in a healthy family environment. If you practice them in your life as a future father or mother, they will lead you to become the best parent you can be because you are trying to be the best you can be as a person.

**A. Give our children faith for successful living.**

Faith in God motivates us to create in our lives essential qualities that develop healthy personality characteristics that enhance our relationships. It is recorded in the Bible by Paul concerning a young man named Timothy, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, I am persuaded that it is in you also.” (2 Tm 1:5).
The instruction of parents to their children is not only by words of teaching, but also by example of a godly life. Parents of faith produce children of faith. Parents must leave their children a “genuine faith.” The greatest inheritance that parents can leave their children is a faith in God that will carry them throughout the rest of their lives.

B. Give our children spiritual knowledge.

The Bible speaks of the results of one godly mother, of whose son, Timothy, it was stated, “Continue in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith…” (2 Tm 3:15).

The Holy Scriptures (the word of God) are a source of wisdom. From childhood, Timothy was taught the principles of the Holy Scriptures. He was taught by his mother and grandmother, women who had dedicated themselves to God and His principles for conducting their lives. Good parenthood begins by first giving ourselves to God.

RECOGNIZING OUR CREATOR

Since God is our Creator, we must love Him with all our hearts. This may seem to be a strange statement in the context of the parents’ relationship with their children. But it is not. Parents must teach their children to love God above all things by their placing of God before their children. The parents’ example of putting God first in all things teaches the children that God must be exalted above all things in life. When parents live totally committed lives to God, their children will understand that there is a Higher Power to whom we all must eventually give account. Their children will also understand that the most important thing in life is to focus on that which goes beyond life.

C. Give our children direction for godly living.

In speaking directly to fathers in their responsibility of working with their children, the Bible says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord” (Ep 6:4). Fathers must not provoke their children through unjust punishment, lest the children become frustrated. It is the responsibility of the
father to correct and direct the children. He is to do so with wisdom and a spirit of love. Unloving discipline leads to frustration and rebellion on the part of the children. However, if a father will lovingly discipline his child in order to restore the child to that which is right in the eyes of God, then the child will greatly respect the father.

D. Give our children examples for doing good.

Parents are human, and thus they have their own faults. They know what good should be done to their children. Regardless of their faults, good parents will always seek to do that which is right for their children. However, if they do wrong to their children, they will gain the respect of the children by confessing their wrong and asking forgiveness from their children.

Parents are not perfect. They are human. And being human means that they also can make mistakes. It is not wrong for a parent to confess to his or her children when he or she has failed the children by wrong actions. If children see a spirit of confession in their parents, they too will develop characters of humility.

E. Give our children a spirit of humble service.

Since all humans are the creation of God, then all humans must peacefully live together on earth. In order to do this, we must seek to do good to one another. It is for this reason that doing good to others must be a fundamental principle that is taught in the home.

When parents do good to others and to their children, they set an example for their children of doing good works to others. In a home where good works are continually done for others, children grow up with an example of how they should behave in relation to others in society.

Civic leaders who have grown up in homes where they have experienced a life of doing good to others will see their function as civil servants who must do good to others. They will not see their work as a position of power. They will see it as an opportunity to serve their communities and nations as humble civic servants.

F. Give our children a heart for others.

It is stated in the Bible, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction” (Js 1:27). One cannot have a true relationship with God if he or she is not concerned about the needs of those who have suffered the loss of their husbands or have
been robbed of their parents by unfortunate circumstances. One cannot say he loves God if he does not have compassion on those who are either widows or orphans. Parents who want to develop character in their children must reach out of their home to those who are widows and orphans. By doing this their children learn about community responsibility in taking care of others. And when our children learn to take care of others they develop a heart of compassion for others in their community. Those who have a heart of compassion are good citizens.

G. Give our children a disciplined life.

A disciplined child disciplines himself in life. Discipline is necessary in the home in order to develop the type of person that will be a responsible person in society. King Solomon wrote, “He who spares his rod hates his son. But he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Pv 13:24) “The rod and rebuke give wisdom. But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Pv 29:15).

God’s principle for family order is that children be disciplined when they do wrong. A father who does not discipline his children does not love his children.

An undisciplined child will not respect his or her father or mother because the child has not felt loved. When discipline is administered in love, it manifests a spirit of love toward the child. Those parents who do not discipline their children when they do wrong are teaching their children that they have little concern for their future.

We love God because He corrects us when we do wrong. His discipline in our lives is evidence that He loves us. God deals with us as we should deal with our children. This is why children must be disciplined when they do wrong. Parents must prove that they are concerned about their children’s moral development in relation to others. God’s discipline of us creates in us characters of self-discipline. The disciplined believer, therefore, disciplines himself or herself for success in life.

H. Give our children an example of responsibility.

Parents should accept the responsibility of taking care of their children. While their children are in their home, it is the responsibility of the parents to care for the needs of the children (2 Co 12:14). Parents must not only care for the physical needs of their children, but also for their spiritual needs. In doing this, they set an example for their children as to how they should care for their own children when they are married. Parents who care for their children guarantee that their grandchildren will be properly taken care of by their own children.
Parents have a great responsibility of setting an example for their children to follow. When children grow up in a home that is conducted after the principles of God, then good citizens are trained for society. However, when a home is broken, the children of the home are given insufficient or erroneous examples for family conduct. Broken homes destroy nations.

Many people in the world today have come from broken homes. However, coming from a broken home is not an excuse for one to refuse to live according to God’s principles for the home. Everyone can and should learn family skills that will produce great families for society. It should be the goal of every young person to learn these skills. By learning them we are on our way to developing a happy family for the future and a stable society for nation building.

I. Give our children an environment of security.

Being the head of the family means being the center of reference for both physical sustenance and spiritual strength. As the head of the wife, the husband must accept physical and spiritual responsibility for his wife. If a man is not willing to do this, then he has no right to marry a woman. The loving headship of husbands brings a sense of stability to the family. When children grow up in a stable family, they develop a sense of security.

Unstable families produce unstable children. When parents argue in front of their children, they confuse their children. When children witness parental arguments, they become confused concerning family relationships. They thus lose their sense of security. It is important, therefore, that parents develop a secure character in their children by giving them an example of harmony in the family environment. Parents must control their tempers when in the presence of their children.

Children bring honor to their family by their obedient conduct in the community.

The family is a God-created institution. In the family, children learn principles and personality skills by which they can live in society. It is also in the
family that children develop their characters. It is important, therefore, that fathers and mothers take special care in teaching their children relationship and behavior skills that are based on sound moral and ethical principles.

It is the responsibility of the children to maintain an obedient relationship with their parents in order that they learn as much as possible from their parents. Obedient children learn from the example and teaching of their parents in order to be good citizens in society.

If a child unfortunately has to grow up with only one parent, or no parents at all, then he or she must take comfort in the fact that one can learn to be a good parent from the example of others. God also wants to direct everyone’s life according to principles that will lead us to become better people. Regardless of one’s family situation, he or she must always seek to discover healthy family principles by which to become a great parent to his or her own children. Being an orphan may at first present some challenges as to how one can be the best father or mother he or she can be. However, by learning the principles of God that relate to being a good parent, anyone can successfully apply these principles for building a good family.

A. Honor parents.

One of the ten commandments that God gave Moses to give to Israel was, “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex 20:12).

Children must respect their parents for who they are. Rebellious children bring shame upon the name of the family. The Bible states, “Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with promise—so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Ep 6:2,3). The life of those who do not honor their parents will not be well on the earth. It will not be well simply because one’s attitude toward his or her parents will be his or her attitude toward authority in the world. The prisons are full of people who did not honor their parents

B. Obey parents.

A son or daughter who does not honor either his or her father or mother manifests a lack of respect for authority. The result of a lack of respect for authority will lead one to have many conflicts with others. If one does not respect authority, he will bring many sorrows upon himself. It is stated in the Bible, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Ep 6:1). “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord” (Cl 3:20).
Obedience is a virtue that manifests the integrity of a self-disciplined life. It is a personality characteristic that goes beyond individual acts of submission. It is a personality that is what is right in every situation where one encounters the needs of his fellow man.

C. Be submissive.

Young people who are obedient to their parents manifest a spirit of submission. One cannot be faithful to God and at the same time be disobedient to his or her parents. Young people learn how to establish and maintain guidelines in their lives through their obedience to their parents.

Young people who are obedient to their parents manifest their honor of their parents. King Solomon wrote through the direction of God some good advice for sons and daughters. This advice is from God, not just from the hand of Solomon.

D. Do not conform to evil.

- “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother” (Pv 1:8; see 6:20).
- “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a grief of his mother” (Pv 10:1).
- “He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach” (Pv 19:26).

Have you ever heard the statement, “Bad companions corrupt good morals”? (1 Co 15:33). It’s true. If you seek to associate with those who do evil things, you will adopt their motives, and subsequently, will carry out in your behavior wrong actions.

As children grow into young adulthood, they invariably seek to explore the world. And when people become friends of the world, evil times will result. Jesus explained such evil times when He stated, “Now brother will betray brother to death, and the father the son. And children will rise up against their parents and will cause them to be put to death” (Mk 13:12). It is during evil times as this that children become disobedient to their parents. When children do not learn God’s will, they will bring evil times.

In times of evil in society, there is a lack of family loyalty. Disobedience to parents is a sign that there is wickedness in society. Therefore, young people play an important role in maintaining an orderly society when they are obedient to the instructions of their parents. Their obedient spirit encourages their parents to give the best counsel possible for their direction.
E. Develop a faith in God.

All that we know about the early childhood of Jesus is mentioned by Luke when he recorded an incident that happened in Jesus’ life when He was about twelve years old. One time when the parents of Jesus were returning after a feast in Jerusalem, Jesus stayed behind in order to carry on with His heavenly Father’s business. After the parents returned to find Jesus, it is recorded in the Bible, “Now it came to pass after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the middle of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Lk 2:46-49).

The parents of Jesus asked why He stayed behind. He responded, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Lk 2:49). When young people seek to do God’s business, they focus on doing good, not evil. They go about doing good projects that uplift their community.

Young people should desire to be among those who seek to serve God in the community. As Jesus, they should seek to discuss spiritual subjects and do good things with others. When young people focus their attention on spiritual things and doing good to others, their thoughts are on the right things. Their minds are on spiritual things, not things of this world.

When speaking in the context of worries about the possessions and circumstances of the world, Jesus encouraged us by saying, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Mt 6:33). It is only reasonable to believe that those who seek to maintain a spiritual life will enjoy the best of this life.

The unifying bond that brings a family together is the common desire of every family member to place God before every family member. Happy families are built on a common goal of every family member placing God first in all things. When we place God first, we are cautious to follow His instructions concerning the family structure. When young people honor God, they will follow God’s instructions that they be obedient to their parents. Obedient children bring peace to their father and mother.

F. Be humble.

The beauty of humility is in the fact that others are drawn to humble people. We seek to be in the presence of the
humble. Humble parents produce an environment in the home where the minds of children are opened for instruction.

**Humility is recognizing that one never has all the answers for every situation in life.** It is developing one’s life around others and God, rather than one’s self. Great men realize their weaknesses, and then compensate for their weaknesses by relying on the counsel of others.

When one grows into adulthood, he or she should not lose the spirit of humility. The reason for this is that one who is proud and arrogant will never accept the instructions of others simply because he or she has never learned how to submit to the will of others.

When still in the home and under the direction of their parents, young people should seek to maintain their humility by submitting to their parents. When they come to the age of making their own decisions, they should carefully follow the counsel of their parents. Following the counsel of our parents shows that we seek to do right. It shows that we continually respect our parents.

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It is the responsibility of children to maintain their God-ordained position in the family. Not only do the parents have a responsibility to maintain their position and work in reference to the children, the children also have a responsibility to maintain their obedient relationship with their parents. When both parents and children place God first before all things, and thus maintain their God-ordained functions and positions in the family, then the family becomes a truly happy environment on earth.

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What some young people did when they were between the ages of 18 and 25.

- **TENNYSON** wrote his first volume of literature.
- **JOHN CALVIN** became a part of the religious Reformation Movement of Europe.
- **ALEXANDER THE GREAT** conquered the ancient middle eastern world.
- **ISAAC NEWTON** formulated his conclusions concerning the Law of Gravity.
- **MARTIN LUTHER** began his literary work of the Reformation Movement.
- **CHARLES DICKENS** wrote *Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*.
- **JOHN OF AUSTRIA** led an army to victory at the Battle of Lepanto.
- **JOAN OF ARC** did all her work by the time she was burned at the stake at 19.
Chapter 6
YOUR HEALTH, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Moral behavior determines the quality and length of life.

One purpose for building families that are morally healthy is to produce physically healthy citizens. Many people live in areas where many unhealthy conditions exist. As a result, thousands of people unnecessarily die every year because some very practical principles for good health are violated.

In many situations, we create our own unhealthy environments. This is particularly true in reference to sexually transmitted diseases. The most common sexually transmitted diseases are gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, chancroid, herpes, genital warts and HIV/AIDS. One becomes infected with a sexually transmitted disease through vaginal, anal or oral sexual intercourse with an infected person. The human sexual organs are the ideal environment for the transmission of germs that cause sexually transmitted diseases.

One of the greatest sexually transmitted diseases that has attacked the human race is HIV/AIDS. Thousands are dying every day because of AIDS. It is important that everyone take a very proactive stance to combat this attack against human society.

Many are saying that HIV/AIDS cannot affect them. They say they are too young, too healthy, or too cautious in their sexual relationships. The fact is, however, that AIDS shows no mercy, knows no race, no age, and no class. If you are sexually active outside the union of marriage, chances are you will
become HIV positive, and subsequently develop AIDS. **And if you have AIDS, you will die.** If you live in sub-Saharan Africa, your chances of becoming HIV positive are tremendously high if you are sexually active outside the union of marriage. Therefore, you must be very knowledgeable of this disease. Your life depends on it.

**A. Identifying HIV/AIDS:**

The letters **AIDS** stand for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is a medical diagnosis that results from a combination of illnesses that exist in the body because of the weakening of the body’s immune system. HIV attacks the immune system of the body. This makes it impossible for the body to adequately protect itself against the invasion of germs and viruses of other diseases.

HIV is the bad guy that causes AIDS. The letters **HIV** stand for Human Immune deficiency Virus. HIV weakens our body’s ability to fight off foreign germs that invade the body. What normally happens when our bodies are invaded by germs is that the white blood cells attack the foreign invaders. However, HIV enters and destroys our white blood cells. Our immune system is thus weakened and our body is not able to fight off invading germs. What happens next is usually fatal. One’s body becomes infected with any number of diseases. When symptoms are manifested from one or more of these diseases, it is an indication that one has AIDS. One who has AIDS, therefore, often dies from an invading disease.

Though one will not know if he or she is HIV positive without a blood test, the following are some signs that HIV has progressed to AIDS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY SIGNS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Loss of weight that is greater than 10% of the normal body weight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A prolonged fever that is more than one month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• On and off, or prolonged diarrhea for more than a month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Persistent severe fatigue.</td>
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<table>
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<th>MINOR SIGNS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Persistent cough for more than a month.</td>
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<td>• Itchy skin rashes.</td>
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<td>• Cold sores over the body.</td>
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<td>• Shingles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Swollen glands at two or more places throughout the body over a period of a month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Thrush in the mouth or throat.</td>
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**B. Contracting HIV:**

HIV is passed from one person to another through body fluids—blood, semen or vaginal secretions. HIV is primarily a sexually transmitted disease. If you have sex with someone who is HIV positive, chances are you will contract HIV/AIDS. In order not to become infected with HIV, you must protect yourself.
Many people do not know that they are infected with HIV. You cannot tell if one is infected just by looking at them. It often takes many years before HIV progresses to AIDS, and thus manifests the symptoms of the disease with which one becomes infected. Therefore, you may be a carrier of HIV and not know that you are infecting others with HIV by your sexual activity. In order to know if one is HIV positive, he or she should be tested.

C. Protecting yourself:

Since HIV can also be transmitted during any procedure that breaks the skin by the use of instruments that come into contact with the blood system, special care should be taken in procedures such as injections and blood transfusions. HIV can be contracted if a traditional healer makes cuts with an infected knife, or a nurse gives an injection with an unsterilized needle or syringe. Intravenous drug users often infect themselves by sharing unsterilized needles and syringes with other drug users. Here are some things to do to prevent contracting HIV:

- Just say no to sex outside the union of marriage. Make a decision right now that you will not have sex outside marriage. (Remember, there is no such thing as “safe sex” outside marriage. The passion of two young people can be spontaneous, and thus two people will often have sex without the use of a condom. It only takes one unprotected act of sex to become HIV positive. Teachings that we can have “safe sex” by use of condoms only encourages sexual activity outside marriage. This encourages young people to continue sexual activity, and thus, the chances of sexual encounters without the use of condoms. The encouraging of “safe sex” outside marriage has actually led to the spread of HIV/AIDS in society because it has encouraged that which causes the transmission of HIV, that is, sexual activity with many different people.)
- If you are about to get married, and you know that the one to whom you are about to marry has had other sexual partners, insist that he or she have an AIDS test. If one partner is HIV positive, that partner will infect their future husband or wife, and subsequently the newborn ba-
bies of the family.

• Don’t let someone deceive you with statements as, “If you loved me you would have sex with me.” These are words that actually manifest an unloving and selfish attitude of someone who has little or no concern for your well being. Having sex is not a proof of love.

• Talk to your dating partner about sex and abstinence. Both of you should make a decision to refrain from sex until marriage. (Remember, if a partner is not willing to do this, then this partner is more concerned about sexual passion than you as a person.)

• Protection against HIV transmission is possible by using a condom. However, remember that if you believe that “safe sex” can be practiced by use of a condom, it is highly probable that there will possibly be an occasion when one loses control and has sex when no condom is available. It may be during that single act of unprotected sex that one contracts HIV.

• Educate yourself concerning HIV if you are pregnant. Contact your local health workers for information on HIV/AIDS.

• Wear gloves when coming into contact with the blood of another person.

• Take care when handling medical instruments that have come into contact with blood, semen or vaginal fluids.

• If you come into contact with another’s blood, semen or vaginal fluid, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. (Do not scrub your hands until they are raw.)

• If you are in a region of high HIV infection, health workers and midwives should wear gloves and use sterilized instruments. (Always go to qualified health workers for injections. Insist that health workers use an unused syringe for any injections. If health workers break the skin with any instrument, insist that the instrument be thoroughly sterilized before it is used.)

• Gloves or syringes that have come into contact with blood, semen or vaginal fluids should be burned or discarded in a sealed container.

• Clean with disinfectants all surfaces onto which blood has been spilled. Practicing cleanliness will help prevent many diseases in your life. As a common practice, seek to be clean in everything you do.

D. Testing for HIV:

If you have had several sexual partners, you should have an HIV test. This is particularly important because you may unknowingly be infecting others. If you are preparing for marriage, and have previously had other sexual partners, you should have an HIV test. This should be done because of your love for
the one you seek to marry. It would certainly be sad to infect with HIV the one you love, and the children born into your care.

There are different systems for testing for HIV. These include the ELISA and Western Blot blood tests. These tests detect antibodies in the blood that are fighting HIV. They do not detect the virus itself. The ELISA test is usually done first. If it is positive, the Western Blot test is performed to confirm the results.

One should wait at least three months after probable exposure to HIV before taking an HIV test. It will take approximately this amount of time before the body starts producing antibodies against the invasion of HIV. To make certain that one has not contracted HIV, it is advisable to take another test six months after probable exposure in order to make sure one is not HIV positive.

Keep in mind that HIV tests only determine if there are antibodies in the blood that are trying to fight off HIV. If you have sex within the three to six months after the initial exposure, you could test negative because the virus you may have contracted from your most recent sexual encounter has not fully attacked your immune system, and thus there are no antibodies in your blood.

The ELISA test may also be positive if the body is fighting off another disease such as malaria. This is a false positive result. This is why a second ELISA test should be taken, followed by the Western Blot test.

E. Why be tested:

If you are suspicious about the possibility of being HIV positive, here are some good reasons why you should be tested:

- If you know you are HIV positive, your concern for others will lead you not to spread HIV by having sex with others.
- If you are HIV positive, you can change your behavior and eating habits in order to prolong your life.
- If you know you are HIV positive, you will know that you cannot give blood.
- Your knowledge about the causes and effects of HIV/AIDS will help you to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in your community.
- If you are married, and you are tested to be HIV positive, you will be able to make financial plans for the future of your children when you die.
- If you are planning to marry, and you are HIV positive, you must tell the one you are planning to marry.

F. Living with HIV/AIDS:

HIV/AIDS is a reality of our lives. The infection rate in many African countries is 30% HIV positive or higher. Thousands of people die every day from HIV/AIDS related diseases. Those who are HIV positive need help and care. You can be a great help in stopping the spread of HIV in your community by learning as much as possible about HIV/AIDS and by abstinence in sexual activity outside the union of marriage.
If you follow the previous suggestions as to how one can protect himself or herself from HIV infection, then there should be no worry on your part about contracting HIV from an infected person. Those who are HIV positive need your care and love. You cannot contract HIV by touching, hugging, sharing eating utensils, or coughing on the part of the HIV positive person. Therefore, you should not isolate yourself from those who are HIV positive. If you are HIV positive, or you know of others who are, here are some things you can do to have a fulfilled life and to help others live the best they can with HIV:

- Show your concern and love by associating with a person who is HIV positive.
- Educate yourself on how to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and to keep yourself free of HIV.
- Help HIV people to be positive and maintain a healthy diet. If you are HIV positive, maintain a positive outlook on life.
- Maintain a good exercise program.
- If one is sick as a result of AIDS, encourage proper medical treatment.
- Through counselling, encourage an HIV positive person not to have sex with others. You can be a good friend to one who is HIV positive by being there for them.

If you are HIV positive, that does not mean that you should be negative about the rest of your life. Living a positive life without stress is one of the primary health care principles to prolong your life. Take care of your health. Exercise. Get sufficient sleep. Seek the support of those around you.

Eating properly helps your body fight off the attack of many diseases. Eating healthy foods means avoiding drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco and abusing drugs. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains as samp and brown bread.

Stay optimistic in your outlook on life. You made a mistake and contracted HIV. This does not mean that your life is over. Your condition should be an opportunity to change your behavior by focusing on helping others to prevent getting HIV themselves. Therefore, you must believe in yourself and look on the positive side of life. Focus on God and how you can better serve Him. You now know that you will have some challenges in your life. This is a time to change your thinking and live a life for God. It is a time to focus on God and how you can prepare yourself to life forever in His presence.

One of the greatest things you can do is start a support group to help others who are HIV positive. Through the help
of friends and family, you can let it be known to others that you would like to start a discussion group of those who have HIV/AIDS. Ask those who do not have HIV/AIDS to participate with you in the discussion group. Helping to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS means that the community as a whole must become involved in a very proactive way to combat those problems in society that have led to the spread of HIV. It is time for action, not reaction or resignation.

Dignity refers to the development of our character in a manner that results in being respected by others because of our honest conduct of life. It refers to the manner by which we conduct ourselves in our relationships with other people. Similar in meaning to dignity is integrity. Integrity is the state of being of a sound moral principle. It is a character of uprightness, honesty and sincerity. The dignified person conducts himself with great integrity.

As a citizen of the community, we must conduct ourselves with honesty, diligence and integrity. These qualities are manifested through speech and behavior. All these qualities refer to the dignity of a person. It should be your goal, therefore, to focus your life around these qualities so that you can develop your character. In doing this you will live with dignity in your community. You will gain respect and honor among fellow citizens when you conduct yourself with dignity and integrity.

The general principle for maintaining a dignified relationship with one’s fellow citizen is, “All things whatever you want men to do to you, even so do also to them ...” (Mt 7:12). Men and women who conduct themselves with dignity make this the guiding principle of their lives. They conduct themselves in their relationships with others as they want others to conduct themselves toward them. This is the principle by which you must conduct your life if you seek a better life with others. By following this principle, you will gain great respect, for people will see you as a person of dig-
nity in the community.

It should be the challenge of every person to discover skills for developing a dignified life of integrity. In accepting this challenge, we must focus on specific characteristics that God wants us to have in our character. If we understand and apply each of these personality characteristics to our lives, we will be the dignified person God wants us to be. We will be the type of person our neighbors want us to be. And in being this type of person, we will be received by all people with whom we associate.

A. Dignity in our hearts:

Dignity begins in one’s heart. In order to conduct oneself with sincere dignity, we must begin with our inner beliefs. True dignity is the manifestation of integrity in one’s heart.

1. The dignified person serves others with sincerity of heart. When one works as an employee, he or she sometimes has grudges against the employer. Because of these grudges, employees sometimes steal things or steal time from their employers. This is not the behavior of a dignified person.

   Honorable People Help Others.

   Therefore, putting away lying, let everyone speak truth with his neigh-

Honesty is showing fairness and sincerity toward one’s neighbor without lying, cheating or stealing. Serving an employer honestly and with sincerity of heart means that one makes every effort as an employee to make his employer successful. Dignity is being honest and sincere in what one does in his or her relationship with others. A manpleaser is one who does something with an insincere heart in order to accomplish a selfish goal. But one who serves with sincerity does his service from the heart in order to serve another.

2. The dignified person is honorable. He or she seeks honorable behavior with all people. Honor means submitting ourself first to God in order to give Him reverence, respect and service. In relation to our fellow man, it means submitting ourselves to the needs of others in order to give service to the needs of others. When we give honorable respect to others, we will seek to serve them. We place ourselves in a position of honor when we show respect to others. This behavior is explained in the Bible by the nature and behavior of the godly person who conducts himself or herself with dignity in the community. As a citizen of your community, it must be your goal to behave in an honorable manner.
3. The dignified person has an honest heart. He or she does not deal in a crafty manner with others. The Bible says of the honest person: “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Co 4:2).

Those who “walk in craftiness” are those who are not honest with their fellow man. A dishonest person is one who is concealing truth from others for his or her own selfish advantage. A deceitful person is selfish because he or she is thinking only of one’s self. In contrast to this type of behavior, the dignified person does not deal with others with hidden selfish goals or purposes. He or she is always honest in all relationships with others.

4. The dignified person behaves unselfishly with others. Corruption in government and society in general is a curse to the people. When corruption exists in society, people do not deal honestly with one another. They deal selfishly in all matters of business and government in order to receive dishonest money and possessions for themselves. Corruption destroys the moral fiber of society. It does so because corrupt people always think of themselves when dealing with others. They are always thinking about what they can get out of their relationships with others. Corrupt government officials work in the same manner. They seek to serve themselves.

Greedy people will deal corruptly with others. They will always have themselves at heart, and thus, will always be seeking to deal falsely with their neighbors. On the other hand, those who are not selfish, and seek to reach out and help others, will deal sacrificially with their neighbors. They will seek to give, not take.

5. The dignified person guards himself from corruption. Recorded in the
Bible is an event of some government officials who came to John the Baptist. He instructed them to guard themselves from corruption. He instructed that tax collectors not to take advantage of others because of their office. Soldiers were not to intimidate others because of their position. Government officials were to be content with their wages (Lk 3:12-14). The behavior of government officials establishes an example for a nation. Honest and dignified officials who deal honestly and justly will establish an example of how all citizens are to behave. It is very important, therefore, that all civil servants of a country conduct themselves honorably before the citizenship of their country.

Corruption in a government of the people is a sign that people are selfishly using their positions in government as an opportunity to take advantage of the people. Honest government officials who work with integrity will not use their positions in government to take advantage of those who trust them to serve as civic leaders.

6. The dignified person lives with a good conscience among all men. Having a good conscience means that one is able to lay his head down at night and sleep in peace. Those who live dignified lives, and thus, conduct themselves with integrity in their relationships with others, will have peace of mind. They will have peace of mind because they know they have done that which is right in all their dealings with others.

Integrity is conducting oneself with sound moral character in working with others. It is upright living and being honest and sincere in all aspects of your life. Men and women with integrity always seek to do that which is right. By seeking to do what they believe is right, they have a good conscience about themselves in their relationships with God and man.

7. The dignified person focuses on that which is good and true in others. The Bible instructs, “Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things” (Ph 4:8). This is the thinking of dignified people. People of integrity focus their minds and lives on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. They do not focus on evil things and that which is of this world.

B. Dignity in godly living:

The dignity of one’s heart is carried...
out in the behavior of his or her life. It is for this reason that the dignified person can always be identified by his or her integrity in behavior. You must focus your behavior on the following principles in order to conduct yourself with dignity:

1. The dignified person conducts his or her life according to godly principles. If we want to know a general definition of God’s servant who conducts himself or herself with dignity in the community, then the following statement would be such a definition. Notice the godly conduct that God wants of those who would be His representative in the community.

   “I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.”

   Abraham Lincoln

For an overseer must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent, not greedy of dishonest gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, sensible, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, so that he may be able by sound teaching both to exhort and refute those who contradict (Ti 1:7-9).

The person who would seek to lead others must maintain qualities in his or her life that manifest a godly nature. This is the person of dignity who seeks to lead others by the example of godly living.

2. The dignified person controls his or her speech. Our speech reveals to others our inward feelings and thoughts. If we have evil in our hearts, this evil will eventually be manifested by what we say. If we have good in our hearts, others will know the goodness of our hearts by the words of our mouth. Jesus said the following:

   For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man brings good treasure out of good things. And an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you, that every idle word that men will speak, they will give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Mt 12:34-37).

The one who cannot control his or her speech, cannot hide the innermost thoughts of the heart. If there is evil in our hearts, then we will speak that which is evil. We cannot have evil in our hearts without revealing such through our speech.

The wise person never says more than he or she knows. We should conduct our speech according to the Biblical statement, “Let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Js 1:19). This is good advice. The person of dignity guards what he or she says.
He or she speaks with caution in order to encourage others to speak, as well as learn from what others say. The more one speaks in a conversation, the less he or she learns from others.

The Bible also gives the following instructions concerning our speech, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone” (Cl 4:6). The one who speaks in order to intentionally embarrass or offend others is often seeking to exalt himself or herself over others. However, we must always speak in order to build others up. We do not build others up by speaking evil of them or telling lies about them.

3. The dignified person respects his or her neighbors. Moses wrote, “Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother” (Mk 10:19). These commandments refer to dealing with one’s relationship with his or her neighbor by respecting one’s neighbor. Those who violate these commandments do not love their neighbors as themselves. They are not people of dignity. The person of dignity, however, will make every effort to live with his or her neighbor by not violating the rights of one’s neighbor.

4. The dignified person respects the property of others. It is a principle of mutual respect that one not steal from another. The Bible instructs, “Let him who stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, so that he may have something to give to him who has need” (Ep 4:28).

The one who steals from his or her neighbor does not respect others. The thief is always selfish. He has no consideration for the hard work of others who labor with their own hands to acquire what he steals from them. There is no such thing as a dignified thief.

5. The dignified person will provide for his family. A lazy person is not dignified. There is no dignity in the one who refuses to work in order to help his family. On the other hand, the one who works to support his family and others is to be highly commended for accepting such a responsibility. Even if the wages one earns is low, and the family has little to spare, the dignity of the one who earns a wage is seen in the fact that he is willing to do all he possibly can to take care of his family.

C. Dignity in work:

There is no dignity in being lazy. If there is work to be done, the dignified person will work. He will assume responsibility for taking care of himself. He will assume his or her responsibility of taking care of his family.
1. **The dignified person will seek to support himself.** It is a principle of dignified living that one diligently work with his own hands in order to support himself. The Bible seriously teaches on this subject when it states “*that if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat*” (2 Th 4:10).

The dignified person assumes personal responsibility to secure a job in order not to be a burden to others. By working to support himself, the dignified person sets an example for others to follow, and thus, everyone in the community is encouraged to work.

A good citizen of the community will not live in a way that causes conflict in the community by being a financial burden to others. He or she will work with his or her own hands in order to fulfill all personal financial responsibilities.

Because the dignified person works with his own hands in order to supply his necessities, he can deal honestly with his neighbors. When one can take care of himself, he is not tempted to beg from his neighbor or steal from his neighbor.

2. **The dignified person is a fervent worker.** Those who serve God will be diligent workers because they live in thanksgiving to God for what He has done for them. They prefer to be with those who likewise honor and serve God. The dignified person keeps company with those who are diligently serving God and others.

Diligence is the quality of applying oneself to any task that is undertaken in order to bring about the reason for undertaking the task. Diligent people are driven by their sense of responsibility to themselves and others. They are disciplined in their behavior. These are people who are determined to do what it takes to accomplish goals in their lives.

If there is work to do, and one does not work, then he or she is not accepting responsibility. An opportunity to work with one’s hands is an opportunity for accepting responsibility to care of oneself and others.

3. **The dignified person works in order to help the poor.** One purpose for our working is to share what we earn with others. In order to show appreciation for our work, we seek to give to others. Only through giving to others do we build our character. Selfish labor leads to a greedy heart. Those who understand that they do not work only for themselves, but also for their fellow man, will develop caring hearts. When one has work, therefore, he or she must not forget those who cannot find work. Those who conduct themselves with dignity have compassion on those who are suffering from economic depression. It is always the responsibility of society as a whole to take care of society as a whole. Democracy can exist in a nation only
when citizens unselfishly work together in the free economic structure of the nation. Each person must be responsible for providing for himself and his family. But we must also be concerned about those who are the poor among us (Gl 2:10).

Chapter 8
NEIGHBORS WITH CHARACTER

One’s individual character is enhanced only when he or she becomes an active participant in a community.

One of the first principles of God for relationships between neighbors is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39). If one wants his neighbor to do good to him, then he must first do good to his neighbor. Being a good neighbor makes one a good citizen. Those who conduct themselves with dignity and integrity will be good neighbors. They will be an asset to the communities in which they live.

When neighbors in a community begin stealing, lying and cheating one another, then the society of the community is destroyed. It is essential, therefore, that everyone in the community seeks to live in peaceful harmony with one another. In order to do this, everyone in the community must live by Divine moral principles. Everyone Needs A Neighbor.

To Receive Good You Must First Do Good.

To receive good you must first do good. Principles of good neighborhood, therefore, include showing love and respect for others. Neighborhood is the work of individuals doing good to others as they want others to do good to them. Giving clothes to the needy and food to the hungry are common practices of good neighborhood. Everyone also care for those who fall into unfortunate circumstances.

It is each neighbor’s responsibility to work toward the development of a social environment in which everyone can pur-
sue happiness. It should be the goal of all of us to live in communities wherein we promote goodwill toward one another by encouraging one another to live a peaceful life.

When love exists among neighbors, there will be joy, peace, kindness and patience among those who dwell in the community. There will be the desire of everyone to work together in order to develop a community spirit. **Good neighbors join together in order to make a better neighborhood for the benefit of all.**

A. Respect others.

At one time during the ministry of Jesus, a young ruler came to Jesus. The young ruler asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded, “You will not murder. You will not commit adultery. You will not steal. You will not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother. And, you will love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 19:18,19). The fact of the young man’s ability to live with neighbors was shown in his response to Jesus. He responded to Jesus, “All these things I have kept” (Mt 19:20). The young man was a good neighbor in that he respected others. The Bible states that Jesus looked at him and loved him for who he was.

**Loving one’s neighbor means that we must show respect to our neighbors.** We show respect in our relationships by not dishonoring others through sexual immorality. We show respect to others by not stealing or bearing false witness against others.

We are not alone in our community. We must take an active part in interacting with others in our community. This means that we do to our neighbors what we want them to do to us.

B. Do good.

In the Bible it is taught, “Therefore, all things whatever you want men to do to you, even so do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7:12). What this means is that **one must initiate goodwill toward others.** In other words, you do not wait for others to first do good to you. You must take the first step in doing good. Good neighbors take the first step in doing good to others in order to have others do good to them. This is the key to being a good neighbor. When we go about doing good to all people, then all people will do good to us.

This is the principle behind Jesus’ statement, “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, it will be poured into your lap. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured to you again” (Lk 6:38). So
Nature’s Lesson

The honey bee illustrates an amazing example of community communication and mutual loyalty to common goals. In the diligent work of honey bees, each bee cooperates in order to develop the hive. Through an intricate system of communication, each bee works for the common good of the whole. In storing the honey, each bee contributes a distinct glandular secretion to the honey according to what function each group of bees performs in reference to building the hive. The hive is a balanced community when all secretions are present and sufficient in supply. However, when a particular secretion is missing or not sufficient, a moaning sound is made by the bees with their wings that goes throughout the entire hive. This is a throbbing sound in the hive as if it were suffering from a fever. This is a signal to all the bees of the hive. All bees are thus alerted in order to make up the imbalances of the hive. Some bees even change work roles in order to make up where the hive is deficient. Thus all bees work together for the survival of the hive.

take the initiative. Do good and give. The same will eventually be done to you.

We must take a proactive part in showing respect for others. Those who have given themselves to serve God, serve Him by respecting the personal rights of others. One way you can take a proactive part in respecting the rights of your neighbor is by not involving yourself in sexual behavior that endangers the community in which you live. You can do this by respecting others in reference to your sexual activity. By this you must not put your neighbor in a situation where he or she feels compelled to have sex before marriage. In this way one shows respect of others.

C. Speak truth.

Good neighbors speak truth to one another. Believers are encouraged, “Therefore, putting away lying, let everyone speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Ep 4:25). Both cheating and lying indicate that one does not have respect for other people. By cheating another out of his or her money or possessions, one shows that he or she does not respect neighbors. The liar reveals his or her personal insecurity in relationships with other people because he
or she lies in order to give a false pretense to others. Both the thief and liar are self-centered. They have little concern for establishing relationships with others. And because they are either thieves or liars, neighbors do not trust them.

D. Protect others.

Good neighbors do no harm to one another. It is stated in the Bible, “Love works no harm toward his neighbor” (Rm 13:10). It also teaches that no one “put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Rm 14:13). “Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification” (Rm 15:2). These are great principles by which to live with one’s neighbor.

Falsely accusing another individual means we show contempt toward another person because we have selfish ambition or seek to do harm to another. Good neighbors do not behave in a way that causes others to stumble before God. On the contrary, a good neighbor seeks to please others in order that they be encouraged. By not lying, cheating, stealing or falsely accusing others, one protects his or her neighbor.

E. Show equality.

Good neighbors do not discriminate between neighbors because of either race or riches. In fact, the Bible teaches, “If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well. But if you show respect of persons, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (Js 2:8,9).

One cannot love his neighbor as himself if he shows favoritism on the basis of either race or riches. If we show favoritism to a particular person because of his or her race or riches, we will neglect showing respect to others. The reason favoritism in the community is detrimental to community peace is because people are intentionally leaving others out of their lives. We cannot do good to all men if we intentionally leave some people out of the good that we should be doing to them. The practice of favoritism in reference to riches or race must always be viewed as detrimental to national unity and community harmony.

F. Care in times of crisis.

Good neighbors help one another in times of crisis. During the ministry of Jesus, a crippled man was once brought to Jesus by his friends. The crippled man’s friends manifested their will to be good neighbors because they were willing to help their crippled friend who was in need. This is what good neighbors do (Mk 2:1-5). They help one another in times of need.

Like the four friends of the crippled man, good friends will do all that is nec-
ecessary in times of crisis in order to see to one another’s needs. Neighborhood means that we are willing to help those in our community whose lives are in crisis. When needs arise in the lives of others, good neighbors go into action to help. They do not stand around and watch others do that which must be done.

**G. Help widows and orphans.**

Good neighbors will help widows and orphans. True religion is expressed in the fact that individuals have compassion on those who have lost their spouses or parents to death (Js 1:27). When wives and children lose their source of daily provision, then it is the responsibility of the community to act.

In order to be a good neighbor, you must make sure the physical and spiritual needs of widows and orphans in the community are fulfilled. If there are many widows and orphans, you must take the initiative to move the community into action. Doing such not only manifests one’s humanity, but also your belief that you respect others without discrimination. The presence of widows and orphans in our community is an opportunity for us to show that we are concerned about others.

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**Believers in God should always set the example of what a good neighbour is. They should take the lead in servicing the needs of the community because they are ready to help others. Living the life of a believer means dealing with our neighbours in a positive way that produces peaceful communities. Though evildoers exist in most communities, this does not mean that one should neglect doing good to his neighbour, or even to his enemies. When God is in our hearts, we will seek to do as He desires in our community. In every community, believers should do what Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:16).**

“We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibres, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.”

Herman Melville
Chapter 9
THE PRODUCTIVE CHARACTER

Great countries are founded	on the productive ingenuity of a godly
and zealous people who seek a better life
as the common good of all citizens.

Are you known as a person who goes about in your community taking an initiative to do good to others? Those who are assets to their communities are people who take the initiative to be productive in their relationship with others. The productive citizen of any community goes about doing good in every area of his or her life.

- The productive citizen does good for his or her family.
- The productive citizen does good when working in the garden and the fields.
- The productive citizen does good when working on a job for someone else.
- The productive citizen seeks to do good as an employee of the government.

In every area of life, the productive citizen seeks to do good to others in order to develop the community economically so that everyone enjoys a better way of life. Are you this type of person?

Individual productivity brings about a better way of life for everyone. It is the responsibility of everyone in any community of the world to be productive in order to make better societies in which people can live. By assuming the responsibility to be the best you can be as a productive citizen in your community, you will be known as one who seeks to better life for everyone. Your influence will motivate others to do the same. When leaders lead productive lives, they are good examples to everyone in the community. When everyone in the community goes about doing good

“The greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are and what we could be.”

John Grimes

Successful Employees Seek To Make Successful Employers.

The literary genius, Charles Dickens, was once asked what the key to his success was. He responded,

“Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well: whatever I have devoted myself to I have devoted myself to completely.”

The Bible Teaches:
“Whatever you do, do it heartily.”
Colossians 3:23
in order to serve others, then societies prosper.

As a productive citizen, you must work to be the best employee on the job you can be. **It is the goal of the employee to make his or her employer successful.** When you make your employer successful, you and others benefit from the company for which you work. In order to guarantee your job as an employee, you must make every effort to perform productively on the job as an employee.

Leadership involves being an example to others concerning employment. A leader must lead in giving an example of how to be employed by others. The productive employee will lead those who are fellow employees in how to develop a successful company for which they work.

God has given us principles by which we can be productive citizens in our communities. When we follow these principles, we play our part in developing the community to be a great place to live. We fulfill our role as leaders by giving examples to everyone in the community concerning God’s conduct for employees and employers.

It is important to discover principles of attitude that increase productivity in our lives. These are principles that must identify the character of everyone who seeks to be a productive citizen. Fundamental principles of productivity will help you lead a more fulfilled life in your community. Follow these principles and you will be a productive member of your community and a successful employee on the job.

**A. Be zealous.**

A productive person is zealous in his or her behavior. Zeal is the foundation upon which productivity is based. Zeal refers to the manner by which you do your job. **It refers to accomplishing the assigned job the best you can in the shortest amount of time.**

It is the natural behavior of those who have given themselves to serve God to be known for doing good. They zealously do their work because God has and continues to do good for them. When you are full of zeal in doing good to others, your behavior encourages others to also do good. If you are a zealous employee, you set an example for others to follow. Leaders encourage good deeds in their communities by zealously doing good to others. They are an example to others by their productive lives in working as employees.

**B. Focus on others.**

**In order to be zealous in service to others, one must focus on others.** If

> “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.”

*King Solomon*
one is “kindly affectionate” toward others, he or she will fervently seek to serve others. This thought is a principle of the Bible, which states, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, ... distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” (Rm 12:10-12).

If the emphasis of one’s life is on others, then he or she will be a true servant to the needs of others. However, if our focus is on ourselves, then we will not be fervent in spirit to reach out with service to others.

The selfish person sees himself as the center of his existence. On the other hand, the selfless person who is full of brotherly love sees others first in all things. In putting his neighbor first in all things, he becomes a servant who seeks to serve others. And when he serves others, he is serving and pleasing God. In His service the name of God is glorified.

C. Serve others.

It is the nature of a productive person to show zeal for labor in service to others. The following statement in the Bible describes the nature of this type of person:

*For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love that you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and still are ministering. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that you not be sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises* (Hb 6:10-12).

The above principle was maintained by the apostle Paul who was a great leader in showing others, as a religious leader, to work with one’s own hands in order not to be a financial burden to others. He wrote, “You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me” (At 20:34). He said that he and those who were with him did not “eat any man’s bread without paying for it, but worked with labor and hardship night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you” (2 Th 3:8).

When one ministers to others, he is showing his love of God. For this reason, believers are not sluggish, but zealous in reaching out to do good to all people. This was the nature of believers in the city of Thessalonica, about whom the Bible speaks, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love ...” (1 Th 1:2,3).

Good leaders zealously maintain good works in their lives. Through their behavior of good works they teach by setting an example for others that we must
seek to do good to our fellow man. In fact, if one claims to be a believer in God, he or she must make and activate good works that can be done in the community in which he or she lives. He or she must be willing to meet the urgent needs of the community in order to be a leader in the community. Zealously maintaining good works means that one must continually seek to do good. If we make it a goal in our life to do a good deed every day, our influence will lead others to do the same.

D. Serve others in submission.

When one has a spirit of submission, he or she will submit to opportunities of learning or serving in all areas of life. The Bible teaches that we are “to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work ...” (Ti 3:1).

One who has a submissive attitude will reflect submission in all areas of his or her behavior. A submissive heart allows one to accept and practice in his or her life the principles of God’s word. Submission opens the door for spiritual growth.

- The submissive submit to civil authority.
- The submissive submit to responsibility on the job.
- The submissive submit to the needs of one’s family.
- The submissive submit to the needs of the community.
- The submissive submit to the needs of personal relationships.
- The submissive submit to the needs of team efforts.

Good leaders dedicate themselves to be submissive to the needs of others. It is through their attitude of submission that they learn to lead others.

One’s spirit of submission to both God and man is the key to a happy and successful life. It is through submission that the individual opens the door of opportunity that leads to a fulfilled life. It is through this door that the humble spirit passes with a receptive mind that absorbs strength from others which is essential for victorious living.

E. Take the initiative.

Many people talk about doing good. Others just do it. Those who seek to be leaders must be known for being people who do what they talk about doing. They must be people of action where they do what they say. No one is a leader who does not have the self-initiative to do that which must be done. The principle of self-initiative is taught in the Bible. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ... he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues to abide in it, not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in his deed” (Js 1:22-27).

The great inventor, Thomas Edison, was a man who used his imagination and initiative to give to the world some
of the greatest inventions. The United States Patent Office granted him 1,098 patents. He received 122 patents before he was thirty years old. On his seventy-fifth birthday he said, “Work heals and ennobles.”

The productive individual makes sure his performance in life matches his desires. He will speak of great things to do. However, the difference between the productive individual and the one who speaks and does not, is that the productive person does what he says he will do. He initiates work without being told to work. True leaders take the initiative to do that which is right. They are known as people who take action. Their performance in life matches their desires to do great works for others.

“*The smallest deed is better than the greatest intention.*”

Unknown author

F. Work faithfully.

In order to continue with a productive life, one must not rely on the recognition of his work by others as necessary in order to continue to work. Working without relying on recognition is important simply because most people do not recognize most of your work. The truly motivated person does not work because of the reward of recognition. He or she works because of an inward motivation of being satisfied with a job well done.

If one works in order to be commended by people, then he or she will eventually stop working when people cease to recognize their works. The employee who is a believer must always remember that he or she is working for God when working for an employer of this world. When one realizes this, then there is always a sense of accomplishment and reward in what one does.

G. Deal justly.

It is a principle of employment that employers give a fair salary to those who give them fair service. Every employer must deal justly and fairly in wages that are earned by the employees. The Bible speaks of some who did not do this. “*Behold, the wages of the laborers who have mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out against you*” (Js 5:4).

God’s principle for payment of laborers is that they must be paid fairly for what they do. Unjust employers are identified by their unjust dealings with their employees in reference to the payment of salaries. Unjust employers will be held accountable for their refusal to pay salaries to their employees. Their unfair treatment of employees is against God’s will. God instructs, “*‘You will not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’*” (1 Tm 5:18). When an employee does a worthy amount of work, he is worthy of his pay. On the other hand, when an employer gives a worthy amount of pay, an employee must render a worthy amount of work.
Chapter 10

THE RESPONSIBLE CHARACTER

Responsibility is knowing and doing what God and others expect of you. It is not simply doing what you say you will do. It is doing what you know you should do in your relationships with others and what is required by the law of the land. Responsibility includes doing what is expected of you by others, regardless of whether or not you want to do what is expected.

It is the task of every citizen of every nation to be a productive and responsible individual. If one can work, and there is work to be done, then it is the responsibility of everyone to work. Work is a principle of life by which God intended that all men be productive in order to support themselves. When one assumes his or her responsibility to work, then men...
and women can live productive and responsible lives in harmony with one another.

The more responsibility one assumes in his or her duties in life, the more freedom one has to control his or her own destiny. However, the more freedom we have, the more responsibility we have to maintain correct relationships with others. Assuming responsibility gives us freedom to do that which we know we should do. When we perform our duties of life, we feel free. This freedom means that we are being responsible for the things that we consider to be our duty to do. Only those people who assume their responsibility to work have control over their destiny. Everyone else is controlled by the circumstances of life. The point is that we must take control of our destiny by responsibly taking control of every opportunity to work.

If one is a believer in God, then he or she has a great responsibility to be diligent and industrious in all aspects of life. The believer must give himself or herself to his or her work. This is especially true if you are employed by an employer who is paying your salary. God expects us as employees to live according to the principle of giving responsible service to those who employ us as their laborers. The responsible person, therefore, makes it his or her goal to make his or her employer successful.

In order to be the type of responsible person that God desires, we must discover those principles and skills that make it possible for us to work in a functioning relationship with others. After we make this discovery, then it is time to implement these principles in our lives. Knowledge without implementation profits nothing in the development of our characters. We must simply do what we learn. These principles and skills must be practiced in our lives in the following ways:

- Employee responsibilities.
- Marriage responsibilities.
- School responsibilities.
- Community responsibilities.

As we research what God has instructed concerning being a responsible person, we must concentrate on implementing His successful skills for productive living. Keep in mind that it is your purpose to be the best person you can be in order to gain the respect of the community in which you live. In order to be this type of person, you must begin by applying to your behavior the living skills of our Creator.

If we study leadership skills of life, we discover many important principles that make one a better person. You will be a better citizen by practising these skills. The following skills are listed as some of the most important behavioral ethics that must be manifested in the lives of those who seek to develop a personality that is successful in life. Your character development in these areas is necessary in order to become a responsible person in society.
A. Develop an ethic for work.

One of the first personality skills you must learn is that you must be fervent in spirit (Rm 12:11). Laziness is a sign of irresponsibility. King Solomon wisely asked, “How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?” (Pv 6:9). He continued, “The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (Pv 13:4).

Responsible people assume tasks in order to carry out their duties as productive citizens. They are not lazy people. Responsibility is manifested in their lives through work.

1. Be responsible in work. Responsibility means that one accepts the challenge to work. A responsible person can be identified by his or her continual desire to work in order to provide for the necessities of life, as well as to do good for others. By accepting the responsibility to work, one accepts his or her community responsibility to bear his or her own load. The Bible teaches that “each one will bear his own load” (Gl 6:5). Citizenship in any community means that one must assume the responsibility of providing for his or her own needs. If there is work, and one can work, then one must work in order not to be a burden to others.

As a religious leader, the apostle Paul worked with his own hands while he served God in the city of Thessalonica. He wrote that he did not “eat any man’s bread without paying for it, but worked with labor and hardship night and day” so that he might not be a burden to anyone (2 Th 3:8). He was a tentmaker by trade, and thus made tents wherever he went in order not to be a financial burden to others. His example teaches us that we must develop a trade by which we can support ourselves.

2. Be responsible to work with your own hands in order to eat. Paul was serious about people working in order to be responsible for their own financial well-being. He wrote to the Thessalonians, “For even when we were with you we commanded you this, that if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat” (2 Th 3:10).

One of God’s principles for behavior in any community is that everyone must work in order to be a productive citizen of the community. The seriousness by which we must keep this principle is shown in the fact that those who work are not obligated to support lazy people. If there is work, and one can work, but does not, then those who work are not obligated to feed lazy people.

3. Be responsible to work with your own hands in order that your family is able to eat. The Bible teaches, “The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children” (2 Co 12:14). It is the responsibility of parents to take care of their children while the children are under their care. Responsible parenthood means providing for
those under one’s care. The Bible also teaches, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tm 5:8).

4. **Be responsible to work with your own hands in order to take care of your wife.** When a husband loves his wife, he must be diligent to take care of her physical necessities. Therefore, when a man seeks to be married, he must accept the responsibility of taking care of a wife as he would take care of himself. “Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Ep 5:28,29).

**B. Avoid debt.**

Here is some good advice that is made in the Bible. “Owe no man anything, except to love one another ...” (Rm 13:8). Responsibility includes not being in debt to the point wherein one cannot pay what he owes to another. A good principle of finances is not to buy anything that you cannot pay for in cash at the time of purchase. This principle is based on saving your money, and thus preparing for the time when you must buy things that are necessary for living or to be prepared for some unforeseen financial need. It is also based on the principle that you should not go into debt by buying things that are not necessities for the existence of life. Food and shelter, and those things that make it possible to provide food and shelter, are the things that are necessities for life.

The Bible teaches that we must “learn to maintain good works to meet urgent needs” (Ti 3:14). When you work, you must save some of the money that you earned. If you do not save, you will not have anything to give to those who are in a crisis in their lives and have urgent needs. The practice of saving manifests our discipline over our financial blessings. Saving is being responsible for the blessings that God has given to you. The one who saves is a good steward of his or her blessings.

**C. Help others.**

Not only must you work in order to support yourself, you must also be eager to help others. Those who believe in God must “be careful to maintain good works” (Ti 3:8). Believers must “learn to maintain good works to meet urgent needs so that they will not be unfruitful” (Ti 3:14).

Everyone must be careful to maintain the principle of good works toward others. This is a principle of life that must be learned while growing up. It is the responsibility of fathers and mothers to teach their children that they have a responsibility to help others.
One of the first things you must learn as a citizen of the community is the responsibility you have toward helping others in your community. Since we are the creation of God, we should seek to aid others. Being a part of any community means that one has a responsibility to be a part of the community by aiding others when help is needed. When everyone practices his or her community responsibilities of helping others when there is a need, the community will develop into a vibrant atmosphere of love and concern. The needs of everyone will be met and everyone will feel a part of the community. It is for this reason that Christians set the example for community service. They are seen as those people who care for the needs of others.

D. Help the poor.

In order to be a diligent worker and an asset to your community, you must have a purpose for work. The principle of work is based on our desire to help ourself and others. Being lazy is an indication of one’s selfish behavior toward others. When others are working, while the lazy individual sits idly by and watches, then the lazy person is not concerned about the needs of others. Neither is the lazy person willing to participate with the community. As a religious leader, the apostle Paul worked in order to help others. He wrote, “You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. I have showed you all things, that by laboring as this you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (At 20:34,35).

Because it is a principle to work in order to help others, we are selfish if we refuse to work when there is work to be done. If we refuse to work, we do not care for those for whom we are responsible. One of the first indications that you have developed a character of responsibility is that you desire to work with your own hands in order to help yourself and others. By helping others one manifests that he is not a selfish person.

E. Do your duty.

Good employees perform their duties. They seek to please their employers by performing well on the job. They do not steal from their employers by taking tools or articles from the workplace (Ti 2:9,10).

Employees should willfully do that which they have agreed to do in order that the principles of God be manifested to all. They should not steal (pilfer) the possessions of their employers. Every time an employee steals from his employer, his job is endangered. When employees who believe in God conduct themselves with honesty on the job, the name of God is exalted before others and one’s job is made secure. It is for this reason that Christians secure their jobs beyond those who work to serve themselves, or who work without consider-
F. Give honor to others.

We must give honor to whom honor is due. This means that if someone does a good work, you must compliment them. You must give people credit for the work they do. You must consider others before yourself.

In the context of instructions concerning employer/employee relationships the Bible teaches that bondservants “count their own masters worthy of all honor so that the name of God and his teaching not be blasphemed” (1 Tm 6:1). If bondservants were to give honor to their masters in the first century when these words were written, then certainly employees today should give honor to their employers. In giving honor to the employer, the responsible work of the believing employee gives glory to God.

When you give honor to other people, you are humbling yourself before them. Giving honor to others is a guarantee against becoming arrogant.

G. Work as for God.

When one works for an employer, he or she should work as if working for God. The Bible teaches that when one works for an employer, he or she must work “as to the Lord” (Ep 6:6,7).

As an employee who is a believer, you should work as in service to the Lord. In doing this, you seek to please God, and thus, please the one for whom you work. “And whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men” (Cl 3:23,24). When one is employed, he or she should be diligent on the job as an employee. If you are employed, remember that you are employed not only to receive a pay check, but also to give honor to the Lord through responsible work. Doing your work as to the Lord develops a greater social environment in the workplace.

H. Help the weak.

A principle for maintaining a community is that the emotionally and spiritually strong should bear with those who are still weak. The Bible teaches that we must “bear one another’s burdens” (Gl 6:2). This refers both to growth in knowledge by everyone in the community, as well as to the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of every person.

In every community there are strong and weak personalities. There are emotionally strong people and emotionally weak people. The strong, therefore, have a responsibility to help the weak. A good person will always look for ways he or she can reach out to help others through counselling and strength in times of trial. When a calamity befalls another person, a responsible person will seek to help. Responsibility means helping those who have fallen victim to unfortunate circumstances.

Good civil governments have laws that help the weak. It is the responsibility of society as a whole to help those who are poor. Our behavior in reference to the poor must always be based on the
principle that is stated in Galatians 6:10. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” When we follow this principle in life, God will bless our life.

I. Obey civil laws.

Every citizen of every nation must be responsible for maintaining the civil laws of society. Those who are irresponsible will work against the law of the land, and thus, cause anarchy. The Bible teaches, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God. The authorities that exist are ordained by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority, resists the ordinance of God” (Rm 13:1,2).

God has ordained that civil government exist in order to prevent anarchy and crime in society. It is the responsibility of every citizen, therefore, to maintain government and civil law for the sake of peace in the land. It is for this reason that the Bible calls on all of us to pray for those who are in authority in order that we live in peace. It exhorts “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tm 2:1,2). When we live in a peaceful society, we are able to go about our work serving God. A peaceful society is necessary for Christians to carry out their work of serving others and helping others to come to a knowledge of God.

Chapter 11
THE DYNAMIC CHARACTER

The engine that drives development is the skill of people who can excite others into working toward a common goal. Leaders are not born. They are made. They are developed through the learning and practicing of leadership skills that produce effective leadership. There are potential leaders in everyone. You can be a leader by learning those skills that are necessary for the development of your personality. You must develop a personality that encourages others to accomplish common goals for the betterment of all. The following are some personality skills you must develop in your life in order to be a dynamic person:
A. Creativity:

Dynamic people are creative. Creativity is developing wise thoughts, words, innovative ideas, and then putting these thoughts, words and ideas into action. It is skillfully carrying out one’s determined goals. Creativity is bringing into action thoughts that are clearly defined. The truly creative person is often the ordinary person who has an uncommon manner of carrying out that which is common. Creativity is the expression of the wisdom of those who have given themselves to bring their dreams into reality.

Learning is the foundation upon which one acquires the mental tools of knowledge. It is with knowledge that we are able to form innovative ideas that produce dreams.

B. Decisiveness:

A decisive person makes a choice to do that which is right according to accurate facts, wise counsel, and goals that are clearly defined. Everyone makes either wise or unwise decisions. However, the decisive person brings together as much information as possible before making his or her decision to act. Dr. Glen Heck gave four Ds for making decisions.

- Don’t
  If it is the responsibility of others, let them do it.
- Delay
  If it should be done at a better time, wait.
- Delegate
  If others can do it better, let them.
- Do it
  If none of the above apply, do it!

The decisive person focuses on making small choices in order to develop big decisions that must be made in the future. He focuses on his destiny, rather than on distractions. The wise person determines to make decisions to act, rather than allow the circumstances of life to make decisions for him. And when a decision is made, he or she refuses to detour from that which is right and just.

You must first make a decision in your life to do that which is right. Sec-

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Are you a creative person?

- Do you think about doing something in a better way?
- Do you think about things to do for the community?
- Do you create things for people to do?
- Do you become discouraged when you run into obstacles?
- Do you overcome boredom by thinking of things to do?
- If something does not work, do you find another way of doing it?
- Do you seek to improve things?
ondly, you must decide that you will focus your life on doing what is right for the good of all. People will follow those who decide to do right.

### ARE YOU A DECISIVE PERSON?

- Do you always determine to do that which is right?
- Do you seek the counsel of others before making a decision?
- Does it take you a long time before you decide to act?
- Are you afraid of doing something that is new and different?
- Are you afraid to do that which is right if everyone is doing wrong?
- Are you always afraid of making a mistake?
- Does making a mistake discourage you from continuing?

### C. Dependability:

A wise person is dependable. **Dependability is making a decision to do what is right regardless of the personal cost to one’s own self.** The dependable personality assumes the responsibility for small decisions in order to assume the responsibility of the bigger picture of life. One can count on the dependable person for doing the following:

- Keeping his or her word
- Staying on schedule
- Being alert to details
- Using time wisely
- Making wise decisions
- Completing the task
- Doing what is right
- Doing what is just and fair

Your dependability is determined by your ability to stay focused on completing a job that was greater than you first anticipated. You must stick to your decisions.

### ARE YOU A DEPENDABLE PERSON?

- Have you ever failed to do something you said you would do?
- Do you use difficulties as an excuse not to do something?
- Have you paid back all money you have borrowed?
- Do you always do the tasks that are asked of you at home?
- Can you keep a secret?

### D. Diligence:

A dependable person is diligent in whatever task he or she assumes to accomplish. **Diligence refers to accepting a task in order to complete it skillfully and efficiently with all of one’s energies.** The diligent person gives the totality of his or her abilities to accomplishing each task of life. The diligent person is not just involved in activity, but in work that accomplishes what he or she has set out to do. In order for you to be a diligent person, you must have clearly defined goals for which you enthusiastically seek to accomplish. Diligent people establish goals for their lives, and then set themselves to reach those goals. They know where they are going because of established goals.
ARE YOU A DILIGENT PERSON?

- When given a task to perform, are you quick to see it done?
- Is it difficult for you to get out of bed?
- When you are doing nothing, do you feel you are wasting time?
- Do you do more than you are asked to do?
- Do you feel that sleeping on the job is the wrong thing to do?
- Are you always busy?

E. Enthusiasm:

Enthusiastic people manifest an outward expression of inward energy to accomplish dreams and goals. Enthusiasm is the expression of one’s mind, will and emotions. It is the passionate devotion to the work of accomplishing one’s goals in life. It is giving one’s best to every effort. When one is enthusiastic about his or her work, ordinary behavior is turned into extraordinary achievements. Enthusiasm will change ordinary tasks into successful accomplishments. It will change the ordinary person into one who accomplishes exceptional tasks.

You may feel that you are an ordinary person. However, if you are enthusiastic about what you do, you will be able to accomplish great things in your life. People of passion believe in something that they must do. Their passion generates enthusiasm, and thus they act. In order to develop an enthusiastic attitude, one must become very passionate about something.

ARE YOU AN ENTHUSIASTIC PERSON?

- Do people become enthusiastic when they are around you?
- Do you greet people with enthusiasm?
- When given a task to do, do you get to it as soon as possible?
- Have you ever been asked twice to do a job?

A Lesson From Nature

The small arctic tern is a determined bird. From his nesting grounds in the Arctic Circle near the North Pole, the arctic tern sets his goal to fly over 30,000 kilometers to the Antarctic Ocean near the South Pole. He takes one of two routes in order to make his way south. He will fly either along the eastern coast of Alaska, Canada, the United States and Central and South America, or he will take the African route by flying along the eastern coasts of Europe and Africa.

By flying an average of 200 kilometers a day, the arctic tern will reach the Antarctic in about five months after leaving home. When he decides to go home, it will take him several more months. After completing the entire journey, this small wonder of the bird world will have made a journey equivalent to flying around the world. His nature of diligence and determination allows him to accomplish this incredible journey.
F. Flexibility:

Someone once said, “If you want to grow, you must be willing to stretch.” The dynamic person is able to flexibly stretch around the changing situations and circumstances of life. However, it demands wisdom to be inflexible in reference to false ideas and circumstances that would lead to one’s turning from that which is right and just. It takes great wisdom to know when to be flexible and when to stand firm. We must not be flexible concerning that which is right. Compromising that which is right will lead to being unsuccessful. We will not accomplish the desired outcome of our efforts by doing wrong.

But flexibility may involve pain in changing one’s behavior, work or goals. The successful person, however, will make all necessary sacrifices in order to accomplish that which is right. Flexibility is the ability to make changes in one’s methods by which he or she seeks to accomplish goals. The flexible person is not afraid of change.

If you want to be successful, you must be flexible in your work when you receive more information concerning how a job must be done. The more you adopt new information into your plan of work, the more successful you will be.

ARE YOU A FLEXIBLE PERSON?

• Have you ever become angry when you could not do what you wanted to do?
• When something goes wrong, do you become discouraged?
• When things do not go according to your plans, does it take you a great deal of time to make changes in your life?
• Would it cause you emotional stress if you had to move from where you now live?
• In a group with others, do you always try to get your way or talk about the things you want to talk about?
• How discouraged would you become if you lost everything you owned?

G. Initiative:

The dynamic person takes the initiative. He or she recognizes what must be done, and then acts before being asked. Initiative includes the creative thoughts of the individual, as well as bringing these thoughts into action. Initiative is the quality upon which all characteristics of the dynamic person are brought into action in the life of the leader. One may have great ideas and dreams. But if these ideas and dreams are not brought into reality by the self-initiative of the individual, they are useless.

If you want to be a dynamic person, you must put into action your ideas and dreams. You must be self-motivated, and thus, not depend on the prompting of others to move into action.
H. Self-control:

Self-control is the ability not to do that which is harmful to one’s self. It is refusing to do that which is wrong in order to accomplish what is right. **Self-control in the life of the dynamic person is the ability of the individual to restrain his or her desires and passions.** A dynamic person is neither immoral with his or her sexual activity, nor abusive with words. Self-control is the ability to bring all physical appetites under the direction of a disciplined life. If one does not conquer his or her passions, then he or she becomes a slave of self.

If you want to be a dynamic person, you must learn to bring into captivity the self-indulgence of your passions in order to accomplish what you desire. A lack of self-control will destroy your leadership among people. Without self-control people will see you as an irresponsible person. Because they consider you as irresponsible, they cannot trust you for direction in their lives. Therefore, in order to be a good leader, one must learn to bring his or her life under control in order to give people confidence in one’s direction.

I. Justice:

The truly dynamic person is known for his or her fairness in dealing with others. **Justice is the enactment of wise judgments that are based on the laws of both God and the constitutional rights of the individual.** What is just is according to the will of God. The just person takes responsibility for doing that which is true and right. The dynamic personality, therefore, brings his or her decisions into the realm of first being directed by the law of God. He or she then seeks to uphold, and allow as a guide to life, that which is pure in thought, true in life, and right in obedience. His or her decisions are then directed by the laws of God and man to do that which is true and right in personal relationships with fellow citizens of humanity.

As a person, you must decide to be...
just and fair in all your decisions. You must establish a reputation of making fair decisions that are first based on the will of God, and secondly on the constitutional rights of individuals.

ARE YOU A JUST PERSON?
- Do you always seek to do that which is right?
- Do you always seek to be fair in playing sport with others?
- Has anyone ever dealt with you in an unjust manner?
- If you found someone’s lost money, would you seek to return it?

J. Organization:

Dynamic people have brought order into their lives. That which is under their control is neat, clean, and in its proper place. Priorities are established and maintained. They arrange their lives in order to be efficient, and thus more successful in all things. Because they are organized in their living, they are productive in what they do. In order to be productive, therefore, one must develop an organized life.

Being an orderly person means knowing what must be subtracted from one’s schedule. It is knowing how to prioritize what remains, and then obligating oneself to carry out that which is most important.

If you want to lead an organized life, you must place everything in your life in its proper place, and then seek to keep everything in place. Orderliness will thus be manifested in your life by neatness in your daily activities. If you are conscious of how you organize specific activities of your daily activities, then you are an organized person. Your performance on the job will be efficient. Your productivity will be superior to others if you are a well organized person in all that you do.

ARE YOU AN ORGANIZED PERSON?
- Do you begin each day by thinking about what you will do?
- Do you make your bed and straighten your room every day?
- Has anyone ever said that you dress in a presentable manner?
- Is your house always presentable for visitors?
- Do you encourage others to put things in their proper place?

K. Persuasiveness:

The dynamic person convinces people to discover what they need, and then, shows them the way to accomplish their desires. Good leaders are able to persuade others to do that which must be done.

Persuasion is primarily convincing people what they need to do in order to follow God’s directions, and then, showing them how to put into action God’s will in their lives.
In order to persuade people to go in the right direction, you must manifest confidence through your words and actions. To do this, one must believe and teach truth that is based on respect for people. **The dynamic personality knows how to give information to people in order that they come up with good ideas.** He or she convinces others the advantage of implementing correct ideas by showing what they will lose if they do not implement their ideas.

The most powerful means by which you can persuade others is to act enthusiastically about what you seek to accomplish. Enthusiasm is contagious. If you want to affect the lives of others, then work enthusiastically with what you are doing.

**ARE YOU A PERSUASIVE PERSON?**

- Do you seek to persuade others to work together?
- Do you seek to teach others your ideas?
- Have you ever convinced two people to stop arguing?
- Have you ever convinced someone to be faithful to God?
- Is it easy for you to just follow the decision of the crowd?

**ARE YOU A WISE PERSON?**

- Do you take time for meditation on decisions that must be made?
- Do you think before you speak?
- Do you always consider how things happen and why they happen?
- Are you one who always seeks the truth?
- Do you seek the advice of others?
- Do you find enjoyment in studying the counsel of God?

**L. Wisdom:**

The foundation upon which the life of the dynamic personality is built is wisdom. **True wisdom is knowing that the hand of God is present in every aspect of creation and life.** Wisdom is knowing how to implement one’s knowledge. It is the ability to put into action in one’s life truth and knowledge which one knows. **Great knowledge without humble wisdom will lead one to arrogant behavior.** Humble wisdom directs our knowledge for the benefit of others. **It is wisdom to know how to use what we know.**

The first mark of a person who does not understand what life is about is the person who says there is no God. Your first qualification as a wise person, therefore, is to recognize that God is, and then allow your life to be directed by His will.
There are many characteristics upon which you must think in order to develop your character. Some of the principle characteristics that should be a part of your character have been discussed in this chapter. However, there are more. The following is a list of characteristics on which you must focus in order to develop character in your life. Use a dictionary to understand the meaning of these very important character qualities.

Alertness  
Cautiousness  
Discernment  
Forgiveness  
Honor  
Loyalty  
Punctuality  
Sincerity  
Truthfulness  

Attentiveness  
Compassion  
Discretion  
Generosity  
Hospitality  
Meekness  
Resourcefulness  
Thoroughness  
Vigilance  

Availability  
Contentment  
Endurance  
Gentleness  
Humility  
Submission  
Security  
Thriftiness  
Virtue  

Boldness  
Determination  
Faith  
Gratefulness  
Joyfulness  
Patience  
Sensitivity  
Tolerance

Great leaders base their behavior and decisions on the power of moral principles.

Every great person has acknowledged and submitted to a higher power. If one does not make this acknowledgement as a leader, then he or she will often become harsh, dictatorial, selfish and tyrannical. All great leaders allow themselves to be directed and controlled by the principles of One to whom they feel they must give account for their behavior. It is for this reason that the best leaders are those men and women who have a great faith.

Their faith moves them to establish principles of conduct in their lives.

Since God created humans, we must assume that He alone can define the best characteristics that should identify a good person. He alone should be consulted for moral principles by which we must direct our lives.

The following are some of these behavioral characteristics and principles that will aid you to be a great person. Follow them and you will be an asset to your community and country.

A. Volunteer:

Since all humans are on earth because...
of the power of God, then we must assume that God has given standards by which all of us must relate with one another.

Relationships are based on voluntarily doing good to one another. A good person must be guided by the principle of doing good to all men (Gl 6:10). He or she must abound in doing every possible good work (2 Co 9:8). By doing this one will build relationships with many people. If you seek to continually help others, you will encourage others to do the same. In this way you will be leading others to reach out and help others (See Cl 1:10; 2 Tm 2:21; Ti 2:9,14; 3:1,8,14; Hb 10:24; 13:21).

Our character is shown by the relationships we establish with others through good works. Good relationships are based on the good deeds individuals do for one another. If one desires to establish a good relationship with others, then it is important that he or she seek to do good for others.

Cultures that are rich in character are those cultures that give birth to individual citizens who volunteer to help others. Humanitarianism is the practice of voluntarily reaching out to help others. Every culture must be known for being humanitarian. Any culture that does not encourage individual citizens to take an initiative to help others is weak in moral fiber. Its citizens become selfish and individual.

You must learn to volunteer. If you do not, you will always be expecting others to help you. You must change your thinking from reaching out for a handout to reaching out with a helping hand. A culture of people that learns the spirit of voluntaryism, also learns the spirit of bonding together as one people.

B. Work wisely.

You can ask of God, and He will bless you with wisdom (Js 1:5). Successful people recognize that wisdom is the foundation upon which all decisions are to be made. King Solomon wrote,

- “For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her” (Pv 8:11; see Pv 8:12-21).
- “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Pv 13:20).
- “The lips of the wise disperse knowledge, but the heart of the fool does not do so” (Pv 15:7).

Wisdom is the ability to correctly use that which we know. We gain a great deal of knowledge through study. However, we must exercise wisdom in how we apply our knowledge in our lives. Leaders will study to acquire knowledge. They will also pray that God give them the wisdom to exercise their knowledge in the proper manner.
We must remember that the wisdom that comes from God is always true. It is for this reason that we must seek the wisdom that comes from God. The Bible states, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (Js 3:17; see Ph 3:8; Gl 2:20).

People can grow in the wisdom of this world. However, the greatest source of wisdom and truth comes from God. The wisdom of this world must be based on the wisdom that comes from God. As a potential leader, therefore, do not cheat yourself by refusing to seek wisdom from God. Pray earnestly that God give you the wisdom to function in a godly manner throughout the day. If you ask, God will bless you with wisdom. You need only to call on His desire to bless you with wisdom.

C. Establish priorities.

Your faith must have top priority in leading others. If your faith is first in all things, then other things will fall into their proper order. The truly wise person recognizes that what is most important in life is that which is above this life. Therefore, in establishing priorities in life, the wise person places God first in life. The Bible states, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Mt 6:33).

As a person whom God could use to lead His people, Moses proved himself to be one who based his life on his faith. The following was stated concerning the faith of Moses:

Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. He thus had the opportunity to enjoy himself with the riches of Egypt. However, the priority of his life was to put God first above all things. Every good person will put his or her faith in God above all else in order to serve others with humility. This is what makes great people.

D. Seek counsel.

Throughout the Proverbs of King Solomon there are many exhortations to listen to the counsel of others.

- “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Pv 12:15).
- “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are...” (Hb 11:24-26).
Wisdom is manifested in those who seek the counsel of others. Good leaders will always walk by the counsel of others, for it is through counsel that information is acquired for decision-making. The more information one has in order to make a decision, the better the decision one will make.

We must keep in mind that the key to leadership is information. The more information you have about a particular duty or task that must be performed, the wiser your decisions will be in reference to carrying out the task. A wise person will seek to gain as much information as possible concerning all things in which he or she seeks to lead others. It is for this reason that wise people always seek the counsel of others to gain information before they make critical decisions in their life.

E. Reach for goals.

Success in life depends on our ability to enthusiastically establish and accomplish goals. In order to do this, you must be able not to allow past failures to detour you from going forward. We learn from the past. However, we must not allow failures of the past to make us fearful of the future. In his own life, the apostle Paul was a person who continually reached forward to that which was before him. Even in prison and facing death, he reached toward the goal of heaven. From the confines of a prison in Rome he wrote the following words,

Not that I have already attained or have already become perfect. But I press on .... One thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things that are before. I press toward the mark ... (Ph 3:12-14).

F. Stay active.

When one recognizes his or her abilities, and puts them to work, he or she then becomes a productive citizen. God expects us to be productive according to the abilities He has given to each of us. This point was illustrated by Jesus in a parable concerning a master who gave his servants different talents, or responsibilities. The one who was given five talents of money, produced five more. The one who was given two talents of money did the same. However, the lazy person of the parable was afraid. He subsequently went and hid in the earth the money the master had given.
him (Mt 25:14-30). Because of his irresponsibility, he was unproductive. He was thus called a wicked and lazy servant because he failed to produce with the opportunities that were given to him. Each one of us must discover our abilities in order that we might use them to be productive citizens.

Everyone has opportunities to lead a productive life. If we use these opportunities, our lives will be blessed with great possibilities. You must be perceptive to the opportunities around you in order to take advantage of every possibility to make your life better. You must look at the qualities within yourself in order to take advantage of the opportunities around you. In order to examine yourself, you must be very honest with yourself. This is not a time to compare yourself with others. It is a time to take a good look at yourself in order to make a fair evaluation of your abilities.

G. Be trustworthy.

The Bible states, “It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy” (1 Co 4:2). A trustworthy person is dependable. He or she is one who is faithful in all that he or she does (See 1 Sm 2:35; Rv 2:10). Faithful employees are trustworthy. They do not steal from their employers. They do not cheat their employers by being lazy on the job. A trustworthy person is one with whom a job can be left and the job will be accomplished when the employer returns.

If one is trustworthy with small duties, he gains the trust of others, and thus, he will be given greater responsibilities. The Bible teaches, “He who is faithful in that which is a little is also faithful in much” (Lk 16:10; see Ne 9:8; Pv 11:13; 13:17; 14:5; 20:6; 25:13). An employee who has been found trustworthy with small responsibilities will earn the trust of the employer. When you gain the trust of your employer, you will be given more responsibility. Advancement in work comes through faithfulness to one’s job and employer. It is by gaining the trust of others that one is promoted to leadership.

The preceding was illustrated in the life of a young man named Timothy. He was one who proved his worth before others. As a result, Timothy was well spoken of by people in the two ancient cities of Lystra and Iconium (At 16:1,2). The apostle Paul said of him, “You know of his proven worth ..., that as a son with his father, he has served with me ...” (Ph 2:19-22). By conducting our lives as Timothy, and by being honest and trustworthy in what we do, we gain the respect of other people.

Because the apostle Paul himself was considered a trustworthy person, God used him for a specific work (1 Tm 1:12). Only when we are trustworthy can we be used for great things. If people trust you to fulfill your responsibilities, then they will depend on you for even greater things. If you are dependable, then you have the respect of others. And with the respect of others, you will have a great in-
fluence in the affairs of your community.

H. Manage change.

Leaders are not discouraged when they have to make changes in their work. They see change as a necessary part of life, for in change there is opportunity for growth and new development. If we are discouraged by change, then we will lose many opportunities for success. By learning how to manage change in the environment and circumstances around you, you will be able to grasp hidden opportunities that others miss. You will be able to excel beyond others because you have learned how to make change work for you.

Good leaders are not discouraged when things do not go according to their desires. They easily change direction as circumstances change. They are not afraid of change, since change is a part of life. They know how to change course in order to accomplish their work and goals. Anyone who has a hard time dealing with change, will have a difficult time being successful in a competitive business world. Those who have learned how to make changes in their lives without becoming discouraged will be more likely to succeed in business.

H. Stay on course.

Those who run in a race know that only one person will win the race. However, every contestant still prepares their body for the race. In order to possibly be the one who will win the race, each contestant disciplines his or her body in hope of winning.

Successful people are always confident about accomplishing that which they strive to do. They realize that not everyone can lead in all things. Nevertheless, they continue to press on to accomplish their goals. This principle was expressed in the following words of Paul:

\[
\text{Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain the prize. And every man who strives exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we an imperishable. I thus run, not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified (1 Co 9:24-27).}
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J. Focus on truth.

Successful people speak the truth in love (Ep 4:15). They will always seek to know and apply what is true. In order to be successful, you must always search for the truth in all aspects of life in order to make correct decisions concerning what you will do with your life. When new truth is discovered, you must readjust your life and goals in order to conform to the new truth. Seek to know the
truth in all things in order to do that which is right. King David wrote, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of the sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:1,2).

K. Communicate.

Successful people do not lead by the dictates of their own wills upon the people they seek to lead. They lead first by instructing the people concerning what is right. They then persuade people to carry out that which everyone has learned to be right. To influence others for good, you must be a communicator of information. You must give information upon which others can make a mutual decision to launch out as a group. To do this, you must inform people of all possible information.

A good leader will persuade others with information that leads them to believe that which is true. When people are communicated information that is true, then they will go in the direction of the one who gave the information.

Good leaders learn the facts, and then learn how to communicate to people the facts that will lead people in the right direction.

L. Be impartial.

When a group works in making decisions, every ability and source of information must be utilized and considered. When making decisions, this is not a time to show partiality. If every member of the group is considered, without showing partiality to any one member or group of members, then everyone will join in carrying out the agreed upon decisions. Successful people never practice racism. They never discriminate against any individual or culture of people. The character of impartiality is manifested in the ability of one to consider all participants as necessary parts to the function of the whole.

A great nation is built on the foundation of a leadership that democratically brings all citizens to the decision-making process in order to determine the function and future of the country.

Chapter 13

BUILDING ON A FOUNDATION OF FAITH

Awareness of God allows the individual to soar to unimaginable heights of freedom above all who would dismiss God’s presence in this world.
Some would wonder why there would be a discussion of faith in a course on life orientation. And therein is the problem of the world in which we live. We live in a faithless world, a world that has allowed itself to be stripped of any standard for moral and ethical behavior. If there is no God, then there is no authority that exists outside our own moral inventions. And if there is no eternal standard of moral and ethical authority outside ourselves, then we are left to ourselves to develop moral and ethical standards by which to live. The problem with this is that humans are terrible inventors when it comes to determining what is either right or wrong. We always digress to inventing moral rules that appeal to our own desires.

When we refuse to conduct our lives according to the One who created life in the beginning, we are left as ships without anchors on a sea of social disorientation. Developing character, establishing relationships, being productive citizens, and being the best we can be, are challenges of life that have limits when we have no personal religious faith. It is for this reason that we will never be truly oriented in life unless we are oriented around God.

God consciousness brings richness into our life and success into our challenge to develop as a person. Any course on life orientation that does not focus on the religious yearnings of the human spirit has simply failed to be a complete course. It is incomplete simply because we are religious beings. If we refuse to recognize our religious nature, then we are ignoring the development of the total person.

The South African constitution, as well as many constitutions of nations throughout the world, guarantees the freedom of expression in religious development. This is a very important part of a constitution that represents the people. It is important simply because the people of any nation are religious people. For this reason the development and empowerment of the people must exist within the context of freedom of religious beliefs and expression. Responsible governments establish laws that guarantee the religious freedom of its citizenship.

If we know that we will be held accountable for our misdeeds we may commit against our fellow citizen, then we will conduct our lives with dignity and self-control. If we have no sense of accountability, then anarchy will exist in

"Nothing But Religion Can Make Human Values Known To People"
Vladimir Putin

"To educate a person in mind and not in morals, is to educate a menace to society."
President Theodore Roosevelt

Responsible citizenship and character building is based on the level of one’s sense of accountability he or she has toward Divine authority.
our personal lives, and in society in general. Everyone would do as he or she pleases if there were no sense of accountability in society. We would do as we please, and thus carry out our selfish ambitions to the extent of violating the rights of our fellow man. A sense of accountability guarantees that we do not violate the human rights of others.

Citizens who dwell in nations that are governed by the rule of law, maintain a respect for the rights of one another. Only by submitting to law is there true freedom. Nations establish law, and rule thereby. This is done in order to guarantee the freedom of citizens. If there is no rule by law, then citizens violate one another’s rights. **Human rights cannot exist in nations that are not governed by law.**

When rulers refuse to recognize both civil law, and a higher law from God, they destroy the freedom of individual citizens. God has established a higher rule of law for man. **By making God’s law the final rule of our personal lives, we are guaranteed freedom, even though the practices of men may bring us into captivity.** We are guaranteed freedom from those who would oppress us by their own corrupted desires.

It is for the above reason that all men must develop a sense of responsibility to the will of God. This is the part religion plays in the development of great citizens and great nations. When the citizens of nations respect the rule of higher laws in their lives, great nations are developed. When every citizen feels a sense of accountability to God and a higher law than the civil law of the land, then citizens will seek to respect their neighbors and civil law. **Nations are unified only when the citizenship unites together in honoring God.** Human rights are guaranteed only when people accept and remain obedient to the law of One before whom they feel they will eventually give account for their behavior.

The truly God-fearing person will be the best citizen of any nation. He or she will be the best citizen simply because he or she sees an authority beyond national government. **The God-fearing citizen behaves according to the law of the land because he**
or she behaves according to the higher laws of God. When we know we will give account of our actions before God, we will behave honorably in our relationships with our fellow man.

It is important to understand some of the key moral and ethical principles that are a part of religious faith. These principles are taught by every religious faith, and thus, in order to be complete as the morally and ethically equipped person, we must consider these fundamental principles of religion. If we honor these principles, we will enjoy an enhanced and uplifted life. We will guard ourselves against unfortunate consequences that come as a result of violating these moral and ethical principles. If we violate these principles, then we must expect to sow what we reap. It is for this reason that every person must seriously look at righteous principles by which he or she can live life.

A. Be religiously active.

This brings us to the subject of moral and ethical behavior. Governments of this world establish civil laws to direct the interaction of citizens. However, it is the purpose of religion in society to teach moral and ethical behavior. This behavior must come from God simply because the moral and ethical principles of man continually change. The different civil laws of governments have always changed. However, God’s moral laws do not change. His principles of moral behavior and ethical relationships between people have never changed since the beginning of the world. It is important, therefore, that our moral and ethical behavior be directed by God in our relationships with one another.

An example of reaping consequences by violating God’s law is illustrated by man’s persistence to commit sexual immorality. The civil laws of a government may say nothing about sexual immorality. However, God’s laws have never changed on this subject. Since men and women often violate God’s law in reference to sexual immorality, they have reaped many unfortunate consequences. The pandemic of HIV/AIDS has not come into our societies because civil laws were violated. HIV/AIDS is here because people refuse to recognize God’s laws in reference to moral conduct.

God’s law concerning the sexual activity between a man and woman is embedded in the law of marriage of one man to one woman, both of whom are married for life. In this marriage relationship, sexual intercourse is a blessing from God. When we violate this law, people get hurt. Even if one does not contract any sexually transmitted
disease from immoral behavior, relationships are destroyed. Hearts are broken. **When God’s moral laws are broken, lives are broken.**

The God-fearing citizen honors civil law because he or she honors the will of God. He does not look for loopholes in man’s civil laws in order to violate the rights of his or her neighbor. He does not because he has a religious sense of accountability to God’s higher laws that say we must love our neighbor as ourselves. If we desire to respect the laws of God, we are not looking to see how much we can get away with; we are looking for what we can do to be obedient to His will. By being obedient to His will we seek to manifest our faith in Him by our service to others. Obedient service is a manifestation of faith.

The Greek philosophers knew that there was a God beyond the gods they created after their own imagination. After they had imagined every possible god who would behave after the desires of man, the philosophers of Greece knew that there must be a God who is beyond the definitions of the words of our dictionary. They thus built an idol in the city of Athens to this God, lest in their ignorance, they offend Him in some way. It was the idol directed to “The Unknown God” (At 17:23).

When the apostle Paul saw this idol in Athens, he stated, “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands” (See At 17:24-28). He is the God who “gives
Every responsible citizen of the world must recognize the existence of God. In Him we live and have our being. Our recognition of His existence moves us to seek after His will. In doing this, we become better people. We become individuals who seek to live by higher laws than the laws of this world. Successful character development depends on honoring God and His will.

C. Be accountable.

Within the beliefs of all religions is the concept of accountability. It is a part of religion that is essential for the development of the individual concerning his or her conduct. Though we may escape the judgment of civil laws which we violate, there is a final judgment where everyone will be held accountable for deeds done while on earth. We may steal and escape the police. But there is a final judgment we cannot escape. Being aware of this final judgment motivates us to maintain obedience to both civil law and God’s moral laws. The statement is true: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hb 9:27; see 2 Co 5:10; Rm 14:10; 2 Pt 2:3).

All men must live with the realization that they will eventually give account for their actions. This realization of accountability motivates us to do that which is right. Those who realize that they must give account for their actions will live better lives. They are so motivated because they will always seek to do good to their neighbors and live obediently in reference to God’s will. Accountability produces good behavior.

D. Sow good.

Not only must we live with the realization that we will give account of our actions at a time of final accountability, we must also live with the realization that in this life we will reap what we sow. Remember these words: “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. But he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life” (Gl 6:7,8).

If one violates religious moral laws concerning sexual immorality, then he or she must expect to reap the consequence of sexually transmitted diseases. If we give ourselves to stealing, then we should expect prison. If we give ourselves to deceitful prac-
tices, then we must expect the mistrust of others. We reap what we sow.

If we sow that which is good, then we must expect to reap good things. When we live in this life knowing that we will reap from our actions, we will be motivated to live better lives. This is the part religion plays in culture. It is the responsibility of civil government to establish civil laws that govern our lives as a nation. However, it is the function of religion within a nation to teach citizens that they are to be subject to the higher laws of God. Civil government must deal with civil laws. Religion must develop a conscience in citizens in reference to moral and ethical behavior.

The preceding is illustrated in reference to moral laws surrounding our sexual activity. One of the areas of life wherein millions are reaping bad consequences is sexual immorality. Our world lives with the scourge of sexually transmitted diseases, specifically HIV/AIDS. God’s law is that sexual relationships are to exist only in the bond of marriage (Hb 13:4). The marriage bed is to be undefiled in the sense that sexual relationships are not to exist outside the bond of marriage. It takes two people to spread HIV/AIDS. It takes only one person to stop the spread. You can be that one person who says no to sexual immorality.

Chapter 14
THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT WORK OF GOD

In August of 1980 I stepped into a small single-engine Comanche 260 Piper airplane with five faithful and trusting passengers, Martha, my wife, and our four small children. I was the pilot and we were destined out of Opa Locka Airport in Miami, Florida east over the Atlantic to the small island of Grand Cayman. From there our flight plan would take us to our new home in Antigua.

As I left Opa Locka Air Traffic Control, crossed Miami Beach on a heading southeast, I remember that all we could see was water, water forever. We could see nothing but the sheen of the sun off the water that morning as we stretched our faith to do God’s work in the West Indies. It was a mission of faith. What drove us to this conclusion was the fact that God had better things for us to do. Our incurable optimistic faith had brought us to a point of launching out over the deep, and that is exactly what we did. You must take a leap of faith in order for faith to grow. God works that way.

I think the greatest obstacle in the life of the Christian is a lack of trust in God to work exceedingly abundantly in the life of His children who must walk by
faith. We are not testing God when we launch out. We are testing ourselves; we are testing our faith. And unless we put ourselves to the test, we will never really understand the magnificence of God’s work in our lives.

Christianity is built on faith. As opposed to a legal system by which one walks by sight and personal performance, Christianity is a world view of faith, and thus, the Christian is optimistic in reference to the future. Just listen to what God says. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rm 8:28). “If God is for us, who can be against us” (Rm 8:31). “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rm 8:37). “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Ph 4:13). “For whoever is born from God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). I believe all these promises.

Ralph Bumpus once said, “We must stop allowing the knockers, knit pickers and No No Birds run our lives.” For the Christian, it is not true that things will get worse before they get better. They are now great and the best is yet to be. I suppose there is some irony in what radio commentator Paul Harvey used to say when closing some radio broadcasts, “Don’t worry about anything. Nothing is going to turn out all right anyway.”

There are too many people who spend half their time figuring out what we cannot do. We need those who envision what we can do. We need leaders of faith.

Our mental attitude determines what we get out of life. If we feel like conquerors, then we will live a victorious life. However, if we come to the conclusion that the battle is already lost, then our mental attitude will make sure we operate as those in retreat rather than those who are marching home from victory. As Christians, we must recognize that God has already given us the victory. We must simply stay in the battle.

A. Concluding the worst:

We are surrounded in our lives by too many pessimists. Someone once said, “A pessimist is a man who looks both ways before crossing a one-way street.” This is the person who believes that things are as bad as they can possibly be, and yet, expects them to get worse. “A pessimist is a man who does not choose the lesser of two evils. He chooses both.”

The story was told that before the championship boxing fight between Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey, Tunney woke up one night before the fight, having dreamed that he had been severely beaten by Dempsey. When he later referred to the dream in a conversation with a friend, he said that he had been reading too many newspaper accounts concerning the ferocity of Dempsey. That ferocity had been eating away at this mind, discouraging him concerning the upcoming fight. He then made a decision. That
decision was to stop all input of negative thinking. He would focus on winning. He would concentrate on his own ferocity. The result of his positive thinking was his winning the champion fight.

If we would place Christianity in the field of philosophy for a moment, the greatest psychiatrist in the world would classify it as an extremely positive philosophy for mental behavior. “Fight the good fight of the faith”, “We can do all things”, “All things work together for good”, “God is for us”, and a host of other positive concepts define the nature of the Christian mental attitude. It is for this reason that Christians can “do all things without grumbling ...” (Ph 2:14). They can “count it all joy” when they fall into various trials (Js 1:2).

B. The best is yet to be:

A self-centered optimist once said, “An optimist is a man who tells you to cheer up when things are going his way.” That is really not a true optimist. A true optimist is the man who spends his last dollar to buy an new billfold. He is the one about whom someone once wrote, “Optimism is the belief that even when things come to worst, it won’t be so bad.”

We do live in a world that seems to have gone wrong. Sin has had its epic in eternity, that epic being the time of the existence of this world wherein sin has ruined an Eden environment. However, sin has been overcome by a cross that was posted at Calvary.

F. H. Bradley concluded, “The world is the best of all possible worlds, and everything in it is a necessary evil.” We live in a “necessarily evil world” simply because God has turned the work of Satan—a world gone wrong through sin—into a preparatory environment for those who are headed for an eternal dwelling. It is for this reason that the Christian firmly believes that all things are working together for good. It will turn out well in the end. Really. It is not what Ken Hubbard said, “An optimist is a fellow who believes what’s going to be will be postponed.” For the saint, what is yet to be is an eternal reward of glory in the midst of a truly optimistic heavenly environment.

We must think on the positive side of life. In his best selling book, The Results of Positive Thinking, Norman Vincent Peale wrote,

A positive thinker does not refuse to recognize the negative, he refuses to dwell on it. Positive thinking is a form of thought which habitually looks for the best results from the worst conditions. It is possible to look for something to build on; it is possible to expect the best for yourself even though things look bad. And the remarkable fact is that when you seek good you are very likely to find it.

And so you will. Someone once said, “Always act as if it were impossible to fail.” I think this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote from prison that we can...
do all things through Christ (Ph 4:13). With God on our side, how can we fail? Paul concluded,

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm 8:38,39).

C. Making a choice for a difference:

You have a choice concerning your mental attitude. You can choose to be optimistic about life. Or, you can choose the alternative. You can choose to drink from the darkness of discouragement and despair. Or, you can feast on the brightness of that which is good and true. The world is full of those who have chosen to be happy, to look on the bright side. In fact, if it were not for so many optimists in the world, the pessimist would not know how unhappy he really is.

You have a choice of being either optimistic about life or thinking that things are bad and will get worse. You can choose to be the pessimist about whom J. B. Cabell wrote, “The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; the pessimist fears that this is true.” You may think that the pessimist is more often right. However, he is not the one who is more often happy. It was said, “The optimist consoles himself that things could be worse; the pessimist just waits a while, and sure enough, they are.” His mental attitude brings him to the conclusion that the worst is yet to be.

If our vision of the future is dark, then dark clouds will rise over the horizon. The state of our mental attitude has a habit of bringing into reality the nature of our dreams. If we see an opportunity in every calamity of life, then life will be filled with the reality of sweet dreams. However, if we focus on calamities in every opportunity, there are only dark clouds in the future. Looking on the bright side of life leads us past feeling that we are only half way there. It leads us to believing that we are nearing the end of the worst and coming into the reality of the best.

Squirrels store up nuts for the winter season. When things get bad, squirrels have a store of nourishment from which to feed. So it is with our mental attitudes. We must store up positive thoughts, thoughts of good times. When winter comes, we will then have a host of pleasant thoughts from which to draw in difficult times. We can be as the tea kettle when it is up to its neck in hot water. It just whistles.

A trapeze instructor once had a difficult time in training a young student. The student complained, “I can’t do it. I can’t do it.” The wise instructor said, “Just throw your heart over the bar and your body will follow.” We must train our minds to learn to expect, not to doubt. This was what Jesus said to a father who had brought to Him an afflicted son. He said, “All things are possible to him who
believes” (Mk 9:23). However, I think most of us are in the situation concerning our faith as the father. He recognized his pessimistic outlook in reference to his weak faith and responded to Jesus, “Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24). “Help our unbelief.” It is not natural for the Christian to suffer with unbelief. Unbelief is a cankering leaven that will destroy our positive mental attitudes. I think Paul had this in mind concerning the leavening of sin in the Corinthian church. His instructions were, “Purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump” (1 Co 5:7). We need to be purged of unbelief, purged of negatives, purged of doubts, and thus purged of fear. Once we have purged ourselves of those things that hinder us from reaching our potential, then we will aspire to what God would have us be. Samuel Ellsworth Kiser was right in his following poem:

There was once a man who smiled,  
Because the day was bright,  
Because he slept at night,  
Because God gave him sight,  

To gaze upon his child;  
Because his little one,

Could leap and laugh and run;  
Because the distant sun,  
Smiled on the earth, he smiled.

He smiled because the sky,  
Was high above his head,  
Because the rose was red,  
Because the past was dead.

He never wondered why,  
The Lord had blundered so,  
That all things have to go,  
The wrong way, here below,  
The overarching sky.

He toiled, and still was glad,  
Because the air was free,  
Because he loved, and she,  
That claimed his love and he,  
Shared all the joys they had;

Because the grasses grew,  
Because the sweet winds blew,  
Because that he could hew,  
And hammer, he was glad.

Because he lived, he smiled,  
And did not look ahead,  
With bitterness or dread,  
But nightly sought his bed,  
As calmly as a child.

And people called him mad,  
For being always glad,  
With such things as he had,  
And shook their heads, and smiled.

Chapter 15
DEALING WITH DOUBT

It is not doubt from which the faithful have been set totally free, but the obsession with doubt that would hinder them from aspiring to reach their destinies.

We often impetuously respond to someone who has imparted to us a piece of previously unknown information by saying, “I doubt that.” We have the right to doubt. However, our response obligates us. We are obligated to search for
a reason for our doubt. We must investigate, search, dig, study. One has no right to doubt if he or she is not willing to study or investigate in an honest manner that which is doubted.

Our doubting is often too frivolous. We are too quick to doubt what one says. Or, we are often too quick to doubt that which is new and not according to our traditional way of thought. We are thus too hard on ourselves. Our inability to change in order to incorporate new information into our thinking and behavior leads us to be too quick to be challenged by others who might question us.

When it comes to the subject of doubt, it is usually not a problem of doubt in what others say. The problem is ourselves. We burden ourselves with countless questions about our own beliefs. In fact, our resistance to the questions of others is often a resistance to add to our own assortment of questions. We thus reside in a dark room of self inflicted doubt, refusing to allow in any more questions that might add to our confused world of skepticism. When we have allowed our faith to be attacked by our own selves, we resist the skepticism of others who seek to perpetuate our own faithlessness.

Webster defined doubt “to waver or fluctuate in opinion or belief, to be uncertain or undecided respecting the truth or fact; to be undermined.” That covers about everything in reference to questioning everything. The uncontrolled doubter has a lot of territory to cover. The uncontrolled doubter is a skeptic. He is skeptical of all that cannot be identified by the five senses. A Christian is not a skeptic if he or she has those times where questions arise concerning one’s beliefs. Our questions should drive us to seek answers. The skeptic simply gives up on faith and is satisfied to live in a world of lingering questions.

The fact is that we all have some doubts. Sometimes we even doubt our own faith. E. D. Starbuck once made a survey wherein 53% of 142 women and 79% of 95 men he surveyed had doubts concerning their religious faith when they were between the ages of eleven and twenty-six. It is during this time in life that young people are moving from the foundation of their faith. They are moving from founding their faith on their fathers to making up their own minds. Bertrand Russell once said, “In all affairs it’s a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted.” It is not wrong to have times of doubt concerning our faith. This is especially true during those formative years when we are transitioning from the foundation of our father’s faith to one that is based on our own conclusions.

There is nothing unnatural about doubting. The problem is not with doubting. It is with our unwillingness to do as the Bereans. “They received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” (At 17:11). If doubt does not drive us to searching, then we are not honest with ourselves. It is something like Wilson Mizner said, “I respect faith, but doubt is what gets you an education.”
If we doubt what someone has said, we are not fair to the one we doubt if we are not willing to investigate that which is said. If we doubt our own beliefs, then we are not fair to ourselves if we do not search for answers. **Doubt that resides in a lethargic mind has found a permanent residence.**

A. Causes of doubt:

A normal process of intellect is questioning that which is accepted as true. However, a chronic doubter is a skeptic, and thus, one who is unable to accept anything. He is a perpetual agnostic, one who makes questioning his hobby. However, some are like the insomniac dyslexic agnostic who stayed awake at night wondering if there were a “dog”.

Unchallenged doubt has its unfortunate consequences. We must not lead ourselves to believe that a failure to deal with doubt demons will somehow resolve itself. These demons can raze havoc with our faith. They can crush our hope. It is for this reason that we must be vigilant about dealing with those things that cause doubt.

1. **Ignorance of the Bible causes doubt.** One’s doubts about the Bible are more often the result of his or her ignorance of the Bible. People have often accused the Bible to be a book of fables, myths and contradictions. At the same time they have not investigated the text of the Bible enough to understand its literary nature. They do not understand that God has left to man the responsibility of making sure the text of the Bible is preserved in a way that will lead those who are searching to a knowledge of God and His salvation for man.

Those who know little about the Bible have not studied it enough to understand that the Bible has come down to us through history in a manner that God has wanted it to come down to us through history. If a copyist stumbled here and there over making copies of the text, then God allowed such to happen in order to test our faith in His word. We may blame a copyist of the Bible for not being perfect, but we cannot blame God for allowing the copyist to do his work, regardless of his imperfections. We simply know that we have the Bible today in a form that God intended that we have it.

Now concerning doubt of the content of the Bible, we must be honest with ourselves. One’s lifestyle may make him prejudiced concerning judgments the Bible makes about sin in his life. Doubt that is based on a rejection of Bible truths because of sin in our lives is not fair. It is a doubt that is generated by rebellion.

Now if the general content of the Bible is doubted, then that is another matter. If we want to write off the content as an assortment of myths and fables, then we have obligated ourselves to some objective studies. We have committed ourselves to enrollment in the Christian Evidences 101 course of study. In this study, one must not only investigate the content of the Bible (Jn 20:30,31), but
also external evidences that prove that God’s word could not be the invention of men. If it were, then the invention would be greater than the greatest human philosopher or religionists. We must never forget that men gave their lives because they believed the Jesus they had personally experienced. They believed He was who He said He was, the only Son of God. Men and women went to death because they walked by the fact that a miracle happened in their presence. They wrote, died, and thus have handed to us a testimony that only the hardened agnostic would continue to doubt.

2. Despair and depression cause doubt. Someone once said, “There is no weariness like that which comes from doubting, for doubt is brother devil to despair.” Again in his book, The Psychology of Religion, Starbuck told of a patient who wrote to him, “I have had times of doubt when I wondered almost if anything were true and how we could believe it. This would usually come at times when I felt unusually despondent and nothing went right; it would end as soon as I felt better.”

When was the last time you were depressed? I would assume that that time was also the time when your doubts surfaced. It is not doubt that brings on depression. Turn it around. Our depression only gives doubt an occasion to make us question ourselves.

3. The religious traditions of men cause doubts. Every religious person seeks to please God. And every religious person knows that at the end of the day, God is the one who must deliver truth to those who seek to please him. The problem comes when worshipers seek to serve God after the traditions of men and not after the revelation of God. If one is honest, he or she knows when something is tradition and something is Bible. At least most people do.

When I confine myself to traditional worship and service, I know that something is questionable. If I do not know for sure if my beliefs and behavior in reference to God are based on the word of God, then I have doubts. At least if I am honest with myself in my ignorance of the word of God, I will wonder if what I am doing religiously is pleasing to God. Of course if I am not honest, nor greatly concerned about doing what God says, I will carry on with my traditional beliefs and behavior. But for religiously honest people who seek to be pleasing to God, this is not good enough. The truly honest person conducts himself or herself according to what Paul instructed in 2 Corinthians 13:5. “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test your own selves.”

The only relief one can have for religious doubt is to love the truth of God (See 2 Th 2:10-12). Study! Paul, Peter and the other inspired writers of the word of God got the message by inspiration. It is by perspiration that we will get it. Nothing short of diligent searching of the Scriptures will deliver us from doubt concerning our traditional religious beliefs and behavior.
B. The consequences of doubt:

As stated before, everyone at times doubts his or her personal beliefs. In reference to religious behavior, we often question what we are doing. If our doubts drive us to investigation, then we are on our way to a strong faith. However, if our doubts remain unanswered, then faith will often crash and burn. You can become as the one about whom it was said, “A skeptic is a man who has faith in nothing except in his own lack of faith.” Therefore, uncontrolled doubt is not without consequences. The following are only a few:

1. 
   **Doubt leaves us without a life center of reference.** Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rm 10:17). God meant that His written word would be our source of faith. However, if one allows his or her doubts to bring into question the source of our faith, then our faith takes the fall. One of Satan’s greatest attacks against the faith of man is to bring into man’s mind questions concerning the Bible. When the Bible is subsequently discarded as simply good religious literature, then we are left with no revelation from our Creator. When the Bible becomes just another book on the shelf with an assortment of good books on philosophy and religion, then we are left to our own inventions. We are relegated to a world of religious competition wherein might makes right or the majority rules the day. If there is no standard for right, then right does not exist. Who would want to live in a world wherein everyone did that which was right in his own eyes?

2. 
   **Doubt submits us to endless inward turmoil.** James explained the nature of the one who has burdened himself with perpetual doubts. “He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind” (Js 1:6). Doubt makes God feel a long way away, somewhere off in a distant universe, unapproachable by finite beings He may have deserted on a planetary desert. And when one feels that God is distant, unapproachable, he then leaves himself to be driven by the waves of turmoil. Ralph Waldo Emerson was right when he said, “Skepticism is slow suicide.” It is the lot of the skeptic to doubt his beliefs, and then start believing his doubts. The philosopher Descartes took this road. He discovered that at the end of this road, the human mind needed faith. So once he had exhausted himself with questioning, even questioning his own existence, he concluded, “I think, therefore I am.” At least this is a start toward faith.

3. 
   **Doubt destroys faith.** A skeptic is often told that seeing is believing, but he refuses to look. It is often true as someone said of the perpetual doubter, “A skeptic is a man who has faith in nothing, except in his own lack of faith.” And without faith, one has no anchor of the soul in times of turmoil (See Hb 6:18,19). Doubt burns bridges to our way back to the tranquility of our emotionally secure homes.
There are many who, as someone said, “Believe their doubts and doubt their beliefs.” But such mental gymnastics lead one only to a life of endless faithlessness. God would not have us behave this way because He does not want us to believe this way. We must pray without doubting (1 Tm 2:8). We must move mountains by faith (Mt 21:21). Man was never designed to be a doubter, and thus we must conclude that persistent doubt is not natural. It is not human to be skeptical. The skeptical mind is a deviation from how we are emotionally created.

4. **Doubt destroys confidence.** One can be confident in his or her ability to work and reach goals. We are a self-reliant people. We can “do our own thing.” We can “do it our way.” All these mental attitudes cause men to do great things. However, when it comes to faith, there is a biblical teaching that “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rm 8:37). “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Ph 4:13). Get the point. We humanly have the ability to do great things. We can build a tower of Babel, for God Himself pronounces concerning the ability of man, “Nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them” (Gn 11:6). However, if we recruit God for our side, then we are more than master builders. We are more than conquerors. We can have the confidence that the best is yet to be. We can have the faith that He “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us” (Ep 3:20). Take away that faith, and the Christian can have no confidence beyond his own abilities. Take away our faith and we are no better off than the disillusioned world in accomplishing that which we dream to do.

Regardless of where one is in reference to his or her doubts, there must be a reconstruction of faith. This is not an option if we seek to establish mental and emotional security. In view of the consequences of faithlessness, there must be a building again of a foundation that leads to a life of faith, for without faith, we are lifeless. And lifeless people can never discover their destiny.

**C. Searching for the cure of doubt:**

We must respond to doubt according to what O. H. Tabor once said, “In our day, when so many creeds written and unwritten, are bound upon people, everybody is a doubter to somebody. There must be a real search for truth; an honest doubt is sometimes the path to truth.”

Doubt will often come knocking at our door. We must allow faith to open it. And when the door is opened, no one will be there. Faith makes our doubts vanish away. Someone once said, “Faith is dead to doubt, dumb to discouragement, blind to impossibilities, and knows nothing but success in God.”

Turnbull once said, “Doubt is the disease of this inquisitive, restless age—it is the price we pay for advanced intelligence and civilization—but as the most beautiful night is born of darkness, so the faith that springs from conflict is often the strongest and best.” In a time where
doubt seems to triumph over faith, a strong faith will emerge from the conflict. Out of the mire of an environment wherein chaos has been produced by faithlessness will come a faith that has been purified by testing. Doubt may often take us down the corridors of despair; but it is faith that will chain us to the Infinite. Things were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God (Jn 20:30,31). It is our responsibility to investigate that which has been written. Charles H. Gabriel expressed our victory over doubt when he wrote,

I’m possessed of a hope that is steadfast and sure,
Since Jesus came into my heart,
And no dark clouds of doubt now my pathway obscure,
Since Jesus came into my heart.

Chapter 16
PATIENCE

If life is a puppet show, then God is the artist that moves us along by the strings of faith. We must never allow the scissors of skepticism to cut the strings that bind us to hope. It is through faith that we will eventually be victorious.

Someone once said that patience is “the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears.” Bierce said that patience is “a minor form of despair, disguised as a virtue.”

In some or all areas of life, this is the personality characteristic with which all of us struggle. It is the flaw we first see in ourselves, and the one from which we reap a host of negatives in our relationships with others. How many of us have pronounced the self-condemnation, “I am too impatient.” Or, if we have a dear one who has felt we needed the same exhortation, he or she had said to us, “You are too impatient.” And we are.

Peter said that to our self-control we need to add patience (2 Pt 1:5,6). It is possibly that we need more than addition. We need multiplication. Impatience has ended in too much strife, heartaches ... apologies for nonsense we have spoken for which we have had to repent.

There are so many exhortations in the Bible for the Christian concerning patience. “… in your patience possess your souls …” (Lk 21:19). “… we with patience wait for it …” (Rm 8:25). “… be sound … in patience …” (Ti 2:2). “… you have need of patience …” (Hb 10:36). “… let us run with patience …” (Hb 12:1-KJV). “… let patience have her perfect work …” (Js 1:4). And on and on. One would get the idea that God wants us to work on this virtue.
A. Causes of impatience:

Dealing with any problem means dealing with the causes of the problem. Since the Bible gives so many exhortations concerning building patience, we must assume that God knows we can handle this challenge. If we judge ourselves to be impatient, we can change. But in order to change, we must recognize areas of cause in order to deal with the effect of impatience.

1. The lack of mercy on others causes impatience: Remember what James said, “For judgment will be without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy” (Js 2:13). Remember that.

We often try to fly like an eagle, but feel we are surrounded with turkeys. We blame others for our misfortune. Someone said, “No matter how little patience you have with the mistakes of others, you always have lots of patience with your own.” This was the case with the unforgiving debtor in Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving debtors. After being forgiven of his own debt, the unforgiving debtor went to one who owed him a small amount. He sought immediate repayment. Of this unforgiving one Jesus said, “And his fellow bondservant fell down and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will pay you.’ And he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt.” (Mt 18:29,30). How many times have we cast into prison those friends with whom we should have been patient? Even to this day, how many of our friends are still in prison because they are not performing as we think they should, or being who we think they should be?

Goethe said, “Tolerance comes with age; I see no fault committed that I myself could not have committed at some time or other.” It is time to release others from prison. It is time to realize that “in the way you judge, you will be judged” (Mt 7:1).

“Patience consists of feeling and seeing things with your heart instead of your hands and eyes.” It is time to allow a tender heart to rule the day in our relationships with others. We must seek to free ourselves by allowing others to be themselves around us. Once we are merciful to the faults of others by reflecting on our own imperfections, then patience will reign in our relationships.

2. A lack of communication causes impatience: Have you ever tried to finish someone’s sentence with a presumptuous statement that was not what the speaker wanted to say? If you have been married for some time, then you know what I am saying. Because some lack skills in how to carry on a discussion with another person, their impatience causes them to assume things the other person does not have on his or her mind, or even intends to say. Our impatience that has been generated by a moment of temper or haste has caused us to blurt out something that was never on the mind of the one with whom we have presumed to be communicating.
There was a case in Paul’s life where the magistrates of the city of Philippi impatiently presumed to be true some false accusations of irritated accusers. They subsequently “tore off their clothes and commanded them [Paul and Silas] to be beaten with rods” (At 16:22). Now imagine this. Before these magistrates questioned Paul and Silas, they went into a rage and commanded these two strangers to be beaten. They knew that a Roman citizen could not be beaten before a just trial. If he were, then the one who beat him could be sentenced to death. We would say that they were impatient and foolish. But how many times have we beaten a friend or loved one before we understood the whole truth? How many times have we struck a blow with our tongue before we communicated?

3. Anxiety causes impatience: Someone was right when he said, “A man is as big as the things that annoy him.” There is the old Chinese story of a frustrated student and an old woman. One day the student became so frustrated with his studies that he threw his books away. He quit going to class. After a couple days he was wandering down a street and saw an old woman rubbing an iron bar against a stone. He asked, “What are you doing?” The old woman responded, “I am making a needle.” We must keep in mind the old proverb, “If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.” Just keep in mind that “patience on the road will often prevent patients in the hospital.”

B. Areas where patience is needed:

Now let’s get to the point. We need to work on our patience. We have identified what some of the causes are, but now we need to start to work on specific areas of life where we need patience.

I have found that some people have patience in particular areas of their lives where in others they have a great problem with maintaining control of their person. Some are patient in working for a personal goal, but impatient with those with whom they have to work in order to accomplish that goal. I have always thought it interesting that one would spend days, weeks and months in preparing something to be printed. Once the final draft had been made, he rushed it to the printer and expected it to be printed yesterday. He was patient with his own work, but impatient with the printer when it was not printed on schedule.

Our challenge is to work on patience in all areas of our lives. We need to take the patience we have in one area of life and spread it over the totality of our behavior, especially when working with other people.

1. We need patience when dealing with people in general. God intends that we be led by those who have focused on being patient people. Elders are not to be “quick-tempered” (1 Tm 3:3; Ti 1:7). Older women are to teach younger women to be “sound in patience” (Ti 2:3,4). Shakespeare was right, “How poor are they who have not patience.”
Poverty in patience leads us to have poor relationships with others. It is for this reason that Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church, “Be patient toward all men” (1 Th 5:14).

Winston Churchill once said to an impatient general, “Sir, you do not possess your emotions. They possess you.” We are too often possessed when dealing with the ignorance, faults, and often trivialities of those with whom we associate. There were once two Irishmen on a tandem bicycle who had just reached the top of a hill. The one on the front was totally exhausted. When they came to a stop at the crest of the hill for a rest, the front rider said to Pat on the back, “Pat, that was a stiff climb.” With no sweat on his head, Pat responded, “It was at that. And if I hadn’t kept the brake on, we would have rolled backwards.”

People need patience. We need the patience of others in our times of folly. Give someone a “brake” by being a little more patient.

2. We need patience with our own performance. One time the great inventor Thomas Edison had unsuccessfully tried over 1000 times to solve a problem with experiments. He was asked to justify 1000 plus experiments to come up with a solution. He replied, “Why, now we know 1000 ways it won’t work.”

Luther Burbank estimated that he must have pulled a million cactus spines out of his hands in the sixteen years it took him to develop a cactus that cattle could eat. Norman Vincent Peale once wrote,

“Why can’t people make better use of patience in their lives. Mainly, I think, because it has three great enemies: discouragement, that white surrender, the flag that makes people give up too easily; frustration, generating anger that clouds your judgment and wrecks your timing; and the tendency to overreact under stress, hit the panic button, lose your cool.” (Reader’s Digest, 1972).

Peale was right. Nothing great ever came as a result of impatient work. It takes persistence to accomplish a lifetime of greatness. It is as a Chinese proverb, “Nothing is so full of victory as patience.” It is for this reason that we must “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hb 12:1).

3. We must have patience for the coming of the Lord. The Christian is patient with the events of this world simply because he knows that this world is only temporary. It is not the Christian’s final end. Our focus on the eternal builds a spiritual foundation for patience. We must have a living hope, a hope that pushes us toward that which is yet to be revealed. However, our anticipation must be mellowed with patience. James had this in mind when he wrote,

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. And he has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near (Js 5:7,8).
It takes patience to wait on God’s work. In the context of James’ words was the imminent destruction of the persecuting Judaism that was a thorn in the flesh of the early church. While suffering under the oppression of intolerant Judaism, James encouraged the Jewish church to be patient for deliverance. We must also be patient. We thus glory in tribulation, knowing that it is through the trial of our faith that we gain a character of patience. “... we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience ...” (Rm 5:3). It is through faith and patience that we will eventually overcome at the coming of Jesus.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that you not be sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Hb 6:11,12).

The Bible places a great deal of emphasis on the character of patience. The reason is that it is necessary to have patience in order to establish close relationships with others. Nothing destroys a relationship with another more quickly than impatience with the faults of others. It is imperative, therefore, that we focus on this virtue.

The ultimate purpose for developing a patient character is in view of eternal dwelling. Since we will dwell with one another in the eternal setting of heaven, then certainly we must have a very patient personality. Heaven will not be full of impatient people.

Chapter 17
HAPPINESS

Happiness will find those who have sincerely dedicated their lives to the service of others.

An amendment of the United States constitution entrones freedom which includes an article that each citizen has the “right to pursue happiness.” Not only is this the right of American citizens, it should be the right of every citizen of the world. It is what is inborn within every individual. It is what we want. It is our inner most craving. We want to be happy. Unfortunately, happiness is what everyone wants, but few know where to find it.

A little girl was once sitting at the breakfast table with her mother when the sun made its presence known by rising over the distant horizon. As its morning light beamed through the cottage window and on to the spoon of the child who was sitting with her mother at the breakfast table, she responded with joy to her mother, “Mama, I have a spoonful of sunshine!” Solomon was right, “A merry heart does good, like medicine” (Pv 17:22). Every morning we need a big
dose of sunshine medicine to brighten our day. We should arise every morning with the declaration, “This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:24). Upon making this declaration, we must make a decision that each day of our lives will be a day of happiness.

It is not totally true what Menchken said, “The only really happy folk are married women and single men.” Nor is it totally true what another proverb stated, “Happiness comes by filling a child’s stomach, a woman’s wardrobe, and a man’s wallet.” And again, happiness is not really acquired as a frustrated younger brother said, “Happiness is having a sister with laryngitis and a TV with only one channel.” True happiness does not revolve around material things nor pleasurable events. It is almost as someone once said, “Happiness has a habit of pursuing the person who feels grateful to his God, comfortable with his conscience, in favor with his friends, in love with his labors, and in balance with his banker.” But someone correctly stated, “The secret of happiness is learning to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.”

In a secular and materialistic world, true happiness is elusive. The secular person unfortunately looks to events and activities that will entertain, but will not bring longlasting peace. He forgets that happiness is not something you experience. The materialist always looks for the right possessions, forgetting that happiness is not something that can be bought or owned. Happiness is not yearning for the things that we feel will make us happy. Money cannot buy us happiness. It only prolongs our search in the wrong direction.

Why do people struggle to find that which seems to be so elusive. Too many people find only momentary happiness in things and activities, and subsequently deceive themselves into thinking that they have acquired their goal. When things become old and activities no longer satisfy our thirst for inner happiness, we often add to our collection of possessions or change to performing other activities in order to get another “happiness fix.” It is too often too late after a lifetime of such misguided searching that we come to the realization of Solomon’s wisdom, “Vanities of vanity, all is vanity” (Ec 1:2).

An activity oriented culture is always afraid of being bored. The inhabitants of such frenzied cultures have concluded that their happiness is found in their ability to keep themselves involved in a host of events and activities. They are fearful of not having enough to do lest they discover that there is an emptiness inside that cannot be filled with possessions or an assortment of activities. True happiness is an elusive dream to the one who keeps himself busy with earthly diversions. The secularist must remember that happiness is not discovered in the things we want. Seneca wrote, “If you would make a man happy, do not add to his possessions but subtract from his desires.”
Contrary to a secular and materialistic world that would drive us to seek happiness in the wrong places, I would suggest the following to begin one’s road to a happy disposition of life. These simple keys will at least point one in the right direction to what is often an elusive goal for too many people, the goal of being happy.

A. Happy people develop a happiness habit.

Ninety-five percent of our behavior is simply habit. We subconsciously do that which we have always done. Since this is true, we must develop a habit of simply being happy. We need a happy habit. Norman Vincent Peale wrote, “The happiness habit is developed by simply practicing happy thinking.

The desire to be happy is the first step to becoming happy. Former President Abraham Lincoln once said, “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” You must first make up your mind to be happy, and then set yourself to the task of accomplishing your desire for happiness. Sound too simple? It’s not.

I once found a recipe for happiness. I do not know the source, but I am sure the one who wrote it knew the key to happiness.

Take ...
... 2 heaping cups of patience,
... 1 heart full of love,
... 3 hands full of generosity,
... a dash of laughter,
... 1 head full of understanding, ...
... sprinkle generously with kindness;
add plenty of faith, and mix well. Spread over a period of a lifetime, and serve everyone you meet.

Not bad advice. This is certainly what Paul meant when he wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice!” (Ph 4:4). Solomon was again right when he said, “He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast” (Pv 15:15).

Most people can be happy in times when everything seems to be going right, or going their way. But this surface happiness is tried in the balance of life and found wanting when things go wrong. In the brochure, Attitudes Unlimited, which was written for executives of corporations in Dallas, Texas, it was stated, “Most anyone can smile when everything goes along smoothly ... but the valiant one is that person who can still smile when adversities beset him from all directions.”

Christians must remember that they were not baptized in vinegar. Nor should they look as if they have been eating out

Happiness Is Planned, Not Accidental.
of a milk churn. A long face does not come with age. Truly happy people have learned that happiness originates from that which is within, not from that which affects one from without. Once happy habits are developed from within, then our environment has little effect on our true inner emotional or mental state of being. It is for this reason that the happiness habit must come from our inside work, regardless of our past or our present circumstances.

B. Happy people live to serve others.

On the eve of His encounter with the cross, and in the presence of disciples who anxiously shuffled in His midst, Jesus took a towel, stooped to the floor, and washed twenty-four dirty feet, 240 grimy toes. He knew that when the disciples finally got the point after His resurrection, they would understand what He meant in John 13:17. “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” “These things” refers to His humble service to others, even washing dirty feet, and finally dirty souls. It is only through servitude that we discover the secret to happiness. To feel good you must do good.

Why is it that on our way to the hospital to visit a friend we argue with God? We reason that we have other important things that we could be doing. However, once there, and after a prayer and simple chatter, on our way from the hospital we feel a sense of happiness? We grumble in service but we rejoice when the service is accomplished. Rejoicing after an act of service should enlighten us to the way we are wonderfully made by God. Service brings happiness, a sense of “well done.” Only when we put our hands to work will we be able to raise our hands in rejoicing. This is the way God created us. You do good and you will feel good.

Solomon was right. “He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he” (Pv 14:21). Christians can rejoice in the Lord always because they are always in service to others. Galatians 6:10 was not written as a simple legal act to accomplish a supposed meritorious salvation. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” This statement was written in order to reflect the nature of true Christianity and in order to exemplify in the lives of Christians what Jesus said, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them” (Jn 13:17). Christians are happy, not because they are commanded to be so, but because of what they do. The serendipity of service is always happiness.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz wrote in his best selling book, Psychocybernetics, that people must focus on others in order to be happy within themselves. “One of the most pleasant thoughts to any human being is the thought that he is needed, that he is important enough and competent enough to help and add to the happiness of some other human being.” This
truth is reflected in the words of Paul to the Ephesian elders, “I have showed you all things, that by laboring as this you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (At 20:35). It is more blessed to give simply because one receives the inner satisfaction of happiness when giving things rather than receiving things. I understand from this principle of Jesus that receiving or acquiring things is less blessed than giving things to others. If you would be truly happy, therefore, you must be a giver. The more you give, the happier you are.

C. Happy people focus on good.

In McGuffey’s Stories for children, there is the story of the Old Clock. The Old Clock ticked away until one day it started thinking about all the ticks it had to do for an entire year, a total of 31,560,000 ticks. As he concentrated on that tremendous number of ticks, discouragement set in, and finally, he ceased ticking. After some silence, the Old Clock thought for a moment. “How much effort is there in making only one tick?” He then proceeded to make one tick. “Not so bad.” Then two ticks were made in succession. Then three. Then one hundred. And finally, the Old Clock was back to ticking, thinking on only one tick at a time.

People Are Happy When They Know That They are Needed By Others.

Some poet inscribed,

Don’t you trouble trouble;  
Till trouble troubles you.  
Don’t you look for trouble;  
Let trouble look for you.

The problem with life is that we often look for trouble. We go to too many pity parties. But it would be good to remember what the Holy Spirit wrote in Philippians 4:8. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things.”

It is not natural to remember bad experiences. Think for a moment. Our minds naturally remember good things that happened to us in the past. We remember great experiences with people, events that brought us happiness and joy. Our minds naturally suppress bad experiences, but focus on good experiences. Yes, we do forget the bad of the past. This is the way God made us. It is only natural to think on that which is good. So if it is natural to think on the good, then that is exactly what we must do. Our present happiness must not be determined by our past library of bad experiences. Our minds naturally do not want us to determine our present state of mind by our past experiences. You cannot
build a happy present state of mind over guilt of things in the past. Just do what Paul said, “I count not myself to have laid hold. But one thing I do, foregetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things that are before” (Ph 3:13).

Neither should our present happiness be determined by our present environment or circumstances. Unfortunate circumstances should not determine our inward state of mind. Dr. Matthew N. Chappel wrote, “Happiness is purely internal. It is produced, not by objects, but by ideas, thoughts and attitudes which can be developed and constructed by the individual’s own activities, irrespective of the environment.” True happiness is internally developed, not externally controlled.

Focusing on that which is good destroys worry about tomorrow. Matthew 6:34 is more than an exhortation. It involves a promise that changes our present mental behavior. “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” If we mentally forecast bad times to come, we will unconsciously work toward our forecast. The opposite is also true. If we anticipate that things will be better, sure enough, they will be better. So why ask for trouble when we do not have to be delivered a bag of troubled goods?

We must not be a member of a television audience where the program director holds up a card that says, “Laugh”, or “Applause.” We do not have to allow life to dictate to us our mental state of mind. We can choose to be happy. We can choose by focusing on good in order to determine our emotional destiny. Our present state of mind is our choice. Neither the environment or people with whom we work can determine our happiness.

D. Happy people are incurably optimistic.

Angelo Siciliano was a ninety-seven pound (44 kilogram) runt at the age of sixteen. He was bullied around by classmates, pushed around by friend and foe alike. As any physically weak and small teenager, life was not the best. However, one day he saw the statues of Apollo and Hercules in the Brooklyn Museum in New York. These images of two Greek gods formed an image in his own mind as to what he wanted to be. He immediately bought a newspaper and started exercising according to an exercise program that was printed in the newspaper. He eventually developed his own exercise program. He took control of his destiny through exercise. A few years later, his dreams were realized. We know him today as Charles Atlas.

Pessimism and unhappiness are twins. Numerous surveys have been conducted concerning the mental state of those who are successful in the business world. Every survey concludes that optimistic, cheerful business people who always look on the bright side of things
are more successful than pessimistic business people. Successful people are optimistic about the future. On the other hand, pessimism produces unhappiness and unhappiness produces dis-ease, or better, disease.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz once wrote of a businessman who told him, “I have just lost $200,000 on the stock market. I am ruined and disgraced.” Maltz then said to the man, “It is a fact that you lost $200,000. It is your opinion that you are ruined and disgraced.”

Happy people never add their opinion to the circumstances. They are simply optimistic about the future. The great inventor Thomas Edison once lost a multimillion dollar laboratory in a fire. Someone asked him immediately after the fire, “What will you do now?” Mr. Edison replied, “We will start rebuilding tomorrow morning.” When things look bad, focus on good things to come. Truly happy people are incurably optimistic about the future. They always look on the bright side of things. And by looking on the bright side of things, things that are good are happening in their lives.

E. Happy people allow the Lord to be their God.

Last and most important of all, the road to genuine happiness begins with faith that God is here. There is no truly happy atheist. A truly happy atheist is an oxymoron. No atheist can rejoicefully say, “Thank God I’m an atheist.”

“Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!” (Ps 144:15). It’s true. “Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God” (Ps 146:5). “... whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he” (Pv 16:20). When God is our Lord, we have laid the foundation for true happiness. It is for this reason that the materialist never reaches for that which he or she strives. Someone once said, “Be poor and sleep well. Be rich and sleep restlessly.” If we make riches our god, this god will not bring the serendipity of a good night’s rest. If God is our Lord, we will have the peace of mind that passes all understanding.

Paul wrote, “Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Ph 4:6,7). Those who trust in God have One to whom they can go for help. Just knowing that all things are working together for good brings an unexplainable sense of tranquility. And this we know: “... we know that all things work together for good to those who love God ...” (Rm 8:28). Only those who truly believe in God can reap the emotional peace of mind that comes from statements as Jesus to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me” (Jn 14:1). Believers can come to Jesus for peace of mind. They will answer His plea. “Come to Me all you who labor and...
are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt 11:28,29).

Happy people believe in God. They are thus obedient to His will. Their obedience brings peace of mind. And in peace of mind there is true happiness. Solomon was right. “… happy is he who keeps the law” (Pv 29:18). It is as Jesus said. “Happy are they that hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11:28 - TEV). It is true, therefore, that the happiest people in the world are those people who believe in God and submit to His will. Their happiness is founded on what is yet to come, not what is only in this life. If you would be happy in the truest sense, you must focus on God and what He has prepared for those who love Him. And what He has prepared for the righteous is an eternal home of glory in His presence. This is the hope and happiness of the righteous sons of God. Always remember the following words that are from God to encourage each of us:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.
(Nm 6:24-26).
### Other books by Roger E. Dickson

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**PLUS COMMENTARIES ON ALL BOOKS OF THE BIBLE**

**Dickson Teacher’s Bible**


Developing Character - Roger E. Dickson, ©1995: Africa International Missions, Hutchinson, Kansas U.S.A., Philadelphia, South Africa
ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT
Genesis - Gn, Exodus - Ex, Leviticus - Lv, Numbers - Nm, Deuteronomy - Dt, Joshua - Ja, Judges - Jg, Ruth - Rt, 1 Samuel - 1 Sm, 2 Samuel - 2 Sm, 1 Kings - 1 Kg, 2 Kings - 2 Kg, 1 Chronicles - 1 Ch, 2 Chronicles - 2 Ch, Ezra - Er, Nehemiah - Ne, Esther - Et, Job - Jb, Psalms - Ps, Proverbs - Pv, Ecclesiastes - Ec, Song of Solomon - Ss, Isaiah - Is, Jeremiah - Jr, Lamentations - Lm, Ezekiel - Ez, Daniel - Dn, Hosea - Hs, Joel - Jl, Amos - Am, Obadiah - Ob, Jonah - Jh, Micah - Mc, Nahum - Nh, Habakkuk - Hk, Zephaniah - Zp, Haggai - Hg, Zechariah - Zc, Malachi - Ml

NEW TESTAMENT
Matthew - Mt, Mark - Mk, Luke - Lk, John - Jn, Acts - At, Romans - Rm, 1 Corinthians - 1 Co, 2 Corinthians - 2 Co, Galatians - Gl, Ephesians - Ep, Philippians - Ph, Colossians - Cl, 1 Thessalonians - 1 Th, 2 Thessalonians - 2 Th, 1 Timothy - 1 Tm, 2 Timothy - 2 Tm, Titus - Ti, Philemon - Pl, Hebrews - Hb, James - Js, 1 Peter - 1 Pt, 2 Peter - 2 Pt, 1 John - 1 Jn, 2 John - 2 Jn, 3 John - 3 Jn, Jude - Jd, Revelation - Rv