



G O D L Y Leadership

In Business & Life

G. Brent Riggs

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Leadership is a subject near and dear to my heart not only because good and Godly leadership is such a rarity today but because it has been such a big part of my life.

As a former drill sergeant, a Bible teacher/pastor, and a manager/owner/executive of many businesses through the years, I have not only experienced the life of leadership but have seen firsthand how desperately more Godly leaders are needed.

My goal is that when you have finished this little book, you will have a list of leadership principles that you can understand and apply practically to your life. Those who are in more traditional leadership roles like pastors, business owners, managers, and teachers will be able to apply the principles in their official capacity. Everyone else, whether you are leading a family, the unofficial leader of friends, the mentor or parent of a growing leader, or any number of other roles, can equally benefit from these leadership principles.

A handwritten signature in a cursive, stylized font that reads "Brent". The signature is written in a dark grey or black ink and has a soft, light grey shadow or glow effect around it, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

About the Author

Brent Riggs is an author, teacher, artist, and businessman with many published titles and large growing audience online.



He is a married father of eight and loves the simple life of small-town Oklahoma.

You can find out more about Brent at BrentRiggs.com or SeriousFaith.com.

Brent's oil paintings and lessons can be found at ThePaintingTeacher.com

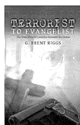
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Some of My Other books

(all my books are at www.brenttriggs.com/stuff):



Terrorist To Evangelist

The True Story of Cornelius Kenneth McClinton

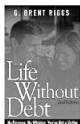
Born into abject poverty and lower working-class Belfast, Kenny McClinton became as hard-core as the life he was forced to live. From a violent, drunken father to abusive boys homes, from the Navy to a sadistic prison, from terrorism to salvation... this is Ken's remarkable and gut wrenching story of how the Lord rescued him from a life not worth living.



Sinners In The Hands of An Angry God

A Modern Rendition By Brent Riggs

Visit the website A modern version of one of the greatest sermons of all time. Sadly, and tragically, uncompromising preaching about HELL is unpopular today. They say "you shouldn't try to scare people into Hell." Who says? Certainly not God, Jesus, or the Apostles. The Bible has far more to say about Hell than Heaven.



Life Without Debt

No Excuse, No Whining, You Aren't a Victim

How to get out of debt, how to stay out of debt; the truth about the credit industry; how to save money, how to reduce expense; timeless principles about personal finance.



SeriousFaith Questions & Answers - Vol. 1

The Guide Full of Christian Common Sense, Biblical No Nonsense & My Spiritual Two Cents

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For the new or uneducated Christian - the fundamentals of the Christian faith. A MUST KNOW collection of knowledge for all Believers.



Internet Pornography

The Guide That Teaches You How to Discover and Deal with a Porn Problem

Internet porn is destroying churches, marriages and individual lives. Find out how to discover porn, and then how to help someone deal with it.



Knowing The Will Of God

The Guide That Teaches You How to Confidently Determine God's Will in Your Life

An incredibly useful topical guide to Bible Verses; Brent Riggs Bible messages, quotes and more; over 200 pages.

Introduction

1 Corinthians 11:1: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (NKJV)

Leadership is a subject near and dear to my heart not only because **Godly leadership is such a rarity today** but because it has been such a big part of my life. As a former drill sergeant, a Bible teacher, and a manager or owner of several businesses through the years, I have not only experienced the life of leadership but have seen firsthand how desperately more Godly leaders are needed.

You might be tempted to think this book is not for you if you are not in some position of authority, supervising other people, or in some way the leader of a group. That could not be farther from the truth. Every person in their own way leads to some degree or another whether they realize it or not. **Regardless, the character traits, skills, and Godly attributes of the leader make every person a better individual.** Even if you do not consider yourself to be a “leader” (you are though, you just may not realize it), knowing and understanding about leadership will help you be a better follower

(we are all followers, too, even the “leaders” follow someone), and help you to support the leaders around you and help cultivate the potential leaders you come in contact with.

It would be a mistake to tune out this book thinking they are only going to apply to those in an official leadership position. Again, everyone in different ways and at different times will fulfill the role of leader or be a part of the making of leaders.

There are a lot of books and resources already available concerning leadership. Much of it is based on pragmatism or cloaked in metaphysics. If it works, it must be right. As with all things about Christianity, pragmatism is not how we measure what God would have us to do. God has given us a written Word that flies in the face of what the world teaches much of the time. It is no different with the subject of leadership.

So, if you are looking for (or afraid this may turn out to be just another rehash of) Carnegie/Zigler/Covey/Robbins/Peterson/Schuller, I will go ahead let you know now that it is not. Where those men agree with Biblical principles, I agree with them. Where they diverge and follow the path of

humanism, pop psychology, or “self-ism,” without apology I will disagree with them.

My goal is that when you have finished this little book, you will have a list of leadership principles that you can understand and apply practically to your life. Those who are in more traditional leadership roles like pastors, business owners, managers, and teachers will be able to apply the principles in their official capacity. Everyone else, whether you are leading a family, the unofficial leader of friends, the mentor or parent of a growing leader, or any number of other roles, can equally benefit from leadership principles.

Here is a summary of what will follow:

- What is leadership?
- Who does it apply to?
- What are some of the characteristics of Godly leadership?
- Finally, I'll end with a list of practical applications and definitions of character that you can put to use on a daily basis.

What Is Leadership?

A Godly leader is primarily someone who imitates Christ so that those who follow will become more like Christ. If I had to sum up leadership, that would be it. *1 Corinthians 11:1*

A leader is someone who will choose right, act right, think right, and seek what is right so that others may follow them to what is right. *Luke 6:39*

A leader is someone who will purposefully cultivate Godly character in their own life in order to instill it into the lives of those whom they lead.

Ephesians 4:24

A true shepherd
leads the way. He
does not merely
point the way.

Leonard Ravenhill

A leader is someone who understands that most of the world, and even most Christians, are headed in the wrong direction. A leader is someone who is headed in the right direction, towards God, and does their best not only to turn others from the wrong direction, but continue to show them the right path over the long term. *2 Timothy 3:2*

Leadership is having the courage to seek out and obey God and show others how to do the same in a world where very few seek God. *Matthew 7:13*

Leadership is leading people toward what is important in life rather than what is temporal, fleeting, and materialistic. *Matthew 6:20*

Of course there are techniques, skills, and systems that leaders can use and should learn; but, leadership is primarily more about character, courage, and Godliness.

Give me a person with conviction and integrity, and to varying degrees (depending on their God-given gifts), they can be taught to be a leader.

Give me a self-serving, worldly person, and though they possess the highest degree of natural leadership skill, they will never amount to anything more than someone who is climbing the ladder of worldly success while others pay the price for their ascent.

Who Does Leadership Apply To?

I've always
believed leaders
don't ask others to
do what they're
unwilling to do.

Mike Huckabee

Every person is a leader in some way even if it is to simply lead their own life towards God. In a real sense, you lead yourself. However, more than that, most everyone actually leads someone else.

It is the rare case of a person who never in any sense leads another person - whether it is a parent leading a child, a mentor mentoring, a manager leading a subordinate, a teacher leading a student, or a friend leading a friend. Whether you realize it or not, you are a leader. If you have ever given advice, direction, or instruction, you are a leader. If you have ever taught a class, led a Bible study, or counseled someone, you are a leader. If you have ever had anyone look to you as their example, you are a leader. If another person has ever observed your life and formed an opinion about how they should act as a Christian, then you are a leader.

Granted, I believe **there is a specific manifestation of the gift of leadership** that God

gives to certain people. Not all people are “official” leaders or have that gift. In fact, I would go so far as to say there are far too many self-proclaimed leaders that God has NOT called or gifted to lead in the official public sense.

There is the general sense of leadership in that each person has influence over one or more people in their life. That is leadership. More specifically, God gives certain people the gift and mission in life to actively and more broadly lead groups of people whether as a manager, a mentor, a teacher, or as someone who has great influence over others’ lives. It is a mistake to think that only people in official leadership positions are leaders; in fact, almost every single person is a leader to some degree and should understand the responsibility of leadership.

To those whom God has called specifically to the official role of leadership, the principles and characteristics we will discover are simply learned, practiced, applied, and taught **to a greater degree, to a larger number of people perhaps in an official capacity.**

Whether you feel like God has called you to a public position of leadership; whether you are

simply a leader within your family or group of friends; or if you are an example that a few people in your world look to, it is important to understand the effect you have as a leader, the influence that you have as leader, and the responsibility that you have as a leader.

Godly leadership, while overlapping with a few of the common leadership qualities and skills that we often hear in business leadership training, **is primarily a matter of spirit, character, and truth.**

I believe the essence of true Godly leadership is: a leader imitating Christ so that those who follow them may become more Christ-like. It does not matter if it is parenting, mentoring, counseling, management, or simply being someone who is an example to another person - it is all considered leadership.

A leader is
one who knows
the way, goes the
way, and shows
the way.

John C. Maxwell

*Leaders imitate Christ so that
those who follow them will
become more Christ-like.*

Contemplation: Do you consider yourself to be a leader? Does anyone look to you for advice or as an example? Is anyone observing your Christian walk? Do you work or attend school around anyone who is unsaved? Do you parent, teach, or ever give direction to anyone? You are a leader.

Practical Principles

1 Corinthians 11:1: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (NKJV)

The following is a list of leadership principles and reminders that I have developed over the years and given to those whom I have personally managed, mentored, or put into positions of leadership.

- Don't "manage." Lead.
- Lead by example.
- Set the standard.
- Lead by having the best work habits of anyone around you.
- Lead by being first in line to serve and show the way.
- Good "managers" are not managers, they are leaders. People follow leaders, not bosses.
- Be decisive and committed to your decisions.
- Decision by committee, fear, or popularity rarely works.
- Make decisions and be fully committed to them.
- Do not let popularity, rejection, or failure paralyze you; make your best judgment and take action.

- Take responsibility for a bad decision and correct it with humility.

Perspective is Everything

Learn to see the situation from both short-term and long-term perspectives.

- Long-term vision keeps you from making impulsive decisions based on pain, stress, or frivolity.
- Short-term vision allows you to remain fresh, dynamic, and quick acting; it gives you the ability to see immediate consequences and be firmly decisive.
- Perspective allows you to keep both personal and business priorities in line.
- Perspective increases your stature with those you mentor because you can simultaneously envision everything necessary to make a decision that gives leadership now (instead of procrastination), and leadership later (avoiding long-term negative effects that turn into painful lessons learned).

Left Brain – Right Brain

Learn to balance both sides of intellect and emotion. You will manage people and deal with

customers who run the entire spectrum from “cold logic” to “gut feeling.”

- You will crush the spirit and alienate those emotional followers that you lead if you have too much of an “I tell it like it is” or “because I said so” approach.
- You will not have the respect and response you need if you have too much of a “feelings first” approach or if you do not take charge when taking charge is necessary.
- Real leadership comes with consistent, determined, purposeful, and firm command, along with control that is tempered and filtered through compassion and empathy for those you lead.

Handling Mistakes and Valuing the Lessons Learned

Never fear mistakes. Be decisive and take risks as long as they are done with discipline and purpose, rather than from laziness or sloppiness.

- Never fail to, or hesitate to admit and apologize for, mistakes without excuse or defense, whether to a subordinate or the boss.

- Learn to catalog and archive lessons learned for future reference. Record as many things as possible that you learn from a mistake or situation.
- While you do not fear mistakes, you also do not accept their inevitability as a rule. Develop the mindset that mistakes are to be avoided at all costs and communicate that standard to those you manage by your personal example and by your high expectations of them.
- When employees make mistakes, teach them these same things rather than simply correcting the mistake or disciplining them.

Keep Your Personal Life Balanced

Find the balance between personal life, and the necessary sacrifice for business success.

- Learn the balance between working hard, but not letting work cause you to truly neglect family, friends, and rest.
- Learn to modify your personal activity to support your goal of being professionally successful. In other words, if something like partying or playing golf excessively is keeping you from being disciplined and reaching your career goals, you have to decide which is more important, and either give up one or sabotage the other.

Allow Others Room to Grow

As you manage people, you have to learn the balance between control and letting people do their jobs.

- Give people room and give them your trust until they prove otherwise.
- Every person considers themselves competent and capable. Learn to increase or decrease your control and management to fit where each person is at in their professional development.

Details Are Everything

No matter how good you are, if you are a person who does not pay attention to details, you will not only lose credibility, you will cause yourself a lot of extra work and heartache.

- Pay attention to the details of everything you do; never assume something will get done; never put off something that could be done now.
- Learn how to keep an effective planner (paper or electronic) to help you manage the myriad details you will be facing.

- If YOU are good at details, it will encourage everyone else around you to be as well; and of course, the opposite is also true.

Plan Ahead, Look Ahead, Stay Ahead

Success does not just happen, it is planned for.

- It is planned for both personally and professionally.
- The business, your job, and your life, is not “shoot from the hip” if you want them to be the best.
- Look ahead, know what is coming, have a plan.

Help Those Around You Succeed

You will surround yourself with successful, loyal, and grateful team members if you personally take an interest in helping and seeing them each succeed.

- You never truly learn anything until you teach it to someone else. So much like I am teaching these things to you, you must turn around and teach the same things to those you lead.
- Remember, in the end, life is all about people and what you have invested in their lives.

- Income is a byproduct of character, integrity, hard work, and God's blessing. Do not worry about income. Be concerned about people and character. The rest will fall into line.
- Do not mistake concern for people as necessarily being "friends." Leadership in business is much like parenting. Feelings come second to doing what is best for: 1) the business, and 2) the employee.
- You lead others while being lead yourself by the principles, goals, and mission that guides the company and guide us as Christians.
- Being personal friends with those you lead is a tough balancing act that takes maturity and wisdom.

Be the Best at What You Do

No matter what tasks or responsibilities you have, never settle for anything short of the being the very, very best at doing it.

- Anything short of that robs the company, robs your employees, and robs you personally.

Love to Learn

In order to be the best at what you do, you must be a passionate student.

Continual learning fuels your creativity and passion – it keeps you fresh and current.

- Continual learning communicates to those you lead that you are a serious and dedicated leader. It sets the standard and removes the excuses from those around you who do not want to invest the effort into continual self-education.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Learn to pick your battles. Fight for what is important and learn to recognize and bypass the picky, unimportant, or superficial.

- Learn which things are NOT worth your emotional, physical, and spiritual energy; save your strength for those things that are.

Keep the Main Things the Main Things

Do not fall prey to the “tyranny of the urgent” (the most urgent thing always gets your attention to the neglect of the important things).

- Live and die every day by your “Top Six Things That I Must Accomplish Today” list.
- Make sure that list includes your personal and spiritual needs.

Character Traits of Godly Leaders

1 Corinthians 11:1: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (NKJV)

In the last section, we looked at what leadership is and who it applies to. In this section, we will begin to discuss the characteristics of a Godly leader.

A Leader First and Foremost Is Concerned about the Things of God & Things That Matter

It is obvious that a Godly leader must first of all be concerned about the things of God. A Godly leader's faith is not simply a part of his life, it is his entire life and everything else revolves around his faith and emanates from his faith.

While it is true that every Christian should be a "man (or woman!) after God's own heart," it is especially necessary when we are in the role or circumstance of leadership because we have the added responsibility of our influence on another person.

Acts 13:22: And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He

gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' (NKJV)

David was a man after God's heart. While he made many mistakes, God could look down into the deepest parts of his heart and see that ultimately David wanted to please and obey Him. It is this attitude of being

primarily concerned about what God would have us do that God looks for in each of us. Even though we fall well short over and over and constantly struggle with our sin nature, God can look into our hearts and see whether or not what we really want is to please Him and know Him.

No matter how talented or gifted a leader may be, if he is not primarily concerned first about Godliness, his leadership skills will be wasted on self-pursuit. Conversely, a person who is intensely seeking God can take meager leadership ability

Leadership to me means duty, honor, country. It means character, and it means listening from time to time.

George Bush

and, through the blessing and power of the Holy Spirit, have it cultivated to its fullest extent.

2 Peter 3:18: *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (NKJV)*

Being concerned about the things of God is a personal desire but it must be manifested, grown, and sustained by actions. A Godly leader must grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus. We grow through prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with wise Godly counsel. We grow in the grace of God by dispensing our love, wisdom, and compassion on those whom we lead.

A leader who does not grow will not be a leader long. A leader who does not grow in the things of God will not be a Godly leader long. It is not just about leadership education, it is about spiritual education.

If you are to lead those who God has placed in your path, the greatest blessing you can give to them as a leader is to show them how to focus first on God.

A Leader Must Be Compassionate

Of all the traits that Jesus displayed, compassion was probably the greatest. His entire earthly ministry, and indeed the whole purpose of His incarnation, was based on compassion. He looked down upon His helpless creation and knew that they were hopelessly lost unless He chose to come and save them.

All through the Gospels, we see Jesus looking past the surface and seeing into the heart of those who sought Him. Likewise, a good leader will learn to look past emotions, choices, and behavior to discover the real reasons and motivations of those whom they lead.

1 Peter 3:8: *Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; (NKJV)*

Notice that Peter says “ALL” of us are to be of one mind, not just followers. We are all to have compassion for each other, be tenderhearted, and be courteous. This is even more important for a leader, who must show others how to have compassion for people by their own example. Being compassionate serves two purposes: it

allows you as a leader to respond with discernment and see past the surface issues to the real reasons, and it allows you to model the behavior of a Christian so that those whom you lead can learn from your example. Again, we go back to “imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

Mark 1:41: *Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” (NKJV)*

Here we find Jesus was moved with compassion. While there are times that we will be unable to do something tangible; whenever possible, true compassion is

I am not afraid of an army of lions lead by sheep. I’m afraid of an army of sheep led by lions.

Alexander the Great

demonstrated by “movement.” In other words, when we are truly compassionate towards others we do not seek to simply comfort them with our sympathy, or absolve ourselves of responsibility by feeling sorry for someone. True compassion is demonstrated and proven by action if at all

possible. A Godly leader will not simply show compassion, but will demonstrate it.

A Leader Should Be More Humble Than Anyone They Lead

One of the biggest problems with worldly teaching on leadership is that “confidence” is often used to describe what really is a sense of self-importance and haughtiness. Aggressiveness, arrogance, and a lack of concern is often disguised with the phrase “I’m not conceited, I’m just confident.” I’ve rarely seen anyone, including myself, who uttered this phrase who wasn’t, in reality, displaying a lack of humility.

A Godly leader is truly humble. This is not a cosmetic humility that is simply another way to get people to admire you or for you to use to manipulate them. This is a true humility that understands that we have nothing, and are nothing, that God has not given us. A truly humble leader realizes that those who follow are primarily seeking the same things the leader seeks: love, acceptance, understanding, contentment, and most of all, peace. Whether leader or follower, humans can be boiled down to a handful of

primary needs, desires, and pursuits. God calls some people to a greater degree of leadership to help others find the Godly path to these things.

1 Peter 5:5: *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” (NKJV)*

Once again we see the word “all.” This verse is inclusive of both follower and leader. We are to be submissive to one another and do all things with humility. The leader sees and understands that his role is to lead, but that does not make him better than others.

**Leadership is a responsibility -
not a statement about human value.**

**Submissiveness is a responsibility -
not a statement about human value.**

Whenever the word submissiveness or humility arises, all the fires of pride begin raging. We mistake submissiveness for value, and humility for weakness. It is the typical result of sinful humankind who never fail to twist, distort, and flip

around backwards what God means by these types of terms.

Acts 20:19: *serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; (NKJV)*

Of course, Jesus was our greatest example of humility and His humility was amply demonstrated by His willing submission to suffer torture and death on our behalf (which was a mere shadow of the agony of bearing our sin for us).

If it could be measured, one could substantially argue that the Apostle Paul has been the greatest

You don't have
to hold a
position in
order to be a
leader.

Henry Ford

Christian who has ever lived since our Lord. You can do no better, other than Jesus Himself, than to choose Paul as your example of a leader. Paul experienced the highs and lows of privilege and poverty, of authority and

debasement, and of respect and insult. Through it all, he never stopped leading and he never stopped being humble.

Paul was a man after God's own heart, who sought first and foremost the things of God. Paul was full of compassion and his writings are threaded with the feelings of concern and love for those he led. Even though Paul had seen great things, experienced great things, and done great things, he always demonstrated his humility by serving those whom God had called him to lead and giving his entire life (after conversion) for the sake of others.

**Leaders imitate Christ so that
those who follow them will become
more Christ-like.**

A Leader Must Be a Servant

The typical image of a leader today is the person who is upfront, sits in the first row, dines at the head of the table, enjoys VIP treatment, gets the best office, and generally is "first." This worldly idea is the opposite of God's idea of a leader. It does not mean a leader cannot have a nice office, or sit up front, or even enjoy the hospitality of those he leads, but it does mean that he is not

leading to get those things and that he does not primarily care about those things.

A Godly leader thinks of his followers first and is willing to sacrifice getting the best for himself to give the best to them.

Matthew 23:11: But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. (NKJV)

If there is a single point that is the complete opposite of what the world says about leadership, this would probably be it. In today's world, there is no doubt who is "the greatest among us" if we look at the number of people who have people to serve them. The Godly leader will, by default, be much more subdued than the worldly leader because they will be seeking to serve others rather than expecting to be served.

The Godly leader serves their employees by training, mentoring, guiding, and managing them in a way that seeks their greatest good and success. The Godly leader serves their family, demonstrating by example how the Lord came to serve us. The Godly leader serves their students by teaching them through their own life about sacrifice and putting others before them.

1 Corinthians 10:24: Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. (NKJV)

We live in a world today that could be easily characterized by the description that everyone is “seeking their own.” What’s in it for me? What do I get out of it? Does it make me look good? Does it make me money? Very very few people in the world care about another’s well-being as much or before their own. Sadly, in this modern age of the affluent church, professing Christians do not appear to have a much higher standard.

Leaders have power,
but power is safe
only in the hands of
those who humble
themselves to serve.”

John Stott

Granted, it is a balance between taking care of the obvious necessities and needs that we each have, while truly having a spirit and heart that actively looks out for

the well-being of those around us. It is all the more important for a Godly leader to demonstrate - purposefully and obviously - to those they lead this attitude and characteristic of being concerned about the good of those around them. A leader

must demonstrate this in action, priorities, and communication. A truly successful, Godly, servant-hearted leader will be characterized and known as someone who takes care of the people around him.

A Leader Must Be Uncompromising in Truth and Generous with Liberty

A Godly leader must learn and know the difference between essentials and liberty. In the areas where conviction and commitment are needed, the Godly leader must determine to stand strong and be unmovable in the face of peer pressure, political correctness, and persecution. A Godly leader must not be seen as wishy-washy or wavering concerning things that are black and white. They must become the anchor of steadfastness in truth to which followers can grasp hold and know that they too are firm in those convictions.

However, a Godly leader should never bind his personal opinion where God has not made something absolute. A leader demonstrates by example that freedom and liberty were purchased by Christ for all and not just a privileged few. A

Godly leader must not be afraid to allow his followers liberty in those things that do not call for concrete conviction.

Ephesians 6:14: Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (NKJV)

The waist is the center of balance, the foundation of a person's body; if it is weak, then the whole body is weak. The Godly leader will strengthen and support himself by learning God's truth, which will create in him a strong foundation. Having learned the truth, the leader will then be more confident in allowing and cultivating liberty because it is no threat to truth.

Galatians 5:1: Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (NKJV)

A Godly leader seeks to free his followers from all types of bondage - whether it be legalism, political correctness, bad habits, or poor thinking. One of the greatest blessings and benefits that we have as Christians is our liberty in Christ. It is also one of the most forsaken and abused blessings that we have. A Godly leader will learn and understand

what is essential, versus that which God has allowed us personal liberty and room for varying understanding. A Godly leader will learn that liberty is not a threat to essential Godly truths.

A Leader Must Cultivate Discipline in Their Own Life and the Lives of Those They Lead

Personal spiritual discipline is a fading concept in today's world. Much of society applies its efforts for discipline in the pursuit of self-interest and self-promotion. Of course there is nothing wrong with the athlete who is

disciplined in training, unless that same athlete neglects spiritual discipline.

There's nothing wrong with the musician who disciplines himself to learn to play an instrument, unless that musician neglects

spiritual discipline. There's nothing wrong with the businessman who is disciplined and learning everything about his industry and market, unless

No man will make
a great leader who
wants to do it all
himself, or to get
all the credit for
doing it.

Andrew Carnegie

that same businessman neglects spiritual discipline.

There is nothing wrong with the leader who is disciplined in learning management, communication, or organizational skills unless that same leader neglects spiritual discipline.

1 Corinthians 9:24: Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. (NKJV)

To win the prize in a race, an athlete must be disciplined in their training and execution. Likewise, a Godly leader must run the race of leadership in such a way as to win the prize. What is the prize they seek? The prize is having followers who, because of their leadership, have become more Christ-like, as well as successful in their responsibilities.

A leader teaches discipline by being disciplined.

A leader who does not discipline themselves to correctly run the race cannot hope to have those who follow be properly disciplined. A leader

teaches discipline by being disciplined. There are no shortcuts, no rah-rah speeches, and no training seminars that will allow a leader to be lazy and undisciplined and have followers who are not.

Acts 17:11: These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)

A major key to personal discipline is the word “daily.” Every single day, a Godly leader must work towards disciplining each area of their life. Taking one day at a time allows us to escape the regrets of the past and not be overwhelmed by the future. Daily Bible study, daily prayer, daily education, daily exercise, and daily effort are a necessity for the Godly leader.

A genuine leader is not a searcher of consensus but a molder of consensus.

A Leader Must Have Vision

A leader must be able to see the way and know where they are going. If not, then you have the proverbial blind leading the blind. A parent

leading their children must have a vision for where they want their children to end up. A teacher leading students must have a vision of what they want the students to learn and how to apply it. A business owner must have a vision for where the company is going and what its goals are.

Matthew 15:14: Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” (NKJV)

Leaders provide the vision of what must be done, who must do it, and how to get it done. Without this vision, the best you can hope for is to go around and around in circles; but, the reality is that, without vision, people and efforts will deteriorate to the lowest common denominator.

Look at all the great leaders of the Bible and you will see that they each had a clear vision: Moses leading the Israelites, David leading his armies, Paul taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, or Jesus leading His disciples. Each knew exactly where they were going and what end result was needed.

A Leader Must Be Able to Communicate Effectively

A leader must be able to effectively communicate vision, needs, encouragement, instruction, and discipline and rebuke as needed. Communication takes many forms whether speaking, writing, through body language, or through attitude.

The people we lead are not mind readers, so we cannot expect them to be led if we are not effectively communicating as leaders. Truly effective communication originates in the heart of a Godly leader who is foremost concerned about how or what God wants done, rather than what benefits them personally. Effective communication starts in the heart of a leader who is a servant first. The greatest oratory skill in the world does not overcome the negatives of the self-serving leader. Great salesmanship that manipulates those around them to get what they want done will produce temporary results at best - and inevitably disloyalty and conflict.

James 3:2: For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. (NKJV)

While this verse is primarily speaking of taming the tongue on a personal level in order to keep from sinning, it is very applicable for the leader to learn to

You are to
follow no man
further than he
follows Christ.'

John Collins

carefully measure his words in the process of giving direction to his followers. Learning to be deliberate and thoughtful concerning our communication will go far in keeping the Godly leader from troubles that arise when a “shoot from the hip” methodology (no pun intended) is used.

Effective communication for the Godly leader starts with the leader himself and his communication with God.

A Leader Must Be Decisive

In a day and age where many have lost their moral compass and ethical foundation, decisiveness is both more rare and hard to accomplish (without a Biblical foundation). To be decisive, the Godly leader must have a firm grasp of God’s Word, a

clear understanding of right and wrong, and a Holy-Spirit-led conscience that does not fear either results or the world's opinion.

Being decisive often goes against the popular mood or societal norms. Being decisive - especially about moral or ethical matters – quite frequently brings a leader in conflict both with those he leads and those who observe. The Godly leader will be decisive regardless because his decision is based on what he knows God would have had to do. In making that decision, he has no fear of a man's opinion of the decision.

Psalms 27:1: The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? (NKJV)

A Leader Must Not Be Fearful

That verse in Psalms also reminds us that a Godly leader should not be fearful. The fear of the future, fear of the unknown, fear of opinion, or fear of losing popularity can render a leader obsolete and ineffective.

Fear is like a cancer that will spread through the leader to his followers and destroy them both. A

Godly leader derives their strength and purpose from God and humbly, but without apology, fears no man's opinion of their leadership. A Godly leader understands that God is sovereign and in control of all things and so he has no fear of the future or the unknown.

**A Godly leader believes
that all things are in God's hands
and so he fears no man's hands.**

A Leader Must Be Aware of and Understand the Power and Responsibility of Their Influence

I have known people who have great leadership qualities and naturally attract people. I have also known some of those same people who use that natural attraction and leadership gift to simply get out of people what benefits them personally.

It is the responsibility of the Godly leader to be aware of the effect they have on people. The naturally gifted leader will draw others who want to emulate them and look to them for their example. The charismatic leader creates a natural

magnetism where others simply want to be like them. This is a powerful gift that comes with a serious responsibility. The Godly leader must realize that their followers look to them as an example, and many of them actually want to be like the leader. There is nothing wrong with this as we see in our theme verse: “imitate me as I imitate Christ.” The problem comes when the leader either does not care about the fact that people want to be like them or uses that fact as an opening for self-serving manipulation.

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot be a leader and not care about the influence you have on others. You cannot be a leader and claim like the famous Charles Barkley comment: “I didn’t ask to be their role model.” If you are a leader in any capacity, you are a role model, you do influence people, and you WILL be held responsible for it.

A Leader Must Cultivate Selflessness

A leader must demonstrate and cultivate selflessness. The leader cannot expect selflessness from those he leads if he does not demonstrate it himself or herself. Leaders’ choices, lifestyles, and priorities must reflect selflessness; no amount of

“saying but not doing” can disguise a lack of selflessness.

A Leader Must Develop Discernment for Themselves and Those Who Follow

Discernment is the ability to know what is right. Discernment is sorely lacking at all levels today. Discernment primarily starts with knowledge of God’s Word that allows the discerning leader to filter situations, circumstances, and questions through biblical knowledge and application. Discernment is the ability to see through the rhetoric, emotion, and politics to get to the real issues and determine what is right and what is wrong - what is truth and what is propaganda or error.

A Leader Must Avoid Hypocrisy

It is hard to add much more to that sentence as it is plain enough alone. A leader who is exposed as a hypocrite at best does damage to their effectiveness as a leader and at worst destroys it totally. A leader must live by the same standards he presents to those who follow. There is no amount of smoke and mirrors, showmanship, or

tap dancing that can rescue a leader from blatant hypocrisy (I say blatant hypocrisy because this is not to be confused with saying that a leader must be perfect and can never make a mistake, be guilty of bad judgment, or even have a short-term lapse in judgment).

A Leader Must Be Firm and Fair

A Godly leader must be firm. They cannot be wishy-washy or wavering. Those who follow the Godly leader must be sure they will not be victim to a vacillating weakling who sticks their finger in the air to find out which way the wind is blowing to determine directions or decisions.

A Godly leader must be fair, not showing self-serving partiality or simply ignoring fairness because it is inconvenient or difficult. The Godly leader will find much more receptiveness to correction and redirection when the recipient feels that the leader is fair and balanced in their judgment and in delivering both rebuke and praise.

What is Character?

- *The attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual.*
- *An evaluation of a particular individual's durable moral qualities.*

~~~~~

Character is the real you. It's the YOU staring back first thing in the morning that hasn't shaved or put on makeup. It's the person you are when there is no one around but you.

There are three versions of you:

1. who you think everyone thinks "you" are
2. who you really think "you" secretly are
3. who "you" actually are

Character shapes the reality of all those versions of you. Bad character will result in a very different version of all three of those while good character means a consistent version of those three.

Individual characteristics matter to us as much as the individual ingredients matter to a great recipe. No one ingredient by itself is fulfilling or complete.

It is only when we mix all of those ingredients together and see the final product that we understand how they all blend and work together. It is the same way with human character. The totality of our good and bad characteristics, thoroughly blended in the mixing bowl of life, decides whether or not we end up being a gourmet meal, junk food, or something inedible.

Developing a good character does not come by default. Like all things in life, if we simply neglect the cultivation of a good character it is not going to happen; or worse, the bad character traits will dominate.

What's more, it takes more than just a generic desire to have a good character. You must educate yourself and be aware of what good character traits are and how they are cultivated and grown.

### **When You Squeeze a Lemon You Get Lemon Juice**

- Character is what motivates you from the inside out.
- Character seeks the highest standards of behavior in every situation whether private or public.

- Character determines our default responses to the circumstances of daily life.
- Character is revealed when the pressure is on.

Let me expand on that last point. When you squeeze a lemon, you will get lemon juice. Pressure and stress in our life will squeeze out what is really inside of us. Good character will ensure that when the pressure is on we will not transform into an ugly version of ourselves.

The word “character” implies an explicit or specific image of ourselves. It is the exact representation of the true you from the inside out. Good character ensures that we are not living a hypocritical double life where we act one way when people are watching but another when they are not.

As you read through this guide and encounter each character trait, think about people that you know who possess that trait and tie them to the definition of it to help you remember it.

Ask yourself the questions that follow on each page. The more you emotionally engage yourself with each concept, the more you will remember

them and be aware of them as you live your daily life.

## Accountability

- *The obligation or willingness to accept responsibility (or to account) for one's actions.*
- *Answerability; blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving.*
- *Considering carefully, and being open to challenge in relation to, one's choices.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Lack of accountability is one of the primary traits of a person with a bad character. They don't want to be told what to do and they don't want anyone knowing what they do or holding them to any kind of standard.

Accountability flies in the face of a culture that elevates personal rights and instant self-gratification. Accountability is the opposite of "I'll do whatever I want, whenever I want, and it's none of your stinking business."

Embracing and utilizing accountability helps us to be disciplined, avoid doing what is wrong, and



takes advantage of the strength and positive peer pressure available to us in good friendships.

**Ask yourself:** Do I have anyone I'm accountable to? Do I consider myself answerable to anyone about my life and behavior and choices?

## **Adaptable**

- *Able to change or be changed in order to fit or work better in some situation or for some purpose.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Stuck in your ways. That's the way we've always done it. I've been doing it this way for too long to change now.

That is the opposite of being adaptable. The adaptable person does not mind positive and beneficial change. They look for ways to work better, to live better, and to do things that help build even greater character and influence in their life and those around them.

The adaptable person accepts change where change results in a greater good, and actively cultivates the ability to change anything in their

life when an opportunity to improve or grow presents itself.

**Ask yourself:** Are you known as someone who is stuck in their ways? Are you the first to gripe and complain when presented with change? Do you actively seek out change when it result in stronger or better character?

## Benevolence

- *The inclination or tendency to help or do good to others; charity.*
- *Acts of kindness.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The benevolent person is not only willing to be kind to others, they actively seek out opportunities to engage in specific and thoughtful acts of kindness.

Benevolence is a mindset of the kind person, who by habit and practice, is actively evaluating each moment and situation to see if there is an opportunity to be kind to others.

Benevolence is a mindset, an attitude, and a way of life that we can cultivate. The benevolent

person's default reaction to the situation is to think of the kind and caring response.

You will find that benevolence feeds upon itself. The more benevolent you are, the more your sensitivity and willingness to be kind is heightened. You become more creative in your ways to show kindness to others as benevolence spurs on even greater benevolence.

**Ask yourself:** As you live your daily life, are you actively looking for ways to be kind to others?

## Community

- *A group of people having common interests.*
- *Similarity or identity: a community of interests.*
- *Sharing, participation, and fellowship.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The idea of community has us realize that we do not live in a vacuum and are part of the greater good and whole of where we live and who we live amongst.

Living with a mindset of “community” helps us to care about what effect our life has on our friends, coworkers, and neighbors.

Community is the mindset that what is good for me is good for those around me. It is the opposite of being selfish and not caring about or actively participating in the lives of those we see next door, walking down the street, or clocking in at work.

It is unfortunate that it seems to be the common situation today for people to be so busy and consumed in their own lives they neither know their community nor care much about it.

**Ask yourself:** Do you care about your influence on your community? Do you participate in positive and uplifting ways with your community?

## Conscientious

- *Being concerned with doing something correctly.*
- *Being very careful about doing what you are supposed to be doing.*
- *A personality trait that is defined as being thorough, careful, or vigilant; it implies a desire to do a task well.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The average mindset of most people is to do things in such a way that only benefits them, and to only do just enough to get them the reward they seek - such as a paycheck or recognition.

The conscientious person does something correctly and thoroughly because it is the right thing to do.

Being conscientious implies being thoughtful, careful, and considerate about our work, life choices, and relationships. It's doing things on purpose for the right reasons.

**Ask yourself:** Are you thoughtful and careful about what you do? Are you concerned about doing things the right way as much as you are concerned about the reward?

## Contentment

- *Happiness with one's situation in life.*
- *Emotions experienced in a state of well-being.*
- *The acknowledgement and satisfaction of reaching capacity.*

~~~~~

In a culture driven by advertising and a relentless message that you never have enough, few people truly learn contentment.

Contentment is not the absence of wanting to achieve or obtain more, but rather the mindset of being happy and satisfied at any given moment with your circumstances. This is particularly important in our society where even those we call poor have an abundance of food, clothing, and possessions.

Contentment allows us to enjoy life rather than begrudge what others have that we do not, or engage in self-pity constantly thinking we deserve more.

Ask yourself: Are you content with the necessities of life or do you constantly feel like you deserve more? When you receive something good, are you content with it or is your first thought about how you should have gotten something better or gotten more of it?

Decisiveness

- *Recognizing key factors and finalizing difficult decisions.*

- *Able to make choices quickly and confidently.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Decisiveness is a rare quality today in an age where self-interest and “covering your butt” is more the common practice.

Decisiveness is cultivated more easily in the midst of a good character because selfishness and a lack of discipline are not creating a mindset of insecurity and self-preservation (which are the enemies of decisiveness).

Decisiveness is a mixture of wisdom, self-education, and confidence, born from a high level of good character which makes us secure in our ability to choose the right course of action.

As much as any character trait, decisiveness is a byproduct of many other good character traits.

Ask yourself: Are you decisive or paralyzed at the moment of choice? Can you make choices and decisions confidently, knowing that regardless of the result you have made your decision based on principles grounded in high character?

Deference

- *Submission or courteous yielding to the opinion, wishes, or judgment of another.*
- *Courteous respect.*
- *A yielding or submitting to a recognized superior out of respect or reverence.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Deference has become so out of style in our modern society that most people have never even heard of the word much less be able to define it.

Put simply, deference is the willful choice to put someone else ahead of yourself, to prefer them (their desires, needs, choices) over our own for unselfish reasons.

You can remember it this way: to “defer” is to “prefer” another person’s well-being and experience over your own. This is not our natural tendency as “looking out for number one” is the default mindset of humanity.

Learning deference is only achieved in one simple way: you have to practice it on purpose.

Deference comes with a huge reward of satisfaction.

Ask yourself: Is your default attitude one of deference or preferring (what's best for you)?

Diligence

- *The ability to invest all your energy to complete the tasks assigned to you.*
- *Characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort.*
- *Steadfast application, the virtue of hard work.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Which would you say is most common: do as little as you can to get done? Or do something as thoroughly as possible for the satisfaction of a job well done and a clear conscience?

We all work or perform tasks for personal benefit - and that's a good thing. However, if we have the mindset that we will do as little as we possibly can to receive that benefit, with no consideration to the quality or thoroughness of what we have done, then we are not practicing diligence in our life.

Diligence is the idea that doing something right, doing something to the best of our ability, and going the extra mile to make sure it is the very best we can do, is a benefit unto itself apart from whatever income or reward it may earn for us.

Ask yourself: Are you diligent in your work and responsibilities? Or do you do as little as possible, just enough to get your paycheck or recognition?

Excellence

- *The state or quality of excelling or being exceptionally good; extreme merit; superiority.*
- *An action, characteristic, feature, etc., in which a person excels.*

~~~~~

Excellence is closely related to diligence.

Excellence is not only doing a job thoroughly and completely, but it is the ongoing effort to improve your skills and knowledge to the highest degree possible.

Excellence is the desire to be as good at something as it is possible for you to be whether it

is work, education, relationships, or personal growth.

Excellence is the opposite of mediocrity and complacency. Excellence is the passion and desire to continually do more, do things better, and improve yourself in all aspects of your life.

**Ask yourself:** Do you care about excellence or is it enough to just get by? What things are you doing in your life to increase your level of excellence? What education, activities, or experiences are you actively pursuing to increase your personal level of excellence?

## Fair-Minded

- *Play by the rules. Don't blame others carelessly. Treat all people fairly.*
- *Having or showing an honest, fair way of thinking.*
- *A principle of justice holding that decisions should be based on objective criteria, rather than on the basis of bias, prejudice, or preferring the benefit to one person over another for improper reasons.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Being fair-minded goes back to the golden rule. Treat other people like you would want to be treated. Being fair-minded is not holding someone else to a standard or level of judgment that you do not apply to yourself.

Being fair-minded is also being reasonable and treating others within a standard that they are aware of and are capable of achieving.

It is human nature to be fair-minded about ourselves, but under the guise of being tough or “achieving excellence” apply a higher standard to others. Being fair-minded means not requiring of others what we are not willing to require of ourselves.

**Ask yourself:** Do you routinely stop and evaluate whether you being fair-minded towards others?

## Forgiveness

- *Compassionate feelings that support a willingness to forgive.*
- *Mercifulness, mercy - the feeling that motivates compassion.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It is a puzzling feature of human nature that we all desire and even expect forgiveness to be dealt out generously to us while being stingy and hesitant when it comes to forgiving others.

Forgiving someone is not letting them off the hook. In reality, it is letting yourself off the hook. By forgiving, you no longer have to feel offended or contend with the need to defend or avenge yourself.

Forgiveness has a way of coming back to you. If you are slow to forgive, harboring bitterness and grudges, it will negatively affect your personality and you'll find people treat you the same way.

If you freely forgive, work to restore relationships, and mend the damage, you will often find people will be more forgiving towards you as well.

**Ask yourself:** Are you quick to forgive? Do you expect a certain response from the other person before you will forgive?

## **Generosity**

- *Liberality in giving or willingness to give.*

- *Spending time, money, or labor, for others, without being rewarded in return.*

~~~~~

Generosity is a mindset that can be cultivated.
There is never a diminishing return on generosity.
The more you give, the more of a blessing it is.

You can learn to be a generous person even if you do not feel like it. As with sports or a job, the more you practice, the better you get at it and the more benefit you receive from it.

The immature or selfish person thinks that giving results in diminishing yourself or your resources. The generous person learns and experiences that the more you give, the more you receive both in emotional and spiritual reward and often in physical reward as well.

There is hardly a more satisfying and pleasant character trait to develop than generosity.

Ask yourself: Are you a generous person? Are you always expecting to receive but only grudgingly and hesitantly give? Are you willing to give generosity a try?

Goodness

- *The quality or state of being good.*
- *Correct or proper. Of high quality.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Be good. How many times we hear that from parents, teachers, and other adults as we grow up. The simple phrase “be good.”

To be good is a mindset. It’s to look for the good in others, seek out the good in a situation, and actively choose and exhibit good behavior in our own life regardless of feelings or circumstances.

To be good is a reward in and of itself. We don’t have to regret our choices when they are good. We don’t have to fear consequences as a result of good actions. We don’t have to feel guilty or lose our peace when we seek the good of others.

Of course, goodness implies there is a standard of goodness. Goodness can be determined through the measure of other positive character traits. What is generous is good. What is honest is good. See what I mean?

Ask yourself: Do you stop and think about what is good in every situation? Do you try to choose good behavior even if you don't see the purpose?

Gratefulness

- *Appreciative of benefits received; thankful.*
- *Feeling or attitude in acknowledgment of a benefit that one has received or will receive.*

~~~~~

In an era of entitlement and with the current focus on personal rights and instant gratification, gratefulness is a casualty of war.

To be grateful and thankful implies thoughtfully acknowledging what you have or what someone else has done for you. Instead, our culture cultivates an attitude of “what have you done for me lately?” and an insatiable appetite for personal entitlement.

A grateful person is sincerely thankful for what they have and fights the urge to continually feel they deserve more. A grateful person certainly does not indulge in self-pity over what they do not



have. A grateful person has sincere joy when others are blessed even when they are not.

Learn to be grateful and thankful, especially in a culture like ours where even the poor are abundantly blessed with food, clothing, and resources.

**Ask yourself:** Are you grateful for what you have? Do you actively work on being a thankful person?

## Honesty

- *Fairness and straightforwardness of conduct. The quality of being fair and truthful.*
- *A facet of moral character that involves such traits as integrity, truthfulness, and straightforwardness, including straightforwardness of conduct, along with the absence of lying, cheating, theft, etc.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

You are either honest or you are not. You can't compartmentalize honesty. You'll often hear people claim that despite some dishonesty in one area of their life, they really are an honest person.

The lack of character that will allow you to be dishonest about one thing will allow you to be dishonest about 1000 things if the circumstances fit. Honesty often involves being honest when it hurts or is to our detriment.

Being honest will automatically make you part of the “cream of the crop” in our modern culture that celebrates, laughs about, and commercializes lying. Dishonesty, cheating, and lying have become such an acceptable part of our culture that is nothing more than a statistic to be studied.

**Ask yourself:** Are you honest even when it hurts and even when you think no one will find out?

## Honor

- *Respect for others because of their worth as human beings.*
- *High moral standards of behavior.*
- *Good reputation as judged by other people.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Honor. That’s such an old-fashioned word. Does it really have a place in modern society? Perhaps it’s

just a romantic notion relegated to inspirational movies, July 4th, and puff pieces on the news.

It could be argued that honor is the foundation of all the other character traits in this book. Honor begins with a respect for others because of their intrinsic value. Honor is a respect for your own life because of your own intrinsic value.

Honor is the idea of having the highest standards of behavior and thinking. Honor is doing the right thing simply because it is the right thing, regardless of personal cost or amount of effort needed.

To strive to be an honorable person is to strive for the highest quality of character in humanity.

**Ask yourself:** Have you contemplated the idea of honor? Is being an honorable person something that appeals to you?

## **Integrity**

- *The quality of being honest and fair.*
- *Steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code; being wholesome; unimpaired.*

- *Consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Integrity is a word often used, but more often poorly defined or misunderstood. Most people have only a shallow understanding of integrity because it is a mixture of several other qualities.

Integrity involves being honest, just, and fair minded in all your dealings with others. Integrity implies a commitment to a standard higher than yourself that is not subject to circumstances or feelings. Integrity involves consistency in the quality of behavior and choices that are absolute, based on a standard of good unaffected by personal agenda and selfishness.

Integrity is the cultivation of a consistent lifestyle of goodness, honor, honesty, and fairness, based on a standard that we recognize cannot be changed simply to match our own personal desires.

**Ask yourself:** Are you a person of high integrity?  
Can you validate that claim by pointing to the

character traits in your life that add up to integrity?

## Loyal

- *Demonstrating commitment to others.*
- *Having or showing complete and constant support for someone or something.*
- *Faithfulness or a devotion to a person, country, group, or cause.*

~~~~~

If you are a careful observer of business, politics, entertainment, and modern life, you will quickly understand that loyalty is increasingly rare.

It is not loyalty to be committed to someone only while it benefits you. It is not loyalty to be committed to the cause only when it is culturally popular. It is not loyalty to support an idea simply because it gains you an advantage.

True loyalty is the idea of being committed to a person, organization, cause, or concept because you believe in it, and because it is the right thing to do regardless of the sacrifice or potential consequences.

There is nothing quite so rewarding as being loyal and there is nothing quite so refreshing as seeing loyalty given to you personally.

Ask yourself: Are you loyal, I mean truly loyal regardless of the cost, to any person, group, or idea?

Overcomer

- *To defeat (someone or something).*
- *To successfully deal with or gain control of (something difficult).*

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If you have observed humanity recently, it's not hard to argue that (for the most part) people quickly give up in the face of any adversity or challenge.

The overcomer is at an immediate advantage in our society simply because it is such a rare character trait to possess. Instead of cultivating a spirit of perseverance and victory in the face of life's difficult circumstances, we instead celebrate whining, self-pity, and unhealthy dependence.

Learn to overcome challenges. Learn to defeat setbacks. Strive to gain control over not only what hinders you from your personal goals, but also what would hinder you from building a stronger character.

Being an overcomer means never giving up - regardless of the cost or effort involved - if the mission or cause is honorable and good.

**Ask yourself:** Do you easily give up? Do you push through and work hard to overcome difficulties in life?

## Patience

- *The bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain without complaint or anger.*
- *An ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay.*
- *Quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care.*

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You've probably heard the prayer, "Lord give me patience, and give it to me right now!" Sorry, it

doesn't work that way. There's only one way to get patience: enduring difficult circumstances.

Patience is a particularly difficult character trait to cultivate today because we live in a society that rabidly promotes and encourages instant gratification regardless of the long-term damage to both individual lives and society.

To practice and learn patience, you have to buck the mentality of the culture. There are no magic shortcuts to learning patience. You simply have to choose to be patient on purpose; but if you do, growing to be a patient person is one of the most rewarding character traits you can have.

Ask yourself: Are you a patient person? How much does indulgence and instant gratification hinder becoming patient?

Practical

- *Relating to what is real rather than to what is possible or imagined.*
- *Being likely to be effective and applicable to a real situation.*

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Much of our advertising and entertainment industries make it hard to even understand what practicality is. There is always something newer, faster, better, and more desirable than what you have now. We are constantly being bombarded with enticements that we deserve to have things, do things, and be things that are in reality not practical.

Being practical does not mean being pessimistic; it means being realistic. It means living life not thinking you deserve to be the next American Idol, the next millionaire, or the next lottery winner.

Practicality is not glamorous, so it is not something heavily promoted by our culture. Practicality is generally not profitable to others, but over time is highly profitable to you individually.

**Ask yourself:** Are you a practical person or have you been caught up in the advertising and media message of impracticality?

## Respect

- *A feeling of appreciative, often deferential regard.*

- *A specific feeling of regard or esteem for the actual qualities of the one respected.*

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“Don’t disrespect me” or more accurately people say “don’t diss me.” It’s ironic that we hear this accusation routinely today by those who have actually no clue what respect is. To them, respect is not saying or doing exactly what they want.

Respect is showing an appreciation for or placing high-value on the qualities that deserve that kind of appreciation. It might be respect for a person, respect for position, or respect for something intangible such as someone else’s property.

The level of respect due to something is based on its own intrinsic value, regardless of whether you recognize that value or choose to appreciate it.

A respectful person looks for this value in both people and situations so that they can express the appropriate appreciation.

Ask yourself: Do you show respect to whom respect is due? Do you recognize the difference between real respect and the shallow version we see today?

Responsible

- *Knowing and doing what is expected of you.*
- *Being accountable for your words, actions, and attitudes.*
- *Able to be trusted to do what is right or to do the things that are expected or required.*

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Being responsible is the opposite of playing the victim and claiming nothing is ever your fault or under your control.

Being responsible is the opposite of feeling entitled, expecting the burden of your welfare and provision to be shouldered by others.

Being responsible is having accountability for your life choices and how they affect not only you, but those close to you and the rest of society.

Being responsible is knowing that as much as is humanly possible, you are to take control of your own life and what you do with it and what results from it.

Being responsible means you do what you have to do because it is right and needs to be done.

**Ask yourself:** Do you take responsibility for your life? Would others consider you a responsible person?

## **Self-Disciplined**

- *Able to correct or regulate oneself for the sake of improvement.*
- *Capable of or subject to self-discipline.*
- *Having self-discipline, being in control of one's self and one's actions.*

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When most people think of being self-disciplined, they only think of denying themselves the fun things in life that the carefree lucky few get to enjoy.

In reality, being self-disciplined is a very fulfilling, productive, and enjoyable way of life. It keeps you from being a slave to instant self-gratification. It keeps you from being a slave to your feelings and impulsive unpredictable desires. It keeps you from being a slave to the manipulations of a world that would keep you perpetually dissatisfied and unhappy with what you have and who you are.

Being self-disciplined affects every area of your life, and the more you practice discipline the more benefits you will see from it.

**Ask yourself:** In what areas of your life are you lacking self-discipline? What parts of your life are disciplined and what benefits do you see from it?

## Servant-Hearted

- *One that serves others and is devoted to others.*
- *One who serves another, providing help in some manner.*

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If you want a surefire way to regret how you spend your life, never make any effort to serve others but only be concerned with what others can do for you.

One of the most satisfying and fulfilling ways you can live your life is to dedicate significant portions of it to the welfare and blessing of others.

To the inexperienced, this may seem like you are using up your own time and resources only for the benefit of someone else; but anyone who has lived the servant-hearted life will tell you that

could not be farther from the truth. There is far more fulfillment and gratification in serving than in being served.

The servant-hearted person cultivates a default mindset that is constantly seeking ways to serve others and expend their energy, experience, talent, and resources to the benefit of someone else.

Ask yourself: Do you look for ways to serve others? Have you experienced the benefits and fulfillment of serving others?

Thoughtful

- *Showing concern for the needs or feelings of other people.*
- *Characterized by careful reasoned thinking.*
- *Demonstrating thought or careful consideration.*

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Often we define the word “thoughtful” as someone who does something nice for another. Or maybe it’s the act of really empathizing with another person.

Those are certainly aspects of being thoughtful, but it goes much deeper than that.

Thoughtfulness is a mindset of sincerely caring about people and making a real effort to understand their needs and feelings.

Thoughtfulness is not impulsive. Rather, it is careful and reasonable, giving significant consideration to a situation or circumstance and taking time to come up with the best response to it.

A thoughtful person is not impulsive, reactive, or haphazard. Instead, they deliberately spend time carefully considering the situation or person at hand.

Ask yourself: Are you blessed when people are thoughtful towards you? Do you show appreciation for that thoughtfulness by striving to be thoughtful to others as often as you can?

Thorough

- *Executed without negligence or omissions.*
- *Complete; perfect; attentive to.*
- *Having full command or mastery.*

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It's probably hard to argue against the fact that the vast majority of people have a mindset of doing as little as possible for the greatest possible benefit to themselves.

For example, employees often do the minimum amount of work, just short of getting in trouble, while still expecting and feeling entitled to not only a paycheck but to positive reviews and pay increases.

A thorough person doesn't think this way. They complete a job or a task with a mindset of wanting to do it completely, with the highest attention and the best of their skill.

That same person may still have a paycheck or reward as their motivation, but they see just as much reward in being thorough about everything they do.

**Ask yourself:** Are you thorough in your work and responsibilities? Do you find yourself ever trying to do as little as possible while still claiming "job well done"?



# Thrifty

- *Using or managing money in a careful or wise way.*
- *Given to or marked by economy and good management.*
- *The quality of being frugal.*

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The opposite of being thrifty is only caring about what benefit, income, or gratification you receive while having no concern about the consequences.

Our culture of credit-driven consumerism is a specific enemy of being thrifty. You don't have to be careful, wise, or frugal when you're spending money you don't have yet.

An employee also needs to learn to be thrifty at work and remember that expenses are in essence spending your employer's money. Being thrifty with someone else's money is as honorable as being thrifty with your own.

Learning to be thrifty takes time and discipline, but the rewards of being financially free are well worth the effort.

Ask yourself: Are you thrifty and wise with money? Or living beyond your means?

Trustworthiness

- *The trait of deserving trust and confidence.*
- *Someone in whom you can place your trust and rest assured that the trust shall not be betrayed.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

How do you feel about a person you can't trust? In reality, is there much they can do to earn your trust? For most people, once your trust has been betrayed it is almost impossible to earn it back.

Now think about yourself. Do people see you as trustworthy? If not, do you think they are just being unfair or have you given them reason?

Whether it is employment, marriage, business, or friendships, there is hardly a character trait that has more impact than trustworthiness.

If you can be trusted, almost any other obstacle can be overcome. If you cannot be trusted, everything else you offer doesn't matter a whole lot. It is all overshadowed by mistrust.

There is only one way to learn trustworthiness and that is to be a trustworthy person. No shortcuts.

Ask yourself: Are you considered trustworthy?
Are you honest in your assessment of that?

Understanding

- *The knowledge and ability to judge a particular situation or subject.*
- *A willingness to understand people's behavior and forgive them.*

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Most of us know someone who is not an understanding person. They thrive on being hard-nosed and inflexible and don't really care about anyone else's concerns or challenges. They often consider this an admirable quality, but it is really a self-serving characteristic that benefits only them.

An understanding person takes the time to observe and rightly judge a situation or person. Then they thoughtfully consider the circumstances or behavior and, as often as is possible, extend empathy and forgiveness as necessary.

The characteristic of understanding involves wisdom. Wisdom only comes from continual self-improvement and embracing lessons learned. The understanding person takes all of that and uses it in his relationships to the benefit of others.

**Ask yourself:** Are you an understanding person?  
Do you strive to see a situation from the other person's view?