

# CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER

## **MODULE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To equip you with the unseen ideals and the non-negotiable traits that guide people of Christ-like character, including humility, faithfulness, forgiveness, courage, integrity, loyalty, diligence, gratitude, compassion, and patience
2. You will learn how to tap into the power to always do the right thing.
3. You will learn to stay in a place with God where the anointing on your lives can flow and bring the unseen riches of the Kingdom of God to those around you.

## **RECAP**

### ***I.***

#### **Introduction**

- A. The struggle for character
- B. Honorable character comes from God.
- C. Character matters!
- D. The English word “virtue” derives from the Latin word for strength (“virtus”).
- E. We fear (reverence or highly honor) God by living life as He directs.
- F. Making the virtuous choice is always a walk of faith – we must believe that God will see us through and make everything turn out for our good.
- G. The virtues of humility, faithfulness, forgiveness, courage, integrity, loyalty, diligence, gratitude, compassion, and patience are the pillars of your Christian life.

### ***II.***

#### **Humility: The First of the Virtues**

- A. Humility defined
  1. “A freedom from arrogance that grows out of the recognition that all we have and are comes from God.” – *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*
- B. **Humility is exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.**
- C. **Humility is not shame or condemnation for sin.**
- D. **True humility includes agreeing with God concerning all that He says about us.**
- E. **Our humility before God is measured by our daily lives with our fellow men.**
- F. **Instruction in humility from the Scriptures**
  1. **Be teachable.**
  2. **Trust God to deal with your enemies.**
  3. **Do not return evil for evil** – 1 Peter 3:9.
  4. **Prefer others** – Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12.
  5. **Give respect to employers** – 1 Pet. 2:18-19.
- G. **Promises to the humble man or woman:**
  1. **Answered prayer**
  2. **Guidance**
  3. **Abundance of peace**
  4. **Grace**
  5. **Riches, honor, and life**
  6. **Joy**

### **III. Faithfulness – Stewardship of the True Riches**

#### **A. Faithfulness defined**

1. From *Merriam Webster's Dictionary*:
  - a. *obsolete*: full of faith  
[NOTE: Though considered obsolete in modern usage, being full of faith is essential for developing faithfulness!]
  - b. steadfast in affection or allegiance: loyal
  - c. firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty: conscientious

#### **B. Jesus is our pattern for faithfulness.**

1. **He is a faithful High Priest** – 1 Sam. 2:35; Heb. 2:17.
2. **Now we are the priests of the new priesthood** – 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
3. **We must now be faithful stewards of the priesthood we are placed in.**
  - a. God has first called us to be stewards of our own lives.
  - b. God has anointed believers for service to others.
    - 1) Jesus modeled this by healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, and forgiving sins – Acts 10:38.
    - 2) He gave His disciples the power to heal– Matt. 10:7-8.
    - 3) Now He has anointed us as well (2 Cor. 1:21) – if people can get to us, they can receive eternal life, healing, and wholeness from God.
  - c. God simply asks us to guard our hearts and minds to protect the anointing, the treasure in us through which we minister to others – 2 Cor. 4:5-7.
  - d. The presence of the Holy Spirit and His anointing is the only guarantee that we can be successful as faithful stewards of the calling on our lives.

#### **C. Instruction from the Bible**

1. The biblical picture of faithfulness is “the faithful steward.”
2. As believers, we are entrusted with the goods of the Kingdom of God.
  - a. We are stewards of the multi-faceted grace of God – 1 Pet. 4:10.
  - b. To be a good steward means to watch over the goods of one’s master, to protect, invest, and increase them.
3. Jesus said, “If you are faithful in little things you will be faithful in large ones” – Luke 16:10 NLT.
  - a. The use of material wealth is a test of character.
  - b. Those who cannot use it wisely do not deserve to have spiritual responsibilities (the true riches) entrusted to them.
4. God wants His stewards to give the “true riches” of His kingdom away!
  - a. He wants us to forgive the debts and trespasses of those around us, restoring them to God – John 20:23.
  - b. In addition to forgiveness, God wants us to distribute healing, righteousness, peace, and joy! – Matt. 10:7-8.
5. In the parable of the talents, the servant who invested his talent increased his talents, while the one who buried his talent had it taken away – Matt. 25:28.
  - a. Gifts improve with exercise.
  - b. Those who do not “stir up the gift” (NKJV) that is in them – 2 Tim. 1:6 – find their gifts will rust and decay.
6. We must be faithful stewards of the specific ministry God has given us – 1 Cor. 4:1-2.

- a. This can be a very specific word.
- b. As we obey God, He pours His power and anointing upon us to accomplish this word.
  - 1) We must not use this power and anointing for personal gain or position, but to serve others.
  - 2) We must be fair, just, generous, free of covetousness and greed.
  - 3) The kingdom of God is not about accumulating, but about giving out.

**D. Examples of faithful men in Scripture**

1. **Abraham** was faithful and became God's covenant partner – Neh. 9:7-8.
2. **Moses** was faithful and was called a friend of God – Heb. 3:5; Ex. 33:11.
3. **Paul** was a mighty conduit of the blessings of the kingdom of God.

**E. Promises to faithful men and women**

1. **Protection** - *...He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord*
2. **Abundance** - A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished (Proverbs 28:20).
3. **Expanded territory** - "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matthew 25:21 NKJV).

## SECTION TWO

### IV. Forgiveness – Learning to Release

- A. **Forgiveness is a distinguishing mark of Christian character.**
- B. **Forgiveness is the foundation of the gospel.**
  - 1. Forgiveness defined:
    - a. To send away, to send forth, yield up
    - b. To let go, give up a debt, forgive, to remit
  - 2. Forgiveness is like untying a boat and letting it float down the river.
- C. **Forgiveness is not optional – it is mandatory.**
  - 1. Jesus gives a clear message on forgiveness.
    - a. Matthew 6 – the Lord’s Prayer

#### Matthew 6:12 (Amp)

‘And forgive us our <sup>[a]</sup>debts, as we have forgiven our debtors [letting go of both the wrong and the resentment].

- b. Matthew 18 – the parable of the unforgiving servant
- c. Mark 11:23-26 – requirements of answered prayer

#### Mark 11:24-26 (Amp)

<sup>24</sup>For this reason I am telling you, whatever things you ask for in prayer [in accordance with God’s will], believe [with confident trust] that you have received them, and they will be given to you. <sup>25</sup>Whenever you <sup>[a]</sup>stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him [drop the issue, let it go], so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions and wrongdoings [against Him and others]. <sup>26</sup><sup>[b]</sup>[But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your transgressions.”]

- 2. The Apostle Paul emphasized forgiveness – Eph. 4:30-5:1.

#### Ephesians 4:31-5:1 (Amp)

<sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor [perpetual animosity, resentment, strife, fault-finding] and slander be put away from you, along with every kind of malice [all spitefulness, verbal abuse, malevolence]. <sup>32</sup>Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave <sup>[a]</sup>you. **5** Therefore become imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father];

- 3. Summary: “As Christians, we have been forgiven a debt we cannot pay – our sin debt. In response to God’s great forgiveness toward us, we can find the power to forgive others. Because of what God did for us, there is no unforgivable offense.” – David Stoop

- D. **Four false beliefs that make it seem hard to forgive**
  - 1. False belief #1: If we forgive, we are condoning what was done.
    - a. God never condones a wrong.
    - b. Forgiveness does not mean we condone the wrong that was done to us.
  - 2. False belief #2: We have to “forgive and forget.”
    - a. It is okay for us to “forgive and remember.”
    - b. We know we have forgiven when we can be reminded of the facts, but these facts no longer hurt us.

3. False belief #3: We feel we must forgive quickly.
  - a. Forgiveness is a process that takes time and patience.
4. False belief #4: We believe if we forgive, we must reconcile.
  - a. Forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate concepts.
    - 1) God separates the two—first we repent, then we can enjoy His fellow- ship.
    - 2) Scripture requires us to forgive; reconciliation is optional and conditional.
  - b. Reconciliation requires repentance on the part of the one who has done wrong – Matt. 18:15-17.

#### **Matthew 18:15-17 (Amp)**

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins<sup>[a]</sup>, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens *and* pays attention to you, you have won back your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two others, so that EVERY WORD MAY BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. <sup>17</sup> If he pays no attention to them [refusing to listen and obey], tell it to the <sup>[b]</sup>church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile (unbeliever) and a tax collector.

#### **E. What forgiveness is not**

1. Forgiveness is not excusing or reasoning away the sin.
2. Forgiveness is not denying the reality of the sin.

#### **F. What forgiveness is**

1. Forgiveness is a *decision* – an act of the will, done by faith before God.
  - a. We give up our right to hold another person accountable for the wrong they have done to us.
2. Forgiveness is releasing your offender, forgiving the debt.
3. Forgiveness involves three inner decisions:
  - a. You see the offense as sin, not just a wrong.
  - b. You view the sin from the position of Jesus on Calvary.
    - 1) Jesus completely paid the price for this sin – and all sins ever com- mitted.
    - 2) See it nailed to the Cross – Col. 2:13b-14.

#### **Colossians 2:13-14 (Amp)**

<sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh (worldliness, manner of life), God made you alive together with Christ, having [freely] forgiven us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled out the <sup>[a]</sup>certificate of debt consisting of <sup>[b]</sup>legal demands [which were in force] against us and which were hostile to us. And this certificate He has set aside *and* completely removed by nailing it to the cross.

- c. You make a decision to forgive.
4. Forgiveness is repenting of unforgiveness and bitterness. Ask God’s forgiveness – 1 John 1:9.

#### **1 John 1:9 (Amp)**

If we [freely] admit that we have sinned *and* confess our sins, He is faithful and just [true to His own nature and promises], and will forgive our sins and cleanse us *continually* from all unrighteousness [our wrongdoing, everything not in conformity with His will and purpose].

5. Forgiveness is releasing yourself from the guilt. Forgive yourself.
6. A statement of forgiveness:  
 "I forgive, \_\_\_\_\_(their name)\_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_(specifics)\_\_\_\_\_. I take authority over you, Satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of His resurrected life. I take back the ground I have allowed Satan to gain in my life because of my attitude toward \_\_\_\_\_(their name)\_\_\_\_\_ and I give this ground back to my Lord Jesus Christ."
7. Forgiveness is a process.
  - a. The decision to forgive must be followed by the faith walk of forgiveness.
  - b. New offenses can be forgiven as they occur without linking them to past offenses.

**G. Unforgiveness is like drinking poison – and waiting for your enemy to die.**

1. Sowing to the spirit vs. sowing to the flesh – Gal. 6:7-8.

**Galatians 6:7b-8 (Amp)**

for whatever a man sows, this *and* this only is what he will reap. <sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his flesh [his sinful capacity, his worldliness, his disgraceful impulses] will reap from the flesh ruin *and* destruction, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

2. Many believers suffer because they have not forgiven those who have hurt, offended, or rejected them.
  - a. Unresolved hurt and anger turned inward lead to guilt and defensiveness.
  - b. Unforgiveness can result in depression and bitterness – Heb. 12:15.
3. Bitterness also results in physical problems and Satanic strongholds.

**H. Refuse "the bait stick of Satan."**

1. Unforgiveness is a trap – and offense is the bait.
2. Embracing an offense  
 "Embracing an offense is so easy, but once it has been embraced, it is almost impossible to get rid of by your own strength and ability. Taking hold of an offense is like reaching out and grabbing a high-voltage electrical wire...you need help to let it go. If you make the decision to get free by faith, and then ask the Lord to help you, God will empower you to release offense and live totally free. The very thing that looks impossible will become a reality when the power of God works through you" (Ollison 139).
3. Your chance to shine!  
 "You cannot control how people act; you can control how you react. When offensive situations arise, they become your opportunity to shine! You can literally make the decision that regardless of the way others act, you will not allow them to offend you. You can be surrounded by an atmosphere of strife and contention and be the only person who remains totally free from their influence" (Ollison 47).
  - a. Best policy: when you wake up in the morning, forgive everyone in advance!

**I. Biblical examples of forgiveness**

1. Joseph forgave his brothers – Gen. 45:1-15.
2. Job was willing to forgive his friends and pray for them – Job 42:10,12-13,16-17.

**J. Everyday examples**

1. Be the first to say “I’m sorry” in an argument.
2. Don’t hold onto wrongs done to you.
3. Don’t tell others about wrongs done to you.
  - a. If a bird flying overhead pooped on your arm, would you keep it to show off to everyone around you? No! You would wash it off immediately!
4. Go to an offending brother or sister “first alone” – Matt. 18:15.

**Matthew 18:15a (NLT)**

“If another believer<sup>[a]</sup> sins against you,<sup>[b]</sup> go privately and point out the offense.

5. Pray for those who spitefully use you – Matt. 5:44-45.

**Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)**

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

*Spitefully means “in a way that shows you want to annoy, upset, or hurt another person, because you feel angry towards them”*

**K. Promises to those who forgive**

**1. Forgiveness from the Father –**

**Matthew 6:14 (Amp)**

For if you forgive <sup>[a]</sup>others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins], your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

**2. The fruit of righteousness –**

**James 3:14-18 (Amp)**

<sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be arrogant, and [as a result] be in defiance of the truth. <sup>15</sup> This [superficial] wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly (secular), natural (unspiritual), *even* demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder [unrest, rebellion] and every evil thing *and* morally degrading practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure [morally and spiritually undefiled], then peace-loving [courteous, considerate], gentle, reasonable [and willing to listen], full of compassion and good fruits. It is unwavering, without [self-righteous] hypocrisy [and self-serving guile]. <sup>18</sup> And the seed whose fruit is righteousness (spiritual maturity) is sown in peace by those who make peace [by actively encouraging goodwill between individuals].