

## Higher Dimensions of Character and Lifestyle

### Part 1

If the world is to see Christ, then we need to embrace Christian character and lifestyle. Sadly, many Christians are not taught about Christian Character and their minds are not renewed. As a result the world does not have a picture of what Christ looks like.

#### What is character?

1. The mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.
2. "Character is what you are in the dark." DL Moody
3. Our Character is seen in our integrity, attitude, moral fibre, disposition, and this shapes how we treat one another, good or bad. For the Christian your character also stems from the degree to which you yield to the life of Christ in you to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

*Story by Dr. Richard J. Krejcir: Some time ago, searching the market to buy a house with a very limited budget, one was found that seemed a real good deal for half the normal price. In Southern California this is a rare and rich find! The reason for the great price was because its foundation was cracked. It did not seem to be a big deal; after all, it could just be filled in with some kind of cement, I thought. But, a builder friend of mine explained to me how essential it was to have the foundation completely intact. So, reluctantly, with a lot of pouting and moping, I had to pass up this great deal. I then realized how this is like character. We desire to go and find the easy way out of the hard and time-consuming things of life to get to the point of our day or quest. This happens even in ministry. Even if it cuts the corners off Character, we strive to shortcut our way though spiritual growth and serving God. A few months later, I drove by that house and talked to the new owner who was quite beside himself in frustration. It seems he was having a lot of problems with water leaking into his house all of the time, even when it was not raining. It will cost him more to fix the house's foundation than it would be to tear it down and rebuild. He ended up with a very raw deal that I almost got my family into. I realized through this that **skipping character for convenience** may seem OK at the time, but it will catch up with you.*

Your character will determine the choices you make. Is patience part of your character? Is humility a core foundation in your life? Has your character been marred by anger issues? Is greed a characteristic that may describe you? Your character will determine your lifestyle?

#### What is lifestyle?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary:

Someone's way of living; the things that a person or particular group of people usually do:

- He doesn't have a very healthy lifestyle.
- She needs a pretty high income to support her lifestyle.
- an alternative lifestyle

*My doctor says I should start playing sport because my lifestyle is too sedentary.*

*Some people like the sense of structure that a military lifestyle imposes.*

*He ran up stupendous debts through his extravagant lifestyle.*

*The city lifestyle seems to suit her - she's certainly looking very well.*

*I don't know how they manage to support their expensive lifestyle.*

Ephesians 4:1-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

### 1. Your lifestyle must match your calling.

- Paul being a prisoner was part of his apostolic package.
- Many people fall and are offended with God because they are not aware of the lifestyle that goes with their calling.
- Some never receive their calling because they are not willing to change their lifestyle.
- The reward of walking in your calling far surpasses the lifestyle adjustment you will have to make.
- You can't say I am called to be a kingdom financier but have a stingy lifestyle and bound by greed.
- What is the lifestyle of an intercessor? You can't say I am called to be an intercessor but be given to food and never willing to fast. I can't say I am an apostle but be unwilling to challenge the culture, travel to troubled communities and get persecuted. I can't say I am a pastor but I hate people.
- Ask God to reveal to you the lifestyle associated with your calling and then make the necessary adjustments.

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

### 2. Walk in love

- Love is largely characterised by humility, patience and gentleness  
Humility = lowliness of mind. Its not lowliness of behaviour so its essentially an inner attitude. Many people act humble but are not. They call you nice honouring things but they are not humble.

Patient = makrothumos. Makros = long duration, distant and thumos = passion, heated. Longsuffering. For how long can you suffer? Eg my kid complaining when there was more rubbish to take out. Eg parent dealing with a special needs child or dealing with slower people on a run eg when Daniel and I ran, week one and week two, when he wanted to sprint at the end. You can laugh at me but what are you like in a queue?

Gentleness = meekness, gentle strength, mildness. You are careful how you speak lest you fall too. You are very conscious that with the same measure you judge you will be judged. You are speaking to someone with the full awareness that you are what you are by God's grace.

Love = agapeo – God's love. The big key to understanding agape is to realize that it can be known from the action it prompts.

Let's look at what Paul meant by love as he unpacks it in his letter to the Corinthians.

*1 Cor 13:4-7: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

- Is your life characterised by these qualities? Do you speak the truth in love to the people you say you love or do you say "I love her too much to tell her the truth."

- You grow in love when you realise that we have the same Father and we are part of the same body. How can you be superior to someone who shares the same ancestry and are made of the same substance. We all come from Him. We came from the ground and He breathed on Adam who become a living being. There are no super Christians. We are all one body.

### 3. Remain grounded

Ephesians 4:14

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

- This is one of the reasons people church hop. They are not mature, so they go to wherever tickles them that week.
- Don't be deceived eg going to places that appeal to your flesh eg 24 hour miracle. Or a husband in 3 months. What if you now go and try to make things happen in the flesh.

### 4. Speak the truth in love

Ephesians 4:15

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

- There is no growth without truth
- Choose friends that tell you the truth not those that placate you. Choose friends that are open to you speaking the truth to them otherwise you will always feel hindered when you are around them.
- Satan is the father of lies so wherever there are lies the devil is close by
- Tell yourself the truth too in love
- We are called to be the mature body in every respect not just some respects. This is why it's important to have a balanced diet where we receive truth for all of life. Are there some things you don't like to hear about? Are you drawn to some messages but avoid others e.g. money or certain habits you nurse?

### 5. Know your work and do it in love

Ephesians 4: 16

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- Each of us has work to do, not just a few special people
- Do not compare yourself with others or become envious
- Recognise that we are one unit so don't work in isolation
- Don't expect someone else to play your part

### 6. Embrace the Christian lifestyle that is different from the world

Ephesians 4:17-24

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. 20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

- Paul was clearly passionate about this as he insists on it.
- The world is separated from the life of God (Zoe) because of ignorance.
- *Futility of their thinking* tells me that there is always a mindset behind behaviour. Futility – mataios = without purpose, fleeting, ineffectual, groundless, aimless, unproductive, without profit.
- *Hardness* – callous, blindness, lacking sensitivity or spiritual perception.
- *Sensuality* – aselgeia = licentiousness, outrageous conduct, lewdness (inciting to lust), obscene, wantonness (self-indulgent flirtation)
- *Greediness* – pleonexia = covetousness, avaricious, desiring more, trampling on the rights of others, defrauder.
- What has changed about you since getting saved?
- What is no different?
- What aspects of your lifestyle are yet to be sanctified?
- What aspects of your attitude are yet to be sanctified?
- Worldly people have hearts that are hardened. How soft is your heart toward the things of God?
- They are darkened in their understanding of the things of God. How enlightened are you with regards to the things of God?
- Have you lost sensitivity in some areas?
- What type of sensuality are you still involved in?
- What type of impurity are you still indulging in?
- Are you completely free from greed?
- Jesus clearly taught a specific way of life.
- The old life has desires that are described as deceitful. What desires do you have? Do you know which ones are from your old life and which ones are from the new? In what areas can your desires be deceitful?