

# GIVING GOD CONTROL OF YOUR CHARACTER

Living for Christ requires having the kind of faith in God that gives Him control over every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:5-7). One element of giving God control of your life is giving Him control over your character. This lesson will focus on some basics about what this should look like.

## ROMANS 8:9-11

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The character of the Christian (i.e. the features and traits of who you are and how you act) must be determined by the Spirit of Christ (as revealed by the Holy Spirit in Scripture) rather than the desires of the flesh (Romans 8:1-8)! While sin previously dwelt in you when you were focused on the things of the flesh, the Spirit of Christ should now live in you when you are focused on spiritual things! For example, the Scriptures record Jesus's character of loving all people (Romans 5:6-11), of being humble to submit to the will of the Heavenly Father (Philippians 2:5-11), of serving others rather than demanding others serve Him (John 13:1-17), of meekness that controlled His strength in a way that would honor God (Matthew 11:28-30), etc. Therefore, anything in your character contrary to the Spirit of Christ must not just be dismissed as being "who you are." For, you have been redeemed from such things (1 Peter 1:18-19) and must now allow your character to be shaped by the Spirit of Christ rather than any other factors!

## MATTHEW 5:3-12

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The Christian must foster each of the characteristics identified in this passage. First, you must develop the characteristic of poverty of spirit (humility) that recognizes your spiritual destitution apart from God rather than thinking of yourself as being self-sufficient. Second, you must develop the characteristic of mourning over how sin has impacted your relationship with God rather than

failing to take sin seriously. Third, you must develop the characteristic of being meek so that you yield your strength to God's control rather than doing whatever pleases you. Fourth, you must develop the characteristic of eagerly desiring to know and do whatever is right with God rather than pursuing your fleshly desires. Fifth, you must develop the characteristic of being merciful to pity and compassionately forgive others rather than hold grudges and seek revenge. Sixth, you must develop the characteristic of purity in your heart that stems from a devotion to God rather than one that is stained with fleshly passions and desires. Seventh, you must develop the characteristic of seeking and making peace with others rather than stirring up or being the source of conflict. Eighth, you must develop the characteristic of being willing to do what is right even when it means suffering for it rather than only doing what is right when it is easy or convenient.

## COLOSSIANS 3:12-15

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Prior to this passage, Paul identified many things that must be put to death in your life that were focused on your physical desires (vv. 5-8). This passage then describes a new character that pleases God. For example, your character should be defined by holiness that seeks to stay away from evil and be devoted to what is good and right (1 Peter 1:13-16). So, you must develop the characteristics of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another. All these characteristics demand a selfless demeanor that seeks the good of others, even to the point of patiently enduring and forgiving the wrongs other people do to you. Therefore, this new character is molded by God and does not seek what is in your interests, but what is in the best interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). This character also demonstrates kindness and gentleness toward others in all your interactions that reflect the love of Christ. Finally, notice that this character also involves gratitude – ultimately, gratitude for all that God has done for you!

## **GALATIANS 5:19-24**

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You can know your character by examining the fruit your life has been producing. Verses 19-21 describe the fruit your life will produce if you are focused on the things of the flesh. However, verses 22-23 describe the fruit your life will produce if you are focused on spiritual things and living according to what God's Holy Spirit has revealed. Therefore, you must look at the fruit of your life and evaluate which best describes your character. Since these are contrary to one another (vv. 16-18), you should be evaluating and seeking to eliminate any bad fruit from your character and cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. You do that by directing your focus on spiritual things, studying God's word, obeying what God teaches, and surrounding yourself with influences who are also cultivating this fruit!

## **2 PETER 1:3-11**

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God has given you everything needed to live a life that pleases Him but has left it up to you to cultivate the character that pleases Him. So, just believing in who He is and having the faith to obey the initial commands He has given is not all that He requires. Instead, if you fail to grow and mature in your faith from this point, you will not be useful and fruitful in His service (1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 5:12-14). This is an ongoing process of supplementing your faith with the characteristics of goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These characteristics are to be yours in increasing measure. Therefore, you must not treat this as a list to check off but as one to increasingly mature in (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2, 9-12)!

## **CONCLUSION**

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Giving God control of your character will impact everything about who you are and how you conduct yourself. While there are many characteristics you can develop in your life, letting God mold your character will cause you to make sure that each characteristic of your life is according to the teachings of Scripture and pleasing to God. Therefore, you must humble yourself to accept and obey these and all of God's instructions about your character.

## **DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

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How do you let the Spirit of Christ be formed in you?

What are some characteristics of the Spirit of Christ?

What characteristics are identified by Jesus as resulting in blessedness before God?

What does holiness require from your character?

What is the difference between the life focused on the flesh versus the life focused on the Spirit?

How can you evaluate your character?

What characteristics should be used to supplement your faith?

How is maturing in your character a process that is never complete?

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