

Greek Word Studies

Advanced Level

Lesson 11

Lesson Title: A Kingly Character (Semnos)

Text: Titus 2:7, ‘In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity (Gr. semnotes), sincerity’.

Introduction: Meaning of semnos (grave) semnotes (gravity).

The word semnos is translated ‘grave’ in the King James Bible.

It is a word associated with royalty.

It describes kingly character.

Semnos is a word that embraces all of the essential characteristics of a Christian leader. All Christians are called to lead and the kingly character of semnos should be evident in all believers.

‘Semnos’ describes a person who is serious; thoughtful; above reproach, a person of dignity, honest; and respectful.

The New International Version translates 'semnos' as 'worthy of respect'.

A king does not act as a fool.

Humour is used with care.

A Christian should be a person who reflects royalty.

In Christ we have become part of the family of God.

We are sons and daughters of the living God.

Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Our lives should show we are the family of God.

Story: Nominal Christians

The first time I went to India I was told that the greatest hinderance to the gospel was not Hinduism but nominal Christianity. The people saw the lives of nominal Christians and rejected the message of the gospel because their lives did not show the love and life of Jesus.

Personal Testimony: From the moment a person comes to Christ, he or she will be watched.

I was 21 years of age when I became a Christian.

At the time when my life was completely turned around I was working in an office in London.

Before that time I cared nothing about work.

Then afterwards everyone in the office saw the total change in my character.

I was able to tell them how Christ had changed my life.

The Holy Spirit works with natural qualities.

In Christian leadership natural qualities that make a person worthy of respect must be combined with the power of the Holy Spirit.

All great Christian leaders have been characterized by semnos.

Their lives enforced everything they stood for.

William Wiberforce who led the campaign to abolish the British slave trade was known to be a man of high principles.

William Booth led by example working with the poor on the streets of London.

Charles Spurgeon was a great preacher who was also known for his great heart for the people.

There have been many Christian leaders who lacked this quality of ‘semnos’, and it has brought shame to the gospel.

Some have been associated with large amounts of money. They are known for their luxurious lifestyles, and multimillion dollar homes.

Their ministries are often surrounded by scandal or divorce

Scripture tells us that these are not the people who should be in Christian leadership.

Semnos in the New Testament

The Bible refers to *semnos* being required in men, women and young people.

The kingly character of *semnos* is a word used in connection with the leadership of a man and his wife.

Overseer – respect within the family

1Ti 3:4 'One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (*semnotes*');'

Deacons: 1Ti 3:8 'Likewise must the deacons be grave (*semnos*), not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;'

Deacons wives: 1Ti 3:11 'Even so must their wives be grave (*semnos*), not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.'

It is used in connection with maturity and experience.

The older men (presbyters) – Elders (masculine). Tit 2:2 That the aged men be sober, grave (*semnos*), temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

The older women (presbutis) – elders (feminine). Titus 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

It should be seen to characterize those who teach.

Teaching by life example. Titus 2:6-7, 'Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity (Gr. *semnotes*), sincerity'.

Main Points

1. Presenting the right image

Presenting an image that is 'worthy of respect'

It is not enough to say God looks at the heart because man always looks at the outward appearance.

Appearances do matter.

Our appearance should show that we are the family of God.

a) God does not lead a people in rags

When the Lord took the children of Israel into the wilderness it was not possible for them to get materials to make new clothes. God provided miraculously.

Deuteronomy 29:5 'And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not worn old upon you, and your shoe is not worn old upon your foot.'

Our appearance should always show that the Lord is able to provide for His people.

He provides naturally through work.

He provides through the care of the body of Christ.

He provides through the promises in His word.

He provides through the miraculous provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

b) In everyday life we learn how to present the right image.

We use our brains so we don't have to look miserable just because we feel bad.

We are not a people controlled by how we feel on a particular day.

It is not hypocritical to smile at people who irritate us.

Good manners require us to hide some emotions.

Hypocrisy is when we say one thing and do another.

The word hypocrite became associated with pretence.

'Hupokrites' - Roman or Greek stage actor who put on a large mask and magnified the voice with a mechanical devise.

A hypocrite is a person who preaches one thing and does another.

Illustration: Celebrities attract people.

Hollywood stars know how to present the right image in front of a camera.

They can speak with confidence.

They are highly honoured and respected;

They become great ambassadors for organisations like the UN etc.

Their skill is in performing.

But the image presented on camera does not always reflect the character in personal life

This can also be true of Christian TV.

In front of the camera a person can present an image of upholding righteousness, but

when the camera is not on he or she is characterised by anger, pride, deceit.

Fame and success can build big ministries but it cannot produce 'semmos'.

The image we present on camera must be continued in everyday life.

2. Representing the Lord. Ambassadors for Christ.

An ambassador of Christ is sent with the message of reconciliation with God.
2 Corinthians 5: 20, ‘Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.’
The character of the ambassador must reflect the importance of the message.

a) The character of an ambassador.

The ambassador is a representative.

Serious; thoughtful; and above reproach.

An ambassador will be called to account if his or her life is not found worthy of being an ambassador.

Higher standard will be required from an ambassador.

The ambassador will set the standard that people associate with the kingdom or state he or she represents.

An ambassador cannot relax his standards and rely upon the prestige of the nation.

Ambassador in scripture is the word ‘presbeuo’

It is closely related to the word elder, a man of experience, ‘presbuteros’.

An ambassador is an experienced man.

A Christian leader must not be a novice (neophytes – one newly brought forth), 1 Timothy 3:6.

For this reason that pride in a position can destroy an inexperienced person.

Prison Ministry

The gospel not only brings forgiveness from sin and new life in Christ, but the gospel also makes ambassadors out of men and women who have been lifted from sin.

When I was preaching in the prison in Romania, I told the men that an ambassador is not one who goes around with his or her head down on the ground. An ambassador for Christ looks people in the eyes and says ‘the same Jesus who lifted me is able to lift you’. It is exciting that the Lord has chosen the foolish things of the world. He makes ambassadors out of the worst of sinners.

b) Leadership without semnos

When a man or woman is put into a position of leadership and the quality of ‘semnos’ is lacking, the consequences can be disastrous.

Here are some of the common consequences of leadership without ‘semnos’.

- 1) Leadership led by self interest.
- 2) Leadership becomes community centred and not Christ centred. (It’s not the same!)
- 3) Ministry gifts are not used because they become a threat to the leadership.
- 4) There is a lack of experienced leadership.

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ.

Ambassadors must live by high standards.

A Christian is an ambassador for Christ every day, 24 hours a day.

3. Exemplary in character.

The life of a believer should stand as an example at all times.

a) A person of dignity.

It should be seen that the believer is worthy of trust.

Honourable – fair in his or her dealings with others.

Reliable – will keep his or her word and do things well

Dependable – able to take on responsibility

Upright – not being led into wrong dealings.

Semnos does not just involve outward actions but also inward thoughts.

Philippians 4:8 ‘Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest (*semnos*), whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’

Paul tells Timothy to pray for those in authority so that we may be free to exercise the character of *semnos*.

Timothy 2:1-2 ‘I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (*semnotes*).’

When a nation is led by an evil system then the freedom to exercise a ‘*semnos*’ character will come under attack.

b) Sin destroys the dignity of man. It will destroy the royal character of the believer

Sin seeks to build on the throne of self. It is motivated by pride and self interest.

It will hide its deeds in the darkness.

Royal dignity does not hide.

Sin will cause a person to run away so that his or her deeds are not known.

Sexual Immorality

Lies

Sin will demolish the dignity and kingly character of a man or woman.

We are to keep away from the ‘appearance of evil’

1 Thessalonians 5:22 ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil.’

We need to keep away from the appearance of evil.

We are called to live a higher standard than the world.

c) Alcohol - Drunkenness destroys the dignity of the believer.

The Bible tell us not to be drunk.

The world enjoys seeing people a little drunk but alcohol will remove the ‘dignity of royalty’ from the character of the believer.

If a Christian drinks even a little alcohol and drives, it can bring great shame to the gospel.

Faroe Islands

Every Summer there is a festival in the Faroe Islands called Olavsoka. Many hundreds of people walk in the town and talk with each other. But many people also get very drunk during this festival. If a Christian is seen drunk during this festival, his royal character is lost, and it will take a long time to restore the dignity that he had before he was seen in a drunken condition.

Christians are to be examples at all times.
This means it is necessary to live by high standards.
It includes how we dress, and where we go, as well as what we do.

4. Speaking with authority.

The words of a man or woman who has the kingly character of '*semnos*' have authority.

a) Semnos – speaking with kingly authority.

The word of a king must be based upon truth
The authority of a king is that he has power to perform the word spoken.

The believer should always speak as a king and see that his or her words are fulfilled.
It is not necessary to swear by an oath.
It's OK to affirm the truth of our words in a court of law because we should always speak truthfully.
But sometimes it is necessary to keep silent regarding it is not always good to say everything we know.
The word of King is trustworthy.
A promise will be kept.

This does not mean that we cannot take oaths, but it means that taking an oath is not necessary as our word is true and will be fulfilled.

b) Living under authority

The centurion had authority because he was under the authority of Rome.
Matthew 8:9 ‘For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he does *it*.’

He did not speak by his own authority.
If the centurion chose to live the life of a civilian while on active service he would lose his authority.

It is the same in the Christian life.
Authority comes from being under the lordship of Christ.

Authority in prayer - answered prayer will be seen to the extent that we walk in obedience to the word of God and closeness to Christ (relationship).

Authority in word – speaking with spiritual authority is like prayer and depends on obedience and relationship, but also on outward appearance and relationship with others (*semnos*).

c) Purpose of a monarchy – able to lift a nation.

We have been brought into the family of God.

We are royalty.

We must live as royalty.

The purpose of a monarchy is to lift the nation.

We are called to lift others with the life and love of Jesus.

Summary: Semnos refers to the character of a Christian leader.

- 1) A Christian leader must present the right image.
- 2) It is the character of an ambassador – a representative.
- 3) The exemplary character of semnos.
- 4) The character of royalty whose words are always fulfilled.