

GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
ARUSHA - TANZANIA

SUBJECT: **CHRISTIAN CHARACTER**

LESSON 1: **INTRODUCTION & DEFINITIONS**

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Introduction: - Colossians 3:1-25; Ephesians 4:1-3, 17-32; 5:1-33; Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 5:1-5

Character is defined as a person's mental and moral qualities which distinguishes the person from others. It is the distinctive nature, uniqueness, reputation and moral strength of a person.

When we become Christians through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we took on the nature of God, which defines His character and personality (2Corinthians 5:17). From then on we are expected to grow daily and become more like Jesus as we walk in tune and in obedience to His Word and to His Spirit (1Peter 2:1-3; Galatians 5:16-17, 24-26).

God's desire is that we grow to be more like Jesus in character (2Corinthians 3:18).

As Christians, we have been called to live separate from this world, not physically but morally (Romans 12:1-2; 2Corinthians 6:14-18; 1John 2:15-17). We are a 'called-out' people and a holy nation to the Lord (1Peter 2:9-12). We are to walk worthy of the Lord in righteousness and faith. If we are still consciously living a life of sin, then it questions the sincerity of our faith whether indeed we were born again (1John 3:4-10).

Our character defines what we do and who we are (Luke 6:43-45; Matthew 3:8; 7:17-20; 12:35).

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to help us in our daily walk with God. When we are yielded and fully controlled by the Holy Spirit, He produces God's nature within us, which we often refer to as the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the nine visible attributes of a true Christian life.

A tree is known by its fruit and has only one fruit. The work of the Holy Spirit is known by the fruit that He bears in the life of a believer. The fruit is singular but has 9 parts, which are a manifestation of the nature of God in us. God is love and this love is expressed in various ways as we relate with others and with Him. We can see example of this in 1Corinthians 13:4-7 - Love is kind, good, patient, peaceful, gentle, joyful, faithful and self-controlled.

The fruit of the Spirit is listed as:

1. Love (Agape) - God's kind of love, which is self-giving and unconditional
2. Joy
3. Peace

4. Longsuffering (Patience)
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness (Meekness)
9. Self-control

Let's see how we can discern their manifestation in the life of a believer:

1. Love (Greek: *agape*)

Agape refers to goodwill that always seeks the best of the other person, no matter what he does. It is the self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in return, and does not consider the worth of its object.

Agape describes the unconditional love God has for the world. According to 1Corinthians 13, *Agape* love is sacrificial, demonstrated by Jesus' death on the cross, does not display itself haughtily. It is not arrogant and inflated with pride; it is not rude. Love does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not resentful; it pays no attention to a suffered wrong. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, it is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes do not fade under any circumstances. Love never fails.

2. Joy (Greek: *chara*)

The Greek word for 'joy' is *chara*, derived from the word *charis*, which is the Greek word for 'grace.' This is significant to note, because *chara* is produced by the *charis* of God. This means 'joy' is not a human-based happiness that comes and goes but, rather, true 'joy' is divine in its origin. It is a Spirit-given expression that flourishes best in hard times. For example, in 1Thessalonians 1:6, the Thessalonians were under great stress due to persecution; yet in the midst of it all, they continued to experience great joy. Their supernatural joy was due to the Holy Spirit working in them. Paul even called it the "joy of the Holy Spirit".

According to Nehemiah 8:10, "The joy of the Lord is your strength"

3. Peace (Hebrew: *shalom*)

Peace is the result of resting in a relationship with God. Peace is tranquility, a state of rest, which comes from seeking after God, and is the opposite of chaos. Peace is God's gift of wholeness and it is like when all essential parts are joined together as one or as a whole.

The Hebrew word for "peace" is *shalom*, which expresses the idea of *wholeness, completeness, or tranquility in the soul that is unaffected by the outward circumstances or pressures*. When a person is dominated by peace, he has a calm, inner stability that results in the ability to conduct himself peacefully, even in the midst of circumstances that would normally be very nerve-wracking, traumatic, or upsetting. Rather than

allowing the difficulties and pressures of life to break him, a person who is possessed by peace is *whole, complete, orderly, stable, and poised for blessing*.

Jesus is described as the Prince of Peace, who brings peace to the hearts of those who desire it (John 14:27).

Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of God no matter what the conflict.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

When having peace with God through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are then able to make peace between men, and also between men and God, also called "evangelism." It is understood that those who have peace with God, and are therefore sons of God, will act like their Father in heaven and become those who are able to make peace, or be peace-makers, as Jesus says in Matthew 5:9.

4. Patience

Patience, in some translations is "longsuffering" or "endurance".

The word denotes forbearance, fortitude, patient endurance, longsuffering. It is also the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment. It describes a person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint.

Endurance: Constancy, perseverance, continuance, bearing up, steadfastness, holding out, patient endurance. It describes the capacity to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances, not with a passive complacency, but with a hopeful fortitude that actively resists weariness and defeat.

Hebrews 10:36 says, "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." We are "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy" (Colossians 1:11). "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

5. Kindness

Kindness does not necessarily mean being nice. One can be kind and not nice. Nice is defined as being agreeable. In contrast, kindness is acting for the good of people regardless of what they do.

Kindness is goodness in action, sweetness of disposition, gentleness in dealing with others, benevolence, friendliness. The word describes *the ability to act for the welfare of those taxing your patience*.

Kindness is doing something and not expecting anything in return. Kindness is respect and helping others without waiting for someone to help one back. It implies kindness no matter what. We should live "in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left" (2Corinthians 6:6-7).

6. Goodness

Goodness means:

1. The state or quality of being good
2. Moral excellence or virtue
3. Kindness or generosity
4. General character recognized in quality or conduct.

Some English Bibles translate the original word in Greek into two English words: kindness and goodness. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9). See also 2Thessalonians 1:11

7. Faithfulness

(Also means Loyalty)

Faithfulness is committing oneself to something or someone, for instance, to one's spouse, to a cause, or to a religion. Being faithful requires personal resolve not to wander away from commitments or promises. It's not always easy to be faithful. Christian faith requires trust in God. "O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will praise Your name; for You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isaiah 25:1).

Faith means to persuade or be persuaded, which supplies the core-meaning of faith as being "divine persuasion", received from God, and never generated by man.

8. Gentleness

Gentleness is commonly known as meekness, which is a *divinely-balanced* virtue that can only operate through faith (1Tim 6:11).

It is a disposition that is even-tempered, tranquil, balanced in spirit, unpretentious, and that has the passions under control. The word is best translated 'meekness,' not as an indication of weakness, but of power and strength under control. The person who possesses this quality pardons injuries, corrects faults, and rules his own spirit well. "Brethren, if someone is caught in any sin, you who are spiritual should restore that person in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

"With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)

9. Self-control

It means having command or "mastery over" or possession of, "one's own behavior." This is accomplished through and by the power of the Lord, "proceeding out from within oneself, but not by oneself."

"...make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love" (2Peter 1:5-7).