**PERSON THAT GOD USES**

**MEN and WOMEN of CHARACTER**

**PREFACE**
James 1:3-4 "Testing of your faith produces perseverance...." Character
is not developed in a test tube; it doesn't come from a class-room study on
the subject. Neither will it come from reading a book on character. Character comes through the trials and tests of life, which will come to us all. Billy Graham said: "Life at its best is full of problems." When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and walking daily in the Holy Spirit the Spirit will lead us through these trying times and be doing the work in us that He wants.

However, we need to understand what God is doing in our lives. Paul wrote
that "we rejoice in our sufferings" because "we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Romans 5:3-4

This book on character describes some of the attributes of character the
Holy Spirit wants to develop in us. The person that God uses is a person of
character; a person where these attributes described are operating in us.
My prayer is that God will raise up men and women of character; men and
women of ‘stick-ability’ because if we are going to finish the task God has given – this is what it will take.

The chapters in this book are messages preached over a period of years in different pastor’s conference and are now brought into book form for a wider audience. In our post-modern era where there is no ultimate truth the one important thing that has been attacked is what this book is about: CHARACTER.

I trust that God will use this to bring men and women of character to the forefront where they will stand out like bright shining lights in a dark world.

**INTRODUCTION**

I was watching a news program where a question was being asked in New
Hampshire regarding the up and coming Presidential election. (This was in the presidential election of 96, but it is true of almost every presidential election.) The question was: Will character be an issue? I was surprised when many responded and said that character is not what counts. One person made the comment that we now live in the twenty first century and because of that, character is not important. It should not be an issue, but it is most definitely the issue.

I hope that this is only what a few people believe and that this is
not the main stream of the thinking. How can we say that character is not
important? Everything we do springs out of character. Real leadership
comes out of true character.

**Private Morality and Public Policy**

In his magazine “Break Point” of April 14th edition 1992, Chuck Colson said this:

“There's an issue that crops up in every major election campaign, and it's
been debated already in this one: Does a candidate's private morality have
anything to do with his public life? For years, liberals have said
“no” that people can do anything they like in private and it doesn't affect their ability to govern. And now a conservative leader John O'Sullivan, editor
of “National Review,” has said the same thing, that he'd rather be
governed by a competent sinner than by an incompetent saint. The
assumption here is that governing requires only technical competence. But
that's a mistaken assumption. ln reality, governing involves a whole
philosophy of life and, that in turn, involves our personal choices and
behavior.

Let me give you just one example, and a very important one. Nearly all forms of modern philosophy borrow from the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, an 18th century French writer. Rousseau's political ideas are described in his book The Social Contract, where he says “the ideal state is one that demands total allegiance.” Rousseau wanted the state to take responsibility for raising children so it could indoctrinate them to devote their whole selves to its service. These were the ideas that fueled the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. They were adopted by Marx and Lenin and became part of communism.

They even influenced Pol Pot and his cadre of Paris educated Communists,
who slaughtered a quarter of the Cambodian population in their pursuit of
the totalist state. Where did Rousseau get such an awful view of the state?

If we look at his life, the answer becomes clear. Rousseau was a drifter
and a Bohemian. He had several affairs and lived most of his life with a
mistress, a young washer woman, named Therese. When Therese gave birth
to a baby, Rousseau faced a major challenge: Would he settle down and
accept the responsibilities of family and fatherhood? The answer was a
flat “no.” He said that children would cramp his lifestyle and would
undercut his celebrity in the high society of the day.

He persuaded Therese to give up the infant to an orphanage. (Today it
would be an abortion.) Over the years Rousseau had five children. Each
one was deposited on the steps of the orphanage. When his friends
criticized him, Rousseau tried to justify his actions. He hit upon the
argument that giving up his children was actually the best thing for them; that the state could do a better job of raising and educating them; that
the state was a better father.

These ideas later became a key plank in Rousseau's political philosophy.
Having asked the State to be a father to his own children, he devised a
theory of the state as father to us all. The state should be responsible
for forming our minds and our loyalties. In the words of historian Paul
Johnson, Rousseau portrayed all citizens as ‘children of the paternal
orphanage.’

Rousseau might have been appalled if he had known that so much of the
barbarism of the 20th century: the concentration camps, the mock trial,
the genocide - resulted from his efforts to justify his own irresponsibility.” (End of Colson’s quote)

I have written what I call weekly letters on the subject “ARE WE LOSING THE WEST,” which can be found in my blog at [www.menwithfaith.com](http://www.menwithfaith.com) web site. These letters deal with the subject of how men like Rousseau, Nietzsche, Jean Paul Sarte and Karl Marx, just to name a few, have come in with their philosophy, ideas and taken us away from the statues that the Lord has laid down in His Word. We see the result of this today in our 21st century where we now call good evil and evil good.

How did the church move from being the epicenter of our society to where we are now marginalized. Pastor Jim Garlow, pastor of Skyline Church in San Diego, California made and exhaustive study of how the church has moved from being the epicenter of society in the West to being marginalized. He brought out the following:

“1607 - 1833  The *Established* Culture, central:

This was the time when everything centered around the church. If people needed questions answered they went to the church.

1833 - 1918 The *Predominate* Culture, extremely influential:

During this period the church had tremendous influence, but other forces were coming to compete with the church.

1918 - 1968  The *Subdominate* Culture, very influential:

Still up until the late sixties the church had a tremendous influence on culture, but the times – they were a changing.

1968 - 1988  The *Sub*-Culture, equal to others:

It is during this time that the church became an equal voice with other voices prevalent in our society or culture.

1988 - 1998 The *Counter* Culture, on the outside looking in:

Perhaps it should be inside (the four walls of the church) looking out.

1998 - 2008  The *Anti-thetical* Culture, opposite of culture:

We seem to have a dug-in mentality.

2008 – the present    The *Persecuted Church,* harassed, tortured

For a lot of our brothers and sisters in Christ persecution is a reality; something that we have not experienced here in the West, but things are now changing where we are now in a culture that says evil is good and good is evil. We are finding that if we want to stick to the truth there will be a cross to bear. Suffering will come in many different forms when we stand for that which is right, true and just.”

We can see over a period of time how the church has drifted from being a force in our culture to being irrelevant. The writer of the Hebrews told us: “We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.” Hebrews 2:1

Everything stems from character.

I trust that this book will help us all become the ones that God can use.
"The one thing that God is after - is character." Oswald Chambers

**CHAPTER 1 - CHARACTER**

"No man is born with character; we make our own character. When a man is
born from above a new disposition is given to him, but not a new character;
neither naturally nor supernaturally are we born with character. Character is what a man makes out of his disposition as it comes in contact with external things. A man's character cannot be summed up by what he does in spots, but only by what he is in the main trend of his existence. When we describe a man we fix on the exceptional things, but it is the steady trend of a man's life that tells. Character is that which steadily prevails, not something that occasionally manifests itself." Oswald Chambers

1 John 2:12-14 “I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been
forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one”.

We see in I John 2:12-14 that there are three types of people: children, young men and fathers. You can tell what you are by the following criteria. A child delights in what he/she has, in their possessions. A young man delights in what he/she does, in their experience. A father delights in who he is, in his character.

We need to be asking ourselves where we are. Are we still children delighting in our possessions, or are we still delighting in our experiences? My prayer is that we all will become fathers who delight in who they are; seeing character built in each one of us. This I believe, is the great need of the church today and it is going to take men and women of character to make an impact for Jesus Christ in this society that we live in.

The Word of God brings out the need of character without actually
mentioning the word. Paul in writing to Timothy and Titus told them that
they needed to appoint elders in the churches. Paul told them that they
should be looking for men who “must be.....” and then goes on to explain
what that “must be” is.

Our problem today is that we have taken the “must be” of Scripture and
substituted with ‘it would be nice.’ It would be nice if the elders were
such and such. What is Paul talking about here when he says what the
elders must be? The “must be” is about character.

In Exodus 13:17-18 we read about the Children of Israel when they came out of Egypt, that: “Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the
road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said,
‘If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.’ So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.”

This to me is an interesting verse. Look what it says. God knew His
people. He knew that they did not have the inner fortitude for war. They
did not have the character to face battle. So we read that God takes them the long way around so that they would not have to face battle right off. Yet what do we read? The Israelites went up anyway armed for battle.

What does this mean? To me it means that they had the outward form for
battle: numbers and weapons, but they did not have the inward character that was needed for success in battle. Isn't this the way it is today? We have the outward forms for service in the Lord's army. We have our diplomas, our degrees, our education, etc., but we do not have the inner character that is necessary for the battle, for the invisible war that we wage.

What has been the result? We have seen the people go off to battle only to
return like a whipped dog with their tails between their legs. They
discovered that it takes more than just having the outward emblems, but that they need to be a person of character to survive the battle that is being waged by the spiritual forces arrayed against us.

How prone we are to look on the outward. “But the LORD said to
Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected
him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the
outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” 1 Samuel 16:7

Even Samuel was looking at the outward. When he saw Jesse's oldest son he
thought: "This is the one," but God rebuked him with the above words. It
seems from reading this that no one even considered David. He was young and small, tending sheep, inconspicuous, and yet he was the one that God
chose. What did God see? Did He see good looks, intelligence, great education, charisma? No! What God saw was “a man after my own heart; that he will do everything I want him to do.” (Acts 13:22) He found a young man that had character!

David, out in the country by himself and alone with God, was going through the **process** of what it takes to build character. Character is not created in a
test tube. Character doesn't come about in a class room. Nor do you get
character by reading a book on character. Character is developed through
the trials and pressures of life.

“For this is what the LORD says about Shallum son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place: ‘He will never return. He will die in the place where they have led him captive; he will
not see this land again. Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor.’ He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms.’ So he makes large windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red. Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him.” Jeremiah 22:11-15

Here again we see the outward taking precedent over the inward. Here is
Shallum building himself a great palace “with spacious upper rooms.” I am sure it looked impressive, but again a very interesting question is asked here that I want to comment upon. “Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar?” What is the implication here?

I believe it is the same thing that we have been talking about before. We
tend to think that it is the outward that counts. The way we look, the way
we talk, what we have, what we have accomplished, etc. Having an
impressive looking palace does not make a king. To be a king one must have
the qualities to be a king.

Jesus chose twelve men to be with Him and it was these twelve men that Jesus was going to commit the ministry to. We read that they were unlearned men, they were Galileans, they would not have made it in most of our mission societies today, and would have been rejected because they did not have their degrees or the right education. Jesus took them and He began to teach them what was important and through that teaching we have one of the greatest sermons ever preached: the SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

We read in chapter 7:28 "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the
crowds were amazed at his teaching." We have something that is very
important. Jesus was teaching His disciples, but the crowds, the world,
were listening in. The crowds knew what Jesus was teaching His disciples
and consequently they would also know whether or not the disciples were
following His teaching.

Isn't this a problem that we have today? The crowd, the world, looks at
the church, the Body of Christ, and because they do not see the reality of
Jesus' teaching in our lives; that is His character, they have turned us off.
Apostle John said “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” It says that we have seen. We want people to listen, but they want to look. What do they see? Do they see the character of Christ developing in us?

God did not stay in heaven and shout down the plan of salvation. No! He
came to earth. He took upon Himself flesh and bones. He became like us and we could behold Him. We could see the character of God!

Wherever I go into the world today I find that people appreciate Christ.
They have seen His glory. They have beheld His character. Some years ago I was in a hill station in India called Nainital and had the opportunity to speak in a Hindu college while there. They told me not to speak about religion. I said okay and that all I wanted to do was speak about the person of Jesus Christ. They said: “Oh, that is okay.” Mahatma Gandhi told a missionary that if he could find one Christian that was living like Christ that he would become a Christian, but as far as I know he died a Hindu.

If you went into Mahatma Gandhi’s room you would find a stack of books and in that stack of books would be a Bible and if you took that Bible it would probably fall open to Matthew 5, 6 and 7, the "Sermon on the Mount." You would probably find almost every verse underlined. Here is an example of the world listening in to the teaching that Jesus is giving His disciples.

In the Sermon on the Mount the first thing that Jesus teaches are the beatitudes which talk about a Christian's character. Jesus is revealing the character that He wants.

It is interesting because what follows after the Beatitudes, or character,
is influence. "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may
see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16

Character will express itself in conduct and the conduct that we want is to be the salt of the world and light of the world. There is a great need today for men and women of character who have influence among some of the power brokers of today. Men like Daniel if whom it was said of “his conduct of government affairs, they could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, ‘We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’” (Daniel 6:4-5) What a great need for men like Daniel today in our governmental system.

We know that this is often not the case for the church today. We
have lost our testimony. We have become nothing more than an institution
like the Lions' Club or the Rotary Club. Accordingly, Christians are increasingly indistinguishable from their non-Christian friends. A 1999 study of sixty-five common values and traits showed that the values of born-again Christians were not substantially different from any other segment of
culture.

We should be the moral conscience of our nation, but this is not the case.
The church today does not command much respect. We have become a voice that is not intended to be heard. We have lost respect. Why? There is no character like the One that we say we are following. We want people to
listen, but they want to look. What do they see?

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know
that **suffering** produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” Romans 5:3-5

The Greek word for sufferings is “thlipsis.” It is an ancient word that
was a type of punishment for people who committed a crime. They would be
taken and lain out on the floor. Weights were added to their chest until
they were actually crushed to death. This was known as ‘thlipsis.’

Some years ago my family and I were in the old city of Toledo, Spain.
Walking down the streets of this third oldest city in Spain we came to a
'torture museum.' We decided to go in and see some of the torturing
devices that were used during the inquisition. Sure enough we saw a
picture that represented ‘thlipsis.’ It showed a man lying down on the floor with a wide board across his chest with other men bringing weights that were constantly being added. The weight being added presses against his lungs and lungs cannot expand and dies of suffocation, also the rib cage cracks and the fragmented bones enter into the heart, lungs and other vital organs.

In this passage of Scripture Paul says he rejoices in his ‘thlipsis,’ this pressure. Why? The key word in this passage is the word "know," and Paul knew that this pressure produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character produces hope.

This is the way that God works the character that He wants in us. This
comes through the fiery trials that James talked about. “Consider
it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.
Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and
complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” James 1:2-5

God will not give us anymore than what we can bear, but He will take us
through the fiery trials to burn away the dross so that the pure gold of
our faith might be seen. When we go through these trials God says through James that if we lack wisdom we can ask. So if you are not sure what the Lord is doing, ask, and God will show you what He wants to do in your life so that you might shine with the character of Christ.

Pastor Dion, a pastor of a large church in the Ivory Coast of Africa said:
“Leading people to go to the cross and die, is not easy. Until they do
there is no growth. The secret of growth is in the crucified lives of
Christians who have finally come to the end of themselves and are totally
dedicated to doing the work of their Lord. Growth is the result of
dedicated Christians, whose lives are not fragmented and divided between
many interests and ambitions. A serious ministry begins at the cross.
Leaders must be men and women who are deeply committed to what the church is going to do and become.”

Jesus said: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” John 12:24

Paul said: “I die every day. I mean that, brothers, just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:31) Later he also said to the Corinthians: "Death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.” 2 Corinthians 4:12

Martin Luther, the great reformer said: "God creates out of nothing;
therefore until a man is nothing, God can do nothing with him."

**CHAPTER 2 - PERSEVERANCE**

Text: Daniel 1:21; Luke 11:9,10; Galatians 6:9; I Corinthians 15:58

Daniel 1:21 “And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.”

The word *remain* is "hayah" which comes from the root "hava" and means "to be," in the sense of existence.

The thought that comes out here is: that after 50-55 years Daniel was as
much involved in existence as he was at the beginning. We see his
commitment in Daniel 1:8: “But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to
defile himself this way." At the end of chapter 6 Daniel is in the lion's den. Why? His commitment to His God is as it was at the beginning, seen in his praying three times a day.

Many people start out with great zeal, ready to run the 100 yard dash, but
they forget that we are not in a 100 yard dash, but in a marathon. We are
in for the long haul. The word “remain” for Daniel here means that Daniel
had the same commitment at the end that he had the beginning. Daniel had
perseverance.

Why is perseverance so important? It precedes many other qualities such as
faith and character. “I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8) This is referring to the widow woman who persevered in coming to the unjust judge until she got what she wanted. “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance.” Romans 5:3

Men or women of perseverance will see an opportunity in every problem.
William Carey was a man of perseverance. William Carey, the Father of the
Modern Missionary Movement said: "Attempt great things for God; expect
great things from God." This was over two hundred years ago in the early
part of November 1773, William Carey along with his wife and four young
boys, his wife's sister and fellow missionary John Thomas traveled east.
Obstacles were numerous when they arrived in India. They were unknown, had no influential connections, no means of livelihood, they entered India as illegal immigrants, they faced life threatening diseases and the language and culture were largely unknown to them.

In forty years William Carey had translated the whole Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit and Assamese, the NT and other portions of Scriptures into 33 other languages. He started Serampore college, which later became a university. He started a network of more than 125 village schools, and pioneered the education of women. He brought the modern printing press to India, and founded India's first newspaper: Samachar Darpan (News Mirror) which is still published today, and even the oldest English newspaper today called THE STATEMENT, traces its roots back to Carey.

William Carey, like Elijah, was a man like us, but he prayed and took steps
of faith. When we see what is happening around us and the open doors that
God has opened, can we do anything less?

Amy Carmichael was an outstanding example of perseverance. She went to India and was used of God to rescue Hindu young girls from a life of prostitution as temple prostitutes. In order to care for them she started what is now known as the "Donover Fellowship" and orphanage in South India in Tamil Nadu state. She was a woman of great faith and perseverance. The last nine years of her life she was completely bed ridden. It was from this bed that some of her greatest writings came that has been a blessing to many. One phrase in one of her poems that spoke to me was: "Make me thy fuel O flame of God."

God answered her prayer and she became fuel for the flame of God and in
that part of India she burned brightly for the Lord. If you were to visit her bedroom you would see the imprint of the bed post in the stone floor where she laid for nine years. They told my wife and I when we visited the orphanage that when Billy Graham was there and saw the imprints that he wept. Here was a woman of character, a woman of perseverance.

Hudson Taylor is another great missionary statesman that we can learn what
perseverance is all about. At the age of 21 he went to China. In China he saw that most of the missionary work was being done along the coast, but nothing was being done about the millions in the interior. He decided that he would put on the Chinese dress, wear his hair with the traditional pig tail and go inland. In so doing he started what is now known as the second wave of missions, as well as starting a mission called "The China Inland Mission" to go into the interior of China to reach the millions needing the Gospel of salvation.

Hudson Taylor went inland into China and had different missionaries join him and many out posts were started. About this time a nationalistic movement
started known as the “Boxer Uprising.” They were intent on getting rid of any Western influence, which included, especially, the missionaries, with the result that many outposts were destroyed and missionaries killed.

During this time, almost every day, Hudson Taylor received across his desk
telegrams telling of missionaries being killed and mission outposts being
burnt down. It was reported during this time of great crises if a person walked by Hudson Taylor's office he would hear him humming that children's hymn: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

I personally believe that because of Hudson Taylor's perseverance in the
midst of the conflicts that a foundation was laid in China that has now
brought forth such a turning to Christ. It is estimated that there are over 100 million believers in the country of China today. The Gospel is making an impact in the country.

Another outcome of Hudson Taylor’s perseverance in going into the interior of China and starting what is known in mission circles as the second wave of missions. Many other missions were started with the same intent to go inland in the different continents of the world. Praise God for the perseverance of Hudson Taylor.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you
will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” Luke 11:9-10

In this passage of Scripture Christ is doing what His disciples asked:
"teach us to pray." After He gives them a model prayer He then goes on to
give them a parable about a man coming to a friend's house that is asleep
with his family and asks for bread. He doesn't get up because he is a
friend, but rather because of his persistence. What is the lesson that Jesus is getting across to us? Not to give up. We are to keep on keeping on with asking, seeking and knocking.

One principle that comes out continually in the Word of God is the
principle of perseverance. Perseverance not only in prayer, but in
everything we do. I wonder how many times victory was just around the
corner, but we gave up before we got there.

Galatians 6:9 “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Again, the same principle of perseverance comes out.

Why is it that we have a tendency to give up and not persevere? First, we become weary. Satan is constantly nibbling away at us. This to me is a real problem. We see this with David, when King Saul was constantly trying to kill David. Saul was relentless in his pursuit of David, and had his spies tracking his every move. David had been told by the prophet Samuel that David was to be king, but nothing was working out so far. Instead of being on a throne in a castle he was hiding for his life in a cave being hunted down like a rabid dog. David became weary.

“But David thought to himself, ‘One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.’” (1 Samuel 27:1) We see in this verse a relapse of faith of David, trying to run away, and how important it is to learn at these times to encourage ourselves in the Lord, because we need times of refreshing, getting away or pulling away to see the problem of weariness in a different perspective, from God's perspective. This is the importance of Scripture.

We read: “David was greatly distressed because the men were
talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons
and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.” 1 Samuel 30:6

Secondly, we have a lack of conviction in not giving ourselves fully to the
work of the Lord. Perhaps we are not sure what the Lord wants. I have been involved in a project that is now coming to almost eight years, but the one thing that keeps me going is the conviction that this is what the Lord wants.

“As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But the man replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go
and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’” Luke 9:57-62

We see all these would be disciples, but when presented with the real possibility of what it means to follow Jesus they lack the conviction or perseverance and so come up with an excuse for not doing what they should.

Thirdly, we have a wrong motivation. “For Christ's love compels us,
because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.” (2 Corinthians 5:14) What is our motivation in what we do? Is it to get rich? Because if this is the case then when we do get rich - we have a tendency to quit.

Fourthly, pride is another hindrance where we try to show someone, perhaps even ourselves that we are better, or we can succeed, or we can make it on our own.

Fifthly, another hindrance is what I call “reputation building” where we try to make a name for ourselves. We see this in Genesis 11:4 where Nimrod and company try to make a name for themselves; this is their motivation. Our motivation should be the Love of God, because like Paul said, “Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.” 2 Corinthians 5:14

Sixthly, we find that life here on earth is trade-off. We look for the perfect solution, utopia here on earth, but we will not find it. Life, 'under the sun,' at its best is a trade-off. We have two philosophies: One, that there is a solution if we can get the right formula, etc. Two, a vision of tragedy, where we recognize the fact that man is fallen and we live in a fallen world.

For example, I think of my daughter that started to drive. Taking her to school one day she remarked to me: "Just think dad in four months and three days I will have my driver's license and I can drive. You will not have to drive me to school anymore. You will not have to interrupt what you are doing to take me some place. I will be able to drive myself. Just think, dad, how this will be a blessing to you."

For my daughter, driving was utopia. This was the perfect solution. I finally shared with her that life here on earth is not utopia, but it is trade-off and so I explained to her that, yes, it will be a great blessing for me in many ways when she can drive. Yes, it is true I will not have to interrupt what I am doing to drive her, but I told her there is another side. It is going to cost me more for insurance, petrol, etc. Also there will be the worry or fear that she might get in a wreck and be hurt or something else might happen to her. I told her that it is really a 'trade-off.' It is not the best solution.

However, I told her that I will make the trade-off because in the society
that she lives in she will have to know how to drive. So I will make that
decision. This is life with many trade-offs. This does not mean that we trade off or sacrifice ultimate truth, but there we will be minor things that we will have to compromise on.

We also see in our governments something of this as well. The progressives
believe that there is a solution to every problem. If we can throw enough
money at it, bring in the best and the brightest people to work on the problem then we can solve it and establish utopia. I believe they mean well, but their premise is wrong.

Life here on earth is a tragedy because of the nature of man. Man is
fallen. In our Federalist papers in the United States, John Jay wrote: "Nations in general will make war whenever they have the prospect of
getting something out of it." History has proven him right.

Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain, thought that if we
can talk and come to terms with one another that we could avoid war. With
that mentality he went over to Germany to meet and reason with Adolph
Hitler. He came back to Britain with a signed peace agreement. While the British were rejoicing Hitler set out to take over Europe. Millions lost their
lives in the next few years.

When Winston Churchill came to power, he realized the tragedy of man and he prepared for war and Hitler was stopped. Neville believed that man if they could sit down and talk he could come to an understanding and create utopia here on earth. Winston Churchill knew the tragedy of man. Life here on earth is a trade-off.

In the midst of life here ‘under the sun’ how should we then live? If we
are going to have perseverance in our lives then we are going to have to
live one day at a time. It seems to me that this is what Scripture
teaches. "Do not worry about tomorrow," Jesus said. Live for today,
yesterday is already gone and there is nothing we can do about tomorrow which belongs to our Heavenly Father. Today is mine, so live for today.

This does not mean that we do not plan ahead, because we should. What I am talking about is how we seem to either live in the future, always thinking
about tomorrow, what it will be like or what we might do. Or, we live in the past. We are always reliving over the 'good old days.' We always find ourselves thinking about what it used to be like. Because we are in the future or in the past - we often miss the opportunities that come our way today.

We need to see that this is the day that God has given. Learning to live
for *right now* we often can get the most out of life. This is what we must
learn if we are going to be men and women of perseverance. Live a day at a
time!

We need to learn and repent quickly. So often we allow un-confessed
sin to build up. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of something we need to
learn to repent quickly. We often allow time to go by. Un-confessed sin in our life keeps us from being fruitful. Un-confessed sin makes us say: "What is the use?" And, we give up. Un-confessed sin takes away the joy of the Lord. We read in Nehemiah (8:10) that the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Learn to praise the Lord continually. We are admonished by the Lord
to come into His presence with thanksgiving in our hearts. We read that
God has put a new song in our hearts, even praise unto our God.

We read in the Psalms that God inhabits the praise of His people. In other
words, where there is praise - God is there. We know that no enemy can stand to be in the place where God is praised and present. They must leave.

I believe that a praising heart and perseverance go together. David was a
man that persevered. David was also a man that praised God. He is the one
that said in Psalm 57:7 "My heart is steadfast, my heart is steadfast I
will sing and give praise to God."

**CHAPTER 3 - FAITHFULNESS**"Watch where Jesus went. The one dominant note in His life was to do His
Father's will. His is not the way of wisdom or of success, but the way of
faithfulness." J. Oswald Sanders

Whether we are working in the church, in business, as a housewife, a janitor or any profession - character is of utmost importance, because it is what God uses to counter the evil in the world.

If we read the list of men and women in Hebrews 11 we see that they were
all men and women of faith, but they were also men and women of character. God wants to work in us character, the very character of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the question that we need to ask ourselves is: When we talk about character - what are we really talking about?

In the last chapter I talked about perseverance. This is an aspect of
character that we need to see in our lives. The man that God uses is a man
that will persevere. So often we give up. I brought out several reasons of why we give up. 1) We become weary 2) A lack of conviction 3) We have a wrong motivation 4) We forget that life here on earth is a trade-off.

In this chapter I want to write about another important aspect of character
that we need to see operating in our lives, and that is "faithfulness." God cannot build the church of Christ without faithful men and women. The way faithfulness is used in the Bible is: reliable, dependable and trustworthy.

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." In a negative sense, this means that if a person is not faithful he/she should not commit. The context here is referring to Apostles
teaching the Gospel, but the principle is the same whether it is business or in anything else we do.

We are told that if we are not faithful in small things that we will not be
faithful in the big things. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.” (Luke 16:10) It is with the little things that a person shows what he/she is really like.

Being faithful is not about being a perfect sinless person. We have the
example of David. David was not perfect, but God said, "David will do everything I want him to...." and "David served God in his generation and then fell asleep." (Acts 13:22, 36) What does this mean? It means that God could count on David. He was dependable, reliable. It means that when given a task it will be done, it will be completed. It means that you mean what you say and you say what you mean.

One of the characteristics of God is His faithfulness. Dependability, loyalty and stability describes God in His relationship to human believers, and this is a constant theme in the Bible.

In Psalms for example: “I will sing of the LORD'S great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, “I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.”’ The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.” Psalms 89:1-5

God is the faithful God who keeps His covenant: “Know therefore
that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant
of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.” Deuteronomy 7:9

“God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.” 1 Corinthians 1:9

We see from Scripture that God's faithfulness is the source of the Christian's deliverance fromtemptation. “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

God’s faithfulness is our assurance of salvation: “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23

Paul testified to Timothy saying, “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.” 2 Timothy 1:12

God’s faithfulness is the reason we have the forgiveness of sin: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

God’s faithfulness protects us from the evil one: “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” 2 Thessalonians 3 3

God’s faithfulness will resurrect us: “Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him.” 2 Timothy 2:11

Because Christ died and rose again I too will rise, and any other believer in Christ. Death is not the end, rather it is the beginning. It is a release.

We read in Psalm 18:25: "To the faithful you show yourself faithful." I
believe if we want to experience these five things that I have just
mentioned then we must be faithful. God shows Himself faith to the
faithful. How does He do it? I believe through these five things that I
have just mentioned. When I look at these different verses, I praise God that He is faithful!

Since one of the characteristics of God is faithfulness, then faithfulness
is expected in Christian believers as well.

We see the faithfulness of Paul: “Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who, by the Lord's mercy, is trustworthy.” (1 Corinthians 7:25) Paul’s word was trustworthy. How this is needed today in marriage, family, friendship, business, the government and even the church.

About Abraham: “You found his heart faithful to you Lord, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.” Nehemiah 9:8

About Moses: “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house,
testifying to what would be said in the future.” Hebrews 3:5

Faithfulness is also expected in Christian service. Faithfulness to one's fellowman is seen especially in relation to fulfilling an office. “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2) “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.” (1 Timothy
1:12) If we are not faithful then it would be counter- productive to be put into service.

When I was first saved the Lord called me to preach. I quit the college that I was attending and went to a Christian college. I was told that it would be important for me to get involved with witnessing and so I joined the group that would go out door to door once a week and present the Gospel.

It was not easy, but I went. I told the person that was with me when we
went to the first door that he could talk and I would pray. It went quite
well and I thought: "This was not too bad after all."

At the next door he told me that I could talk and he would pray. With
butterflies in my stomach and one knee saying to the other "let’s shake!" I
went to the door. I did not find it easy, but I was able to manage.

Eventually it became easier and I found myself going door to door by myself.
Sometimes I would have the entire family and be able to present the gospel
to them.

Next the Lord led me to work with some black children. I remember some of
my colleagues making comments that they would not do that because they were called "to preach." Working with children would be underneath their
calling, it seemed. When I was working with the children, eventually I was introduced to their parents and had the privilege of seeing some of them coming to the Lord.

The next thing that the Lord led me in was to be an assistant pastor of a
little chapel that was like a daughter church of the big church connected
to the school. I worked all nights on Fridays. I was working in a secular job at night to put myself through college. After working all night my partner and I would go to the chapel to work all day Saturday and have an evening meeting. Sunday would be a full day with meetings and visitation. Needless to say Sunday night when I got back to school I was tired and about ready to drop.

It was not to long after - that the Lord led me to Operation Mobilization and international movement which led to greater responsibility. Eventually I became the director of the DOULOS (an Operation Mobilization ship) and then became the field leader of an entire continent: Latin America.

As I look back I see that the Lord led me into many things. The one thing
that he was looking for was faithfulness. Would I be faithful with the
children that I was working with? Would I be faithful with the little
chapel that I had while in school? Would I be faithful with the different
tasks within OM? God is looking for faithfulness. This is the most important part of character that God wants. Scripture tells us if we are not faithful in
little things we will not be faithful in the large things.

“He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek…. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. ‘If you consider me a believer in the Lord,’ she
said, ‘come and stay at my house.’ And she persuaded us.” (Acts 16:1 and 15) The Bible tells us that “in Christ” all things are made new. It is
interesting that the word for faithful is used for believer here in this
verse. Is there a connection? I believe so. One of the marks of a real
believer is faithfulness.

We are told in Matthew 25:23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’”

One thing that we must keep in mind is that God is preparing us for
eternity. We get so wrapped up in things down here that we forget and we
lose sight of heaven and eternity. It seems to me that what we do in heaven will be determined by our faithfulness down here. God has called us to rule and reign with Him. He is using what we go through down here to prepare us for what He has in store for us. I see from the Scriptures that our faithfulness here on earth determines what we will do in heaven.

A faithful man is a man of conviction. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 10:23) The only way that we can be unswerving is to be men and women of conviction. Conviction is the very fiber of our being. It reveals who we are. It is something that comes from our desire to be obedient to the Lord.

A faithful man is a truthful man. “A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness will utter lies.” (Proverbs 14:5) A faithful man will not lie. This could be a good test for faithfulness. Do we lie? Do we exaggerate? Do we tell the truth in such a way that people believe the opposite?

A question is asked in the Bible: A faithful man who can find? I seem to get from this that it is hard to find faithful men, men that will stick, men that
will keep on going and men that will do what they say.

In observing our culture I believe that there are elements that are not conducive in being faithful; faithful to ourselves, to one another and to God. In our entertainment we see a lack of faithfulness in relationships, marriage, families, business dealings, etc. and give us a picture that this is the norm, acceptable.

I was talking to a sister the other day, in regards to money. I mentioned that money was not the problem, rather that it was relationships. If I look at the work that I have been involved in over the past 54 years my biggest problem has been relationships.

We keep talking about having a relationship with God. We want to go deep
with God and we want to know the deep things of God, etc. My question is
this: Can we know God apart from knowing our fellow brothers and sisters
in the Lord? I do not believe so. We are told in God’s Word that “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” 1 John 4:20

In our culture we are quick to make friends but most usually they are not
deep friendships. We might know a lot of people; we might have many acquaintances, but how many of them could say they are friends, ones that we could share with on a deep level?

To develop a friendship with another, and with God, it takes time and it
takes involvement. If we are not ready for these two things then we will
not go very far in our knowledge of God. Our culture is not conducive for
this type of involvement.

What do we do? How do we become men and women of faithfulness? Start
where you are. Have you been given a trust? Be faithful to it. Remember
it is the little things of life that count.

**CHAPTER 4 - COMMITMENT**

When I look at the evangelical scene today I see a great lack of
commitment. When I look at the lack of laborers out on the field
especially the difficult areas of the world (Muslim, Hindu and Chinese) I believe it comes back to a lack of commitment.

Where are God's people who will go to these hard areas of the world and
stick it out? We find very few who even respond to the call or the
challenge. Out of those who do respond we see a great number who drop out after a short time. Those who make it to the field, after the first
term they often do not go back again. Why? I believe there are a number of reasons, but a big reason is a lack of commitment.

Commitment is important. Webster’s dictionary defines commitment: to bring together, join, entrust; to give in trust or in charge; consign for safe
keeping. I commit my life to Christ Jesus. I join my life to His. I give
my life to Him.

The same is true of marriage. Why are marriages falling apart? I know
that we often hear of incompatibility, mental cruelty, etc. All of these
things are often camouflage for the real culprit that tears a marriage
apart- a lack of commitment.

When we commit our lives to the Lord we are committed to His will. If we continue in His word then we are His disciples. To continue brings out the idea of commitment. To the Jews who had believed in Him, Jesus said, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”* John 8:31

There are three words that I want to look at over the next few chapters
that help define this word commitment. These words are: determination,
responsibility and loyalty.

However we need to think through some of the reasons why we break our
commitment:

1. It wasn't quite what I felt or thought it would be.

This is one excuse that I hear quite often with people who break a
commitment. Perhaps we didn't count the cost. “As they were
walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you
go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests,
but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’” Luke 9:57-58

When Jesus laid down the terms of discipleship He did not hear from these
would-be followers again.

When I was the director of DOULOS (Operation Mobilization's second ship) we would have the people who came to join us to sign what we called a
‘commitment form.’

Before they signed the form we would go through with them what the ship
life was like and what we expected from them and what they would be doing. We wanted to make sure that they understood what they were getting themselves involved with.

We then wanted them to sign the form because we knew that after the novelty wore off they would be looking for excuses to get out of their commitment. Part of the training for the young people who come with us is to teach them the importance of commitment and holding them accountable to finish what they started was important in teaching this lesson.

2. We don't have a mind to suffer. “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.” 1 Peter 4:1

This is part of our armor and is as essential to us as the armor we read
about in Ephesians 6. Because we do not have that mind-set or mentality we
see that the enemy gets in and hits us just where we do not want to suffer.
Consequently we see what we can do to break our commitment.

A young lady joined one of our ships for two years. She had been very
active in her church and had a responsible job. When she was on the ship
she had to spend time washing dishes. Every night in her room she was complaining about her dish-pan hands. Complaining about how she did not join the ship to be a dish washer, etc. One night while she was complaining to the Lord about her hands, how red they looked and all, and thinking how she might be able to get out of her commitment the Lord spoke to her and said: “Look at my hands.”

That was a turning point in her life. She realized how the Lord had
suffered for her. She armed herself with the right mentality and stuck it
out. She became one of our line-up team members that had the
responsibility of going ahead of the ship and lining up the program there. It is a job that carries much responsibility. It is a job for people with
commitment.

3. Wrong ideas of what it means to follow Christ.

We seem to think that in following Christ there will be no problems. We
do not understand how the Lord builds in us character. It is not that we
do not have problems, because we do. As a matter of fact, we probably have
more problems (because Satan is against us), but we have a solution to our
problems. This is what makes the difference.

There is a tendency to think that in following Christ, if things are rough
and don't seem to work out, that this cannot be of God. It is this type of thinking that leads into many erroneous ideas about discipleship.

This is where we get the "Prosperity Doctrine" that states how God wants
you rich and many other enticing doctrines. God does want us to prosper so that we can help others.

How do we interpret Hebrews 11:35-38: “Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.”

What about these people mentioned here. Did they have faith in God?
Couldn't they believe God for deliverance? Yes, they had faith. As a
matter of fact, they probably had more faith. Here we see what real
Biblical faith is. Biblical faith takes us through the problems. This is
what commitment is all about.

Paul writing to the Corinthians said: “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings - and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!
For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. Therefore I urge you to imitate me.” 1 Corinthians 4:8-16

Here Paul is giving us an idea of what it means to follow Christ. After he
describes what he and the other Apostles have gone through he then in verse 16 has the audacity to say, “Therefore I urge you to imitate me.”

What a wrong idea from what we have today as to what it means to follow
Christ. In our Western world thinking and spreading throughout Latin
America, we have the idea that God has blessed us, and indeed He has blessed us. The teaching coming out is that the reward is a material blessing. They get a lot of this from the Old Testament. But what do we do with these verses from the New Testament?

What about our brothers and sisters in some of the difficult parts of the
world where they are being martyred for Christ; taken out of their homes and dumped in the desert with no food, water or protection from the elements.

We need to understand what it means to follow Christ. This is the
time for suffering and later on we will reign. We suffer and reign with Christ. Christ suffered and died on the cross. He now reigns. This is the way it is with the church also. However, when we do come to understand this - we are tempted to break our commitment, which most do.

4. Lack of Compromise.

Some of us are very opinionated. We have our minds made up. We have our
own ideas. There is no flexibility. We don't seem to understand that
other people might have other ideas, other opinions that are just as good, or perhaps even better than our own. In marriage where two people are committed to one another there must be a healthy compromise.

There are things that we cannot compromise on, such as the Gospel. But what happens is that tradition or persecution comes in and then we begin to compromise.

So often we come into some situation with the idea that I will not change
my mind. If the situation doesn't change to my liking then I break my
commitment. We need to see people trained up who know where they are going, and how to get there, but that also have the flexibility in their character allowing them to work with others who might not see eye to eye.

5. Some people say, “I am committed to Christ and Christ only, not to
some organization or group of people.” When I was the director of OM's ship DOULOS, I had people come to me and say just that. They felt that they were very spiritual saying, "I am following Christ and not man." These people would eventually break their commitment because with any
organization there are certain policies that must be followed if we are going
to live together in harmony.

The vertical and the horizontal go together. If a believer is not committed to his brothers and sisters in the Lord in a visible and practical way then I would seriously doubt his commitment to the Lord. We see Paul explaining this to the Corinthian Church. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12

Apostle John said: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.
This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3:14-18) “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” 1 John 4:20

According to Scriptures, when I commit to Christ there are some other things that I am committed to as well.

1. 1 Corinthians 12:12 “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.” I am committed to the Body of Christ. This will be worked out in the reality of the local church.

2. Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” I am committed to world evangelism; to seeing the Kingdom of heaven spreading here on the face of the earth. I am committed to seeing the reign of Christ extended.

3. I am committed to the teachings of Christ, such as in the Sermon on the Mountain. (Matthew 5-7)

I am committed to loving God’s people (the body of Christ), and committed to prayer, and committed to do His will in my life.

Might God work to make us men and women of godly commitment.

**CHAPTER 5 - DETERMINATION**

"It is not a question of learning a thing outside but of determination inside." J. Oswald Sanders

In the church of Jesus Christ today there is a lack of determination. We have a tendency to quit, especially if the way is hard or not what we thought it
would be. A person who lacks determination in their character is like the man of Proverbs 22: 13: “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion outside!’ or, ‘I
will be murdered in the streets!’” Often the difficulties stop us. This means that we will never be able to accomplish much because we will always have problems and difficulties in life. Like Billy Graham said: “Life at its best is filled with problems.”

Church history is filled with men and women of determination. They left
their mark for God. Hudson Taylor at the age of 21 went to China. Instead
of staying on the coast like all of the other missionaries he decided to
move inland. By so doing he started what missiologists now call the “second wave of missions” reaching the inland of the world. New mission societies were started like the China Inland Mission that Hudson Taylor founded.

C.T. Studd at the age of 52 went to the Belgium Congo. He had already
spent time in India and China. He had to leave his wife behind because of
illness and saw her for about two weeks over the next 18 years. Praise God
for the determination of C.T. Studd because today the Gospel is going out in
Africa.

Charles Fuller was a man who preached for thirty or more years on the "Old
Fashion Gospel Hour." Every Sunday his voice was heard by over twenty
million people. Fuller started the Fuller Theological Seminary that has
been a blessing to thousands of students. The burden of finance was upon
him. His wife heard him praying to the Lord to be taken home. The
pressure was great. Could this be what the Apostle Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 1:8: “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.”

Yet God did not take him home at that time. Like the Apostle Paul,
instead, he became a blessing to millions of people. Praise God for his
determination.

Amy Carmichael, who was mentioned in a previous chapter has been a real blessing to my wife and I through the reading of her books. We named our oldest daughter, Amy, after her. In the midst of real difficulties in India Amy Carmichael opened up an orphanage and rescued little girls destined to be temple prostitutes and gave them a new life. She did this at the peril of her own life. Yet she determined to see something done.

The last nine years of her life she was completely bed-ridden. Yet from the bed she penned some of her greatest books and poems relating and expressing her love to the Savior. One of her famous lines that I liked very much is this: "Make me Thy fuel O flame of God!" Dead, and yet she speaks on through her writings. What an example of determination.

I would like to look at two people in the Word of God; one is in the Old
Testament:Elijah, and one in the New Testament: Stephen. “Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.’ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ‘Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.’ So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him.” 1 Kings 17:1-8

“Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people…they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” Acts 6:8-15

Stephen went on to say: "’You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him - you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.’ When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” Acts 7:51-56

These things are written for our examples. We can learn from these men in the Scriptures. One of the great needs today in our Western Culture is for good role models that we can follow. Praise the Lord for His Scriptures that can show us the character that is needed today in our cultures.

What are some things that we can see from these examples to help us in
building determination in our lives?

1. They were men and women who were filled with the Word of God.

When Stephen was giving a message to the people that eventually stoned him, he quoted over 100 Scripture verses from the Old Testament. He quoted from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Amos. We also see with Elijah that the “word of God came to him.” These men were examples of what Paul was talking about when he said "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Colossians 3:16

It is interesting to see that after the command of Colossians 3:16 we have the same list of things after the command of Ephesians 5:18, that to "be filled with the Spirit." There is a direct parallel between being filled with the Word and being filled with the Spirit.

When I was the director of DOULOS one of the things that kept me going was the Word of God. If I did not have the encouragement of Scripture I honestly believe that I could not have lasted for seven years on board.

My time on the ship was in the late seventies and early eighties – going around South America. It was a difficult time because of the economic situation. Economist later on said that the eighties for Latin America was a lost decade economically.

When we made our first trip down the West Coast of South America we were
not prepared for what we experienced. We had unbelievable book sales. It
was hard to keep the ship stocked with books. Every plane coming in from
Spain would be carrying books for us. We decided that when we went down the second time that we would stock our ship full of books and be ready. Many publishers were glad to give us the books on consignments. We would sell them and then pay the bill.

One thing that we did not count on was the domino effect of the economy.
It started in Mexico with the devaluation of the peso and it followed us
around South America. We finally came to Chile where we found that it was going to cost us $2000 per day just to be tied up alongside the dock. This was not counting all of the other costs that we had like tugs, pilots, etc. With the economy collapsing around us, huge book bills to pay and now astronomical port fees - humanly speaking there was no way to carry on. Also during that time Britain and Argentina went to war over the Falkland/Malvina Island and we did not know what would happen to the 50 British that we had on board if we carried on through the Magellan Straits into Argentina.

When the problem was presented to the various leaders on board - the
suggestion of many was to turn around and go back, back to Peru, back to
Colombia, through the Panama Canal and on back to Europe. In so doing we
would have missed two key countries Brazil and Argentina.

I was the director of the ship. How do you make a decision like this? I
was reading in Nehemiah at that time and that morning when the
decision had to be made I was reading Nehemiah 6:2-3: Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: ‘Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.’ But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: ‘I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?’”

The latter part of that verse spoke to me. "Why should the work stop
while I leave it and go down to you?" It seemed to be God's Word to me at
that time and the decision was made to go on. The result was that three days after making that decision President Pinochet of Chile waived all of our
port fees. What a miracle and unbelievable answer to prayer. I found that if we want to be men of determination we need to be men of the Word.

2. Paul said, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we
know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” (Romans 5:3-5) We see from this passage of Scripture that God uses adversity to build in us the character that He wants.

We see this with Elijah and Stephen in how their lives were filled with
adversity. Eventually Stephen lost his life by stoning, and Jezebel was
constantly trying to kill Elijah, but we see that instead of adversity stopping them – it made them stronger.

This is what we must understand as well. Adversity can make us strong.
After coming out from spying on the promise land Joshua told the people of
God not to listen to the ten spies that said they could not take the land.
Joshua's comment was: “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.” Numbers 14:8-9 (King James version)

Joshua's comment was: “They are food for us.” This is what gives us our
spiritual vitality. This is what make us men and women of character,
men and women of God, men and women of determination.

3. We also see that the Lord will test us. He will allow the testing to
come in order to teach us to trust Him. He will not allow any more than what we can bear although at times it might seem unbearable.

We see this in the life of Elijah. He was told to hide himself at the
Brook Cherith. There he could drink from the brook and God would command the ravens to bring him food to eat. Night after night when he laid down he could hear the water running in the brook. It must have been a reassuring sound to hear the water, but he noticed that each night he laid down the sound was becoming less. Eventually we read that the brook dried up. Where was Elijah? He was still waiting upon the Lord. The Lord had not told him to leave. If we were in Elijah's shoes or sandals most of us would probably be digging our own wells by then.

After the brook dried up God told him to go to a widow woman in Zarephath.
Zarephath was where Jezebel came from. God was sending him to Jezebel's
back yard. Here was a woman that was looking all over the world for this
man and God sends him to her back yard. What a test, but Elijah goes. He
was a man of commitment/determination.

4. Men/women of determination are those who are single-minded. Determined men are like the Apostle Paul who said: "This one thing that I do.." They are men of one objective and that objective is the “glory of God.”
“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one
thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,
I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.” Philippians 3:13-16

Elijah was fighting Baal worship. God's glory was at stake. The people were leaving the worship of the One and Only God for something else. With Stephen we see that he was up against a corrupt Priesthood. They were
making money off of the people's worship.

What was the result of these men of determination? Elijah calls a nation back to God. The prophets of Baal are killed and he is taken to heaven in a fiery chariot. Stephen was stoned, but out of that stoning came a new advance of the Gospel. The Gospel started to move into Samaria and later on into the utter most parts of the world. During the stoning there was a young man by the name of Saul (who became the apostle Paul) who saw it all and later it made an impact in his life. Through this young man the Gospel started moving into the entire world. We all have been blessed by the letters that he wrote that are now part of the New Testament, the Word of God.

In the book of Isaiah there is a prophecy about the Lord Jesus Christ. “Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.” (Isaiah 50:7) In the New Testament we read: “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51 (KJV)

Jesus Christ was determined to finish the work that the Father had given
Him to do. "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the
work you gave me to do." (John 17:4) Later on the cross he cried out, "It is
finished." A way was made for sinful man to approach a Holy God.

Paul said: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

We too have a job to do, a course to run. Will we finish the race? Will
we complete what the Lord has given us to do? If we are to finish, and not
just somehow - but triumphantly, then we need to learn the lesson of
determination.

**CHAPTER 6 - LOYALTY**“Loyalty to God and to God's children is the supreme test in the life of a
saint. We are never free from disloyalty unless we are actually loyal.”
Oswald Chambers

“During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana
and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became
angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.” Esther 2:21-23

Ahasuerus, also known as “King Xerxes I,” was an extravagant, immoral and cruel tyrant. Mordecai finds out that two of the king’s men, Bigthana and Teresh are planning to assassinate the king. Mordecai brings this matter before Esther, who is Mordecai's niece and has now become the king’s queen. After this assassination attempt the king decides that he will shift his
cabinet around and in the process of doing this he elevates a man that he
thinks is loyal: Haman, but later on finds out that he isn't.

Haman is a man that is filled with much pride and became very angry and
indignant when Mordecai would not fall down and pay him homage when he
walked by. He is so filled with rage that he hatches a plan on how to get rid of, not only Mordecai, but all the Jews as well. With his close relationship with the king he was able to persuade the king to put in writing a law that would eventually wipe out the Jews overnight.

God used Mordecai's loyalty to save his people. It so happened that
one night the king could not sleep and he wanted something to read. So he
had the records brought into him and he discovers what Mordecai had done in exposing the assassins. He also discovered that nothing had been done for him in the sense of a reward.

The king found Haman and asked him what should be done for the man that he, the king, would like to honor. Haman, so puffed up with his own pride
thought: "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" (Esther 6:6) So Haman said: "For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'" (Esther 6:7-9) “‘Go at once,’ the king commanded Haman. ‘Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.’” Esther 6:10

How true Scripture is that pride goes before a fall. How humiliating this must have been for Haman, because everybody knew that Haman disliked Mordecai since Mordecai would not pay him homage. Now here is Haman leading Mordecai through the city, on the king's horse, with the king's robe saying: 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'"

Haman begins to realize that the wheels of fortune were turning against
him. Esther had been planning a banquet where the King and Haman were
invited. In the course of events she would reveal her identity and the
evil designs that Haman had for her and her people. The king then would see that Haman was not thinking of the king and his country, but of his own selfish desires.

The end result was that Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had
prepared for Mordecai, and throughout the kingdom - the Jews had a great
victory. Today the Jews have a feast called “Purim” where they celebrate the loyalty and courage of Mordecai and Esther and their deliverance by God from the clutches of Haman.

We should also mention something about the courage and loyalty that we see with Esther. She was asked by Mordecai to approach the king. This was not a small matter. The people, and even the queen, do not just appear in the presence of the king unless they are bidden. She had not been asked for one month to appear. So she called on her people to pray and fast for her. Unless the king held out the golden scepter she would be instantly killed.

The Greek Historian Herodus gives us a little indication about this man.
It is recorded that a wealthy man by the name of Pythius entertained Ahasuerus troops when they passed through Lydia. He contributed large sums of money toward the Grecian campaign. He also requested of the king that his oldest of five sons be excused from military duty to help him out and console him in his old age. This would seem a reasonable request. But, Ahasueras had the son cut in two and the army march between the two halves as an example of what he considered a *lack of dedication*.

In this episode of the history of the Jews we see the loyalty and courage of Mordecai. It is with this loyalty of Mordecai that I want to spend some time, because I believe that this shows commitment to God, His Word and His people. If there was not this commitment then Mordecai would not have seen this great deliverance by God for his people, the Jews.

We see this loyalty of Mordecai coming out in three ways:

1. He was loyal to the Word of God. It would have been easy at different
times to have rebelled against the king, especially when he found out about
the plot to have him assassinated.

Mordecai was a wise man. He learned from the mistakes of his ancestors.
His forefathers had been brought into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. He knew
that Jeremiah had written a letter to his people in exile that they should
settle down. While we do not know a lot about what happened to Esther, one thing that we do know is that she had a son, Darius, who became King Darius II. She brought him up to be favorable to the Jews and he eventually lifted the ban against the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple), which led to the building of the Second Temple.

Isaiah also tells us: "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.” Isaiah 45:1-3

The main message that Jeremiah had for the people before they were taken
off into captivity was to submit to the king. They did not listen and we
see the results. Even in captivity Jeremiah wrote and told them what to
do.

Mordecai would have known this. I believe what we see with Mordecai is a
loyalty that comes to the Word of God. This is one of the things that
we need to ask ourselves as well: How loyal are we to God's Word and to the King of kings? When we think in terms of commitment, this is something we need to look at.

Our loyalty to the Word of God will be seen in us getting into it to see
what it is saying and what it says about our situation. Our loyalty to the
Word of God will be seen by our believing that it is God's Word to us and
that will be seen by our obedience. The man who believes will obey.

2. This brings out another aspect of Mordecai's loyalty and that is an
attitude towards leadership. In some ways we hate to talk about leadership because of the misconceptions that have come from false sects and their emphasis on authority. We all remember Jim Jones and what took place in Guyana as 900 of his followers followed him into a suicide pact. This was a good example of the blind leading the blind.

However we read in the Word of God that we are to be subject to the powers
or authorities, but when they go against our own conscience and the Word of God then the Word is very clear: we are to obey God.

However the Jews had been told to submit to these kings for their own
well-being. I believe this is the reason Mordecai revealed the
assassination plot against the king. Mordecai believed that God was
Sovereign and could bring about His plans even with such a cruel tyrant as
Ahasueras.

However, we see that God has ordained leadership and this is a constant theme in the Word of God. God has ordained leadership in the church. “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” (1Timothy 3:1) “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7) “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Hebrews 13:17

We also see that God has ordained civil authority. “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” Romans 13:1

We live in rebellious times and it seems that the spirit of rebellion has
fallen upon mankind in a far greater measure than before. We find this in
the church as well. We need to ask ourselves whether we are loyal to the
leadership, whether the leadership is in the home, church or nation.

3. We also see the loyalty of Mordecai and Esther coming out in their
loyalty to their fellow Jews. This is another aspect of commitment that we
need to look at today. Are we loyal to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

If we are committed to God then we are going to be committed to one another in the Body of Christ, the people of God. If we are loyal to God it will be seen in our loyalty to one another.

Loyalty means: Faithful to one’s oath, engagements, or obligations.
Faithful to one’s allegiances, faithful to any person or thing conceived as
imposing obligations. What does this mean when it comes to the church, the
Body of Christ? I would like to suggest several things.

It means meeting the needs of one another. This is what we find with the early church. “All the believers were together and had everything in
common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.” (Acts 2:44-45) Apostle John asks how we can say that we love God and then hate our brother. He also asks how we can say that we have the love of God in our hearts if we see our brother has a need, and have no pity towards him.

I believe that our loyalty to our fellow brother will be seen by the spiritual gifts given to us to build up one another. My loyalty will be seen in my exhorting, admonishing and rebuking my brother (when necessary) to walk worthy of the Lord who has called us. “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” (1Thessalonians 2:11-12) “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

Lastly, our loyalty will be seen by our faithfulness to one another. We
recognize that we are of the same family because we have the same Father. We have the same heritage and we’re traveling towards the same goal.

Being loyal to one another means that we will not speak out against each other behind each other’s back. So much damage has been done because of loose talk or idle gossip. Faithfulness means that we will walk in the light
with one another. It means that the goal that we have when there is a broken relationship is for reconciliation. It means that I recognize that my relationship within the Body of Christ transcends all other relationships. “Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.”” Matthew 12:49

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:50

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:26

What is the result of a loyal man? Look at Mordecai. “Mordecai
the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.” Esther 10:3 Mordecai was a loyal man, a very committed man.

**CHAPTER 7 - DISCIPLINE**

"The day we live in is a day of wild imaginations everywhere, unchecked
imaginations in music, in literature, and, worst of all, in the
interpretation of Scripture. People are going off on wild speculations,
they get hold of one line and run clean off at a tangent and try to explain
everything on that line, then they go off on another line: none of it is in
accordance with the Spirit of God. There is no royal road for bringing
our brains into harmony with the Spirit that God has put in our hearts; we do not get there all at once, but only by steady discipline.” Oswald Sanders

“Beware of saying, ‘I haven't time to read the Bible, or to pray;' say
rather, ‘I haven't disciplined myself to do these things.’” Oswald Sanders

We have seen in previous chapters that the people God uses are the
ones with character, but when it comes to character we see that there are different characteristics we need to look at.

In the previous chapters we looked at the need for perseverance in our
lives. One of the problems that we are faced with is a lack of
perseverance. We have a tendency to give up. Victory might be just around
the corner; victory was in our grasp, but we gave up and consequently we
never see the victory.

Also in previous chapters we have looked at faithfulness. God is looking
for faithful men and women. In the dictionary there are many meanings for
faithful, but the way that the Bible uses this word is: to be reliable,
dependable, trustworthy. These are admirable traits. This is character.

In this chapter I would like to talk about another aspect of character that
is necessary. THAT IS DISCIPLINE!!!!

Discipline is a word that is greatly misunderstood today in our society.
Discipline conjures up in our minds all types of things and a great
misunderstanding is that it is contrary to grace, but this is far from
the truth.

Billy Graham said: "Discipline is the key to victorious Christian living."
What a statement!

Paul said: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one
receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” 1Corinthians 9:24-27

Paul told a young man, Timothy, something that young men/women need to hear today: “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of
the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight
into all this.” 2 Timothy 2:3-7

The apostle Peter also elaborates upon the need for discipline in the following statement: “For this very reason, 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, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and
has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.” 2Peter 1:5-9

What is a good definition for the word discipline? "Discipline is doing what you know you should be doing whether you feel like it or not." There are many things that we know we should do, but often we do not feel like doing, because we have a tendency to cave in to the emotions, or to the flesh, and we do not do what we should.

We give in to the tyranny of our emotions. We know we should pray, but
often we do not feel like doing it. We know that we should spend time in
the Word, but often we do not feel like doing it. We can think of many
things that should be done but are left undone simply because we do not
feel like it.

The first step in building a godly character is to surrender our lives to
Christ. John 15 talks about abiding in Christ, but to remain in Christ it takes discipline.

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit
by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless
you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.
If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” John 15:4-7

Here is where misunderstanding comes in. There is a tendency to think that
we stand still, like a tree, and the fruit automatically sprouts, we do
not have to do anything. In one sense this is true. Jesus is the one who
produces the fruit. However, we see from John 15 that we are to 'abide,'
or to “remain." What does this mean?

The Greek word “remain” is the word “meno.” It has several meanings and is
used in various ways in the New Testament. Here are just a few.

Luke 8:27 “When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.” This word 'lived' is the same word as ‘remain.’ It brings out the idea that we are to live in Christ.

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects
the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." This is the same Greek word used in John 15, to remain in Christ. If we do not remain in Christ then we find that God's wrath remains on us. Why is this so? Christ took the wrath of God upon Himself when He went to the cross. When we remain in Christ then we find that we are out of the wrath of God, but if we are out of Christ or, not living in Christ, then we are in the wrath of God.

John 8:31 “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, ‘If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.’” (KJV) The idea that comes out here is the word "continue." But this is the same word for “remain.” It brings out the idea to hold, or to continue.

“Holding fast,” “continuing” and “discipline” are all connected. A number of people in the Word of God who lost their place to someone else happened because they did not hold fast, or continue on - disciplined. For example:

Regarding Esau and Jacob: “Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.” Genesis 25:34

Esau said, “Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!” Then he asked, “Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?” Genesis 27:36

Regarding Reuben and Judah:

“Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up
onto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it.” Genesis 49:4

"Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.” Genesis 49:8

Regarding Eli, the priest and his young trainee Samuel: In a nutshell, Eli did not discipline his own sons, or himself, and therefore he lost the priesthood, and it went to Samuel who learned from Eli.

Regarding Saul and David:

“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.’ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence
of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon
David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.” 1 Samuel 16:1, 13

The question is: How do we remain? Apostle John tells us: “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.” John 15:10

Obedience is the only way and the last command the Lord gave us was: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) This is why Jesus, in giving the Great Commission said: "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the age."

The idea to remain is tied in with the thought of spending time with the Lord, but to spend time with the Lord in His Word and prayer - takes discipline. However, when you are in love with someone it is no chore to spend time with that person.

In 1 Corinthians 3:14 Paul tells us: “If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.”

This is another use of the word - remain. “Survives” brings out the idea of
perseverance, keeping on, not giving up, pushing towards the mark of the
high prize in Christ Jesus. Can we do this without discipline in our lives?

Peter tells us: “But the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.” 1Peter 1:25

Again we see the idea of ‘remaining’ through the word “stands.” We are told
in Ephesians that we are to take our *stand* against the evil one. We are
told in 1 Corinthians 15 that we are to *stand on the gospel*.

Hebrews 13:1: “Keep on loving each other as brothers.”

What are some of the steps that we can take in order to continue on, or persevere?

1. See areas in your life where you need discipline. Focus on these areas.

2. Get someone to help you in discipline.

3. Ask the Lord to give you a desire for a disciplined life.

**CHAPTER 8 - PATIENCE**

"Patience is the result of well centered strength; it takes the strength
of Almighty God to keep a man patient." Oswald Sanders

Psalms 27:14 “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the
LORD.”

Psalms 37:7 “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret
when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.”

Psalms 40:1 “For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. I waited patiently
for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.”

Habakkuk 3:16-18 “I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.”

Romans 8:25 “But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it
patiently.”

A virtue that is of great importance in our lives, but few of us have it, is patience. We live in a get-rich-quick society. Almost every day I get e-mail letters telling me about quick rich schemes. “Invest $100 and make a $1000!” How often we fall for these things only to find that there isn't a treasure at the end of the rainbow after all.

Instead, we see that we are admonished in Scripture to wait patiently for the Lord. Something that is very essential, but extremely hard for us to do. Often by not waiting patiently for the Lord we have the capability of
hindering the Lord, not helping the work of God. We can move too
slowly, behind the Lord, or too fast, ahead of the Lord. Either way, we
hinder the work of the Lord.

A key word in all of this is “faith.” Do we really believe all that God says
in His Word? “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word
I put my hope.” (Psalms 130:5) The Lord has given us a number of examples in Scripture to show us what He means.

In Genesis 16 we see the situation with Hagar and her son Ishmael. God had told Abraham that out of his body would come a son that would be heir to all
that he has. However, time went on until it was, humanly speaking, impossible for Sarah to bear a child. Sarah came to Abraham and gave her handmaiden to Abraham for him to have a child with. This was an accepted custom in those days.

Abraham does so, and the result was Ishmael. As soon as he was born there
was jealousy and competition in Abraham's camp and there still is. At the right time God gave Sarah the opportunity to conceive and bear a child, and Isaac was born. It was through Isaac that the Abrahamic blessing would move.

Sarah moved Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael became a
mighty nation as well and even today we see the problems of this situation
in the Middle East. Here is the result of where it would have been good and wise for Sarah and Abraham to have waited patiently for the Lord.

In Genesis 25-27 we see the situation with Jacob and Esau. God had said to Rebekah: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the **older will serve the younger."** Genesis 25:23

God said that the older will serve the younger. We read in Genesis 27:1 that when Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer
see, he called for Esau his older son, to come so that Isaac could bless him.

However, we read that Rebekah hears about what her husband is about to do. In Genesis 27:5 we see that Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. She gets a hold of Jacob to share what is taking place and to hatch out a plan.

Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “‘Look, I overheard your father say
to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.’ Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies. Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.’ His mother said to him, ‘My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.’ So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. He went to his father and said, ‘My father.’ ‘Yes, my son,’ he answered. ‘Who is it?’” Genesis 27:6-18

We see the deceit and lying that took place. Is this how the Lord works?
Is this something that the Lord blesses?

However we see that the plan works and Isaac winds up blessing Esau. “May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness—an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.” Genesis 27:28-29

What was the result of all of this? Esau, rightly so, felt that Jacob had
deceived him. (Genesis 27:35) “Your brother came deceitfully and took your
blessing.” (Genesis 27:41) “Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the
blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, ‘The days of
mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’”

Jacob fled into his mother's country and for a number of years did not have
contact with his own people. Jacob found some of the same duplicity being
played upon him when he goes to his uncle Laban to take a wife.

I think of the sadness that must have come upon Isaac and Rebekah's tent
because of trying to help the Lord out. Esau did not succeed in killing
his brother, but his ancestors have been trying to do so ever since. Esau
married a daughter of Ishmael and part of the Arabic race goes back to
Esau.

The question comes to our mind that if Rebekah and Jacob did not execute
their own plan what would have been the result? Would Isaac gone ahead and blessed Esau even though God said that the older would serve the younger?

I believe the same blessing would have come out of Isaac's mouth just like
it did. If that had been Esau coming into Isaac's tent instead of Jacob I
believe the blessing would be what Esau got anyway. “His father
Isaac answered him, ‘Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness,
away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.’” Genesis 27:39, 40

Jacob, I believe, would have received the blessing that he did. To wait
patiently for the Lord involves faith. Do we really believe what the Lord says? God had told Rebekah that the younger (Jacob) would serve the
older (Esau). Often, we are like Rebekah and think that we need to help the Lord out. Like someone once said: We try to push our way into the Trinity to make it a foursome. How much pain we often cause because we did not wait in faith upon the Lord to do what He said.

Later on in the land of Egypt we have Joseph's two sons. They come to Jacob for his blessing. Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. (Genesis 48:13) And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him.
Genesis 48:14

“But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's
head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left
hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. Then he blessed Joseph and said, ‘May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,
the Angel who has delivered me from all harm - may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth.’ When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to him, ‘No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head’ But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.’ He blessed them that day and said, ‘In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: “May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.”’ So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.” Genesis 48:12-20

I wonder when Jacob did this if he was thinking back to his own mother
Rebekah and their scheme to steal the blessing from Esau? We need to wait
patiently for the Lord and have faith that He will do what He says. This will prevent ‘regrets.’

Another example of patiently waiting is with David. David had been anointed
as king by the prophet Samuel. Yet instead of being king he was fleeing for his life. Saul was relentless in trying to kill him. Instead of sitting on a throne David was sitting on a rock in cave. It seemed that what the Lord said was not going to work out.

We read in 1 Samuel 27:1 “But David thought to himself, ‘One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me
anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.’”

Here we see David's lapse of faith. David escapes to a city called Ziklag,
which was a border town and a place of compromise. David leads his six hundred valiant men into this place of compromise which had an effect not only upon him, but also upon his men.

We see David beginning to live a lie, to deceive. It is so out of David’s character as a man of God. It was during this time that Saul is killed by the Philistines and David is made king over Judah and a few years later king over all of Israel. God had said to David you will be king and king he was.

A real testimony to me of patience and waiting faithfully for the Lord is
the Apostle Peter. We read in Acts 12 that Peter is put into prison by
Herod. Herod had just killed James the brother of John and because it
pleased the Jews he had Peter put into prison with the idea that the
following day Peter would be brought out and killed as well.

Peter was in an impossible situation. We read that he was guarded by 16
soldiers and humanly speaking there was no way out for Peter. Not only was
he guarded by 16 soldiers - he was also chained to the wall. However we read in verse 6: “The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.”

Peter was sleeping. This speaks volumes to me. How many of us would be
found sleeping knowing that in a few hours we would be taken out of the
dungeon and killed. But Peter was sleeping.

Several years previously, Jesus had told Peter how he would die. “’I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me!’” John 21:18,19

Jesus had told Peter that when he was ‘old’ he would die, and so when Peter was in prison under a death sentence he realized he was still young and that he couldn’t die yet. He didn’t need to get all uptight about what Herod threatened to do. Peter believed God, and so he went to sleep and left it all in the hands of God.

We read what happened next. An angel is sent to Peter and we see one of the most relaxed jail breaks I have ever read about. Peter slowly gets up, gets dress and wanders out of the prison. The **doors open** when he approaches each one. Peter is amazed by it all thinking that it is a dream until he finds himself out on the street.

What I see in all of this is a necessary patience in waiting upon God to work out His plan, and faith is the power of being patient. Do we really
believe what the Lord says? It seems to me that faith and patience go
together.

What is the Lord trying to do in our lives? He wants to build in us
character and a part of character that we need is patience and faith. God
wants a pure faith in our lives and patience works to purify our faith. This is more important in the eyes of God than gold or silver.

We must learn the lessons of waiting upon the Lord. First, we need to learn to wait so that God can speak to us, and then secondly, we must learn to wait on His timing, until He tells us to act or to move on.

**CHAPTER 9 - INTEGRITY**

When we think of character we must also give attention to ‘integrity.’ A
man of character will also be a man of integrity.

Integrity: unimpaired moral principles; honesty, soundness, the quality of being whole or undivided. Some of the synonyms that go along with integrity are words like: virtue, honor, morality, principle, uprightness, righteousness and goodness.

Sometimes we can tell more about a word, not from the synonyms, but what we call the antonyms or words that have the opposite meaning. What are some of the antonyms for integrity? Words like corruption, deceit, disgrace,
dishonesty, disloyalty, double-dealing, duplicity and faithlessness are
just a few.

The Hebrew word for integrity is “Tom.” It means completeness, simplicity, upright, integrity. It is interesting that a root of the word “tom” which is “Tummiyn.” The Tummiyn (Thummin) was one of the objects in the high priest breast plate and was an emblem standing for complete truth.

Perhaps one of the ways to interpret the word integrity is: complete truth.
This brings out the idea of several things. First, a man or woman of
integrity is transparent. Secondly, there is no exaggeration with a man of
or woman of integrity. And thirdly, a man or woman of integrity is a person
that can be counted on. They mean what they say and they do what they say they will do. They walk the talk.

A man in the Bible who exemplified integrity is King David. David was not
a perfect man. Scripture points out David's sin in 2 Samuel when he
commits adultery with Bathsheba and later on commits murder, of her husband, to cover it up.

Scripture is not silent when it comes to David's lapse of faith recorded in
1 Samuel chapter 27 when David resigns himself to the fact that he will be killed by Saul. I believe that all of us can identify with David, but what shines forth with David is his humble transparency with God and with his fellow man.

We see this coming out when Nathan the prophet came to him regarding
Bathsheba. When Nathan said: “David, you are the man,” what did David do? He confessed and said: “I have sinned.” He could have denied it. As king he could have had Nathan killed, but this was not who David was. David knew that he was wrong and had sinned and when confronted with it he confessed.

What does this show us? That a man of integrity will agree with God about
sin. When we are honest about sin then we find that we have an advocate
with the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” (1 John 1:9-10) “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 2:1

The breastplate that the high priest wore with the Thummin standing for
complete truth was worn over his heart. The biblical heart refers to who you are; what you are. The best way to define the biblical heart is: me.

Transparency is very important. A person who is transparent is a person
walking in the light. It means that he is an honest person, a trustworthy
person, someone who can be trusted. A transparent person is one whom people can see through. Again I think of David. We see his transparency coming out in reading the many Psalms that were written by him.

Listen to what he says: Psalms 17:3 “Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.”
Psalms 18:21 “For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God.”
Psalms 25:4-5 “Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”
Psalms 25:7 “Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.”
Psalms 38:17-18 “For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.”
Psalms 40:2-3 “He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.”
Psalms 40:17 “Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.”

In reading the Psalms we see the transparency of King David of Israel. He was not a man who exalted in his position. He was a man who exalted in what he was in the sight of God. In these Psalms we see David's honesty in regards to his feelings, emotions, etc. He was not trying to be something he was not. He shared openly his weaknesses, fears and desires.

David was a man who agreed with God about sin and that he was a sinner. Psalms 51:3-5 “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

An integral part of integrity is truthfulness. Listen to what David says
about this. Psalms 51:6 “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.”

What does the Lord want to see in us but truth in the inner man, truth with one another and above all truth with God. This is where transparency and walking in the light comes in.

One of the reasons we see so many of God's people, and especially His
leaders, falling into immorality is because of a lack of openness and accountability with one another. In church after church, country after country and continent after continent I have seen churches torn apart because of immorality among the leadership. All of this comes back to a basic flaw in the character of the individual: a lack of integrity, a lack of transparency and a lack of openness.

Along with this, I believe, is a fear of man. Pastors and Christian
leaders have often been put on a pedestal. Those of us who are in
spiritual leadership believe that we must be more spiritual, more godly,
etc. Although we never say this it is none the less our attitude.

This makes us to be 'pretenders.' Our whole life becomes a pretense. We
are faced with problems, with lust, with a desire for material things (just
like every other person), but we pretend that we are above and beyond these things. That these things do not get us down or tempt us.

In becoming the 'great pretenders' and maintaining the pretense we find
that a lot of emotional energy is used. Eventually we get what is known
as burn out. We can only maintain the pretense so long.

But why do we do this? I believe that one of the most powerful reasons for
this is the 'fear of man' and the 'mask' that we all wear to deceive one
another as well as ourselves.

Paul Tournier says this: "The external mask, the outward-reaction deceives
everybody, the strong as well as the weak. All men, in fact are weak.
All are weak because all are afraid. They are all afraid of being
trampled underfoot. They are all afraid of their inner weaknesses being
found out. They all have secret faults: They all have a bad conscience
on account of certain acts which they would like to keep covered up. They
are afraid of other men and of God, of themselves, of life and of death.
What distinguishes men from each other is not their inner nature, but the
way in which they react to this common distress."

One of the reasons for the mask, the lack of transparency, the fear of man
is the fear of being rejected. This is the one thing that we do not want
and something we cannot live with, and that is rejection.

Paul Tournier goes on to say: "All men are afraid and all long to be
assured. The university degrees they take, the successes, the esteem they
seek and cultivate by means of honorable behavior, the courage they show,
the nerve with which they defend their views, their tenacity in
demonstrating that they are always right, the respect they claim from those
weaker than themselves, the witticisms they come out with; all of this is
armor to cover up their weaknesses." Dr. Meader said: "The one thing
that hinders people from talking openly is the fear of being condemned."

The one thing that helps us to overcome all of this is integrity. First we
learn to be open and honest with God, and if we are then God will not reject us. We are told in Ephesians that we have been accepted in Christ, the Beloved of God.

When we realize that we have been accepted as we are by the Lord, and as this becomes a far greater reality in our lives - we will also be more open with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We will become men and women of
integrity, men and women of character.