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THE CHARACTER OF A MISSIONARY: WHY FOCUS ON FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?

Who would you suggest is the greatest believer living in the world today? Is it the one who prays the most? Could it be the one who fasts often? Some might suggest that the greatest believer is the one who gives cheerfully! But it is much simpler than that. Could it be suggested that the one who is the greatest is the one who is always thankful to God, who follows everything that God follows, who joyfully receives everything as an example of God's incredible goodness, and one who has a heart that is always ready to praise God? That takes a lot of Christ-honoring character, does it not?

Is character really all that important in our culture today? It seems that in some sectors of the business and political worlds, character is not a major concern. However, former Arkansas governor, Mike Huckabee, contends that *Character is the Issue*. One man commented, "We have many characters in our state legislature, but few men of character." May that not be said of those in kingdom ministry! Jeff Iorg writes about the importance of character in ministry when he declares in his book, *The Character of Leadership*:

The biblical qualifications for leadership stress character more than skill, education, or experience. Conversely, for ministry leaders, character failure undermines and cancels out prior results to a greater degree than for leaders in other fields. . . Churches are devastated, people leave wounded and discouraged, and ministries take a long time to recover (if they ever do).¹

Character and fruitfulness in life and ministry are related, especially in the life of a missionary. Christlike character and fruitfulness result from our abiding in Jesus and His Word,

¹Jeff Iorg, *The Character of Leadership* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group., 2007), 17-18. Reprinted and used by permission.

and the Holy Spirit abiding in us. Building Christian character must take priority over “putting on a show” through special abilities. The characteristics that God desires in our lives are seen in the nine fruit of the Spirit. Jesus emphasized this in John 14 and 15. He brings cleansing, forgiveness of sin, and acceptance into the family of God. No valuable, godly character can be developed and exhibited throughout a lifetime without vital connection with Jesus. Jesus was emphatic in His statement, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NASB). Apart from Jesus, we cannot develop lasting, godly character. Eddie Gibbs writes:

There can be no life transformation resulting in a person becoming more Christlike without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the person’s life, as well as within the community of disciples. Believers must cultivate the attitude of abiding in Christ in relation both to the values they uphold and the mission they are committed to.²

Lists of Character Traits

It is amazing how many people talk about character in an abstract way, but who do not identify specific traits of what constitutes positive character. Those who do attempt to list traits seem to develop different lists. As a point of reference, there are a number of possible sources for lists of character traits in current literature and in the Bible. In Appendix 1 found on page 25, you will find an example of two lists found on different Web sites that are combined to include 75 character traits.

The following chart reflects what some contemporary writers believe would be important character traits.

²Eddie Gibbs, *LeadershipNext: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 42.

Table 1
Character Traits Identified by Contemporary Authors

Servant Leader: Spears ³	Great Leaders: Iorg ⁴	Virtues: Bennett ⁵	Leadership Challenge: Kouzes ⁶
Listening	Integrity	Self-discipline	Honest
Empathy	Security	Compassion	Forward-looking
Healing	Purity	Responsibility	Inspiring
Awareness	Humility	Friendship	Competent
Persuasion	Servanthood	Work	Fair-minded
Conceptualization	Wisdom	Courage	Supportive
Foresight	Discipline	Perseverance	Broad-minded
Stewardship	Courage	Honesty	Intelligent
Commitment to growth of people	Passion	Loyalty	Straightforward
Building community		Faith	Dependable

You will notice that of the 39 traits listed above, honest and honesty appear on two lists. A synonym for honesty, integrity is found in a third list. Foresight and forward-looking could possibly suggest the same idea. That leaves 36 different traits on the four lists above. Take a moment to review the lists. Based on what these words mean to you, would you suggest any further repetition of character traits? From these lists, what would be the top nine traits for you? Take a few moments to circle your top nine traits.

So, where is a missionary to find a comprehensive list of character traits? From the Bible, there are a number of lists that deal with character issues. None of these lists are comprehensive, nor do they include the same traits. Two different lists are from men recognized for their wisdom: one from Solomon in Proverbs, and the other from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Solomon writes, “For there are six things the Lord hates—no, seven: haughtiness, lying,

³Larry Spears, “On Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders,” [on-line]; accessed 8 November, 2007; available from <http://www.greenleaf.org/leadership/read-about-it/articles/On-Character-and-Servant-Leadership-Ten-Characteristics.htm>; Internet.

⁴Iorg, *The Character of Leadership*.

⁵William J. Bennett, *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

⁶James M. Kouzes and Barry Z Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995).

murdering, plotting evil, eagerness to do wrong, a false witness, sowing discord among brothers (Proverbs 6:16, TLB).” If these seven traits God hates, then what are the opposites? Could we conclude that these opposites would be traits that God loves?

Jesus expresses his values in the Beatitudes, as He said:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:3-12, NIV).

Can we infer from the Beatitudes the character traits that Jesus values? Table 2 below is one writer’s attempt to identify the character traits from Solomon and Jesus’ statements. Try to identify the opposite traits from Solomon’s list of things that God hates and the traits embedded in the Beatitudes.

Table 2
Words of Solomon and Jesus about Character

God hates	Character God loves	Jesus Values	Characteristics valued
Haughtiness	Humility	Poor in spirit	<i>Dependency</i> on God
Lying	Honesty	Those who mourn	<i>Sensitive</i> to sinfulness
Murdering	Valuing life	The meek	<i>Teachable</i> , coachable
Plotting evil	Kindness	Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness	<i>Passionate</i> for things of God
Eagerness to do wrong	Holiness	Those who show mercy	<i>Caring</i> , gentleness
A false witness	Truthful	Pure in heart	<i>Sincerity</i> , no divided loyalty
Sowing discord among brothers	Building peace and unity	The peacemakers	<i>Relational</i> , concerned with restoring relationships
		Those persecuted for righteousness and falsely accused	<i>Integrity</i> , persecuted or insulted because of integrity not contrariness

Three lists of character traits for church leaders are found in 1 Timothy and Titus as Paul writes to these members of his church planting team who have been instructed to complete some of the church planting/church development process that still remained. Look over Paul's lists in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. What do you see revealed in these passages about the character of the church's leaders? How well are churches in your area doing in giving attention to these passages in evaluating the character of those people they are choosing to lead the churches?

Gene Getz in *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* reflects on these passages, and he comes to five conclusions that are summarized below.

1. Paul puts a greater emphasis on character than title or position. Of the 20 different qualifications Paul listed for pastors and deacons, 18 had to do with character. "When Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus and instructed them regarding certain leaders, he first and foremost spelled out [character] qualifications."⁷
2. Gifts and fruit are both important, but some gifted people are disqualified for ministry because of character (or fruit) issues. "The most important criteria for selecting leadership is spiritual qualification."⁸
3. God's plan for a church (or a church planting team) is NOT for a multi-gifted leader, but for a multi-gifted body. The biblical model shows a team who brings a variety of gifts and uses those gifts to sharpen and grow one another, as well as the whole.
4. Paul did not focus as much on task as character. Tasks change based on the church planting model used, the development phase (or cycle) of the church, the maturity of believers, and the differences of cultures in which the church planting team members are ministering.
5. The specific functions and tasks spelled out in the New Testament leave room for creativity of thinking and performance of ministry. Do not become locked into one model, method, pattern, or form for all time.

⁷ Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 109.

⁸Ibid., 118.

Some see the full armor of God as revealing character traits needed by Christians who will be able to withstand the battles involved in spiritual warfare. As a missionary, what traits do you see in the armor?

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:11-18, NIV).

Table 3
Armor of God and Character Traits

Armor of God	Character Traits
Stand firm	Courage to stand in the face of the enemy's attacks.
Belt of truth	Personal integrity or sincerity that grows out of truth of God's Word
Breastplate of righteousness	Personal holiness and right conduct that protects us from criticism.
Readiness . . . gospel of peace	Personal disciplined preparation or solidity for sharing the gospel.
Shield of faith	A faith in God that results in faithfulness in commitments.
Helmet of salvation	An assurance of salvation that results in steadfastness (not arrogance).
Sword of the Spirit	A knowledge of the Bible that gives courage and resolve to face attacks.
Pray in the Spirit	A regular prayer life that results in submissiveness to direction of the Holy Spirit and sensitivity to needs of fellow believers.

Personal Reflection: Several questions were asked and activities suggested in the previous section. Hopefully, you took time to answer these questions. Here is an additional activity for you: Think about leaders with whom you have worked and for whom you had great respect. List the character traits in those leaders that were important and caused you to respect them. Have you listed any traits that could be added to the list in Appendix 1? If so, add them to that list. Which of the traits that you admired in other leaders have you sought to incorporate into your own life? How effective have you been in incorporating them into your life? What makes these traits important to you as a missionary?

The Fruit of the Spirit

Paul lists another set of character traits in Galatians 5:22-23. This shorter list of the fruit of the Spirit identifies nine character traits for all believers. The fruit of the Spirit form one grid to assess the maturity of a disciple of Jesus. One way to evaluate the disciple's character development is to look at his or her fruit. The fruit can also be used as a tool for a mentor to guide a disciple into deeper maturity and more godly character.

Notice that the phrase “the fruit” is singular. The picture is not that of a bowl of various types of fruits—apples, oranges, bananas, pineapple, peaches, and so forth—for an individual to select those of his or her choosing. The picture might be better seen as a cluster of rich, luscious grapes.

H. E. Dana writes:

The Holy Spirit produces the graces of the Christian spirit and character. . . It is not a series of graces, from which one may make a selection, and develop those that accord with his personal preference, while neglecting others. They are all connected together as one essential work of the Spirit. It is doubtless significant that Paul denotes them as the *fruit* of the Spirit, and not the *fruits* of the Spirit.⁹

Billy Graham echoes similar sentiments as he writes:

The fruit of the Spirit is God's expectation in our lives. Unlike the gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is not divided among believers. Instead, all Christians should be marked by all the fruit of the Spirit. Put in simplest terms, the Bible tells us we need the Spirit to bring fruit in our lives, because we cannot produce godliness apart from the Spirit. In our own selves we are filled with all kinds of self-centered and self-seeking desires which are opposed to God's will for our lives.¹⁰

Jerry Vines writes:

All nine graces are to be seen as a whole in every Christian's life. A Christian can't say, "I'm into joy, but not meekness." Or "I'm a self-controlled Christian, but I'm not much

⁹H. E. Dana, *The Holy Spirit in Acts* (Kansas City: Central Seminary Press, 1943), 78.

¹⁰Billy Graham, *The Christian Worker's Handbook*, (Charlotte, NC: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 2005), 158.

of a kindness Christian.” We are to display every fragrance and flavor of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

As noted earlier, these nine traits are essential for the missionary who would do kingdom ministry effectively. The fruit of the Spirit is best understood in the context of Christian discipleship and ministry. Many highly gifted people are limited in ministry—or even disqualified from ministry—for lack of some particular characteristic of the Spirit’s fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit are the natural product of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The climate for fruitfulness can be enhanced, the soil cultivated, hindrances to fruitfulness removed, and water and proper nutrients introduced. However, it is the Spirit that makes the fruit grow. Most fruit can be imitated for a time by the flesh. Over time and during periods of pressure, the reality and quality of the fruit is revealed. What are you doing to cooperate and allow the Holy Spirit full freedom to bear fruit in your life?

Charles Spurgeon reflected on his own experience as a gardener:

Fruit does not start from the tree perfectly ripe at once: first comes a flower; then a tiny formation which shows that the flower has been set; then a berry appears, but it is very sour. You may not gather it. Let it alone a little while, and allow the sun to ripen it. By-and-by it fills out, and there you have the apples in the full proportions of beauty, and with a mellow flavor which delights the taste.

Fruit again calls for care. If you have a garden you will soon know this. We had a profusion of flowers upon our pear trees this year, and for a few weeks the weather was warm beyond the usual heat of April, but nights of frost followed and cut off nearly all the fruit. Other kinds of fruit which survived the frost are now in danger from the dry weather which has developed an endless variety of insect blight, so that we wonder whether any of it will survive. If we get over this trial and the fruit grows well, we shall yet expect to see many apples fall before autumn, because a worm has eaten into their hearts and effectually destroyed them. So is it with Christian life: I have seen a work for the Lord prospering splendidly, like a fruitful vine, when suddenly there has come a frosty night and fond hopes have been nipped: or else new notions, and wild ideas have descended like insect blights and the fruit has been spoiled; or if the work has escaped these causes of damage, some immorality in a leading member, or a quarrelsome spirit, has appeared unawares like a worm in the center of the apple, and down it has fallen

¹¹Jerry Vines, *Spirit Fruit: Graces of the Spirit-Filled Life* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers), 15.

never to flourish again. “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” You must take care of your fruit if you wish to have any laid up in store at the end of the year; and so must every Christian be very watchful over the fruit of the Spirit, lest in any way it should be destroyed by the enemy. Fruit is the reward of the husbandman and the crown and glory of the tree.¹²

Phillip Kenneson makes a similar observation as he writes:

. . . I always wondered why the tomatoes, green beans, and corn always had a much harder time making it than the weeds. If you wanted the vegetables to grow and yield produce, you had to work hard to help them. If you wanted weeds to take over your garden, you did not have to do anything but stand back and watch.¹³

Personal Reflection: Think through the concepts of fruit and fruitfulness from the following Bible passages. Select at least three of the passages below for personal reflection. Let these three questions guide your thoughts.

1. What does it say to me about my life and ministry as a missionary?
2. What does it mean in personal and practical terms to me for ministry?
3. What should I do in light of these verses?

Matt. 7:16-20; 12:33-37

Luke 13:6-9

Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23

John 15:1-8

Matt. 24-30; 36-43

Gal. 6:7-10

Traits Reflecting God’s Character

Two facts must be understood as we study the nine character traits that are identified as the fruit of the Spirit. First, with the exception of “meekness,” all of these words are used to describe some character trait of God the Father. Three examples can illustrate this point. Twice John states “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). This love prompts God’s action in sending Jesus to die for our sins (Romans 5:8). Patience is often translated “longsuffering” in the King James Version. David prays, “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15, KJV). Peter writes, “The Lord is

¹²Charles H. Spurgeon, “The First Fruit of the Spirit,” (May 25, 1884) [on-line]; accessed 7 November 2007; available from <http://www.peacemakers.net/unity/chsfirstfruit.htm>; Internet.

¹³Phillip D. Kenneson, *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 30.

not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, KJV). God can be trusted. As Moses reminds us, God is faithful: “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deuteronomy 32:4, NIV). Paul speaks of this character trait, “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, NIV). Of the one trait not ascribed to God the Father, Jesus (God in flesh) said of himself, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for *I am meek* and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29, KJV) (emphasis added).

The Perfect Example of the Fruit of the Spirit

Second, ask, “Has anyone ever perfectly embodied these nine traits?” Yes, Jesus has. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit to conform our lives to the likeness, image, or character of Jesus. This is God’s purpose in the events of life. He works through the events of life to conform us to the likeness of Jesus. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:28-29, NIV).

Iorg acknowledges God’s work in a believer’s life: “God has a purpose for you. His purpose is to make you more and more like Jesus. He is relentless in his quest. God will organize and orchestrate circumstances to accomplish his purpose.”¹⁴ Iorg points out that God uses circumstances (both good and difficult ones) and people (both friends and foes) in His process.

¹⁴Iorg, *The Character of Leadership*, 6.

He summarizes: “God uses all the events, conditions, and relationships you encounter as a leader to shape you.”¹⁵

Harry Poe comments on the continued need for growth in the life of a disciple:

Christlikeness is the goal of spiritual maturity. The aim of the new birth is nothing short of producing offspring for God who conform to the image of Christ (Ephesians 4:13-14; Galatians 4:19). Until Christians are truly Christlike, they still require spiritual growth and maturity. . . . As Christ bears the image of the Father, so Christians are to bear the image of the Son.¹⁶

Two vital questions need to be answered:

1. How are the fruit of the Spirit being seen in my life?
2. How much more am I like Jesus today than I was when I was saved, than I was 10 years ago, five years ago, and the first of this year? (Can those closest to me see any difference for the better?)

Personal Reflection: Where is God working now to conform me to the image of Christ? Who or what is He using in the process? How am I responding to that person or those circumstances? Are there some responses I need to change? What? How?

Three Clusters of Three Fruit

Look again at the list of nine character traits. They can be clustered into three groups.

First Cluster

Love, joy, and peace result from our relationship with God Himself. These grow as His presence is experienced and manifested in our lives. These three character traits become an inner, spiritual disposition that is nurtured from communion with God and which prepare us in our inner life for the work of a missionary.

Love. Love speaks of activity, and not mere sentimentality. God demonstrated His love in sending Jesus to die for our sins. He calls us to demonstrate love in our personal relationships.

¹⁵Ibid., 11.

¹⁶Harry L. Poe, *The Fruit of Christ's Presence* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 12.

This New Testament word carries the idea of an enduring love, not conditioned by the worthiness of the recipient but by the character of the lover. We do not have the ability to carry out the three priority commands—to love God, love our neighbor, and love one another—in our own strength. Jesus goes beyond these three arenas for love and instructs: “I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27, NIV). Michael Smith asks, “If we cannot learn to love the body of Christ, how will we ever be equipped to love our neighbors and the lost, let alone our enemies?”¹⁷ We can only love others as we love Him and experience His love. One way we show our love for God is obedience to His commandments (1 John 5:2-3). How else is our love for God revealed? In 1 Corinthians 13:4-6a, Paul identifies 16 characteristics of love that are to be expressed in our human relationships. Try the matching exercise for these characteristics on page 26 in Appendix 2: Sixteen Characteristics of Love. Think about “How do I show love for my family, my neighbors, my fellow Christians, and my enemies?”

Joy. The United States Declaration of Independence states “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Joy is a unique expression. It is different than happiness. Happiness is based on what is happening around us—for many people happiness is conditioned by pleasurable events and the accumulation of possessions. The Christian can be joyful even when the happenings of his life are not to his or her liking. Jesus explained that joy comes from knowing that your salvation is secure in heaven (see Luke 10:20). In looking at the life of Paul, we see that he learned imprisonment was part of his life. He wrote from one jail experience, and 19 times words for joy occurred. Paul stated, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will

¹⁷Michael M. Smith, *Become More Like Jesus* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1999), 44.

say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4, NIV). Joy is the deeply settled disposition that trusts God and allows one to sing, “It is well with my soul,” in the midst of the storms of life.

Peace. There are two different types and sources of peace: peace from the world and peace from Jesus. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27, NIV). Peace from the world is often sought in positive thinking, pursuit of pleasure, or denial of problems. Sometimes the world’s peace comes through avoidance or escapism. However, peace for the disciple is not the absence of conflict, but confidence in God’s ultimate victory. Peace is the tranquility and serenity that comes from knowing our lives are in God’s hands. There can be peace in the midst of a storm, because the Prince of Peace lives in our hearts. This peace is the result of reconciliation to God, and the source of reconciliation is Jesus. Because we know the Prince of Peace, we can become peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). We are called to be agents of peace and ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20).

J. L. Ogilvie writes: “A lack of peace is a warning signal, a jarring alarm inside us telling us that someone or something has taken Christ’s place as Lord of our hearts. Who is it? What is it? Where is it for you?”¹⁸

Second Cluster

Patience, kindness, and goodness flow out of the richness of our relationship with God, and they are revealed in our relationship with our fellow man. These are seen in our outer, social disposition toward others, as well as in how we act toward those God brings into our circles of relationships. How a missionary relates to others is critical to his contribution in the kingdom.

¹⁸Lloyd John Ogilvie, *The Magnificent Vision: Seeing Yourself Through the Eyes of Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1980), 62.

Patience. Patience is a word that speaks more to our relationship with other people than with the circumstances or events of life. It is a spirit that endures wrongs and injury and does not seek revenge, even when possible. Patience expresses the character of God and reflects His forbearance with sinful humanity. God’s patience is an example for disciples in their dealing with others (1 Timothy 1:16). Don Aycock suggests that biblical patience produces creative waiting. “Creative waiting is not merely putting up with bad situations, but it is learning and growing from them.”¹⁹

Kindness. Kindness carries the idea of doing specific, helpful, useful, beneficial acts of kindness rather than simply having a kind attitude. Jesus taught often about the necessity of extending forgiveness to others. Paul writes that one expression of kindness is extending forgiveness to those whom we feel have wronged or hurt us (Ephesians 4:32). Kindness is sensitivity to others. Jesus uses a word similar to kindness when He describes His yoke as being easy, not chaffing or galling. How often are we guilty of conduct that irritates others or “rubs someone the wrong way?”

Dorothea Lotter encourages Christians to kindness: “We must purpose in our hearts to not be part of the cruelty in our church and world. Rather, we must be sensitive to the needs of people, showing kindness to those we serve—friends and enemies alike.”²⁰

Philip Kenneson writes:

This fruit by its very character, therefore, is one of the most outwardly *visible* fruit of the Christian life. Kindness is neither a state of mind nor an invisible attitude or emotion. Neither do we think people kind simply because they refrain from doing unkind things.

¹⁹Don M. Aycock, *Walking Straight in a Crooked World* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 54.

²⁰Dorothea Lotter, “The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,” (2007) [on-line]; accessed 8 November 2007; available from http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/top/fruit5_kindness.cfm ; Internet.

Rather, we regard people as kind because they go out of their way . . . to engage in kind actions.²¹

Harry Poe observes: “It is possible to do a nice thing or a good deed without being kind. The welfare system of the United States does good things but not necessarily in a kind way. Sometimes the welfare system does its work in a way that may destroy self-respect and personal dignity.”²² Are the good things we do kind? Does our kindness help make other people become better, stronger, wiser, or more Christlike? Do you see kindness as a part of your missionary calling?

Goodness. Goodness (or gentleness) reflects something that is good (such as fertile soil) or beneficial (such as a helper who comes beside you). Goodness looks for ways to be helpful—not harmful—to others. Goodness evolves out of a love and desire for peace, but recognizes that there is a place of discipline, correction, and instruction. A good person does not overlook evil, but steps forward to confront and stop evil.

Goodness goes out of the way to be useful. The word “goodness” communicates an idea of that which is both good and strong. It is the spirit that goes beyond the legal requirement to go a mile and goes two.

Third Cluster

Faithfulness, meekness, and self control are the results of our personal walk with God. These give us the personal reservoir of strength for facing the challenges of a missionary’s daily life. These are revealed in our personal conduct.

Faithfulness. God is faithful, and the disciple casts himself totally upon God and seeks to become faithful to God. Faithfulness is a word related to service and stewardship. Paul applies a

²¹Kenneson, *Life on the Vine*, 136.

²²Poe, *The Fruit of Christ’s Presence*, 60.

general principle of a steward's faithfulness to the specific areas of the missionary task of communicating the gospel, the mysteries of God: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, KJV). Are we reliable, trustworthy even in the small things of life? Can we be trusted with those things committed to our care? Are we dependable to carry out commitments? Do we chaff under positions of accountability? (See Matthew 24:45-51; 25:14-30.)

Meekness. Two men in the Bible are described as meek: Moses (Numbers 12:3) and Jesus (Matthew 11:29). The expression of Moses' meekness is seen at the point where he is criticized by Aaron and Miriam. He chooses not to respond, but trusts God to deal with the issue.

The word translated "meekness" is not well understood in Western culture—it is not weakness, self-abasement, or timidity. Barclay writes, "It [meekness] means *teachable*, the man who is not too proud to learn."²³ It is also used for one who is coachable, who recognizes the need for and accepts the ministry of a mentor/coach. Former Boston Patriot tight-end (1962-67) and evangelist, Tony Romeo, frequently preached a sermon on the greatest asset in pro-football from the text, "Blessed are the meek."

Another graphic picture is that of an animal that has been tamed to the bridle—it is still powerful but harnessed for useful service. Kenneson points to meekness as a characteristic needed in times of conflict: "Christians will have conflicts with other Christians about matters

²³William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1954), 56.

that matter, but when we do, we should not assume that we are always right and that those who think or act differently than we do are wrong.”²⁴

Self control. Self control comes not from self, but yielding self to the control of the Holy Spirit. The various drives, abilities, and talents that God has given man are capable of abuse. The proper use demands the human will to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. This yielding to the Spirit is revealed by bringing under control our appetites, our temper, and our tongue. Iorg comments on this trait:

Doesn't self-control and Spirit-fruit seem like a contradiction? The answer is no. The fact that self-control or self-discipline is Spirit produced only underscores the need to depend on the Spirit for developing this important quality. No fleshly effort will please God or build true discipline. Self-discipline refers to *self* as the object of discipline rather than its source.²⁵

Personal Reflection: As you reflect on these nine character traits, think back on the first Personal Reflection activity and the people you respect. How was the fruit of the Spirit seen in their lives? From an opposite perspective, has there been a person you have not respected? Is there a fruit that was missing or malnourished in that person's life? How is the fruit of the Spirit reflected in your life and work as a missionary? Is the lack of maturity in one or two fruit creating difficulty in your relationships or mission ministry? Which fruit? What needs to be done to enhance growth of that fruit?

Developing the Fruit of the Spirit: Refining Character

In thinking about the process of the development of the fruit of the Spirit, three truths stand out. The first is that the fruit of the Spirit is a product of the Holy Spirit and cannot be manufactured by human effort. The second truth is that an individual can hinder the work of the Holy Spirit by resisting His promptings, by grieving Him (Ephesians 4:30), or by quenching Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The third truth is that we can cooperate with the Spirit and enhance productivity. Poe states: “While the work of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit,

²⁴Kenneson, *Life on the Vine*, 214.

²⁵Iorg, *The Character of Leadership*, 163.

Christians are not totally passive objects in the process.”²⁶ Take time to read again John 15:1-8 and reflect on these verses in light of bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Remaining Connected

God is at work in refining our characters and in making His people fruitful. Notice the progression in John 15: “no fruit, fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.” As we look at this passage, one of the critical factors for fruitfulness is to remain connected to the vine. The connection is three-fold. Look closely at verses four through seven in John 15. First, as the branch must remain connected to the vine, so the believer must remain connected to, abide in, and draw life from Jesus. Notice the phrase in John 15:4: “Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” Look at John 15:5: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus said that a disciple can be productive: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you” (John 15:7a, NIV).

Do not miss the second connection—the believer must remain connected to the Word of Jesus. Look at the parallel passage when Jesus spoke to Jewish believers: “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31, NASB). The same word for abiding, remaining, is used in both passages. What does it mean for me as a missionary to abide in the Word and for the Word to abide in me? How does God’s Word impact the way I do missionary work?

Finally, a vine is not one root system, one trunk, or only one branch. A vine has many branches. A branch needs to remain connected to the trunk and through the trunk to the other branches. As such, a believer needs to remain connected to the community of faith. Kenneson writes that one of the critical factors to understand in cultivating the fruit of the Spirit is that it is not cultivated in isolation. Fruit of the Spirit is cultivated in the community of faith as together

²⁶Poe, *The Fruit of Christ’s Presence*, 15.

believers seek to live out the mission and ministry of Christ in a real world of hurt. How am I connected with a small group that is involved in ministry and mission? Ask yourself the following question: How is the Holy Spirit able to work through that community of faith to mature me and make me more like Jesus?

Receiving Correction

A second critical factor in refining character is to receive correction. Three passages inform our understanding of this factor. In John 15, the text uses the illustration of pruning a vine's branches for enhancing fruitfulness. Paul writes, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28, NIV). Not all things that happen may be "good", but God is at work through all the circumstances of life to conform us to the image of Christ. What have been some of the events of your life that have seemed at the time you were going through them to be very hard but later, upon reflection, you could see these as seasons of growth in character? Now read Hebrews 12:5-11. Remember that a loving Father disciplines the disciple to produce a harvest.

Sometimes pruning, correction, reproof, or discipline come directly from the hand of God. Sometimes these come through circumstances of life. Other times, God chooses to deliver His message of reproof through another individual. In such times, how do you receive that correction? How do you respond to others whom God is using to grow you? What about when the person is a family member? A pastor? A coworker? A neighbor? Solomon indicates that our response to the person offering a word of reproof reveals more about us than about our critic. "Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you (Proverbs 9:8, NIV)." "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee"

(Proverbs 9:8, KJV). (It might be interesting for you to do a study of Proverbs looking at the words correction, discipline, reproof, reprove, or rebuke.)

Finally, in the life of maturing believers, the Holy Spirit works to bring fruit by correction that is the result of the individual believer applying spiritual disciplines. Iorg calls for Christians to cooperate with, rather than resist, the circumstance(s) and/or people God may be using to develop character in our lives. He also challenges leaders to “. . . intentionally create procedures and practices for yourself to promote your own character development.”²⁷ Now reflect on these two questions: “What two traits of the fruit are smallest in your cluster of spiritual fruit? What spiritual disciplines need to be put in place or strengthened to enhance the climate for productivity in your life?” Don’t make a decision about this on your own. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your understanding regarding this. Ask a mentor, trusted guide, or close friend what they have done to expand fruitfulness in this area. Look at some valuable resources such as Richard Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline*, or Philip Kenneson’s *Life on the Vine*.

As we apply the disciplines, we must remember that there are limits to what we can do during the process. We do not control the elements or the process. The church and each member belong to God and He causes the growth and fruitfulness. But there are a number of tasks that He gives to individuals that affect their own growth and the growth of those in the sphere of their influence. This is essential for the missionary to model and teach.

Reproducing Continually

As noted earlier, there is the progression of no fruit, fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. Jim Chew writes:

²⁷Iorg, *The Character of Leadership*, 12

Christlikeness was Paul's goal. Therefore, he wrote about Christlike qualities in his epistles. . . The fruit of the Spirit stands in stark contrast to the works of the flesh in Galatians 5.

The most essential aspect of discipleship training is the cultivation of Christian character. This is a lifelong process.²⁸

Notice the last sentence, "This is a lifelong process." We do not get to a point of perfection in our character or completeness in the fruit bearing process. Iorg writes, "You are on a journey toward Christlikeness that will not end until you meet Jesus face-to-face."²⁹ Do not become complacent or satisfied with the level of growth you have currently achieved. Do not think, "Compared to where I was when I first started this journey, I am doing good." Do not compare yourself to others. There may be the tendency to say, "Compared to _____, I am doing well." Paul writes, "When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12, NIV). Remember, our standard is Jesus.

Personal Reflection: Has the Holy Spirit been working through a person or circumstance to make you aware of a trait that needs growth? How has He been doing this? What are you doing to respond positively to the Spirit? Are there some spiritual disciplines that need to be strengthened or put in place to enhance the climate for fruitfulness? If so, what? How? When? Are there some things in life hindering the fruitfulness with which you need to deal? How will you deal with those things? What specifically will you do? When will you start? Who will you ask to help you with accountability issues?

Conclusion

Character is a critical issue. We have chosen to look at the fruit of the Spirit as a list of traits to use as a beginning place to call for missionaries to reflect on and deal with character issues from a biblical perspective. Why this emphasis? It is an emphasis, because character is a

²⁸Jim Chew, *When You Cross Cultures: Vital Issues Facing Christian Missions* (Singapore: The Navigators, 1990), 73.

²⁹Iorg, *The Character of Leadership*, 226.

vital concern both for the personal life of the missionary and for one's effectiveness in ministry. Failure to respond positively to the Holy Spirit's work to produce balanced, healthy, mature fruit in our lives can hinder our productivity as missionaries and even disqualify us from the ministry for which we have been called and gifted. The cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit is important! Paul warns that there must be a right atmosphere before the fruit will grow. Just like various fruits cannot grow in each and every climate, so is it that the fruit of the Spirit cannot grow in some climates in the believer's life. Fruit grows in a climate consecrated with an abundance of the Spirit and the Word. Such fruitful abundance comes when we walk in step with the Spirit, and not running ahead nor lagging behind Him.

Fruit production is for one thing: It is for the produce to be eaten! Never was the fruit intended to be admired or put on exhibit. There are people today that are starving for you as a missionary to display love, joy, peace, and all the fruit of the Spirit. When the people we encounter see the fruit in our lives, they will know that we have something they lack. Fruit-bearing is not for self consumption. We bear fruit so that others might also be fed. We bear fruit so that others might be helped. Primarily, we bear fruit so that Christ Jesus might be glorified.

Examine again the words of Jesus about "no fruit, fruit, more fruit, and much fruit." Do you sense that Jesus was not satisfied with "no fruit" and "fruit" and that He desired "more fruit" and "much fruit"? Reflect on this final question: "Where am I in fruitfulness as it is reflected in my personal life and in my missionary ministry?"

Appendix 1 Chart of Character Traits

This chart of 75 positive character traits is a combination of two lists of traits found at <http://www.character-in-action.com/character-traits.htm> and <http://rotoruabbc.homestead.com/CharacterTraits.html>. The numbers (Adaptability 9) reference the second list which has numerous Bible verses about that trait. This chart lists only traits that most people would identify as positive character traits and does not include those things that would be commonly agreed as negative, such as laziness, greed, bitterness. A helpful exercise might be to go through this list and identify a negative trait that opposes the positive. It has been observed that any positive trait, when carried to an extreme on either end of the spectrum, becomes negative. Another way to view these is on a continuum. What would the extremes be for each trait? Is this true of all traits? Here are two examples of the trait and the extremes:

Rigidity.....Adaptability.....Pliant
No self esteem.....Humility.....Arrogant

ADAPTABILITY 9	APPRECIATION	ATTENTIVENESS
AVAILABILITY	COMMITMENT 2	COMPASSION 3
CONCERN	CONFIDENCE 1	CONSIDERATION
CONSISTENCY	CONTENTMENT 4	COOPERATION
COURAGE 1	CREATIVITY	DECISIVENESS
DEFERENCE	DEPENDABILITY	DETERMINATION
DILIGENCE 5	DISCERNMENT	DISCRETION 6
EFFICIENCY	EQUITABILITY	FAIRNESS
FAITHFULNESS 6	FEARLESSNESS 1	FLEXIBILITY 9
FORGIVENESS 8	FRIENDLINESS	GENEROSITY 21
GENTLENESS 12	GRATITUDE 34	HELPFUL 14
HOLINESS 15	HONESTY 16	HUMILITY 17
IMPARTIALITY 18	INTEGRITY 19	JOYFULNESS 20
KINDNESS 13	LOVE 23	LOYALTY
MEEKNESS 24	MERCIFULNESS 3	OBSERVANT
OPTIMISM	PATIENCE 22	PEACEFULNESS 26
PERSEVERANCE 8	PERSISTENCE	PERSUASIVENESS
PRUDENCE 6	PUNCTUALITY	PURPOSE
PURITY 28	REVERENCE 30	RESOURCEFULNESS
RESPECT	RESPONSIBILITY	SECURITY
SELF-CONTROL 33	SERVANT-MINDED 31	SINCERITY 1
SUBMISSIVENESS 2, 25	TACTFULNESS	TEMPERANCE 33
THOROUGHNESS	THRIFTINESS 11	TOLERANCE
TRUSTWORTHINESS	TRUTHFULNESS	VIRTUE
WATCHFUL 36	WISE (WISDOM) 37	ZEALOUS 38

Appendix 2
Sixteen Characteristics of Love as Expressed in KJV

Match the trait with the description.

a. __Love suffereth long	1. Not jealous, never boils with jealousy, never envious. Does not see the inwardly over the possessions, attainments, or status of others. Envy desires to deprive another of what he has.
b. __ and is kind	2. Keeps up hope in everything; hopes for everything; is always hopeful; hope is fadeless under all circumstances. It was the belief of Jesus that no man was hopeless. Never gives up, looks forward to the complete fulfillment of God's promises.
c. __Love envieth not	3. Patient, endures long, slow to lose its patience. Patience goes far toward easing and solving problems that confront us. The emphasis is with people, not circumstances. We must exercise the same patience with others as God exercises with us.
d. __ vaunteth not itself	4. Never comes to an end, never disappears, never passes away. Love is permanent. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7
e. __is not puffed up	5. Looks for every way to be constructive. The root meaning of the word is "to make a loan," or "to be helpful." This is not merely attitudes but actions; not words but deeds.
f. __Doeth not behave itself unseemly	6. Is not arrogant; puffed up with pride, not conceited. Does not put on airs or cherish ideas of own importance. Love is not inflated with its own importance, does not make a parade, does not call attention to itself.
g. __seeketh not her own	7. Doesn't brag, never boasts, not boastful or vainglorious, never makes a parade. Love does not call attention to itself.
h. __is not easily provoked	8. Bears up under everything, overlooks faults, there is nothing love cannot face, knows no limit of its endurance. Love can bear any insult, injury or disappointment. Bears patiently and serenely.
i. __thinketh no evil	9. Doesn't act unbecomingly, with rudeness, isn't indecent, unmannerly. The idea is that of <i>charm</i> . There is graciousness in Christian love which never forgets that courtesy, tact, and politeness are lovely things.
j. __Rejoices not in iniquity	10. Is never glad when wrong is done, never glad when others go wrong, does not delight in evil. Finds no pleasure in evil doing. Mourns, grieves and weeps over corruption.
k. __but rejoices in the truth	11. Gives us power to endure anything, endure without limits, endures without weakening. Love bears everything with triumphant fortitude. Not the spirit which can sit down and passively bear things, but in bearing them can conquer and transmute it. Love is no quitter.
l. __beareth all things	12. Does not take into account a wrong suffered, never harbors evil thoughts, keeps no score of wrongs. This is an accountant word for entering into a ledger an item so that it will not be forgotten. Love does not store up memory of any wrong with a view of revenge.
m. __believeth all things	13. Doesn't get angry, bears no malice, not quick to take offense, is not touchy. Love never flies into a temper. Never becomes exasperated with people.
n. __hopeth all things	14. Rejoices with the truth, glad when truth prevails, joyfully joins sides with truth. Christian love has no wish to veil the truth.
o. __endureth all things	15. Does not insist on its own rights or way, isn't selfish, never self-seeking, doesn't pursue selfish ends. The need for today is people who are more concerned for the rights of others than their own.
p. __never faileth	16. It exercises faith in everything, has unquenchable faith, always eager to believe the best. Love believes the best of other people, always gives the benefit of the doubt.

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