

The Character of the Christian by Tim Challies

<http://www.challies.com/writings/the-character-of-the-christian>

As Christians, we all want to grow in spiritual maturity and Christlikeness. At least, I hope we do. We all want to become what we are in Christ, to put aside patterns of sin and unrighteousness and to replace them with patterns of holiness. Ultimately, we want to become like Christ, to think how he thought and to behave how he behaved. We do well to aspire to the highest standards of holiness and godliness.

The Bible holds out one group of people who are to serve as models of Christian maturity: Elders (referred to at times as elders, and at other times as pastors or overseers). Elders are qualified to the office primarily on the basis of their character. While the Bible provides one quality related to skill (the ability to teach) and one related to the amount of time a man has been a Christian (not a recent convert), all of the other qualifications are related to character. Yet while these traits are demanded of elders, they are not unique to elders.

D.A. Carson **has said** that the list of qualifications for elders is “remarkable for being unremarkable.” Why is that? Because these traits are repeated elsewhere as qualities that ought to be present among all believers. Carson says, “The criteria mentioned are demanded of all Christians everywhere. Which is another way of saying, elders are first of all to be exemplars of the Christian graces that are presupposed as mandated on all Christians.” Every church is meant to be full of men and women who display these traits.

This means that if you want to grow in holiness, one great place to begin is by knowing and imitating the character qualifications of elders. Today I am beginning a new series on the character of a Christian, and I will structure the series around these character qualifications. I want to answer questions like these: In what ways do the qualifications of an elder and the calling of all Christians overlap? Very practically, what do those qualities look like in the life of the believer? How can I know if I am displaying these graces? And how can I best pray for them in my own life?

I hope you will join me as we consider how to spur one another on to love, good works, and great Christlikeness! I hope you will join me as we learn together how we can exemplify the highest Christian virtues. Here is how I anticipate progressing through the series:

1. Introduction
2. Above Reproach
3. A One-Woman Man (and One-Man Woman)
4. Sober-Minded, Self-Controlled, Respectable
5. Hospitable

6. Sober, Gentle, Peacemaking
7. Not a Lover of Money
8. A Leader at Home
9. Mature and Humble
10. Respected by Outsiders

This series will kick off next week with the qualification that serves as a summary or an umbrella for the rest of them—the quality of being above reproach, of being blameless and free of any great defects in character and behavior.

(Note #1: There are three texts we look to when discussing the qualifications of an elder: 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3. Each of these overlaps with the others but each also has unique elements. We come to the fullest understanding of the elders' qualifications when we hold the three of them together. This is what we will do in the weeks ahead. Note #2: For the breakdown of the character qualities, I intend to follow the pattern Thabiti Anyabwile uses in his 2012 work *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*.)

The Character of the Christian: Above Reproach

I told you **last week** about a new series that looks at the character of the Christian. What I mean to do is explore how the character qualifications of elders are actually God's calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to display them. I want us to consider whether we actually do display these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure.

We begin today with the qualification of "above reproach." This is given in 1 Timothy 3:2 ("Therefore an overseer must be above reproach") and repeated twice in Titus 1 ("If anyone is above reproach ... For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach"—verses 6 and 7). Whatever it means to be above reproach, it is not only for elders or church leaders. Colossians 3 teaches that the great hope and comfort of every Christian is that God himself will one day "present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him" (Colossians 1:22). Every Christian is to be and to live above reproach. As John MacArthur says, "The reason [this qualification] is called for at the pastoral level is because we are the example which you are all to follow. And if [being above reproach] is part of that example, then guess what is required of you? The same [trait]."

What does it mean to be above reproach? What the ESV translates as "above reproach" is first a legal word that indicates a kind of innocence in the eyes of the law. It means that no one can legitimately rebuke you or make any charges against you that will stick. They may accuse, but your conduct will eventually acquit you by proving you blameless ("blameless" being a far more common translation than "above reproach"). Your life is so consistent that your reputation

is credible, you are an example worth following, and you do not make the gospel look fake by teaching one thing while doing another.

Naturally, we want to know the law before which we must be found blameless and the standard we must uphold. In his book *Biblical Eldership*, Alexander Strauch explains that, “What is meant by ‘above reproach’ is defined by the character qualities that follow the term.” Thus, being “above reproach” is expressed through those other qualities in 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1, and, by extension, 1 Peter 5. Being above reproach in your marriage means you are “the husband of one wife.” Being above reproach in your thought life means you are “sober-minded.” Being above reproach in your actions means you are “self-controlled.” What we see is that this is a kind of summary attribute and that the blameless Christian is the one who upholds all of God’s revealed will. Of course, being above reproach does not mean being perfect. But it does mean that, when we sin, we confess it and turn from it because our standard is perfection (Matthew 5:48).

The primary means through which you gain this characteristic is taking advantage of God’s means of grace—reading the Bible and deliberately applying it, praying privately and with your family, faithfully attending your church’s worship services, participating in the sacraments, and so on. These are the very means through which God extends his sanctifying grace and you cannot expect to be or remain above reproach if you neglect them.

SELF-EVALUATION

The most thorough evaluation of your life will come in the weeks that follow as we examine the more precise character qualifications that are summarized by this one. But in the meantime, these questions may be worth thinking through as you consider whether or not you are above reproach.

- Are there any ongoing sins in your life that would bring shame to you, your family, and your local church if they were made public? Are there any parts of your life you deliberately hide from others?
- Do you know what sins you are particularly prone to and do you have measures in your life to guard against the temptation to these sins?
- Are you taking advantage of God’s means of grace? Are you regularly attending church and participating in the life of the church? Do you have times of private and family worship?
- Do you think your life right now is pleasing to God? When it is not, are you quick to seek the forgiveness of both man and God and to display repentance by making significant changes?
- If your close friends or people in your church heard charges against you, would their reaction be, “That’s not possible!” or “I knew it!”? What does this response say about you?

PRAYER POINTS

As we begin to consider character qualifications, we need to acknowledge that

they are gifts of God's grace that we receive and display in obedience to him. As God's children, he works in us what is pleasing in his sight (Hebrews 13:20-21). So as we aim to be above reproach, we acknowledge that we can be this and have this only through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit who works in us to do and even to have the will to do (Philippians 2:12-13). And this is why we must pray to gain these qualities, to maintain them, and to increase in them. To that end, here are some ways you may wish to pray:

- I pray that I would joyfully and obediently “do all things without grumbling or disputing, that I may be blameless and innocent, a child of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom I shine as a light in the world” (Philippians 2:14-15).
- I pray that your Holy Spirit would help me identify sin in my life wherever it exists and to quickly put that sin to death.
- I pray that I would diligently pursue personal holiness by and through the gospel.
- I pray that I would be and remain blameless in your eyes and in the eyes of man. Make my conduct match my profession so my life does not display even a trace of hypocrisy.
- I pray that when I sin I would be quick to seek the forgiveness of both man and God.
- I pray that if I am ever accused of sin or evil, I would be able to be found innocent, blameless in your eyes.

The Character of the Christian: A One-Woman Man

Today we continue this series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God's calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to display them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure.

Our topic today is a qualification Paul repeats in both 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. The ESV translates it as “the husband of one wife,” a common rendering of the Greek which says, literally, “a one-woman man.” There are several ways we could interpret this qualification. Does Paul mean to say that a pastor cannot be a polygamist? Does it mean that an elder must be married? Does it mean that the pastor cannot have been previously divorced and remarried? None of these quite get to the heart of the matter. John MacArthur says, “It's not concerning status, it is concerning character. It is not a matter of circumstance, it is a matter of his virtue. And the issue here is a man who is solely and only and totally devoted to the woman who is his wife. It is a question of his character. He is a one-woman man. Anything less is a disqualification.”

Similarly, in his book *Biblical Eldership*, Alexander Strauch reminds us that the

first qualification, above reproach, is a summary that is defined by the virtues that follow. He writes, “In both of Paul’s qualification lists, he places the qualification ‘the husband of one wife’ immediately after ‘above reproach.’ So the first and foremost area in which an elder must be above reproach is in his marital and sexual life. ... The phrase ‘the husband of one wife’ is meant to be a positive statement that expresses faithful, monogamous marriage. In English we would say, ‘faithful and true to one woman’ or ‘a one-woman man.’” Philip Ryken says Paul “wants the leaders of the church to be living examples of biblical marriage: one man and one woman in a love covenant for life.”

Just as an elder is to be an example of sexual integrity, so the call goes out to all Christians to “abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This is true whether the Christian is married or single, male or female. Paul commands the whole congregation in Corinth to “flee from sexual immorality” and warns “every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Writing to the gathered church in Ephesus, Paul sets the standard so high as to demand, “Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints” (Ephesians 5:3). If you are “sexually immoral or impure,” he says, you have “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Ephesians 5:5). Writing again to an entire congregation, Paul calls such sexual immorality one of “the works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19).

Of course, as with all of these qualifications, we will not exemplify them perfectly so must always return to the good news of salvation and sanctification through Jesus Christ. Paul also says that even though some in the congregation had been “sexually immoral” and therefore had no inheritance in the kingdom of God, he goes on to rejoice, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). He reminds them that their sexual sin is related to the old man and its evil ways, not the new man and its righteous ways. Still, the call to sexual purity is among the most prominent and repeated commands in the New Testament.

Thus this qualification is a call to devotion—devotion first to God and then to a God-given spouse. It is a call away from adultery to be sure, but also from a wandering heart, wandering eyes, or wandering hands. It is a call on each one of us to be pure and chaste, to be exemplary in character and conduct whether in marriage or singleness. It is a call for the married to pursue and enjoy the sexual relationship with their spouse and a call for the unmarried to willingly submit their sexuality to the will and the care of their loving God.

SELF-EVALUATION

To strengthen your fight against sexual immorality and your striving toward sexual purity, I encourage you to evaluate yourself in light of questions like these:

- Even though you are imperfect, can you stand before the Lord and honestly say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my

thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Psalm 139:23-24)?

- Are there any sexual sins you have committed that you need to confess and repent of? Are there any sins you have been hiding that you need to expose? (Psalm 32:3-7)
- Are there certain settings or contexts where you are especially prone to sexual failure? What precautions have you taken to avoid these settings? Are there radical actions that you still need to take? (Matthew 5:27-30)
- Does your marriage serve as an example of God’s design and ideal for marriage? Are you in love with your spouse? Do you regularly pursue sexual union with your spouse? (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)
- Do you regularly indulge in entertainment that displays explicit nudity or sexuality or that debases God’s design and purpose for sexuality? Or do you willingly abstain from every form of evil and refuse to make light of it? (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Ephesians 5:3)

PRAYER POINTS

If we are to gain sexual purity, to maintain it, and to increase in it we must pray. Let me encourage you to pray in these ways:

- I pray that you would give me the desire and the wisdom to guard my heart from all forms of sexual immorality. I pray that I would be quick to confess and turn from all known sexual sin. [Consider praying through Proverbs 6:23-35.]
- Men: I pray that I would regard older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, in all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2)
- Women: I pray that I would regard older men as fathers and younger men as brothers, in all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2)
- I pray that you would purify my heart so that the sin of adultery—expressed even in lustful thoughts and glances—would lose all of its power over me. (Matthew 5:27-30) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)
- I pray that I would not become despondent when I sin. Please let me take comfort in the knowledge that when I confess my sins, you are faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

The Character of the Christian: Sound Judgment

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring

how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God's calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will look at a set of three traits that are closely related to one another.

First Timothy 3:2 (which is paralleled in Titus 1:8) says that elders must be "sober-minded, self-controlled, [and] respectable." We can group these words together because of a shared emphasis on self-mastery that leads to sound judgment.

Sober-minded is a word that relates primarily to the mind. The sober-minded man is clear-headed and watchful, free from excesses and wild fluctuations in thinking and ideas. This trait allows him to keep alert so he can protect himself and others from any kind of spiritual danger. He is not rash, but thoughtful.

Where "sober-minded" relates to the mind, self-controlled relates to decisions that lead to action. The self-controlled elder is free from excesses and wild fluctuations in actions and behavior. He willingly submits his emotions and passions to the control of the Holy Spirit and, with his wisdom, makes wise, thoughtful judgments. He shows restraint and moderation in all areas of life. Thabiti Anyabwile says those who exhibit this trait are "sensible, discreet, and wise." They do not live for the moment, but consider the future consequences of their actions.

Those who are sober-minded and self-controlled are also respectable. They live orderly lives and are wise and prudent in their dealings so that others have respect for them, both in their character and their behavior. They know how to make wise decisions and live out the kind of practical wisdom described in the book of Proverbs. They are people for whom others have high esteem.

When we put these traits together we see a person who has mastered his thinking and behavior so he is now capable of making wise judgments. His own life is a showcase of such wisdom. Anyabwile aptly summarizes the importance of this trait: "The ministry and the church are always being watched by people inside and outside, and the church's enemies continually look for opportunities to condemn it and slander it. Churches are greatly helped to withstand this onslaught when its leaders are respectable in their conduct and are men of sound judgment."

Of course, God does not call only elders or prospective elders to be "sober-minded, self-controlled, and respectable"—He calls every Christian to pursue these traits. Let's start with sober-minded. In Romans 12:3, Paul writes, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." Later, in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, he says, "So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober."

When it comes to self-control, Solomon warns, "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). Paul lists self-control as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23) and warns that those without self-control fall prey to Satan's temptations (1 Corinthians 7:5). He explicitly

commands it of all believers in Titus 2:2-6. What Alexander Strauch says of elders is true of every believer: He must be “characterized by self-control and self-discipline in every aspect of life, particularly in his physical desires (Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 7:9; 9:25). An undisciplined man has little resistance to sexual lust, anger, slothfulness, a critical spirit, or other base desires. He is easy prey for the devil.”

As for respectability, Peter says, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:15–16). Paul writes, “Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” (Romans 13:7).

The Bible is clear that while these traits must be exemplified in elders, they are to be present in all believers. The character of the elder describes the character we should all pursue and exhibit.

SELF-EVALUATION

Would others say of you that you are “sober-minded, self-controlled, and respectable”? I encourage you to evaluate yourself in light of questions like these:

- When things do not go your way or when someone points out sin in your life, do you tend to respond with patient humility or with fits of anger? Would your spouse, children, or parents agree?
- Do you have any unrestrained or unhealthy habits in what you eat or drink or in your entertainment? Or in all of these things are you joyfully submitted to the Holy Spirit?
- Do you exhibit consistency and discipline in the spiritual, devotional, relational, and bodily aspects of your life?
- Do you maintain a schedule? Do you generally bring your tasks to completion and do so with excellence?
- Are you confident in what you believe, or are you easily swayed by new books, new teachers, or new ideas? Do people seek your counsel when they are uncertain or facing a difficult decision?

PRAYER POINTS

Apart from Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5), so we need his strength if we are to grow in holiness. Let me encourage you to pray in these ways:

- I pray that you would fill me with your Spirit so that self-control reigns in my heart and life. (Galatians 5:23)
- I pray that you would help me to put others first so that I do not think of myself more highly than I ought to think. Help me to think with appropriately sober judgment. (Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:3)

- I pray that you would help me to be slow to anger so that I might have mastery over my temper. (Proverbs 16:32)
- I pray that others would ask me about the hope within me because of my joyful, respectful life. (1 Peter 3:14–17)

The Character of the Christian: Hospitable

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God's calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will look at what it means for an elder—and for every Christian—to be hospitable. We will also see why God elevates this trait to such high importance.

Paul tells Timothy, “an overseer must be...hospitable” (1 Timothy 3:2) and echoes this in his letter to Titus (Titus 1:8). The Greek word for “hospitable” (philoxenon) indicates a love for strangers. In the day before the Holiday Inn, Christians were expected to extend hospitality to other traveling believers or itinerant preachers. They were to feed them and to provide them a place to sleep apart from dirty, dangerous, and unsavory inns. The word is naturally expanded to include other forms of hospitality. But at heart, it indicates a willingness to invite others into your home for a short or extended stay.

Why is there such emphasis on this trait? Alexander Strauch explains by saying, “Hospitality is a concrete expression of Christian love and family life. It is an important biblical virtue. ... Giving oneself to the care of God's people means sharing one's life and home with others. An open home is a sign of an open heart and a loving, sacrificial, serving spirit. A lack of hospitality is a sure sign of selfish, lifeless, loveless Christianity.” Hospitality is a tangible, outward display of godly character.

An open home displays Christian love but it also enables it. Hospitality creates opportunities for relationship, for discipleship, and for evangelism. It creates a natural context for modeling marriage, parenting, and a host of Christian virtues. While we are to teach others what the Bible says, we are also to demonstrate what it says, and we do that by inviting people into our homes and into our lives.

Is it only elders who are called to share their lives and their resources by opening their homes? No, this call goes to all Christians. While the Old Testament law places great emphasis on caring for and protecting the sojourner, this care for strangers is made even more explicit in the New Testament. Peter writes to all Christians when he says “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9) and Paul tells the whole congregation in Rome that they must “Seek to show hospitality” (Romans 12:13). The author of Hebrews says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). Paul instructed Timothy to extend the church's

benevolence to a widow if she “has shown hospitality” (1 Timothy 5:9–10). Jesus taught that we will be judged on the basis of our hospitality, for when we love and welcome others we in fact love and welcome him (Matthew 25:35–40).

Strauch concludes, “Hardly anything is more characteristic of Christian love than hospitality. Through the ministry of hospitality we share the things we value most: family, home, financial resources, food, privacy, and time. In other words, we share our lives.”

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? Would others say that you are hospitable? Engage with these questions and be honest with yourself and with God:

- How many people from your church have you invited into your home for a meal? When was the last time someone stayed the night?
- Do others come to you when they need help, or do you give the impression that you don’t want to be bothered?
- Is your family intentional about welcoming others into your home, even if they are different from you or if they make you feel awkward and uncomfortable?
- Why do you fear welcoming others into your life and your home? What promises has God given you that you can cling to for hope, peace, and assurance?

PRAYER POINTS

Take heart in the truth that the God of the weak and the outcast welcomes you—and pray to him for his help in these ways:

- I pray that you would fill me with your Spirit so that my life bears fruit through loving deeds for others.
- I pray that I would hold loosely to all that you have given me and to know that my home, my food, my time and everything else belong to you. Help me to be a faithful steward of all of them.
- I pray that you would give me boldness to welcome others as you have welcomed me.
- I pray that the motivation of my heart would be that, through loving others, I might express my love for Christ. Please give me great joy and freedom in hospitality.

The Character of the Christian: Gentle

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God’s calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are

to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will look at what it means for an elder—and every Christian—to be gentle.

Paul writes to Timothy, “Therefore an overseer must [be] not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome” (1 Timothy 3:2-3). Similarly, he tells Titus that an overseer “must not be arrogant or quick-tempered ... or violent” (Titus 1:7). The positive characteristic here is gentleness and it is opposed by the two negative characteristics of violence and quarreling. The elder (and, therefore, every mature Christian) pursues gentleness and flees from violence and bickering.

To be gentle is to be tender, humble, and fair, to know what posture and response is fitting for any occasion. It indicates a graciousness, a desire to extend mercy to others, and a desire to yield to both the will of God and the preferences of other people. Such gentleness will be expressed first in the home and only subsequently in the church. It is a rare trait, but one we know and love when we see and experience it.

Alexander Strauch notes that to pursue gentleness is to imitate Jesus. He writes, “Jesus tells us who He is as a person: He is gentle and humble. Too many religious leaders, however, are not gentle nor are they humble. They are controlling and proud. They use people to satisfy their fat egos. But Jesus is refreshingly different. He truly loves people, selflessly serving and giving His life for them. He expects His followers—especially the elders who lead His people—to be humble and gentle like Himself.” Similarly, John Piper writes, “This [gentleness] is the opposite of pugnacious or belligerent. He should not be harsh or mean-spirited. He should be inclined to tenderness and resort to toughness only when the circumstances commend this form of love. His words should not be acid or divisive but helpful and encouraging.”

The elder, then, must be gentle, able to control his temper and his response to others when he is attacked, maligned, and finds himself in tense or difficult situations. He is marked at all times by patience, tenderness, and a sweet spirit. Negatively, he must not lose control either physically or verbally. He must not respond to others with physical force or threats of violence. When it comes to his words, he must not quarrel or bicker or be one who loves to argue. Even when pushed and exasperated he will not lash out with his words, he will not crush a bruised reed or snuff out a faintly burning wick.

I am sure you realize that God calls all Christians—not just elders—to be gentle. Elders must serve as examples of gentleness, but each one of us must display this trait if we are to imitate our Savior. There are many texts we can turn to, including this one which tells us that gentleness is a necessary fruit of the Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Shortly thereafter Paul says, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness” (Galatians 6:1).

He urges the Christians in Ephesus to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to

which you have been called” and says that this involves living “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3). When speaking of the congregation under Titus’ care he says, “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people” (Titus 3:1-2). The evidence is clear: We are to be gentle so we can serve as a display of the one who deals so gently with us.

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? Does your life reflect the meekness and humility of gentleness? I encourage you to prayerfully ask yourself questions like these:

- When someone wrongs you, are you prone to lash out in anger? If so, does that anger express itself physically, verbally, or both?
- Are people afraid to confront sin in your life because they fear your anger or your cutting words? Do your wife and children fear you?
- Would your friends and family say that you are gentle? Would they say that you treat them with tenderness?
- Do you like to play the devil’s advocate? Do you like a good argument? What would your social media presence indicate?

PRAYER POINTS

The God of peace is eager to give you the peace of God (Phillipians 4:7, 9). So, I encourage you to pray in these ways:

- I pray that you would make me more like Christ so that I may be gentle just like he is gentle. I pray that I would regularly consider all the ways in which you have been so patient and gentle with me.
- I pray that you would help me swallow my pride, confess my sins to others, and restore any strained relationships I have.
- I pray that you would give me the grace to be patient and calm when others attack and misunderstand me. Help me respond with gentleness even in the most difficult circumstances.
- I pray that I would be slow to begin an argument or to wade into someone else’s.

The Character of the Christian: Temperate

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God’s calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and

to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will look at what it means for Christian leaders and for all Christians to be temperate and sober rather than drunk or debauched.

Paul tells Timothy, “An overseer must...not [be] a drunkard (1 Timothy 3:2-3). Again, he tells Titus, elders must “not [be] open to the charge of debauchery” and they must not be “a drunkard” (Titus 1:5-7). Why this specific qualification? What is so important about it?

Alexander Strauch says plainly, “Drunkenness is sin, and persistently drunken people require church discipline. ... So a person in a position of trust and authority over other people can’t have a drinking problem.” Again, he writes, “If an elder has a drinking problem, he will lead people astray and bring reproach upon the church. His overindulgence will interfere with spiritual growth and service, and it may well lead to more degrading sins.” It is worth noting that the Bible does not lay the blame for drunkenness on alcohol itself, but on the one consuming it. Commenting on 1 Timothy 3, John Stott points out that Paul “did not require them to be total abstainers, since Jesus himself changed water into wine and made wine the emblem of his blood. ... What Paul requires, however, is moderation, as an example of the self-mastery already mentioned...”

John Piper widens the passage’s implications a little bit when he says, “The general qualification here would be like the one above under temperance, namely, self-control—not addicted to anything harmful or debilitating or worldly. Freedom from enslavements should be so highly prized that no bondage is yielded to.” Piper extends the reach of this command from alcohol to any other kind of intoxicant or narcotic—a common and, I believe fair extension of the principle.

As we have seen for each one of these qualifiers, God requires all Christians—not just elders—to pursue the same standards. Paul tells the church at Corinth that they must not associate or eat with “anyone who bears the name of brother” and who is a “drunkard” (1 Corinthians 5:11). Why? Because drunkards (among others) “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Again, Paul says, “those who do such things (like get drunk) will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21). Elsewhere, he commands, “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). Peter agrees: “The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do (which includes getting drunk)” (1 Peter 4:3).

The Proverbs also warn against drunkenness numerous times and in numerous ways. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat” (Proverbs 23:20). Consider also this passage:

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining?
 Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who
 tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at
 wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.
 In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will

see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. “They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.” (Proverbs 23:29–35)

Finally, specific groups of people are also told to be sober. Deacons are held to the following standard: “Deacons likewise must...not [be] addicted to much wine” (1 Timothy 3:8). And again Paul writes, “Older women likewise are...not [to be] slaves to much wine” (Titus 3:3).

The Bible makes it crystal clear—God’s people are to be enslaved only to Jesus Christ. They are to resist any competitors, chief among them alcohol.

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? Does your life reflect sobriety and self-control? I encourage you to ask yourself questions like these:

- Do you have a biblically-informed position on whether or not Christians may consume alcohol? Do you abide by your position?
- Are you able to partake of alcohol in moderation and without becoming intoxicated? Would your friends and your family agree?
- Do you find yourself tempted to drink too close to your limit? Do you regularly succumb to the temptation to have “just one more drink”?
- Are there any other substances that you are addicted to? Do you look to alcohol or any other substance for the happiness and satisfaction that only Christ can provide?

PRAYER POINTS

Whether you drink regularly, occasionally, or not at all, I encourage you to consider praying some of these prayers:

- I pray that you would deepen my convictions about alcohol so that I can partake (or not partake) with freedom and confidence. Help me never to violate my conscience, never to pass judgment on others, and never to flaunt my freedom.
- I pray that I would be able to enjoy your gifts without becoming enslaved to them. I pray that you would give me victory over all drunkenness and indulgence. Even if that is an unthinkable temptation right now, I ask that you would help me never to relax my guard but always to be vigilant.
- I pray that you would make me more like Christ who was able to be around alcohol and those who consumed it, but who could not be charged with drunkenness because he never once over-indulged.

The Character of the Christian: Generous

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God's calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will look at what it means for Christian leaders and for all Christians to not be lovers of money and wealth, but instead to be marked by generosity.

Paul tells Timothy, "An overseer must ... not [be] a lover of money" (1 Timothy 3:3). Likewise, he tells Titus, "an overseer ... must not be ... greedy for gain" (Titus 1:7). Finally, Peter writes exiled elders, "Shepherd the flock of God ... not for shameful gain, but eagerly" (1 Peter 5:2). Clearly, the biblical authors understand that the way we use our money displays something very important about our relationship with God. They understand as well that there will always be people who pursue ministry for the purpose of personal enrichment.

In his commentary on 1 Timothy, Philip Ryken points out that there are two grave errors that can come when considering Christian leaders in light of money: "It is a grave mistake to consider wealth a credential for spiritual leadership. Being rich does not disqualify a man from the eldership, but it does not recommend him for it, either. What matters is how he uses his money, and especially how much affection he has for it. An overseer must not be a money-lover." Thus, John Piper writes that an elder's "lifestyle should not reflect a love of luxury. He should be a generous giver. He should not be anxious about his financial future. He should not be so money-oriented that ministry decisions revolve around this issue." The man should be free from both the love of money and the love of the lavish lifestyle that money can buy. He displays his freedom from the love of money through his generosity.

Alexander Strauch explains,

This qualification prohibits a base, mercenary interest that uses Christian ministry and people for personal profit. ... Like a powerful drug, the love of money can delude the judgment of even the best men. ... Elders, then, cannot be the kind of men who are always interested in money. They cannot be men who need to control the church's funds and who refuse financial accountability. Such men have distorted spiritual values and set the wrong example for the church. They will inevitably fall into unethical financial dealings that will publicly disgrace the Lord's name.

And, indeed, we regularly see men fall into scandal for that very reason. Jesus warned "You cannot serve both God and [money]" for every person can have only one master (Matthew 6:24). It is crucial to the well-being of the church that its leaders are joyfully controlled by the Word of God rather than the desire for wealth.

How about Christians that are not elders? Not surprisingly, God requires the very

same standard. Jesus warned, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19–21). Later in his letter to Timothy, Paul warns about the power of money: “Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:7–10). One of the major themes of the Bible’s wisdom literature is the danger of idolizing money and wealth.

It would be a great mistake, however, to think that God only has negative things to say about money. Rather, he tells us that money is a great gift that we can faithfully steward for the most significant purposes. “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce,” says Solomon (Proverbs 3:9). “The people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD” (1 Chronicles 29:9). Paul taught the enduring value of generosity when he wrote the church in Corinth: “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

It is the Christian’s duty and delight to hold loosely to wealth and to give generously to the Lord’s work. Any problem with money is not the fault of the money itself but with the sneaky, sinful human heart. As Thabiti Anyabwile points out, we have something so much greater than money that can captivate our affections in a much deeper way: “The Lord gives us greater loves than money, which makes wings and flies away (Prov. 23:5). He gives us greater delights in Christ, who in fact is the greatest delight of all. What a privilege it is, by God’s rich grace, to preach Christ the Lamb to a world overrun with love for money.”

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? How do you relate to your money? I encourage you to prayerfully reflect on questions like these:

- Would others say that you are stingy or generous? Would they say that you love money or that you love people?
- When was the last time you denied yourself a material pleasure so that you might use that money to bless someone else?
- Do you have a plan for your giving to the church and to other worthy causes?
- Are you willing to give secretly so that no one knows about it except for you and the Lord? (Matthew 6:1–4)

PRAYER POINTS

God loves a cheerful giver because He Himself is a cheerful giver. So, I encourage

you to pray in these ways:

- I pray that you, Father, would make Christ more precious to me than all else—including money.
- I pray that you would give me a generous heart that is quick to identify and meet the needs of others. Help me to gladly lay up treasures in heaven with greater enthusiasm than I lay up treasures here on earth (Matthew 6:19–24)
- I pray that you would help me trust in you at all times—even and especially when finances are tight. Help me to believe that if you care for the birds of the air and if you so clothe the grass of the field, then of course you will provide for me as well (Matthew 6:25–34).
- I pray that I would worship you as I give to your work this Sunday.

The Character of the Christian: Family Leaders

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God’s calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will consider why it’s important for parents—both elders and all Christians—to lead their families in a God-honoring way.

We read in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, “[An elder] must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” Paul likewise tells Titus that elders should have “children [who] are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination” (Titus 1:5-6). So, what does that mean and why is it so important?

Quite simply, it means that a man’s leadership within the home proves his ability to lead within the church. Conversely, an inability to lead within the home proves an inability to lead within the church. In this way the home rather than the office or classroom is the testing and proving ground of a man’s leadership ability. Why? As Alexander Strauch explains: “Managing the local church is more like managing a family than managing a business or state. A man may be a successful businessman, a capable public official, a brilliant office manager, or a top military leader but be a terrible church elder or father. Thus a man’s ability to oversee his household well is a prerequisite for overseeing God’s household.”

But what, then, does it mean for a man to manage his household well? John Piper offers an illuminating alternate translation of the Greek: “leader of a well-ordered household.” He explains, “He should have submissive children. This does not mean perfect, but it does mean well-disciplined, so that they do not blatantly and regularly disregard the instructions of their parents. The children should revere

the father. He should be a loving and responsible spiritual leader in the home.”

Again, if a man cannot tenderly lead and sacrificially love his own family, he must not be given the privilege and responsibility of leadership in the church. If he cannot excel at the one he will not excel at the other. Thus if a man has a family, any process of evaluating him as a candidate for eldership must involve a close look within his home. Thabiti Anyabwile warns of “men who could be too preoccupied with the affairs of the church and too little occupied with what’s going on under their own roof. One thinks of Eli’s hasty and mistaken rebuke of Hannah as she prayed, while simultaneously abdicating responsibility for his wayward boys (1 Samuel 1-2). An elder tends to affairs at home.”

And what about the big question of what it means for children to be believers? This is a tricky text that has been the subject of much discussion, but I find myself in substantial agreement with Justin Taylor’s skillful [handling of the passage](#). He points out that the word translated as “believers,” as in “children [who] are believers,” can also be translated as “faithful.” This translation allows the text to nicely complement 1 Timothy 3:4 with its emphasis on control, obedience, and submission. He concludes, “What must not characterize the children of an elder is immorality and undisciplined rebelliousness, if the children are still at home and under his authority.”

Now, what about Christian parents who are not elders? How do we honor the text even as we widen its application? Well, these people, too, must exhibit skill and godliness in their family relationships. They, too, must seek to be exemplary. Fathers must lovingly lead and teach their children, mothers must joyfully care for their children, exercising patient, kind authority over them. Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4; see also Genesis 18:19; Psalm 78:4; 2 Timothy 3:15). In the Shema, God through Moses tells the Israelites, both men and women, “these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; see also Deuteronomy 4:9; 11:19).

Similarly, the Proverbs repeatedly portray the importance of disciplining your children. “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24; see also Proverbs 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15,17). A host of narrative passages display the danger of neglecting such care and discipline. The author of Hebrews likewise emphasizes the importance of disciplining your children as an expression of your love for them. He asks, “What son is there whom his father does not discipline?” (Hebrews 10:7). Indeed, God “disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness” (verse 10; see Hebrews 10:3-11 for the context).

Women specifically play a vital role in the family. Paul instructs Titus, “[Older women] are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled” (Titus

2:3-5). Again, Paul writes, “I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander” (1 Timothy 5:14).

From beginning to end the Bible places upon every parent the responsibility to teach and train children and in that way to exercise kind, caring, loving oversight of them.

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? I challenge you to reflect on these questions below to see how you can grow in your leadership at home:

- Do you look for ways to improve in the ways you teach and discipline your family?
- When your family is in public, are your children out of control, or do they generally follow your lead and respond to your correction?
- Can you speak to your children’s spiritual state? Do you know the condition of their souls? Do you pray for them in specific ways?
- Fathers, do you lead your family spiritually? Are family devotions part of your routine? Mothers, do you teach and train your children, do you pray with them, do you lovingly discipline them?

PRAYER POINTS

Our heavenly Father is eager to help us earthly fathers (and, of course, mothers). Consider praying in these ways as you seek to humbly and boldly parent your family well:

- I pray that you would make me a faithful and patient leader in my home.
- I pray that you would help me show my children that I love them in both tough and tender ways.
- I pray that I would display the gospel in the way I love, lead, and care for my children.
- I pray that I would have a deeper understanding of what it means that God is my Father so I can imitate him in the way I care for my children.

The Character of the Christian: Mature and Humble

Today we continue our series on the character of the Christian. We are exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God’s calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I want us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today we will consider why elders—and all Christians—must strive to live mature and humble lives.

Paul tells Timothy, “[An elder] must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). This is a call to spiritual maturity and we learn that elders must be mature for at least two reasons: Because maturity is accompanied by the virtue of humility and because immaturity is accompanied with the vices of pride and condemnation. Thus we must give positions of responsibility only to those who are spiritually mature. John Piper writes, “the new believer, given too much responsibility too soon, may easily swell with pride. The implication is that part of Christian seasoning is a humbling process and a growing protection against pride. We should see evidences in his life that humility is a fixed virtue and not easily overturned.”

Alexander Strauch says, “Maturity requires time and experience for which there is no substitute, so a new convert is simply not ready for the arduous task of shepherding God’s flock. There is nothing wrong with being ‘a new convert.’ All Christians begin life in Christ as babies and grow to maturity. An elder, however, must be mature and know his own heart. A new Christian does not know his own heart or understand the craftiness of the enemy, so he is vulnerable to pride—the most subtle of all temptations and most destructive of all sins.” Again, he states, “If the elders are humble, the people will be humble, avoiding much contention. If the elders are servant leaders, the church will be marked by Christlike, humble servanthood.” God calls all Christians to maturity and humility—and such growth best takes place in the context of mature, humble leadership.

This call to maturity is given throughout God’s Word, not only for leaders but for all Christians. What elders are to model, all Christians are to possess. The author of the letter to the Hebrews says, “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:14) and calls on this congregation to “leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity...” (Hebrews 6:1). Paul says that God gives the church pastors and teachers “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:12-13). He commends Epaphras for “always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:2). God expects that his children will grow in maturity and that this will in turn lead to humility.

Therefore, in a sense, this topic of maturity and humility gets to the heart of this entire series: “the character of the Christian.” Christian leaders—and all Christians—are to strive to become more like Christ—they are to grow in spiritual maturity. As they grow in maturity, they will necessarily grow in humility.

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? In what ways do you need to pursue greater measures of maturity and humility? I encourage you to consider these questions:

- Are there evidences in your life that you are growing both “in the grace and

knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)?

- Are you more spiritually mature now than you were one year ago? Two years ago? How would you know?
- Do you seek the credit and the glory of man, or are you happy to be unknown and unappreciated? Many Christians want to be thought of as servants, but not treated as servants. Is that you?
- In what ways would your parents, children, spouse, boss, and pastors say you need to grow?

PRAYER POINTS

The faithfulness of God will hold us fast, even when our growth feels slow. Take heart as you pray in these ways:

- I pray, Father, that you would make me more like your Son in every area of my life.
- I pray that you would not let there be blind spots in my life and, if there have been, that you would give me the grace to see them and turn from my sin.
- I pray that I would take full advantage of your means of grace so through them I can become more like Christ.
- I pray that you would help me be the servant of all and thus pursue true greatness.

The Character of the Christian: Respected by Outsiders

Today we conclude our series on the character of the Christian. We have been exploring how the various character qualifications of elders are actually God’s calling on all Christians. While elders are meant to exemplify these traits, all Christians are to exhibit them. I have wanted us to consider whether we are displaying these traits and to learn together how we can pray to have them in greater measure. Today, as we wrap up, we will tackle what it means for elders—and all Christians—to be well thought of by outsiders. And, of course, we will ask why it matters.

Paul instructs Timothy, “Moreover, [an elder] must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:7). Paul has already said that an elder “must be above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2), so being respected by outsiders zeroes in on one specific group: those who are outside the church. Yes, even a man’s standing before the world counts as we evaluate his suitability for leadership. John Piper writes, “What it seems to mean is that a Christian leader should at least meet the standards of the world for decency and respectability, for the standards of the church should be higher.” This matters, for as Paul has written elsewhere, the glory of God is at stake: “You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is

written, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you’” (Romans 2:23–24).

So, why include a man’s outside reputation as a requirement for eldership? Alexander Strauch addresses it practically: “NonChristians may know more about the character and conduct of the prospective elder than the church. Quite often the prospective elder’s nonChristian fellow workers or relatives actually have more daily contact with the church leader than do the people in church.” He also says, “If a pastor elder has a reputation among nonbelievers as a dishonest businessman, womanizer, or adulterer, the unbelieving community will take special note of his hypocrisy. NonChristians will say, ‘He acts that way, and he’s a church elder!’ They will ridicule and mock him. They will scoff at the people of God. They will talk about him and will generate plenty of sinister gossip. They will raise tough, embarrassing questions. He will be discredited as a Christian leader and suffer disgrace and insults. His influence for good will be ruined and he will endanger the church’s evangelistic mission. The elder will certainly become a liability to the church, not a spiritual asset.” The gospel itself is at stake in the consistency or hypocrisy of its leaders.

Now, what exactly is the “snare of the devil” that so concerns Paul? I think John Stott gets to the heart of it when he says, “In his malicious eagerness to discredit the gospel, the devil does his best to discredit the ministers of the gospel.” If Satan can discredit the leaders before the watching world, he can discredit the church and its message. Strauch adds, “The devil is pictured as a cunning hunter (1 Peter 5:8). Using public criticism and the elder’s own inconsistencies, the devil will entrap the unwary Christian into more serious sin—uncontrolled bitterness, angry retaliation, lying, further hypocrisy, and stubbornness of heart. What may begin as a small offense can become something far more destructive and evil. Therefore, an elder must have a good reputation with those outside the Christian community.”

What about Christians who are not elders? They too are to pursue the respect of outsiders. For instance, Paul writes, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:5–6). Again, he states, “We urge you, brothers ... to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one” (1 Thessalonians 4:10–12). Christians will “shine as lights in the world” when they live “without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation” (Philippians 2:15). Similarly, Peter commands, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. ... For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people” (1 Peter 2:12, 15; see also 1 Peter 3:13–17). What is to be modeled by the church’s leaders is to be obvious in every life. You, too, bear the responsibility to live an unblemished life before the world.

SELF-EVALUATION

So, how about you? Where do you see signs of encouragement, and where do you see areas that need growth? I encourage you to ask yourself questions such as these:

- Do you know your neighbors? Do they know you well enough to be able to speak to your character and reputation? How would your unbelieving neighbors describe you and your family?
- What kind of reputation do you have among the unbelievers you work with? Do you work hard and avoid meddling? (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12; Ephesians 4:28)
- What would your unbelieving family members say is most important to you? Would they say that your life matches your profession?

PRAYER POINTS

God is able to make more grace abound in your life, so I encourage you to join me in praying these ways:

- I pray that you would make my life reflect the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) so that my life would glorify, not shame, your name.
- I pray that you would help me think about how my attitudes and actions affect others—especially unbelievers.
- I pray that I would model hard work and respect for authority, and that I would mind my own business in the workplace.
- I pray that I would be a model of good works at home, at work, and in my neighborhood so that by doing good to others you would be glorified.

Thanks for joining me through this series. I believe that God has helped me grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as I've explored and applied his Word. I hope you can say the same! May God help you and help me to live an exemplary Christian life.