

# Traits of the spiritual life

Education, Discipline



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Punctuality](#) \n \t
2. [Loyalty](#) \n \t
3. [Stewardship](#) \n \t
4. [Integrity](#) \n \t
5. [Spirituality](#) \n \t
6. [Discipleship](#) \n \t
7. [Prayer Life](#) \n

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## **Punctuality**

Punctuality, in all essence, is really about two things. Discipline, and respect. Discipline is a major factor because rather it be an early morning appointment, or an evening meeting, or starting a service on time, you must prepare early and plan for setbacks. The reason respect is an important factor is because when you are late, you are showing a lack of respect for the person/people you are meeting.

There is no commandment in the Bible that says, “ Thou shall not be late, ever,” so it’s not as simple as one Scripture reference to determine God’s view on tardiness. Everyone has been late to something at some point, often due to unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances. But, if someone is habitually late and unconcerned about being on time, especially if that person professes to be a Christian, then scriptural principles do apply. As with all things, God looks at the heart, 1 Samuel 16: 7 says “ for the Lord

does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart". He sees, and He knows if we are not giving our best effort. Rather it be because we decided to hit the snooze button several times (something I'm definitely guilty of), or getting stuck in traffic because we didn't plan out our route effectively. We can all take a little more responsibility in our punctuality.

Furthermore, it damages our character. A good name, and a good reputation is important for a Christian. This means that we should be known as people of our word, trustworthy and dependable, and not be known as always late, or unconcerned about others. Our actions as Christians point back at Christ. Do they glorify Him? Do they bring Him honor? Collosians 3: 23 says " And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men". So if we are doing it for God and not man, should we not do it to the best of our ability? Based on this approach, we should view every appointment, every service, every meeting as a meeting with our Master. We would never be late for a meeting with Jesus.

The Power of Punctuality then, would be this. You gain integrity, competency and respect if you place this at its proper importance. If people know you are always on time, they will do their best to be on time as well.

## **Loyalty**

The word loyalty suggests a sense of belonging. With it comes the idea of wholehearted faith coupled with unwavering devotion. Almost like a sense of duty. In the Bible, the concept of loyalty is purely relational. This means our whole being is completely committed to someone. Such loyalty is expressed

to us in both the divine and human aspects, as given to us in the first two commandments of Jesus: “ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength,” and “ Love your neighbor as yourself”.

God established loyalty through His covenant relationship with His people: Deuteronomy 7: 9 says “ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations” Through His covenant, God’s people are assured of His never-ending love from which Romans tells us no believer can ever be separated. God is promising His loyalty and commitment to us. There is however, still a requirement of loyalty on man’s part. For God also made it clear in Deuteronomy 8: 19 “ if you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed”. Those who prove to be disloyal are those who prove they do not belong to Him. But for believers, 2 Timothy 2: 13 says we have the promise that even “ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself”.

For true believers, loyalty is shown in our commitment to Jesus and His gospel. It is the acknowledgement that Jesus Christ is our sole source of authority and salvation. Therefore we should show this loyalty in our love for God, and those whom He has placed over us.

## **Stewardship**

As the Creator, God has absolute rights of ownership over all things, and to miss starting here is like missing the top button on our shirt or blouse,

nothing else will ever line up. Nothing else in the Bible, including the doctrine of stewardship, will make any sense or have any true relevance if we miss the fact that God is the Creator and has full rights of ownership. It is through our ability to fully grasp this and imbed it in our hearts that the doctrine of stewardship is understood.

The biblical doctrine of stewardship defines a man's relationship to God. It identifies God as owner and man as manager. The apostle Paul explains it best in 1Corinthians 3: 9 by saying, " For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" Starting with this concept, we are then able to accurately view and correctly value not only our possessions, but, more importantly, human life itself. In essence, stewardship defines our purpose in this world as assigned to us by God Himself. Stewardship is not God taking something from us; it is His method of bestowing His richest gifts upon His people.

More often than not, when we think of good stewardship, we think of how we manage our finances and our faithfulness in paying God's tithes and offerings. But it's much more than that. In fact, it's more than just the management of our time, our possessions, or our health. Stewardship is our obedient witness to God's sovereignty. It's what motivates the follower of Christ to move into action, doing deeds that manifest his belief in Him.

Stewardship defines our practical obedience in the administration of everything under our control, everything entrusted to us. It is the consecration of one's self and possessions to God's service. Stewardship acknowledges in practice that we do not have control over ourselves or our

property, God has that control. It means as stewards of God we are managers of that which belongs to God, and we are under His authority as we handle His affairs. Faithful stewardship means that we fully acknowledge we are not our own but belong to Christ, the Lord, who gave Himself for us.

## **Integrity**

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated “ integrity” means “ the condition of being without blemish, completeness, perfection, sincerity, soundness, uprightness, wholeness.” Integrity in the New Testament means “ honesty and adherence to a pattern of good works.”

Jesus is the perfect example of a man of integrity. After He was baptized, He went into the wilderness to fast for forty days and nights, during which time Satan came to Him at His weakest to try to break His integrity and corrupt Him. Jesus was wholly man and wholly God at the same time, and He was tempted in every way we are, yet He never sinned. That is the definition of integrity. Jesus is the only one who was ever without blemish, perfect, completely truthful, and always showing a pattern of good works.

Christians are called to be like Jesus. In Christ, we are new creations and can be considered without blemish before God. In Christ we also have the power of the Holy Spirit helping us to be more like Him. It is by God’s power that we become increasingly people of integrity. We are called to obey God and, to be people of strong morality and integrity. Christians should be those who seek and tell the truth and who do good works.

We should be people who keep our word, and who love people with not just our mouths, but our actions. Our lives should line up with our belief in God. Both in front of people, and behind closed doors. I once heard someone say “the Secret to being a Saint, is being a Saint in Secret”.

Living with integrity in a world where the corrupt seem favored, is challenging. But Paul says it perfectly in 1Peter 3: 13-18 “ Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit...”

Paul tells us that it is better to suffer for good than to suffer for doing evil. If we are going to be like Christ, our integrity is vital to our ministry. This is to maintain our good character to those we would minister to. Eventually everything that is done in the dark is brought to light. So when the light shines, we don’t block anyone’s view of God.

## **Spirituality**

When we are born again, we receive the Holy Spirit. In John 16: 13, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us “ into all truth”. Part of that truth is taking the things of God and using them in our daily lives. When that application is made, we then make a choice to allow the Holy Spirit to control us. Therefore, true spirituality is based upon the extent to which we allow the Holy Spirit to lead and control our lives.

The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5: 18 “ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit”. Being filled with the Spirit is simply allowing the Holy Spirit to control us rather than yielding to the desires of our own human nature. In this passage Paul is making a comparison. When someone is controlled by wine, he is drunk and exhibits certain characteristics such as slurred speech, unsteady walk, and impaired decision making. Just as you can tell when a person is drunk because of the characteristics he displays, a believer who is controlled by the Holy Spirit will display His characteristics. And those characteristics are found in Galatians 5: 22 “ By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.” In other words, when we are filled with the spirit we will exhibit sound speech, a consistent spiritual walk, and decision making based on the Word of God.

Therefore, Christian spirituality involves a choice we make to know and grow in our daily relationship with Jesus by submitting to the Holy Spirit in our lives. This means that we make a choice to keep our communication with the



Spirit clear through confession. When we sin, we put up a barrier between ourselves and God. When we submit to the Spirit, our relationship is not broken. Our spirituality is a conscious fellowship with the Holy Spirit, uninterrupted by sin. Christian spirituality develops when a born-again believer makes a consistent and ongoing choice to surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Discipleship**

By definition, a disciple is a follower, one who accepts and helps in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, to overcome the pressures and trials of life and become more like Jesus. This process requires us to respond to the Holy Spirit's call to examine our thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily, studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. We should always be ready to explain the belief that we have and encourage others to do the same.

The actual word disciple is almost exclusively limited to the New Testament Gospels and Acts, and was an early name for followers of Jesus. The word denotes a master or teacher-student relationship, and meant that the student would follow in the path of life laid out by his or her master.

I believe that discipleship should not be named among one of the activities of the church, it is what the church is and does. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, in Mathew 28: 18-20 he made clear in the Great Commission that

making disciples was the call of the church. In this sense, discipleship is not optional, there is no such thing as Christians who aren't disciples. As a community, discipleship must be the main purpose behind everything the church is and does, including its worship, and evangelism.

Disciples are not characterized by arrogance, selfishness, or false humility. But, disciples should be known by an outward life that focuses on serving others. Jesus often reminded his original disciples of the cost to follow him. In Luke 9: 23 He refers to "denying the self daily" and "taking up the cross". In other words, disciples must be ready to put aside anything that stands in the way of following Jesus. This is our duty as Christians, to follow Jesus. His teachings, His examples, His lifestyle.

## **Prayer Life**

I believe that prayer is the single most important thing that we, as Christians must do. The bible is riddled with quotes about prayer and its importance. Jesus felt that it was so important that He says, in Mark 11: 24 "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." He also felt the need to go as far as to teach us how to do it. This is the very reason for the gospel, telling us in His own words, the power of prayer.

I almost always relate prayer with God, to the communication between a parent and infant. The child is dependent on the parent to meet their needs, it is the only help they know. So they cry out, not always knowing how to communicate what they need, but relying on the parent to understand and provide what is needed. Likewise, we are completely dependent upon God to

hear our cry and meet our needs. Like our parents, He is the only one who can understand exactly what we need. That's why Romans 8: 26 says " Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." It is in the times where we are not sure of what to ask for, that the Holy Spirit speaks to God for us. And since God is the Holy Spirit, this means that God communicates with Himself on our behalf.

This is why it is so essential that our prayer life be well maintained. Even though God knows what we need before we ever ask, or even know we need it, our communication with Him keeps us in His presence and allows us to know His voice from our own thoughts. A constant prayer life can keep us from making bad decisions, because when we do as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5: 17 " pray without ceasing", we can be sensitive to the voice of God in times of doubt. Paul even goes further in Philippians 4: 6, saying " Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." In essence Paul is telling us that instead of worrying about what, how, or when we will overcome something, just take it to God in Prayer.

The Power of Prayer can change the way we live our daily lives in a way that we never thought was possible. With God all things actually are possible, but its also according to the power that works in us. We must exercise this power to the best of our ability, by staying in communication with God.