



Christian Character

By Anand David

As Christians, we are called to be Children of Light in a dark world—living out our faith through exemplary lives and good works. Within the church (which is being perfected), we are called to various roles—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and helpers—each serving with purpose. Service is action, and thoughtful action reflects our character. As Jesus said, *"A good tree produces good fruit... just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions."* (Matthew 7:17, 20). Christendom today is fragmented, with many being *"tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine"* (Eph. 4:14). People often follow celebrity pastors and trends with fan-like enthusiasm, embracing new teachings and practices without discernment. In this context, we must ask: **"What is the essence of Christian character?"** Peter urges believers to add to their faith qualities like virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love (2 Peter 1:5–8), while Paul highlights the fruit of the Spirit—including love, joy, peace, patience, and more (Gal. 5:22–23 NIV). These qualities flow from God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5 NLT). For practical understanding, these can be summarized in a 5-H framework: Holiness, Honesty, Humility, Hard Work, and Hospitality.

1. Holiness: Jesus preached thus: "God blesses those whose hearts are *pure*, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8 NLT). How do we become holy? There are two aspects to it: Sanctification and Purification. Sanctification deals with the fallen human nature inherited at birth (Sin). Purification deals with Sins, or acts resulting from selfish impulses, which the Bible calls as sins of commission and sins of omission.

a) **Sanctification:** The Bible says, *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification"* (1 Thess. 4:3 KJV), and Jesus prayed, *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth"* (John 17:17 NIV). Sanctification is the lifelong process of becoming holy — growing from spiritual infancy into maturity through God's Word, trials, and daily walk with Christ. Though we are set apart for God's higher purposes at salvation, sanctification involves the process of being refined by fire as gold is refined.

Job affirmed: *"When He has tried me, I will come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10). As Billy Graham said, *"Nothing can calm our souls more or better prepare us for life's challenges than time spent alone with God."*

b) **Purification:** James reminds us, *"We all make many mistakes... If we could control our tongues, we would be perfect"* (James 3:2 NLT). These are sins of commission and omission—things we shouldn't have done or failed to do. While salvation need not be repeated, we do need ongoing cleansing from daily faults. Jesus illustrated this when He said, *"He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet"*—symbolizing regular self-purification through confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. As Scripture says, *"Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3 NKJV). In the Christian life, purification involves confessing sins, seeking God's forgiveness, and making restitution where needed—whether through material means or by restoring broken relationships. The Bible instructs, *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all"* (Romans 12:18)

2. Honesty: Honesty means being truthful, sincere, and fair in both word and action. Paul modeled this by saying, *"We have lived with God-given holiness and sincerity... depending on God's grace"* (2 Cor. 1:12 NLT). In contrast, Ananias and Sapphira's dishonesty in withholding part of their offering (Acts 5:1-2) serves as a stark warning. Financial honesty is especially vital. Billy Graham said, "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area of his life." John Wesley taught, "Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can." And Solomon wisely noted, *"A good name is more desirable than great riches"* (Prov. 22:1 NIV).

Honesty also means admitting weakness. As Rick Warren said, "People are more encouraged when we share how God's grace helped us in weakness than when we brag about our strengths."

3. Humility: Power often breeds arrogance, but in contrast, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, was marked by humility. He said, *"I am humble and gentle at heart"* (Matt. 11:29 NLT), and taught, *"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5 NIV). Paul urged believers, *"Be humble... think of others as better than yourselves"* (Phil. 2:3-4 NLT). True greatness is revealed through humility.

4. Hard Work: Many do not realize that laziness is also a sin. The Bible warns of laziness thus: *"How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man."* (Proverbs 6:9-11, NIV) American Essayist, J.G. Holland "God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into its nest." When it comes to hard work, St. Augustine provides a practical tip: "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." Brazilian footballer Pelé's said, "Success is no accident."

It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing. Peter admonished the early Christians thus: *'work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen...'* (2 Peter 1:10 NLT). Proverbs 12:24 (NLT) states, *'Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and become a slave.'*

5. Hospitality: During a time of great famine, God told Elijah to go to the village of Zarephath, where a widow would provide for him. As Elijah arrived, he saw the widow gathering sticks and asked her for water and a small piece of bread. The woman replied that she had only a handful of flour and a little oil – just enough for one final meal for her and her son before they died. But Elijah encouraged her not to be afraid. He asked her to first make a small loaf for him, assuring her that God would miraculously provide: her flour and oil would not run out until rain returned to the land. In faith, the widow obeyed – and just as God promised, there was enough food every day for Elijah, the woman, and her family. Her simple act of hospitality and trust led to a daily miracle, as recorded in 1 Kings 17:8-16. Peter encouraged new Christians of his time thus: *'Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.'* (1 Peter 4:9, NLT). Small acts done with a big heart will reflect our gratitude for all that God has blessed us with.

Changing old habits or character is difficult. The pressure to conform is so strong that many hesitate to live counter to the world as children of God. Like the young characters of the Bible, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Esther or Vashti, we need moral courage to live out our faith boldly and consistently in this world.

True transformation happens only when the Lord intervenes and when we fully submit to His correction, otherwise, the old self remains. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"*

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