

Welcome to Digital Discipleship, a weekly video teaching from Pastor Shawn and a downloadable weekly devotional guide. We pray that you will grow stronger in your walk with Jesus as you lean into these teachings and devotions.

DIGITAL DISCIPLESHIP – LESSON 4 – God Expects Us to Grow in Godly Character

Day 1

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Introduction

1. Have you ever taken the time to evaluate your character? How would you describe it? Are you growing in character? Would you say you are more like Jesus today than you were a year ago? This week we are going to look at why it is so important to invite the Holy Spirit to grow our character.
2. At the moment of salvation, several things happened TO us at once.
3. **First: God regenerated us** (Titus 3:5)
 - a. This means that God imparted new life to us, through the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9)
 - b. Jesus referred to this as being ‘born again,’ because something new is birthed in us (John 3:3-8)
4. **Second: God justified us** (Romans 5:1)
 - a. This means that God declared us to be righteous before Him (Romans 3:20-22)
 - b. This refers to a legal standing before Him, for we are not sinless (Romans 7:15-22; 1 John 1:8-10)
5. **Third: God adopted us** (Rom 8:23)
 - a. This means that God made us members of His own family
 - b. We become legal sons and daughters of God together with the blessings of such (Ephesians 1:5)
6. This was God’s work alone and it happened instantly and once for all time.
7. However, something else happened at salvation, called **sanctification**. Sanctification is the work of God in our lives that makes us more and more like Jesus. **It has three stages.**

Stage 1: sanctified in our past

1. This, like regeneration, justification and adoption, happened TO us at the moment of salvation.
2. **1 Corinthians 6:11 (NIV)** *And that is what some of you were. 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.*
3. But what does it mean?
4. We all sinned (Romans 3:10, 23) and so we deserve death (Romans 6:23).
5. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul says we were sanctified, and he links it to justification.
6. Justification means that we were legally declared righteous, and therefore we do not stand condemned any longer.
7. Put another way, we have been freed from the **PENALTY** of sin (Romans 5:18; 8:1).

Stage 2: being sanctified in our present

1. Paul said, *“For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”* **Romans 6:14 (NIV)**

2. Notice – we’re under GRACE which gives us the desire and ability to have victory over sin (Phi 2:13)!
3. This also means that we DON’T LOVE our sin anymore!
4. We are being sanctified or freed from the control or **POWER** of sin in your life.
5. However, just because we hate our sin and don’t have to be controlled by it, doesn’t mean that sin isn’t present in our life anymore.
6. **1 John 1:8 (NIV)** *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*
7. Paul spoke of the same thing in Romans 7:21-25.
8. And though we’re declared righteous and in right standing (Stage 1), we are to continue growing in righteousness, holiness and purity!
9. **Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)** *... because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*
10. Did you catch how the writer reflects these two realities? We have been made perfect (righteous or holy) on the one hand (Stage 1) AND are being made holy (righteous) on the other hand (Stage 2).
11. Here’s what is happening in Stage 2: we are being freed more and more from the practice of sin.
12. And we’re becoming more and more like our Lord.
13. **2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)** *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*
14. Notice, we’re BEING transformed – it’s progressive, not instant.
15. But now we must consider a third very important thing: God doesn’t do this part by Himself – NO!
16. This second stage is an ongoing work of GOD AND PEOPLE in cooperation together!
17. **2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)** *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let US purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*
18. Did you notice that Paul says we are to purify ourselves?!
19. And see what he said to the Romans ...
20. **Romans 6:11-13 (NIV)** *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*
¹² *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.* ¹³ *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*
21. Though we are to “count ourselves dead to sin” (that’s the past sanctification of Stage 1), we are instructed not to let sin reign in us to obey its evil desires (v.12) BECAUSE we’re already freed from its dominance (power) in our lives (v. 14)!
22. Remember what Paul said about HIMSELF? He said he wasn’t yet perfect!
23. **Philippians 3:12 (NIV)** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect.*
24. Now we can understand what Paul meant when he said, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).
25. He wasn’t saying that as new creatures we were already perfect; he was saying that as new creatures, we were no longer obligated to sin – we have the power within to grow in our sanctification!
26. But he didn’t leave matters there – oh, no! Listen to what he goes on to say ...
27. **Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV)** *... but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*
¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*
28. Though sanctified at salvation (stage 1), Paul said he was cooperating with God to press on to further his growth in holiness and righteousness! (also 1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
29. If you don’t understand all this, you’ll coast, thinking that it’s all up to God! It isn’t!

Stage 3: will be fully sanctified in the future

1. Though Stage 2 of sanctification will not be completed in this lifetime, once we die and go to be with the Lord, it will be completed.
2. We will be set free from the **PRESENCE** of sin and made completely perfect!
3. **Hebrews 12:23 (NIV)** ... *to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.*
4. Paul had this to say about it ...
5. **1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)** *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
6. And then our transformation into the image of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:18) will be completed!
7. **1 Corinthians 15:49 (NIV)** *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*
8. With that in mind, let's get to work on Stage 2: growing in holiness and righteousness for the remainder of our lives.

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What happened at the moment of salvation?
3. What are the three stages of salvation?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Read the verses in the introduction; the section that refers to regeneration, justification and adoption. Even look up the verses in brackets.
2. Spend some time praising God for what He did at the moment of salvation. Write out a prayer of praise and read the prayer out every day this week as you do work through these devotional lessons.
3. Review Philippians 1:3-5, Romans 12:2, James 1:22, Matthew 28:19-20, John 10:27, Ephesians 4:11-12, Psalm 1:1-5, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Joshua 1:8, John 14:21, Matthew 6:9-13, 2 Peter 1:3-7
4. Memorize 2 Peter 1:8-9

Day 2

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Why God doesn't make us completely perfect at the moment of salvation

1. **First:** this is connected to what it means to be human
 - a. We must participate in our own sanctification, just like we participate in our own education or physical exercise and fitness, and so on!
 - b. We're not robots! And we're not helpless infants!

2. **Second:** so that we will learn to hate sin forever
 - a. **First:** we tire of tasting the bitterness of the effects or results of our own sin.
 - The experience of tasting from the fruit of our sinful choices leaves a very bad taste in us.
 - b. **Second:** we are wearied, from fighting against the devil, the collective mind of the world, and the constant pull of our sinful nature.
 - Recall Paul's cry: "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*" **Romans 7:24 (NIV)**.
 - If you ever feel that frustration, **that's a good sign** – you're being trained!
 - And how about the pressure of the collective mind of the world, always trying to conform us to its godless image?
 - Think about the pressure to be open-minded and inclusive about all sexual deviance and sin.
 - Think about the social reengineering (brainwashing) being exposed to innocent children in our school systems in the name of education.
 - Think about the pressure to give women choice over their own bodies, so that the most innocent and defenseless in society are butchered with little protest.
 - Do these things enrage you? Good. That's the point. You are supposed to learn to hate it!
 - c. **Third:** we're sickened and repulsed as we observe the injustices and evil perpetrated by people.
 - Think about the last century alone: the horrors of Lenin and Stalin (Russia); the genocides of Hitler (Europe), Pol Pot (Cambodia), Rwanda, Bosnia; the slaughters of two world wars and other wars, such as Korea and Vietnam; or the bloodshed of Middle East tyrants from Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Libya; or the terrorists of al-Qaeda, ISIS and Hamas.
 - Think about the evil plague of slavery, promoted by many European countries and the U.S.
 - How about the endless evils perpetrated against women – even today.
 - Then there is the unconscionable greed of businesses and nations at the expense of individuals and other nations.
 - And what about the wholesale slaughter and martyrdom of countless Christians, and the corresponding silence of governments and media who turn a blind eye to it.
 - Finally, our hearts join those already in heaven, crying out: "*How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*" **Revelation 6:10 (NIV)**
 - d. That increases our appetite for righteousness. Forever, we will hate sin and DESIRE instead, to be holy!

3. **Third:** so that we will trust God forever (fear of the Lord)
 - a. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, they did so because they ultimately trusted their own instincts or understanding, over God's.
 - b. Right down to this present day, we all are guilty of that. How foolish!
 - c. Do you know what we're lacking? A healthy fear of the Lord!
 - d. **Proverbs 14:27; 16:6 (NIV)** Fear of the Lord is a life-giving fountain; it offers escape from the snares of death... through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.

- e. We think we know better than God! Imagine that! That is the root of all sin!
- f. As we live amid such unimaginable tragedy, heartache, wickedness and evil, it begins to dawn on us that this is all a result of trusting ourselves rather than God.
- g. In time, we no longer trust the hollow promises of our politicians, the disastrous theories of our educated elite, and dead-end paths of our philosophers.
- h. Forever, we'll know how much we really need God and His wisdom!

4. **Fourth:** so that we'll long for heaven

- a. There are several things God uses to create a longing for and thereby make us fit for heaven.
- b. First: our personal struggles with sin create a longing for Jesus and for heaven.
 - **Romans 7:24-25 (NIV)** *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?²⁵ Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*
 - Notice that Paul is looking forward to the day when Christ delivers him from struggle with sin!
- c. Second: our experience of physical decay also creates in us a desire for heaven.
- d. Third: our experience in this world also creates a proper longing for heaven.
 - **Philippians 1:21 (NIV)** *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*
 - We come to see that we REALLY are strangers and aliens, who don't belong here.
 - **Hebrews 11:13 (NIV)** . . . *and they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.*
- e. Consider the words from this hymn by Dorothy Masters:

*I've a longing in my heart for Jesus
I've a longing in my heart to see His face
I am weary oh so weary of traveling here below
I've a longing in my heart for Him*

5. **Fifth:** so that we'll appreciate and praise Him for finally making us holy

- a. Consider the sinful woman who heard Jesus was visiting at Simon's house (**READ Luke 7:36-50**).
- b. She wiped Jesus' feet with her tears and anointed them with alabaster perfume.
- c. Simon was incensed by this display of affection and objected.
- d. Jesus then told Simon a parable about two men who owed money to a certain moneylender.
- e. One owed 500 denarii, while the other owed just 50 denarii.
- f. Since neither had the money to pay back the money, the lender forgave them both their debts.
- g. Jesus then asked: "Now, which of them will love him [the moneylender] more?" (v. 42)
- h. Simon correctly answered, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled" (v. 43).
- i. Jesus answered, "You have judged correctly" (v. 43).
- j. He then applied this to the contrast between Simon and the 'sinful woman.'
- k. She felt that she was forgiven much, and so she loved and worshipped Jesus much!
- l. Simon, on the other hand, clearly didn't think he had much to be forgiven for, so He didn't love and worship Jesus as the woman had.
- m. **Here's the point for us ...**
- n. If, at the moment of salvation, we not only received the new nature, but also had the old nature instantly eradicated, we just might not appreciate what the Lord really did for us!
- o. But when we feel the burden of constantly wrestling with that old nature, we will feel wonderfully free – FULLY free! NOW we experience a measure of that freedom, but THEN we will know it fully!
- p. KNOWING (experientially) what really changed in us, will make us SO GRATEFUL!
- q. And such gratitude will produce ceaseless praise to Him in us, for all our endless days!

6. As we consider all of this, may we cry out: *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!* **Romans 11:33 (NIV)**
7. His ways and His thoughts are so far beyond ours (Isaiah 55:8-11)!

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. Why doesn't God make us perfect immediately when we get saved? What are the five reasons discussed today?
3. God is wanting us to hate sin forever. What about sin is that we grow weary of?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Have you ever been frustrated by your own sin, or the evil in the world? Write down what it is that has and still frustrates you.
2. Thank God that one day ALL of this will be done – our struggle, the evil in the world, even the devil!
3. Call, text or email two people that you know. Ask them what they are looking forward to about the return of Christ.
4. Review 2 Peter 1:8-9

Day 3

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

What it means to grow in godly character

1. As we noted on Day 1, our present growth in sanctification is something that is done by the Spirit and us together.
2. Sometimes the emphasis is on the Spirit to the exclusion of anything on our part.
3. We hear it in the popular phrase: **“Let go and let God.”**
4. That is a serious imbalance, for we are instructed to participate in our sanctification.
5. Paul was crystal clear as to our part in this ...
6. **Colossians 3:9-10 (NIV)** *Do not lie to each other, since you have **put off your old self** with its practices ¹⁰ and have **put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*
7. Notice, first, what Paul tells us to put off: sinful practices such as anger, wrath, malice, slander, etc.
8. At Main Street Church we use a tool or strategy to help us intentionally get started in “putting off” – it’s called the **Set Free!** Retreat.
9. But Paul doesn’t stop at mentioning that we need to put off the old self; we need to replace them!
10. That is, we’re to **put on** the new self, which is being renewed in the image of its Creator.
11. What is this image He wants us to be renewed or recreated in? The Lord Jesus Christ!
12. **Galatians 4:19 (NIV)** *My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ... (also 2 Corinthians 3:18)*
13. And Paul said something similar, to the church in Ephesus ...
14. **Ephesians 4:13 (NIV)** *... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (also: 2 Peter 1:3-5)*
15. Paul is talking about putting on or forming the character of Christ in us – Christ’s character traits!
16. Peter, using the term “godliness,” says we can partake in the divine nature, which is Christ (v. 4 below).
17. **2 Peter 1:3-7 (NIV)** *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires*
18. Then, Peter goes on to name what some of these character traits of Christ are ...
19. **2 Peter 1:5-7 (NIV)** *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*
20. The Scripture uses a variety of interchangeable terms to refer to these traits: **fruit of the Spirit, righteousness, godliness, holiness** and even **love**.
21. Here follows a sampling of the interchangeableness of these terms.
 - a. Paul’s **“fruit of the Spirit”** list (Galatians 5:22-23), includes 4 traits just seen in Peter’s **“godliness”** list (2 Peter 1:3-7 above): goodness, self-control, kindness, and love.
 - b. Paul’s **“love”** list (1 Corinthians 13), includes 3 traits found in Paul’s **“holiness”** list (Colossians 3:12-14): patience, kindness and forgiveness (or keeps not record of wrongs).
 - c. Paul’s **“holiness”** list (Colossians 3:12-14), includes 4 traits in his **“fruit of the Spirit”** list (Galatians 5:22-23): kindness, gentleness, patience and love.
 - d. Paul’s **“righteousness”** list (Ephesians 4:24-32), includes 3 traits in his **“holiness”** list of (Colossians 3:12-14): kindness, compassion and forgiveness.
22. When Christ’s character is being shaped in us, our automatic behaviors, our default actions and reactions will begin to be like those of Jesus.
23. **How do we know if we have a particular trait or not?**
 - a. It’s a pattern of behavior: we do not have the trait if we do it one or two times.

- b. It's a pattern of behavior under stress: only a test (a kind of stress – often ongoing) will reveal it.
- c. It's a pattern of behavior when no one is looking

CAUTIONS: Personality profiling

1. Personality profiling can be very helpful in understanding others and loving them!
2. But, if we're not careful we'll confuse personality with sin. Remember our personalities ARE broken.
3. Here are two cautions:
4. **Caution 1**: don't use personality profiling to excuse bad behavior, selfish desires or poor character in yourself.
 - a. Here's a test: if your thoughts, attitudes, desires, actions or behaviors harm yourself or others in any way, then it needs to change – period.
5. **Caution 2**: don't use personality profiling to excuse unloving behavior.
 - a. Certain behaviors can't be categorized as sinful, per se.
 - b. However, if they irritate others or if it causes them to distance themselves from you, God or the church, you are causing such a person to stumble.
 - c. That violates the law of love, which Christ laid down for us.
 - d. Paul made this very clear in his teaching about our freedoms in Christ (1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:29; Galatians 5:13).

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. To grow in godly character, do we simply "put off" old sinful practices? Or is there more that we do?
3. In our growth, what is the goal – to become what?
4. What two cautions are given about personality profiling?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Begin to memorize 2 Peter 1:3-11 and give yourself two weeks to complete it. Place this task in your schedule, or you will forget. Everyone can memorize! It takes discipline, focus, positive thinking and regular repetition and review. But God will bless you abundantly if you choose to place passages like this in your heart! (see Psalm 119:11).

Day 4

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Why we should desire to grow in godly character

1. First, we should desire to grow in godly character because God requires it of us (commands it!)
2. **Colossians 3:5 (NIV)** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature . . .*
3. **1 Peter 1:16 (NIV)** . . . *for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*
4. Second, if we don't desire to grow in godliness, we insult the Spirit of grace.
5. **Hebrews 10:26-29 (NIV)** *If we deliberately keep on ... [we] insulted the Spirit of grace.*
6. However, there is a third great reason to desire growth in godly character – these commands come with wonderful promises!
7. **2 Peter 1:4 (NIV)** *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises*
8. What are some of the promises that godly character brings? We will look at five today, and five more on Day 5.

First: Godly character makes us fruitful in this lifetime.

1. Jesus makes it clear that the Father wants us to be to be fruitful, and that fruitfulness glorifies the Father (John 15:1-8).
2. Jesus says that fruitfulness comes from the Father's pruning efforts in our lives (v. 1-2), from our abiding or remaining in Christ (vv. 5 & 7), and from prayer.
3. Peter tells us there is another way we become fruitful, and that is by growth in godly character.
4. **2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV)** *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
5. The ESV says: "ineffective and unfruitful!"

Second: Godly character affects the outcome of our prayers

1. James begins by saying that we often don't have what we need, because we don't ask.
2. **James 4:2-3 (NIV)** *You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*
3. But notice that he also says that we often don't have because we ask with wrong or selfish motives.
4. Peter offers another illustration of how a lack of character can negatively affect our prayers. He says ...
5. **1 Peter 3:7 (NIV)** *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*
6. How we treat others (character) matters: it affects the outcome of our prayers!
7. James also emphasizes that righteousness (character, holiness) impacts the effectiveness of our prayers!
8. **James 5:16 (NIV)** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

Third: Godly character keeps us from falling away from the faith

1. **2 Peter 1:5-7,10 (NIV)** *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love . . .*
¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall

2. If you are growing in godly character, you will make your calling and election sure.
3. That's a striking statement, because many believers think that you say a prayer of faith and that's about it – just go on living like you wish. Apparently, that's not the truth!
4. We're commanded to grow in the fruit of the Spirit and in godly character.
5. And, according to the Bible, that can keep us from falling! How so?
6. First, if our faith doesn't result in changed behavior, then James says that our faith is actually DEAD!
7. **James 2:17 (NIV)** *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*
8. Paul says the same ...
9. **Acts 26:20 (NIV)** *I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.*
10. Second, character can actually keep us FROM falling away in the first place!
11. For example, some have fallen away from the faith when trouble came to their lives.
12. People have fallen away from Jesus, His local church and their faith, just because He didn't do for them what they wanted Him to do – they gave up; they didn't have perseverance or patience or knowledge/understanding of how God works (2 Peter 1:5-7) or love for God.
13. Had they grown in godly character; they wouldn't have fallen away – that's Peter's point in 2 Peter 1:10!

Fourth: Godly character qualifies us for ministry

1. The divine order for the calling of a man or woman to minister goes something like this:
 - a. God chooses someone to ministry long before he or she is even conceived
 - b. God eventually calls the one he chose
 - c. God then equips that person with the necessary spiritual gifts to fulfill this unique calling
 - d. God sends the one He has chosen, called & equipped
2. But somewhere between, or throughout the time between choosing and sending, something else happens – God remakes the character of the one He has chosen
3. The choosing, calling, equipping and sending are God's work alone.
4. However, the remaking of our character involves and has much to do with us!
5. When God chose Moses, He first had to send him into the wilderness to develop his character – he wasn't patient; he was easily angered; he took matters into his own hands; he lorded it over people; etc.
6. The remaking of Moses resulted in a very long and successful ministry. The more you grow in godly character, the more fruitful you will become (2 Pet 1:8)!
7. Paul listed some of the key character traits (fruit of the Spirit) that he considered a 'must' in order to qualify for ministry as an overseer.
8. **1 Timothy 3:2-12 (NIV)** *Now the **overseer** must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money ... ⁸ **Deacons**, likewise, are to be people worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.*
9. If we don't continue to grow in godly character, we may be disqualified for ministry along the way.
10. **E.g.** Look again at Moses life.
 - a. Moses, towards the end of his life and a stellar ministry, lost self-control.
 - b. After nearly 40 years of dealing with so much resistance and rebellion from his fellow Israelites, when the Lord told him to speak to the rock, he was so angry at the people, that he lost self-control and instead lashed out and hit the rock – dishonoring the Lord! (Num. 20:1-13)
 - c. Apparently, he not only lashed out at the rock, he also said some rash things that really displeased the Lord as well!
 - d. **Psalms 106:32-33 (NIV)** *By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them; ³³ for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips.*
 - e. The result was that though he was permitted to see the Promised Land from a mountain top, he didn't experience the privilege of leading Israel in!

- f. Moses ended his ministry never getting to go into the promised land because he didn't grow in self-control. In the heat of the moment he disqualified himself! What a powerful lesson for us to grow in our character so that we don't end up disqualifying ourselves from experiencing all that God has for us.

Fifth: Godly character helps us win the war against the devil

1. So many believers and churches pursue the power of God. It is a good thing to have God's power – we all need it.
2. But often what we need is right at our disposal – like character!
3. How can character possibly help us in the fight against the devil?
4. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul said that we have spiritual armor to protect us against the attacks of the enemy.
5. One of the pieces of armor required is the breastplate of righteousness.
6. **Ephesians 6:14 (NIV)** *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,*
7. What is the breastplate of righteousness that Paul is talking about? Right living. Character.
8. See how James furnishes us with an example. He asks ...
9. **James 4:1-2 (NIV)** *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.*
10. Covetousness caused them to quarrel and fight.
11. When people lack in character or holiness, they will divorce each other, or lie and gossip about one another, or cheat one another, and so on.
12. When that happens, the enemy gains a foothold into a person, a relationship (e.g. marriage), or a church.
13. **Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)** *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.*
14. When the devil gets a foothold, it neutralizes the effectiveness and fruitfulness of individual believers and the church as a whole
15. All the power of God will not overcome the lack of character and sinfulness in such Christians and in such churches.

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What are three reasons for why we should grow in godly character?
3. If we grow in godly character, there are certain promises that we can rely on. Which five are discussed today?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Listen in prayer and write down how you have grown spiritually the past 10, 5 and 1 year(s).
2. Listen in prayer and write down what character trait that God wants you to grow in during this season of life?

Day 5

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

On Day 4, we looked at five promises given to us, if we will choose to grow in godly character. Today, we'll highlight five more.

Sixth: Godly character reveals Christ to others

1. God wants to reveal Christ to the world because the devil has blinded the minds of unbelievers.
2. **2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)** *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
3. There are several ways in which God does reveal Himself:
 - a. **First: through miracles, signs and wonders**
 - For example, in 1 Kings 18 the story is told of how Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a public contest to see which god could send fire down from heaven in response to prayer.
 - When Elijah prayed, Jehovah immediately sent fire in such a convincing manner, that the people fell prostrate on the ground and cried, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God! (1 Kings 18:39).
 - b. **Second: through godly character revealed in suffering**
 - However, Scripture is equally clear, that God ALSO removes the scales of spiritual blindness from unbelievers' eyes, by means of what they observe when believers suffer.
 - **2 Corinthians 4:10 (NIV)** *We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*
 - To respond properly to trials and suffering requires supernatural strength and power – the power of the risen Christ!
 - When unbelievers observe a believer patiently, humbly and joyfully persevering through deep trials and suffering, it opens their eyes to Jesus Christ.
 - It requires mature, godly character to respond in a way that Christ may be seen in our trials.
 - c. **Third: through godly character shown in good deeds**
 - This mature, godly character is really the character of Christ!
 - **Galatians 4:19 (NIV)** *My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you*
 - Peter also exhorts us to grow the character of Christ, so that the unbelievers can observe that and ultimately glorify God for it.
 - **1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)** *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*
 - Jesus said something similar at the end of the Beatitudes! (Matthew 5:14-16)
 - Good character results in good deeds, which points to and glorifies our Lord!

Seventh: Godly character is required for experiencing the abundant life

1. Many cherish, as they should, the following promise from Jesus ...
2. **John 10:10 (NIV)** *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*
3. However, many do not realize that there are conditions attached to the abundant life!
4. For example, to really experience God's love and joy, we must obey what He tells us to do ...
5. **John 15:10-11 (NIV)** ¹⁰ ***If** you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.* ¹¹ *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

Eighth: Godly character is needed to operate effectively in spiritual gifts

1. The church at Corinth was operating in all the gifts – but they had serious character issues!

2. So, Paul made it clear that without character, their abilities to operate in the spiritual gifts amounted to nothing.
3. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV)** *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

Ninth: We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses

1. In Hebrews 11 the writer leads us through the hall of faith, which includes notables such as: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samuel, David and so on.
2. It also says about some nameless heroes of faith, “the world was not worthy of them” (Hebrews 11:38).
3. And then he connects them to us, saying:
4. **Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*
5. We’re not only being watched by our Lord; we are being watched by countless people who ran an exemplary race.
6. They handed the baton on to us and are watching to see if we’ll faithfully finish what they started.

Tenth: Godly character determines our heavenly reward

1. **2 Peter 1:11 (NIV)** *For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior*
2. **1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NIV)** *Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*
3. Both Peter and Paul said that character will determine our reward in the life to come!
4. The Bible says that while we are saved by grace, our rewards are based on works.
5. **Matthew 16:27 (NIV)** *For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. (also: Rev. 20:12-13)*
6. And even the works themselves will be tested by light and fire.
7. **1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NIV)** *If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*
8. If the works don’t survive examination by light and fire, they will be burned up – they won’t count!
9. The believer is still saved, according to v. 15, but has little or nothing to show for it.
10. So, what are the light and fire testing for? Let’s see ...
11. **1 Corinthians 4:5 (NIV)** *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the MOTIVES of men's hearts.*
12. There it is. God will test our works for what motivated them.
13. For example, did we do a good work because it would bring us praise from people or because it would ultimately bring us praise from God? What’s the motivation?
14. **Galatians 1:10 (NIV)** *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*
15. This is a BIG issue. Paul addressed it with the Thessalonians too ...
16. **1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NIV)** *On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.*
17. Please understand, it isn’t wrong to receive praise from man.

18. But is it men's praise that motivates us to do good? Or are we trying to win the approval of God?
19. That's why Paul said, "*Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.* ²⁷ *No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*" **1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV)**
20. Do you know what Paul means when he says, "I beat my body and make it my slave ... so I myself will not be disqualified for the prize?"
21. He's saying that he is disciplining himself to grow in character so that he doesn't lose the prize (reward) for good works, just because the works were motivated or driven by unholy attitudes!

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. If we grow in godly character, there are certain promises that we can rely on. Which five are discussed today?
3. How does godly character reveal Christ to others?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. On Day 4, you wrote down which character trait that God wants you to grow in during this season of life. Spend some time reflecting on and praying about how that will change your marriage (if married), family life, work relationships, relationships with your neighbors, involvement in church and overall fruitfulness.
2. Contact someone that you are close with and let them know what character trait that you are trying to grow in. Give them permission to regularly ask how you are doing.
3. Review 2 Peter 1:8-9

Day 6

Obedience

1. For this final day, we want to focus on OBEDIENCE, as we as disciples are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22-25). The Bible clearly teaches that obedience is a clear echo of our love for God (1 John 5:3).
2. It is also through obedience that we find blessing and our lives are built on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).
3. Take this lesson and quickly scan the title and headings – do not re-read the entire lesson.
4. Humbly go before God and ask – **“what is one step of obedience that I can take as a result of this lesson?”**
5. Perhaps have a section in your journal where you record this step (and steps from future lessons). Or put it in the calendar on your phone. This shows God that we are both intending and committing to obey.
6. Write or speak out a prayer of commitment based on the step.