

Modern Applications

Consistent Character 9

We've seen some excellent, biblical models of Christian character in this study. Scripture records for us their beliefs and actions. It also requires us to hold our pastors to high standards of character, as they serve as modern examples for the church.

As we discussed the Biblical mandates for pastors, we reminded ourselves (last week) that the standards are no lower for us. Each command for them is echoed for us elsewhere as a requirement for all disciples!

Jesus set the bar for His people very high. We see him raise the bar for us in Matthew 5:

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

and...

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

and again...

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

As we go through life, called by His name - Christian - we must hold ourselves to standards that are not common. This is His expectation for His children.

We must remind ourselves of Romans 12:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We must never be pressed into the world's mold, but must live transformed lives, by His grace and in His power.

So what are our modern applications for character? In what context should these character traits be seen?

1. In our families

Colossians 3:17-21

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

18 ¶ Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

19 ¶ Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 ¶ Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

21 ¶ Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

We begin with the assumption that all we do should be done for Him. This is fitting for those who are "a living sacrifice."

And every member of the family is instructed to live in a counter-cultural manner - live 'not as the world lives,' in many ways.

We see this mandates oft-repeated...

Ephesians 6:1-4

1 ¶ Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 ¶ And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Children are to obey, wives to be submissive, husbands to love and lead and nurture. All of these things a mandate for followers of Christ - and it is in this context (among others) that character is both seen and built!

Families ought to be examples. The members of the family, as we each live according to God's standard, serve as a light-delivery system. The relationships each serving as a metaphor in scripture for God's interaction with man.

Ephesians 5:1

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Ephesians 5:22-25

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

The standards for our families are high - very high - as we serve as a model for God's interaction with men.

2. In our work

Ephesians 6:5-9

5 ¶ Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 ¶ And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

This is another mandate to do all for Christ. Are you working for an employer - no for Christ!

More counter-cultural messages are sent in our required behavior in this context. We are to work just as hard when the boss is not looking as we work when he is looking! We are not to 'appear' valuable to our employers, but rather to 'be' valuable.

Again, these principles are repeated...

Colossians 3:22-25

22 ¶ Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

We must serve with excellence, to the best of our ability, for all service is service for Christ.

3. In our communication

Ephesians 4:29

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Please don't focus on the prohibition and overlook the command. No corrupt communication, but instead edifying and ministering grace!

We live in an era of social media - otherwise known as an age of edification and grace - right? Social media doesn't make our communication corrupt, it provides a forum for the corrupt to communicate. It does not cause bad behavior, it reveals it.

Colossians 3:8-10

8 ¶ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

We communicate differently, because we are different!

No man who is new in Christ can communicate in the old way and be comfortable with it. We are new - our words must reflect this newness.

4. In our commitments

Matthew 5:33-37

33 ¶ Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Phrases of clarification such as "to be honest," or "to tell the truth," or "if I'm being honest," are too common and too true.

Many times it is a departure in the world for people to "tell the truth." This must never be the case for us. If a believer is Jesus Christ says he will do something, that ought to be an end of it.

James 5:12

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

A person that doesn't keep their commitments is a person who lacks Godly character and it is evident to those who know and interact with them.