

# Key Qualities

"No one, having put his hand to the plow,  
and looking back,  
is fit for the kingdom of God."  
Luke 9:62



## For Lasting Laborers

***Spiritual maturity and perseverance is no accident.***

*Individuals who are able to thrive in the challenge of long-term cross-cultural life and ministry do so because of mature character.*

*Character is... mined from the ore of difficulty,  
purified by the fire of God's truth,  
hammered out by the Spirit  
on the anvil of life.*

*There is no shortcut to attaining maturity in grace.  
Nor do we lack the resources to achieve it.  
2 Peter 1:3-4 and 3:18*

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# Character is Key

Titus 2:7-8

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. (NIV)

Psalm 139:1,23-24

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (NIV)

%As the excellence of steel is strength, and the excellence of art is beauty, so the excellence of mankind is moral character.+  
A.W. Tozer

%No change of circumstances can repair a defect of character.+  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

%The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.+ Anonymous

%A crisis doesn't make a person; a crisis reveals what a person is made of.+ Anonymous

%Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today will curse tomorrow; only one thing endures: character.+ Horace Greely

%The only thing that walks back from the tomb with the mourners and refuses ever to be buried, is the character of the man. What a man is, survives him. It can never be buried.+ J. R. Miller

%No man ever climbed out beyond the limits of his own character.+  
Patrick Morley

%Integrity commits itself to character over gain, people over things, service over power, principle over convenience, the long view over the immediate.+ Anonymous

%Judge today, not by the harvest you reaped but by the seeds you planted.+ Anonymous

## Key Qualities for Lasting Laborers\*

(Attributes of laborers who stay the distance)

1. *Contentment (in pain, pleasure or deprivation)* trusts God, maintains eternal perspective.
2. *Balance* humility, servant-hood, values relationships, seeks growth, applies Sabbath principle as well as self discipline.
3. *Leadership* takes responsibility for himself and others under his care; faith; foresight.
4. *Perspective* focused on eternity; trusts God for ultimate outcomes; keeps the main thing the main thing.
5. *Self-Knowledge/Humility* aware of his own weaknesses; willing to receive counsel and correction.
6. *Accountability* humility; lives in God's presence; lives with awareness of coming judgment; willing and committed to being accountable to others.
7. *Resourcefulness* maintains the spirit of a learner; knows how to listen; trusts God enough to make changes; seeks ways to improve self & service.
8. *Flexibility* knows God is in control; sees God's sovereign hand in everything; willing to follow God; isn't demanding or manipulative.
9. *Lighthearted* is amazed at grace; sees his own faults and weaknesses; confident in God even as he laughs at his own personal shortcomings.
10. *Rejection Proof* fears God, not men; accepts the cost of cross-bearing with grace and gentleness; accepts criticism with grace and resilience.
11. *Courtesy/Graciousness* loves God and men; values all people as God's image bearers and objects of Divine love.
12. *Responsibility* understands he is a steward; lives in light of life's brevity and coming accountability; doesn't make excuses for failure.
13. *Generosity* sees everything as from God and for God; sees himself as a conduit of blessing; seeing needs he eagerly and wisely seeks to meet them.
14. *Gratitude* sees everything this side of hell as a gift of free grace; knows every good he receives is undeserved.
15. *Hope/Joy* trusts God's sovereignty and wisdom; knows victory is certain; loves God supremely.
16. *Diligence* maintains a stewardship mindset; understands the value of time; focused but not frantic.
17. *Supportive and Sanctifying Relationships* humility; knows the importance of and understands God's priority for relationships; seeks to be an edifier always.
18. *Teachability* humility; realizes his own personal myopia and seeks to grow out of it; knows he will not arrive but continually pursues progress.
19. *Conflict Resolution/Confrontation* humility; seeks peace & unity; obeys Matthew 5 and 18; Proverbs 18.
20. *Self Discipline* maintains God's priorities in use of resources such as money, spiritual gifts, relationships and opportunities (I Corinthians 4:2; 9:27).

\* I am indebted to Dr. Laura Mae Gardner, D. Min. for her fine work entitled The Hardy Personality, copyright 1996, 1999 Wycliffe Bible Translators, Int. [http://www.xenos.org/ministries/mobilizers/go\\_behavior.htm](http://www.xenos.org/ministries/mobilizers/go_behavior.htm). In addition to omissions and additions to the content, I have also included additional biblical references and examples, as well as a discussion guide for groups. Permission is granted to copy for nonprofit use.

## **Key Qualities for Cross Cultural Servants**

Missionary life calls for a level of maturity which will be continually tested. A committee of missionary care-givers originally identified and described key behavioral qualities of cross cultural missionaries who thrive long term, serve God joyfully, and remain productive under difficult situations while maintaining emotional, physical and spiritual health.

An absence of any of these twenty traits is not necessarily cause for disqualification but does indicate where growth is needed. Don't forget that *we are all people in process*. Paul, perhaps the greatest missionary of all time, recognized his personal weaknesses (II Corinthians 12:9-10) and sinfulness (I Timothy 1:15-16), and yet endured crushing experiences (II Corinthians 4:7-10; II Corinthians 11:23-28) drawing his strength from Christ (Philippians 4:12-13).

The goal of using behavioral definitions is that behavior provides a more accurate measure than does a verbal claim. *Actions speak louder than words*.

Though non-believers may indeed become mature in some of these areas, it is the godly believer that brings to *all* of life a deep realization of universal human corruption, personal inadequacy, and God's sufficiency. The mature believer considers dependence on God to be the ultimate source of endurance in the midst of all personal weaknesses. All glory belongs to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy. (Jude 24)

Biographical studies are fruitful sources of life lessons, helping us see our own need for growth in godliness. The biblical examples included for further study should not be considered final judgments on any of the individuals themselves.

**What are the “big goals” of your team?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**How does your personal passion and ministry directly contribute to these goals?**

**What ministry or personnel is lacking that is keeping your team from fully accomplishing their goals?**

**Which of the following are possible options for strengthening what is lacking?**

Personal change of present ministry

Recruiting other missionaries for this need

Training nationals for this ministry

Training nationals to take my ministry so I can change my ministry focus

Assisting another missionary so they can be freed up to take on a new ministry

**Who? What? When? How soon? How long?**

## **1 Contentment (Pain, Pleasure and Deprivation)**

Pain is not shunned at all cost, nor is pleasure sought at any cost. Both are simply part of life, not its focus (John 10:10, 16:33; II Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29). The spiritually mature person is able to forego immediate gratification, not insisting on having all his desires or longings met. He knows that Philippians 4:11-12 (contentment in any situation) precedes 4:19 (all my needs met) and he remembers that Jesus had unmet needs, too (Matthew 4:1-11). Willing to be content in all circumstances, this person is non-demanding, and able to accept what is available as sufficient for the time.

*Do I grumble or complain constantly? Frequently?*

*How easily do I feel sorry for myself?*

*What do I do when tempted by self-pity?*

*How do I feel about “doing without” today?*

*What do I think I have to have to be happy?*

### **For Team discussion and study**

Positive Examples: Joseph, Daniel, Paul, Moses

Negative Examples: Ahab, Demas, Elijah

Philippians

Ch. 1 How did Paul's faith affect his outlook?

2 Examine the four examples of humility.

3 Can we be both passionate and content?

4 How do faith, joy and contentment relate?

## 2 Balance

The mature person shows balance in his emotional, spiritual, physical, relational and professional life. He does not habitually overindulge in one area to the detriment of another. He does not need adrenaline highs to enjoy life. He is not easily addicted to or dependent on even good things like exercise, companionship or approval. He knows how to do without for the short term and still be creative in meeting his legitimate needs over the long term (I Timothy 4:11-13).

*If my life could be represented by a page, how full would it be with the routine things expected of me, along with my own commitments?*

*How big are the margins?*

*Do I practice the Sabbath principle regularly?*

*How do I use my free time? What is missing in my life?*

*What is out of balance?*

*Who is being hurt by the way I'm living my life right now?*

*What am I willing to change? Do I need help in making those changes?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Joseph, Daniel, Barnabas

Negative Examples: Moses, David, Saul, Ahab

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 How will a long term view of life help us as a team to achieve and maintain balance in life and ministry?

Psalm 139 When life is out of focus, it is out of balance.  
When life is out of balance it becomes stress filled.  
What truths in this Psalm can help us regain balance?  
Take turns praying these truths for each other.

Psalm 73 Why was David so totally stressed in this Psalm?  
How did he get so out of focus?  
Has your team ever experienced this kind of stress?  
What was the turning point for David?  
What truths brought him back into balance?  
Take turns praying these truths for each other.

Matthew 6:33 Kingdom seekers are Biblically focused, Biblically balanced people. How can we, as a team work to help each other stay balanced?

Effective teams don't just happen by accident. They are the result of mature people working together. As you evaluate, don't assign blame. Rather, consider your own responsibility to assist and foster a healthy team.

HEALTHY TEAMS Philippians 2:3-4 Grasp the big picture	UNHEALTHY TEAMS Philippians 2:21 Individual agendas	HOW CAN I HELP Philippians 2:20
Atmosphere of growth	Same old, same old	
Exchange ideas	Married to old ideas	
Resolve conflict	Ignore conflict	
Enjoy togetherness	Isolate themselves	
Work at ministering to each other	Only connect at formal gatherings	
Express appreciation for others	Endure others	

**Matthew chapters 5-7, the *Sermon on the Mount*** is an incredible application of the Ten Commandments lived out in personal holiness. Jesus begins with the blessed man's character, moves on to the power of his influence on others and then looks at his inner life lived out in daily experience. I urge you to study this sermon slowly and carefully. It reveals what *ō*writing My law on their hearts really looks like in daily experience. You will find most of the twenty qualities are dealt with in it.

**5:1-12 What characterizes the truly blessed man?**

**5:13-16 Describe the blessed man's influence?**

**5:17-20 The law is intended to be fulfilled in Christ and in His followers.**

**5:21- 7:14 The Ten Commandments applied deeply and internally.**

**7:15-23 Describe the character qualities of godless false teachers.**

**7:24-27 Hearing without doing brings judgment**

The old *Oxford Group* in England had three rules for Bible study:

- 1) Observe carefully
- 2) Interpret honestly
- 3) Apply drastically

They are still good rules today!

### **3 Leadership**

This person does not need to be in charge nor does he abdicate responsibility when others are in control. Leadership is neither demanded nor feared. He is a team player. He understands that ministry is influence and it does not require an official position, but may use it. He is willing to lead or follow, submitting to those whom God has placed over him. He believes that God delights to work through the leaders he places over us (Romans 13:1; Hebrews 13:17). No matter who is in charge, he maintains his commitment to his co-workers and the task. He is neither passive, controlling, nor helpless. Barnabas illustrates this attitude beautifully in the following passages, (Acts 9:26-28, 11:22-26, 12:25, 13:1-41).

*When do I find it most difficult to submit to authority? Why?*

*How do I respond when I am asked to accept leadership? Why?*

*How do I respond when I am told to do something I do not agree with or is not in my area of giftedness?*

*Am I willing to be honest with my leaders yet willing to submit to their authority?*

*Do I talk about leaders rather than to them?*

#### **For Team discussion and study**

Positive Examples: Barnabas, Daniel, Joseph

Negative Examples: Haman, Herod, Peter in gospels, John Mark

Titus 1:5-16 List the characteristics of worthy leaders

Define each of the characteristics behaviorally in a way that could be defined and measured.

Which of these do you most need to work on and improve in?

Define the person unworthy of leadership, by writing a paragraph description of the very opposite of the kind of person Paul said was worthy of leadership.

What would be the predictable results of having such a person in leadership in a local church or missions team?

#### 4 Perspective

The mature person is not narcissistic. He recognizes life is not about him, it's about God (Romans 11:36). He realizes he is part of something eternal even if he doesn't see the logic or the resolution of the present situation. He keeps on trusting God, knowing God is present and working in it all (Daniel 3:16-18). This person can handle present defeat because he is assured of eventual, permanent victory. He realizes his ultimate approval comes from God, not from people (I Corinthians 4:2-5; II Timothy 2:15).

*How much appreciation or acknowledgment do I need from others?  
Do I often feel slighted or overlooked?  
When has someone else gotten credit for something I have done?  
How did I feel? What did I do? How would I react if that happened now?*

#### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Job, Joseph, Peter (late), Paul in Philippians

Negative Examples: Saul, Demas

Philippians 1-4

Describe Paul's circumstances and the problems he was facing and had faced up to this point from your knowledge of this book and the book of Acts.

Describe Paul's attitude about his circumstances as revealed in each chapter.

Describe Paul's attitude about problem people referred to.

1:15-16

2:21

3:2, 18-19

4:2-3

What foundational truths controlled Paul's perspective so that he could radiate joy and confidence in the face of such misery and trouble?

When do you most frequently lose perspective? What can you do to regain perspective and help others do so as well?

#### An honest self-analysis:

These observable evidences of maturity, skills, attitudes, and spiritual fruit result from God's Spirit using God's Word in the hearts of God's willing servants. They are achieved with God's help, and practiced to God's glory. Growth is made possible by accurate self-knowledge nourished by Scripture, empowered by the Spirit in company with like-minded followers of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:10-12 "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."

It is evident that none of us have arrived at perfection in any of the twenty key qualities discussed. But as you consider the twenty qualities, which ones would you list as present strengths and which ones as present weaknesses?

#### Strengths

#### Weaknesses

The purpose for doing this exercise is to be aware of your weaknesses and then devote specific prayer for growth in these areas. It would also be an excellent spiritual exercise to memorize at least one verse for each and study the scriptures on the topic. The book of Proverbs covers them all. Proverbs 15 alone addresses thirteen of them. Some teams may find it beneficial to assign the qualities individually and have each team member take turns reporting back to the team in a devotional setting. Additional ideas for further application of these principles in a team context follow.



## 20 Self discipline

Spiritually mature people accept responsibility to live life as stewards of God. They know they are not their own, but have been bought by Christ's blood (II Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore they use everything they have been entrusted with as stewards of God. They are careful in their use of money, spiritual gifts, relationships and opportunities. They are self controlled\* emotionally, mentally, physically, financially, socially and spiritually (I Corinthians 9:24-27). \*Self controlled meaning control of self not control by self. This power to control self comes from God.

*Am I impulsive? Am I lazy?*

*Do I make excuses or blame others for my own failures.*

*Am I consistently late for appointments, services, or getting tasks done?*

*Do I regularly start things I don't finish?*

*Do I buy things I don't need?*

*Do I have consumer debt?*

*Do I maintain long term friendships and relationships?*

Positive Examples: Nehemiah, Paul, Solomon, Josiah

Negative Examples: Samson, Gehazzi

Galatians 5:23 lists self-control as a fruit of the Spirit.

How did Jesus demonstrate self-discipline?

How did Paul demonstrate self-discipline?

In what areas of life did Paul exhort Timothy to be self disciplined?

Why is self discipline (self-control) so important to life?

In what areas of life is it hardest for you to exercise self-control: emotional, mental, physical, financial, social or spiritual?

Do a Bible study on this subject and include a study on the individuals suggested as examples both positive and negative.

What specific area of life do you most want to implement self-control in?

Who on your team or in your region seems to be self controlled in this area that you could learn from?

Set up a time to talk to this person for counsel and prayer support.

## 5 Self-Knowledge/Humility

Humble and non-defensive, the mature person displays a high level of self-awareness. He knows his strengths and weaknesses and accepts how God designed him. He seeks continued growth and this frees him from self-absorption, allowing him to live a life of love (I Corinthians 13:4-7). He is not compelled to compare himself with others nor blind or in denial as to his faults (II Corinthians 10:12). Aware of his own limitations, he accepts his need for rest and renewal and takes active steps to obtain it. He is teachable and committed to the process of personal progress.

*Who am I? What qualities in myself do I thank God for?*

*What dissatisfies me about myself?*

*Do I often worry about what others think of me? Why is this?*

*Where do I need to grow?*

*What steps am I presently taking to be renewed and grow?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Paul, Peter (late), Daniel

Negative Examples: Peter (early), Saul, Lot, Joseph's brothers

Luke 18:11-13

Describe the self-evaluation of the Pharisee

What phrase best shows that he was clueless about himself?

Paul was originally a Pharisee just like this one. Record as many passages in his letters as you can find that reflect Paul's *new, accurate and totally transformed self-knowledge* and the humility that flowed from it. What single verse do you think best describes this new outlook?

Matthew 5-6 The "hypocrites" were slaves to their own pursuit of the praise and approval of men. Why is it so easy to fall prey to the "fear of man"?

## 6 Accountability to God

He does not tolerate known sin in himself. Realizing he is known thoroughly by God, he invites God's searchlight on His soul (Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24) as well as the inquiry of others. He is willing to ask and answer the tough questions. He sees the value of being accountable to and transparent with others. He lives in the presence of the Holy Spirit dealing courageously with his own sin (Ephesians 4:30; I John 1:8-9). Yet he deals carefully and compassionately with the sin of other people (John 8:7; II Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:11; I Thessalonians 3:13). He keeps short accounts, forgiving offenses as they occur, and asking for forgiveness when he has failed. He keeps his love for others high and his expectations low.

*Am I willingly involved in being accountable to others or do I avoid transparency with my peers? Why?*  
*Do I see my own faults and sins much quicker than those of others?*  
*Do I feel bitter toward anyone? What could I do to take care of that?*  
*Have I neglected to ask forgiveness for any known offense?*  
*When I think of forgiving others, what comes to mind?*  
*Where am I not at peace in my relationships?*  
*When feeling guilty, do I first compare myself with others or go to God in confession?*  
*Do I find it easy to forgive because I see how much I've been forgiven?*  
*Matthew 18:21-30; Luke 7:36-50*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Paul, Peter (late), David

Negative Examples: Saul, Ananias & Sapphira, Judas, Pharisees

Record as many verses as you can find on the subject of our personal accountability to God (examples: Matthew 12:36; Romans 2:6; II Corinthians 5:10).

What does Matthew 5:21-26 and 6:12-15 have to say about how my relationship with others affects my relationship with God?

How does the Lord's Supper help us to implement personal accountability in our relationships? What do you do specifically to hold yourself accountable before taking the Lord's Supper? Have you ever abstained from the Table and then gone to rectify a situation?

## 19 Conflict Resolution/Confrontation

Spiritually mature people can withstand attack and face confrontation without a loss of inner balance. He works to listen non-defensively, to hear and assess input without owning what is said, and to respond honestly to the issues raised. He is willing to change where he should but does not give in to manipulation. He is neither controlled by nor devastated by others' opinions. While genuinely concerned for others, he is not required to embrace their perspectives. He is able to be honest with kindness and to be corrected when in error.

*Can I disagree with someone on an issue without taking it personally?*  
*Am I frequently critical of others' actions and assumed motives?*  
*How do I feel when confronted? How do I normally respond?*  
*What would help me deal with criticism in a healthier way?*  
*On what issues, and under what conditions am I willing to confront someone?*

Positive Examples: David, Paul, Peter, Jehoshaphat, Joshua

Negative Examples: Aaron, Saul, Rehoboam, Pharisees

Discuss the following passages that deal with conflict resolution. Write down specific principles that are important to implement in any conflict situation.

Matthew 5:9, 21-26

Matthew 6:12-15

Matthew 7:1-5

Matthew 18:15-35

Ephesians 4:2, 25-32

## 18 Teachability

This virtue is tightly attached to humility and the fear of God. He seeks the evaluation of others regularly, looking for ways to improve. He is open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. He is a life-long learner, willing to give up the comfort of the way we've always done it for the challenge and risk of implementing creative new processes and ideas. He is not afraid of failure. He does not hesitate to ask for input from others. (Proverbs 1:2-5, 9:9, 16:23) He is firm on biblical functions and flexible on cultural forms. He is able to make honest evaluations, neither accusative and negative or spinning things positively for personal praise.

*How do I respond to correction?*

*How open am I to changing the way I do things?*

*How open am I to new information, methods, etc?*

*In what area would I like to develop?*

*What can I do to accomplish that?*

*Positive Examples: Moses, Peter, Paul, Disciples, David*

*Negative Examples: Pharisees, Saul*

You have no doubt noticed recurring themes among all twenty of these key attributes. Words like humility, integrity, trust, and self-discipline come up again and again.

Your life has become one of continual change and therefore necessitates continual learning. It is one thing to learn a new language. It is even more difficult to learn a new culture. Add to that the need to work in close contact with new people who have different backgrounds, gifts, and ideas. While it provides you incredible opportunities to learn and grow, if you do not maintain the spirit of a learner you can easily become critical, defensive, or frustrated.

Did Paul have the spirit of a learner initially? See his self description in Philippians 3 as well as Acts 7-9 and II Timothy 1:13.

Read I Corinthians 9:19-23. It is obvious that this former Pharisee went through a huge transformation. How does he demonstrate the spirit of a learner? What were some of the things he had to learn in his journey as an apostle?

## 7 Resourcefulness

His approach to problem solving is "Well, let's see what we can do with what we've got for now." Innovative and creative, he utilizes available resources well. Not easily defeated, he is inventive, looking actively for options, not helplessly waiting to be bailed out. He is not married to old ideas or afraid of change. Paul's basket ride to freedom may not have been dignified but someone certainly showed initiative (II Corinthians 11:33).

*How quickly or easily do I give up when faced with an obstacle?*

*Is it hard for me to find alternate ways to deal with a situation when things go wrong? Why?*

*Do I think options need to be perfect to be acceptable? Why?*

*Is my first response to problems to find fault and assign blame or to look for solutions? Why?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Moses' Father in law (Exodus 18), Jonathan, Andrew "there's a kid here with his lunch"

Negative Examples: Elijah on Horeb lost all perspective and hope

Acts 6:1-7 Apostles creating office of deacon

Describe the problem and circumstances the Apostles faced.

Did this problem appear in a stagnant or vibrant church?

If you were faced with this today, what would you likely do?

Did the Apostles ignore, minimize, magnify or face the problem?

Did the Apostles discard or change their priorities?

What were their priorities?

How did they solve the problem?

What resulted by getting more godly men involved in the solution?

## 8 Flexibility

A mature person is able to enjoy second-best choices. (*I really wanted to do that, but it's raining and I can't, so I'll do this instead*). This person can enjoy what is, rather than pout about what isn't. Disappointment does not destroy hope or vision. This includes embracing and accomplishing group decisions that he voted against but the majority voted for (Philippians 1:12, 4:12-13). He is willing to yield to the needs of the larger team and their vision without resentment or becoming manipulative. He recognizes that the essence of being Christ-like is revealed by his heart response to people and situations. While not necessarily enjoying rapid change, he takes it as an opportunity to grow in grace. He knows frustration is common for us all. Our hopes, dreams, desires and goals are often delayed or dashed. Those who are able to endure frustration and persevere with joy learn to bend but not break in the face of chronic difficulties.

*How have I been disappointed recently? Be specific.*

*How did I feel about that? What did I do or say?*

*How long did it take me to accept it and find an alternative?*

*Do I disguise a stubborn spirit by naming it conviction?*

*Do I mask unwillingness to change by saying: "that's just the way I am"*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Paul, John, Moses, David

Negative Examples: Ahab, Haman, Saul

Acts 16:6-7 Paul had a great desire to take the gospel to people who never heard. Yet, it seems he was stopped in attempting to take the gospel where he desired to go, twice! What did he do in the face of this frustration?

Philippians 1:12 Paul was stuck in prison, when his heart's passion was to go to Spain. Did he give up? What was his new perspective?

II Corinthians 4:8-9, 11:23-28 Confused, distressed, ship wrecked three times, floating around in the ocean hour after hour; this just doesn't look like a wise plan from God, does it? But God was and is in perfect control. How was Paul able to be so flexible so constantly?

## 17 Supportive and Sanctifying Relationships

The spiritually mature person identifies and maintains a personal support system, valuing relationships and giving much effort to sustain them. He can develop healthy relationships in a group (family, church, mission, neighborhood,) while setting appropriate boundaries. He appreciates the power of sanctifying relationships and makes efforts to build godly friendships and mutually accountable relationships (I Corinthians 12:7-26; Ephesians 4:15-16). Knowing the mutual impact people have on each other, he takes responsibility to give support to spouse, family and coworkers.

*How important are relationships to me? Why?*

*Am I stingy or generous in spending time with people who need me?*

*When was the last really significant conversation I had with my spouse, children, co-workers?*

*How much time did I spend this week communicating with supporters, fellowshipping with friends, reaching out?*

*Was it balanced? How could I improve in this area?*

Positive Examples: Paul, Aquilla and Priscilla, Apostles, Moses

Negative Examples: Saul, Rehoboam, Samson

Some people are natural loners, and need to make a concerted effort to develop deep friendships and accountability relationships.

Others are super social, seeming to need others around all the time.

Still others are talkative to the point of being overbearing and need to learn to listen more patiently and actively.

How can you implement the following passages. Be specific.

James 1:18-19, 2:12, 4:11

Who has been an important personal supportive friend to you?

Give examples of two or three people who have made a significant, positive impact on your life. How did they make that lasting, positive impression? Be specific.

Have you ever had an intentional, accountability relationship? Describe it.

Are you willing to enter such a relationship now? Why or why not?

(Contact Ron Berrus, [www.ronberrus.abwe.org](http://www.ronberrus.abwe.org) for resources on initiating an accountability relationship and various models to work from.)

## 16 Diligence

A spiritually mature person realizes he is accountable to God for the use of each day and receives it as a stewardship. He makes plans and sets goals, rather than simply reacting to life and circumstances. But he has a deep realization that God is sovereign and is not obligated to cooperate with his human plans (Proverbs 21:31). He plans and works with providence in mind (Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). He is a self-motivated starter when necessary. He can reframe boredom into some semblance of productivity, making an unexpected loss of time into something useful. He is able to benefit from reflective as well as active times and balance personal and social time for his own well being and that of others.

*How was I thwarted, delayed or sidetracked this week? How did I react?*

*How satisfied am I by the way I used time this week?*

*Where should I make changes?*

*Am I diligent without being easily frustrated? How often am I frustrated?*

*Do I rely on God?*

*Am I fearful of failure or confident that God's purposes will be carried out through my willing obedience?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Nehemiah, Paul, Solomon, Josiah, David

Negative Examples: Martha, Samson

Using time wisely is a major aspect of diligence. Paul commands us to "redeem the time," taking every opportunity to glorify God in the daily tasks and common relationships of life.

Place yourself on the following scale

**LAZY** 0í .1í .2í .3í .4í .5í .6í .7í .8í .9í .10 **WORKAHOLIC**

Jesus was focused, but never frantic (see John 9:4). We are not to be apathetic or undisciplined. Neither are we to be guilt driven or obsessed with success. ("Wear out or rust out" are not the only two options in life!)

How can planning glorify God or dishonor Him?

Discuss the following passages:

Proverbs 15:22, 16:9, 19:21

II Corinthians 1:17; James 4:13-17

Romans 15:24, 28

How could you be a more effective steward of your time?

## 9 Lighthearted

Maturity is reflected in an individual's use of humor. While taking *life seriously*, he doesn't take *himself* too seriously. He laughs easily at himself and is not easily offended if someone laughs at him. He may tease others lovingly, yet is careful not to offend and avoids all sarcasm. A big-picture person, he has an optimism borne of faith in a sovereign God who is working for good in everything (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11).

*What makes me laugh?*

*What have I laughed at this week?*

*When have I last laughed at myself?*

*Did I use to have a better sense of humor earlier in life?*

*When? What happened to it?*

Ungodly humor can be cruel and devastating. This is sinful and there is no place for this in the body of Christ. We must avoid all humor that exalts self and ridicules, demeans or shames others.

People who laugh at themselves are usually honest, humble and confident. How does being a believer enable you to laugh at yourself without fear?

The Pharisees took themselves way too seriously. Why?

Who is or was the most lighthearted person you've ever known?

Describe them and how they affected or influenced you?

Did they have an easy life?

Is it possible to develop lightheartedness? Why or why not?

## 10 Rejection Proof

The mature person is not so fragile that failure defines or defeats him. He learns from his mistakes. (Mark 14:71-72; I Peter 5:1) He has the ability to pick up the pieces and restart after failure, rebuff, or rejection. This makes him easy to supervise. Having fallen down and hurt himself won't keep him from trying again. He is not bound to a painful past. (I Timothy 1:13-16; II Timothy 4:16) His trust in God makes him teachable by men, even in very negative contexts (Galatians 2:11).

*How much of my energy is spent remembering hurts? Why?*

*Who do I need to forgive?*

*Who do I think does not like me? Why? Do I resent or care for them?*

*Is there anger in my life? How does it show itself?*

*Has my anger become chronic?*

*Who could I seek help from?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Joseph, David, John, Peter, John Mark, Moses

Negative Examples: Saul, Samson,

Paul had much pain and failure in his life, but did not allow his past to imprison him (Philippians 3:13). What were some of those things that Paul determined to put behind him in order to focus on God's upward call?

John Mark left Paul and Barnabas on the first journey and could have blamed himself for the breakup of Paul and Barnabas. But he ended up writing the gospel of Mark and becoming a special friend to Paul later in life (II Timothy 4:11). Has God done something similar in your experience?

Satan desires that we focus on guilt from the past or fear of the future. Which of the two (guilt or fear) is a stronger temptation in your life? Share why you think that is. What verses especially help you in facing guilt or fear?

God's grace frees us from guilt and His faithfulness frees us from fear, enabling us to live in the present with joy and peace.

Share a personal example of failure and recovery that God has brought you through that is now a means of ministry to others (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

## 15 Hope/Joy

This person has a relationship with and a confidence in God that makes a daily, obvious, positive difference in his life (I John 3:3). This sense of hope anchors him, giving him stability in times of storm (Hebrews 6:10, 10:23). The mature person is not habitually pessimistic, critical, or easily discouraged when situations look bleak. His hope frees him to experience joy and see the blessings in his daily life (Romans 12:12).

*On a scale of 0 - 100, with zero being a complete pessimist and 100 being a complete optimist, where do I fit most of the time?*

*Do I inspire optimism or negativity in others?*

*Do I have a half-empty or a half-full perspective most of the time? Why?*

*Describe your own definition of a pessimist, optimist and realist?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Paul, David, Mary, Barnabas, Andrew

Negative Examples: Judas, Thomas, Jonah

What do the following passages teach regarding hope and joy?

Psalm 42

Psalm 43

Psalm 51

Psalm 130

John 15,16,17

Romans 5, 8, 15

I Peter 1

How does hope differ from just wishing or positive thinking?

Does joy differ from happiness? If so, how?

## 14 Gratitude

A spiritually mature person is continually grateful. He believes that we are mutually dependent on one another (Romans 12:5). He does not consider himself entitled to what he is given, but realizing that every thing he receives has cost someone else, lets people know their gifts of time and substance are valued. He accepts his own weaknesses and inadequacies and his need of one another care without shame. He graciously allows others to minister to him. He values the synergy of reciprocal ministry. "Cultivate thankfulness" (Colossians 3:15b, The MESSAGE). He sees ministry as an incredible privilege and understands that scores of people are making his ministry possible and fruitful.

*Who have I thanked this week? Who do I need to thank?*

*How do I react when people thank me?*

*When last did I feel really grateful to God for the privilege of serving Him?*

*How often do I go out of my way to show gratitude to my co-workers?*

*Who should I thank this week by writing a note, making a phone call, or speaking to them directly to express it?*

### For Team discussion and study

*Positive Examples: David, Paul, Mephibosheth,*

*Negative Examples: Prodigal's brother, Judas,*

A lack of gratitude figures prominently in lists of sins in the following passages. Share your observations on them.

Romans 1:21

II Timothy 3:2

Pray the following passages back to God with all your heart.

Psalm 103

Psalm 139

Read Psalm 73. David had lost his grateful spirit. Why? How was it restored?

How have you lost a spirit of gratitude recently and how did God restore it? (This can be used of God to help others).

## 11 Courtesy/Graciousness

A mature person knows that good manners are the lubricant of life. Respectful awareness leads them to pay attention to cultural niceties. Aware that they are not an island and that they make an impact on others, they accept the fact they cannot do as they please or act out negative feelings. Ephesians 4:2-3 "Steadily pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences." (The MESSAGE) Anticipatory effort to make another's life smoother is the essence of good manners. John 19:26-27 records Jesus entrusting His mother's care to John ensuring Mary would not have to beg or worry. Jesus called himself "gentle and humble in heart" Matthew 11:29 (NIV).

*How do others experience me in my daily interactions with them?*

*Do I treat people as I would like to be treated?*

*Do I respect others needs and desires?*

*Am I willing to yield to cultural norms that don't violate clear biblical commands?*

*Would most people consider me a gentle person?*

*How is my hunger for righteousness manifested in my relationships?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Daniel, John, Andrew, Mary

Negative Examples: Judas, Peter

Respect is demonstrated by listening to others.

Listening is not always easy, but is always essential.

The most repeated command in the Bible is the command to "listen."

Every culture demonstrates respect by listening.

Do a Bible word study on the words *listen* and *hear*.

List 10 verses that are especially significant to you.

What are some of the positive customs in your new culture that allow you to demonstrate respect and courtesy?

How can your witness as a Christian stand out clearly in this culture in the matters of respect, courtesy and gentleness?

## 12 Responsibility

Able to accept responsibility, the mature person understands the impact he has on others. (I Timothy 4:12) He understands that wherever he is, he is making the situation better or worse. (Titus 2:7) He is comfortable taking credit for the good he does, and willing to take blame for his failures without becoming defensive. (I Corinthians 11:1) He does not deny or rationalize his mistakes. Neither does he assume responsibility for the choices others make.

*Have I ever been unjustly blamed? What was my response?*

*How could I have responded in a more healthy way?*

*When I make a mistake, how do I feel? What do I do?*

*How do I receive credit?*

*How do I receive correction?*

*Am I able to accept criticism without becoming defensive?*

*Am I more interested in understanding another perspective than in defending my own?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: David, Paul, Job, Nehemiah

Negative Examples: Saul, Samson, Elijah on Horeb

Accepting responsibility for our roles, time, resources and even our failure is all part of God's will for our lives. Life is not a gift from God to be spent as we please. It is a stewardship from God for which I am completely responsible.

What lessons on responsibility can you draw from the following key chapters.

Proverbs 12

Proverbs 24

Proverbs 26

Proverbs 31

I Samuel 14-15

II Samuel 11-12

Jonah

Matthew 5:21-48

Matthew 7:18-27

Share some lessons you've learned about

- 1) accepting responsibility
- 2) receiving criticism, and
- 3) taking responsibility for personal spiritual progress.

## 13 Generosity

A mature person lives life richly, freely giving love, energy, resources, and time to meet the needs of others. He is kind, open, trusting, industrious, and giving. He does not hoard. He sees himself living in community and shares so his brother will not be in need (Ruth 2:14-18; Luke 6:38; II Corinthians 8). He realizes that *receiving* from others allows them to be part of God's provision. He accepts that receiving is also an act of generosity, and is necessary for his own well-being & humility. He does not see people as interruptions in his life, but as divine appointments to serve Christ. He is focused on the laborers even more than the labor. He delights in lending a hand to carry another's load (Galatians 6:2).

*How do I invest myself among my family, friends, co-workers and others?*

*What am I willing to let people do for me?*

*Do I frequently think about what I want but don't have?*

*When was the last time I was aware of being covetous?*

*Am I eager to lend a hand and assist when help is needed?*

*Do I look for ways to be helpful or stand back and wait to be asked?*

*Why?*

*How can generosity lead to unhealthy dependency? How do you decide?*

### For Team discussion and study

Positive Examples: Boaz, Jonathan, Good Samaritan

Negative Examples: Ahab, Judas, Proverbs 30, Achan

Generosity is not just a matter of money. It also includes time, attention, compassion, and effort.

Who are some of the most generous people you've known?

What have you learned from them?

The Sermon on the Mount is full of the spirit of generosity.

Note aspects of generosity that Christ expects of His followers.

Matthew 5

Matthew 6

Matthew 7