

# **Christian Character And Commitment**

**A BIBLE STUDY**

**By Rev. Ernest A. Baker, Sr.**

# Christian Character and Commitment

(By Rev. Ernest A. Baker, Sr.)

## BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

### I. Introduction (pgs. 3-8)

#### A. Words Defined

1. Christian
2. Character
3. Commitment

#### B. Preliminary/Foundational Items

1. The Centrality of the “Great Commandment” (Mk. 12:28-30; Dt. 6:5)
  - Accomplished through obedience to the Word of God (1 Jn. 5:3; Jn. 14:15,21,23)
  - Demonstrated through loving others (1 Jn. 4:20-21; 1 Cor. 13:4-8)
2. “Enemies” of Christian Character and Commitment
  - The “flesh” (Jer. 17:9; Mt. 15:19-20; Gal. 5:17-21)
  - The “world” (1 Jn. 2:15)
  - Satan (Jn. 10:10; 1 Pet. 5:8)

### II. Christian Character (pgs. 9-12)

#### A. “Christ-Likeness” (Phil. 2:1-10)

1. Through humility (vss. 3-4)
2. Demonstrated by Christ (vss. 5-8)

#### B. The Necessity of Mental Renewal (Rom. 12:2)

1. Non-conformity to the world.
2. A catalyst for spiritual transformation.
3. Satisfaction of the will of God.

#### C. The Importance of Christian Separation (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

1. Our holiness depends on it (vss. 14-16)
2. Our position as the people of God depends on it (vs. 16)
3. Our position as the children of God depend on it (vs. 18)

### **III. Christian Commitment (pgs. 13-17)**

#### **A. The Presentation of Our Bodies (Rom. 12:1)**

1. A “living sacrifice”.
  - Holy
  - Acceptable to God
2. Reasonable (“spiritual”) response to God

#### **B. The Cost of Discipleship (Lk. 14:25-27)**

1. Human relationships (vs. 26).
2. Sacrifice of self (vs. 26).
3. Exposure to suffering (vs. 27).

#### **C. Characteristics of Godly Commitment: A Biblical Case Study (Dan. 3:16-27)**

1. Submission to God (vss. 16-18)
2. Knowledge of God (vss. 16-18)
3. Faith in God (vss. 18-23)

#### **D. The Importance of Local Church Involvement**

1. Collective Worship
2. Spiritual Guidance
3. Mutual Fellowship

# Christian Character and Commitment

(By Rev. Ernest A. Baker, Sr.)

## Introduction

The need for Christian character and commitment is obvious in view of the profane and ungodly world in which we live. Our Lord charges us to be shining "lights" in this morally "dark" world to the end that our Heavenly Father may be the recipient of the glory He is due (Matthew 5:16). In this study we will investigate the importance of character and commitment in the life of a Believer or "Christian". We must first define these words as we proceed with our study:

**Character** - The pattern of behavior or personality found in an individual or group; moral constitution. (Webster)

**Commitment** - Dedication to a long-term course of action; engagement; involvement. (Webster)

## What Is a Christian?

The word "*Christian*" means "Christ-like" i.e. a "follower of Christ" in both "character" with regard to a holy lifestyle (Cp. 1 Peter 1:14-16), and "commitment" particularly in the area of "Kingdom" interests and involvement (Matthew 6:33). The word "Christian" is rendered in only three (3) places in the Bible:

- Acts 11:26
- Acts 26:28
- 1 Peter 4:16

There are at least three (3) essential truths unique *ONLY* to Christians:

- I. Positionally righteous in the sight of God (Rom. 3:21-22; 4:3-8; Eph. 2:1-13)
- II. The ability to live supernaturally through the Holy Spirit of God  
(Jn 16:13-15; Gal. 5:22-25)
- III. Heirs of an eternal inheritance (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:3-5)

## **Preliminary/Foundational Items**

To address the importance of character and commitment in the life of the Christian, it is necessary to consider two (2) foundational items: the centrality of the "Great Commandment" (Cp. Dt. 6:5; Mk. 12:28-30), and the "enemies" of the Christian's character and commitment (i.e. the "flesh", the "world" and "Satan").

### **The Centrality of the "Great Commandment"**

- 1. Loving our Heavenly Father with all of our being is the 1<sup>st</sup> priority of our lives. (Mark 12:30)**

- 2. We love Him by living according to the truths of His Scriptures.**

*"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."* (1 John 5:3)

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* (John 14:15)

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me ..."* (John 14:21)

*"... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word ..."* (John 14:23)

- 3. We love Him by loving others**

*"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."*

(1 John 4:20-21)

- 4. If we don't love others, we CANNOT love Him**

*"... for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen..."* (1 John 4:20)

**5. His love for us is the standard by which we are to love others**

*"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)*

*"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:10-11)*

**6. Without love, all other Christian effort is useless**

*"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)*

**"Enemies" of Christian Character and Commitment**

**I. The "Flesh" (Cp. Mt. 15:19-20; Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:17-21)**

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, KJV)*

**A. The "Works" of the Flesh (Galatians 5:19-21)**

1. **Immorality** - (Gk.) *porneia* i.e. sexual immorality.  
(*"adultery"* and *"fornication"* in KJV)
2. **Impurity** - *"uncleanness"* (as rendered in KJV)
3. **Sensuality** - expressions of lust or lewdness.  
(*"lasciviousness"* in KJV)

4. **Idolatry** - Image worship. Also, the rendering of Divine homage to any person, place, and/or thing other than God.
5. **Sorcery** - (Gk) *pharmakeia* - to administer drugs; i.e. the use of medicine, drugs, or spells. ("witchcraft" in KJV)
6. **Enmities** - Bitter attitude or feelings of an enemy or of mutual enemies; hostility; antagonism. ("hatred" in KJV)
7. **Strife** - Contention; i.e. the expression of enmity. ("variance" in KJV)
8. **Jealousy** - Feeling of discontent and ill-will because of another's advantages, possessions, etc... ("emulations" in KJV)
9. **Outbursts of Anger** - ("wrath" in KJV)
10. **Disputes** - Rivalry; selfish ambition. ("strife" in KJV)
11. **Dissentions** - (Gk) "to stand apart". ("seditions" in KJV)
12. **Factions** - i.e. "heresies".
13. **Envyings** - i.e. Expressed jealousy.
14. **Drunkeness** - Frequent excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages and associated behavior.
15. **Carousing** - Noisy and rambunctious partying. ("revelings" in KJV)

## II. The "World" (Jas. 4:4;1 Jn. 2:15-16)

*"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."* (1 Jn. 2:15-16)

### A. The "Lust of the Flesh"

1. i.e. strong desires for evil things.
2. Examples:
  - \* immoral sexuality
  - \* greed, etc...

### B. The "Lust of the Eyes"

1. I.e false values
2. A avenue used by Satan to entice the flesh. (Cp. Gen. 3:6)

### C. The Boastful Pride of Life

1. Egoism and self-centeredness with regard to one's possessions, prominence, appearance, etc...

#### **D. The Significance of a "Worldview"**

1. **Worldview** - The framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual interprets the world and interacts with it. A worldview describes a consistent and integral sense of existence and provides a framework for generating, sustaining, and applying knowledge; formed generally by our education, upbringing, culture, books, media, etc...
2. Examples of Worldviews:
  - \* Cultural
  - \* Political
  - \* Religious
  - \* Christian

#### **III. Satan (Jn. 10:10; 1 Pet. 5:8)**

*"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Pet. 5:8)*

##### **A. His Mission (Jn. 10:10)**

1. Steal
2. Kill
3. Destroy

##### **B. His Method (Gen. 3:1-6)**

1. Disguise (vs. 1; Cp. 2 Cor. 11:14)
2. Divert (vss. 1-3)
3. Deceive (vss. 4-6)

##### **C. His Management**

1. "Prince" of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
2. Prince of the "power of the air" (Eph. 2:2)  
i.e. a reference to media and its influence.



## STUDY/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Define The Following Words

1. Christian
2. Character
3. Commitment

### List Three (3) Essential Truths Unique Only To Christians

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
7. What is the "Great Commandment" and why is it significant to the Christian?

### What Are The "Enemies" to Christian Character and Commitment?

- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

# Christian Character and Commitment

(By Rev. Ernest A. Baker, Sr.)

## Christian Character

It is virtually impossible to discuss the subject of Christian character without recognizing the role of humility, mental renewal, or the separation of the Christian from the world. We have previously established scripturally that our humanity is in direct conflict with God, and therefore requires an intentional and constant effort on our part to bring our flesh under subjection to Him by way of humility. *Humility* as defined by Webster is the absence of pride or self-assertion. Our Lord has provided the perfect example described in the second chapter of the book of Philippians:

### Our Perfect Example of Humility (Phil. 2:5-11)

#### A. Humility is an Attitude (vs. 5)

1. i.e. a mindset
2. Not a conglomerate of humble "acts" done sporadically

#### B. Humility Does Not Operate According To One's Status (vss. 6-7)

1. The fact of Christ being God did not hinder Him from carrying out His perfect display of humility.
2. He "humiliated" Himself by placing Himself in human flesh.

#### C. Humility Is Driven By Obedience to God (vs. 8)

1. In obedience to the Father, He humbled Himself to the point of death!

#### D. Humility Always Produces Exaltation (vss. 9-11)

1. Exaltation and glory for the one who practices obedience to the Father.
2. The ultimate purpose and outcome is the glory of God the Father. (vs. 11)

## The Importance of Mental Renewal (Rom. 12:2)

"... do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2; NASB)

### I. Words Defined

1. **Mind** - That which thinks, perceives, feels, wills, etc... Seat or subject of consciousness.
2. **Renew(ing)** - To renovate. To make fresh or sound again, as though new; clean up, replace worn and broken parts in, repair.
3. **Conform(ed)** - To fashion alike. To make the same or similar.
4. **Transform(ed)** - Change, transfigure. To change the form or outward appearance of.

### II. Three (3) Reasons Mental Renewal Is Necessary

#### A. Non-conformity to the World

1. I.e. not becoming fashioned into the image of the world.
2. A statement of resistance.
3. Helps to combat the satanic strategy of darkness. (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

#### B. It is the Catalyst For Spiritual Transformation

1. A "metamorphosis" or "change" into Christ-likeness.
2. A statement of proaction.
3. "Transformation" produces conformity into Christ-likeness, which is consistent with the purpose of God for us in this world.  
(Cp. Rom. 8:29)

#### C. The Satisfaction of the Will of God

1. God's will = that which is **Good, Acceptable, and Perfect**
2. Achieved through practical holiness. (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:23-32)
3. Achieved collectively through the demonstration of Spiritual gifts.  
(Rom. 12:4-8)

## **The Importance of Christian Separation (2 Cor. 6:14-18)**

*"... Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord ..."* (2 Cor. 6:17)

*"They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."* (Exodus 23:33; NASB)

### **Three Areas Of The Christian's Life Affected By Appropriate Separation**

#### **A. Our Holiness Depends On It (2 Cor. 6:14-16)**

1. i.e. our distinction from the world
  - holiness is the manifestation of Christian Separation.
  - holiness is the Believer's "I.D." in the world.
2. Holiness is the Believer's "nature"

#### **B. Our Position as the People of God Depend On It (2 Cor. 6:16)**

1. The benefit of a "Theocracy", i.e. governance by the Supreme Authority of the universe, as opposed to mere humans or man-made gods.

#### **C. Our Position as the Children of God Depend On It (2 Cor. 6:18)**

1. "Father" denoted relational intimacy with Almighty God!

## STUDY/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define the word *humility* .

### **List Four(4) Truths We Learn From Christ's Example of Humility**

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

### **List Three (3) Reasons Mental Renewal Is Important For Christian Character**

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

9. What is a "Theocracy"? How is it relevant to Christian Separation?

10. How are you doing as a Believer in the areas of humility, mental renewal, and Christian Separation, with regard to Christian character? What adjustments do you intend to make in the areas you are challenged most?

# Christian Character and Commitment

(By Rev. Ernest A. Baker, Sr.)

## Christian Commitment

It was the Christ-like character of the Early Church driven by unwavering commitment to the Kingdom agenda that had a tremendous impact on the world as chronicled in the Book of Acts. It is quite unfortunate that commitment to the Kingdom concerns and matters of our Lord is severely challenged and consequently apathetic among present day Believers. In order to have a profound godly impact on the world, there must be a presenting of our "bodies" to the Lord, and the subsequent lifestyle of discipleship. In this section of our study, we will address these areas as well as the importance of local church involvement.

### The Presentation of Our Bodies (Romans 12:1)

#### I. Requires Sacrifice

A. **Sacrifice** – the act of giving up, destroying, permitting injury to, or foregoing something valued for the sake of something having a more pressing claim. (Webster)

#### B. Examples of Areas In/Of Our Lives Impacted By Such Sacrifice

1. Relationships
2. Prestige
3. Wealth/possessions
4. Careers
5. Personal ambitions/ aspirations

#### II. Requires Use of Spiritual Gifts (Rom. 12:4-8)

1. Within the context of the Church/ "Body".  
(Cp. vss. 4-5; 1 Cor. 12:20,27)
2. Spiritual Gifts **MUST** be exercised. (vs. 6)

### **III. Requires The Demonstration of Loving Others (Rom. 12:9-21)**

1. Through devotion to others. (vs. 10)
2. Through the giving of preference to others. (vs. 10)
3. Through the honoring of others. (vs. 10)

### **Discipleship (Luke 14:25-27)**

A "disciple" is one who follows the teachings of another, to the end that what is taught will be executed by the disciple. Christian "Discipleship" is a life of learning the teachings of Jesus Christ (i.e. the Bible) and utilizing those teachings in his life. However, discipleship has a cost, and is not only required of us by our Lord but distinguished from just simply hanging out in the "crowd".

#### **I. The Cost of Discipleship (Lk. 14:25-27)**

##### **A. Human Relationships (vs. 26)**

1. i.e. Jesus is priority #1 in comparison to all other relationships.
2. "hate" i.e. here means to "love less than". (Cp. Mt. 10:37)

##### **B. Sacrifice of Self (vs. 26)**

1. i.e. One's own life. This is a reference to the willingness to give up all to follow Jesus. (Cp. Lk. 14:33)

##### **C. Exposure to Suffering (vs. 27)**

"... *carry his own cross* ..."

1. "Cross" means "exposure to death"; thus representing and symbolizing the suffering of our "innocent" Saviour.
2. "Carrying our own cross" is living a life that expects challenges in this world because of our affiliation with the Master. (Cp. Mt. 15:19; 1 Pet. 4:12-16)

### **The Difference Between The Crowd and the Committed (Lk. 14:25-27)**

- A. The committed desire to be with Jesus (vss. 25-26)
  - 1. i.e. desire and practice spending intimate time with Him.
  
- B. The committed ranks all earthly relationships secondary in view of his relationship with Jesus (vs. 26)
  - 1. i.e. family, spouses, associates, colleagues, etc, in comparison to our relationship with Jesus, looks like "hatred".
  
- C. The committed ranks his own life as secondary in view of his relationship with Jesus (26)
  - 1. e.g. personal pursuits, ambitions, and aspirations.
  
- D. The committed is willing to die for the cause of Jesus Christ (vs. 27)

### **Characteristics of Godly Commitment: A Biblical Case Study (Dan. 3:16-18)**

*The example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*

- A. Submission to God (Dan. 3:16-18)**
  - 1. Separation from the world (Cp. Dan. 1:8-16)
    - \* i.e. practical holiness
  
- B. Knowledge of God (Dan. 3:16-18)**
  - 1. According to what He has said (i.e. Biblical competence)
  - 2. According to what He has done (i.e. Salvation)
  - 3. According to experience (i.e. personal relationship with Him)
  
- C. Faith in God (Dan. 3:18-23)**
  - 1. i.e. the "knowledge" of God put to work.
  - 2. the presence of faith does not always circumvent the "fire"
  - 3. the Father always tends to His committed (Cp. Ps. 37:25; Heb. 11:6)

*"What nobler decoration of honor can any godly man seek after than his scars of service, his losses for the cross, his reproaches for Christ's sake, his being worn out in his Master's service!" (Charles Spurgeon)*



## The Importance of Local Church Involvement

### I. Collective Worship

- A. Corporate praise (Cp. Ps. 150:1)
- B. Practicing of the Ordinances
  - 1. The Lord's Supper/Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:23-32)
  - 2. Water Baptism (Mt. 28:19-20)
- C. Giving of offerings/alms (Cp. Mal. 3:10)
- D. Corporate prayer (Cp. Isa. 56:7; Mt. 21:13)

### II. Spiritual Guidance

- A. By Divinely "called" Pastors/Elders who are responsible for:
  - 1. "feeding" i.e. teaching sound Biblical doctrine. (Cp. Tit. 1:9; Heb. 13:7)
  - 2. "leading" according to righteousness. (Cp. Heb. 13:7)
  - 3. Oversight of the souls of the Body. (Cp. Ezek. 3:17-20; Heb. 13:17)

### III. Mutual Fellowship

- A. For the exercise of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12)
- B. Sharing with regard to needs (Cp. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35)
- C. Encouragement (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25)

## STUDY/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define the word *sacrifice*
2. Define *discipleship*

### List Three (3) Things Discipleship May Cost

- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### List Three (3) Important Reasons For Local Church Involvement

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

9. In what areas are you in the "committed" category vs. the "crowd"?

10. As a result of this study, what areas regarding your *Christian Character* and *Christian Commitment* need improvement? Will you seek the Lord for help in these areas?

# **CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND COMMITMENT**

Copyright © 2011 by Ernest A. Baker, Sr.

**Rev. Ernest A. Baker, Sr.**

New Hope Christian Missionary Baptist Church

1033 E. 95<sup>th</sup> St

Chicago, IL. 60619

(773) 978-4700

Email Address: [rev.ernest.nhcmcb@comcast.net](mailto:rev.ernest.nhcmcb@comcast.net)