

# CHAPTER ONE

## CHARACTER

### THE FIRST GROUP—GENUINE, EXACT, STRICT

#### 1. Genuine

The opposite of genuine is false. He who pretends is not genuine. Genuineness forms one's foundation and base. A person who is not genuine is baseless and cannot be entrusted with great responsibilities. Genuineness in character is the ability to sacrifice for others. Merely to be an honest person is not sufficient; one must be genuine. One who is not genuine may be welcomed by others initially, but the welcome will not last. Over time, it is genuineness which gains people's hearts. To inspire others' confidence, one must possess a genuine character.

#### 2. Exact

Most people are loose; few are truly exact. One who is punctual does not procrastinate. One who is accurate in his words is dependable, and one who is precise in his work is trustworthy. Rare and precious is a person who is perfectly accurate.

#### 3. Strict

Genuineness and tightness make up exactness, which in turn is manifested in strictness. Looseness leads to inaccuracy; he who is exact is always strict. The secret to a punctual person is his strictness. Only by being strict can one be genuine and exact.

### THE SECOND GROUP—DILIGENT, BROAD, FINE

#### 1. Diligent

Few people are diligent; most prefer leisure to labor. Once a person becomes lazy, he can accomplish nothing. Romans 12:11 says, "Not slothful in zeal," and Proverbs 6:6 says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." Why do laziness, gluttony, and sleep go together (Titus 1:12)? It is because all lazy people pity and love themselves, and thus naturally love to eat and sleep. However, 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says, "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat."

All four points mentioned above are related to dealing severely with oneself.

#### 2. Broad

It is easy for one who possesses the foregoing character traits to become narrow. He must therefore pay attention to having a "broad" character. The Chinese language uses an expression meaning "ocean" to illustrate a person's capacity to be as large as the ocean. "And God gave Solomon...largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore" (1 Kings 4:29). Since sand encompasses the sea, the biblical requirement concerning broadness is greater than that conveyed by the Chinese expression. The impact of a person's life-work has much to do with his being either broad or small. A petty person can

never accomplish great things.

### **3. Fine**

A person with a broad capacity often fails to be fine, leading to negligence and inevitable loss. One ought to be broad but not rough, fine but not small.

## **THE THIRD GROUP—STABLE, PATIENT, DEEP**

### **1. Stable**

To be stable is to be solid and not easily moved, not panicky, hasty, or anxious. Stability, however, differs from slowness. Being slow means not acting when there is time to act, while being stable means allowing time to do its work. A stable person does not make decisions lightly or carelessly, nor does he easily praise or condemn others. When a situation is not entirely clear to him, he stops and does not speak or express his opinions carelessly. Neither does he proceed casually in matters that are serious, uncertain, or incomprehensible. Paul, a stable person, said to the Corinthians, "Our word toward you is not yes and no" (2 Cor. 1:18).

### **2. Patient**

Patience here does not refer to endurance but to the ability to wait, as mentioned in James 5:7, "The farmer awaits the precious fruit of the earth." Patience differs from slowness. To be slow is to miss a present opportunity, whereas to be patient is to anticipate a coming opportunity. One should not be slow, but one should be able to wait, working diligently without ever losing hope. Merely to hope, however, is vain; one should trust in his own ability to accomplish things. A patient person is able to remain still when he is in pain. The farmer who patiently awaits his harvest from the earth is allowing time to do its work. Patience is not passivity; it is aggressiveness without anxiety.

### **3. Deep**

To be deep is to be not shallow or superficial. It is to base one's judgment on evidence rather than appearance. It is neither to be nagging nor to be bothersome, but simply to be serious. In any case, one should be deep but not overly inquisitive, since a prying person is useless.

## **THE FOURTH GROUP—PURE, JUST, CALM**

### **1. Pure**

To be pure and unadulterated is a matter of motive, of being free of ulterior intentions. Deuteronomy 22:9 says, "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled." God is never pleased with men doing a mixed work. In the end, ulterior motives always create problems.

### **2. Just**

To be just means to be unbiased, to handle all matters fairly. For example, it is to be

judicious in one's evaluation of others. Faults invariably exist among the good, and merit among faults. To be just, one must be impartial, paying equal attention to each aspect of a person or matter, appraising it from different angles and putting it in its proper place. This is not a matter of spirituality or morality but of character. Both the teacher who expounds the Scriptures and the elder who administrates the church must possess a just character. One cannot do anything rightly if there is the element of injustice in his character. To illustrate, an inaccurate level can never produce an even surface.

### **3. Calm**

The human heart is usually tempestuous. In dealing with important matters, a person who serves the Lord must remain calm in his mind, emotion, and will. One who is not calm cannot resist incitement and external influence. The way to practice calmness is by (1) not acting quickly and (2) not believing rumors, which inevitably cause agitation.

## **THE FIFTH GROUP—SINGLE, CORPORATE, OPEN**

### **1. Single**

To be single and unscattered is related to being pure, just, and calm. A person should either not undertake a task at all or do it single-mindedly. He must be single, whether he is studying, managing a home, or doing business. Singleness brings about concentration, which in turn produces positive results. A person who is not single-minded can never perform a task well.

### **2. Corporate**

To be corporate is to be not individualistic, selfish, or reclusive. Singleness in character must be balanced by a corporate quality.

### **3. Open**

An open believer is able to receive spiritual help. He who is the most open receives the most help and can be the most helpful. How important is an open character among believers! However, this must not be a natural and unrestrained openness but one that, like doors and windows, can be opened or closed readily.

Matters that are absolutely personal, private, and unrelated to others need not be disclosed. The disclosure of one's private affairs never benefits either the teller or the hearer. It is unnecessary to be open concerning matters in which one does not need help or cannot offer help, since such openness is futile.

## **THE SIXTH GROUP—**

AFFECTIONATE, ARDENT, ACCOMMODATING

### **1. Affectionate**

Affection implies both nearness and love. In particular, it stresses care, sympathy, and intimacy. A person without an intimate concern for others cannot bring others to salvation through the gospel. Neither can such a person be a responsible one in the church.

## **2. Ardent**

Being ardent goes beyond being affectionate. Whereas affection is in the heart, ardor implies outward action which resolutely brings others to salvation and helps them to reach the goal. Ardor is fervent and powerful.

## **3. Accommodating**

Herein is the principle of incarnation. If God had not come into the world through incarnation to accommodate Himself to men, but had merely loved men and desired that they return to Him, He could not have accomplished redemption. One must reach out to others in order to lead them to salvation. Only those who fit in with people are able to preach the gospel to them in order to save them. Unless one can accommodate himself to those who are younger and lowlier, he will find it difficult to lead them.

## **THE SEVENTH GROUP—STRONG, PLIANT, SUBMISSIVE**

### **1. Strong**

Strength denotes firmness, not hardness. One ought to be strong but not hard, that is, strong in will but not hard in heart. The Apostle Paul said, "Be a man, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

### **2. Pliant**

Strength must be matched by pliancy. The expression in Chinese is "to temper strength with pliancy." Strength without pliancy is hardness, which inevitably spoils things, whereas pliancy without strength results in softness, which also is useless. A watchband is both firm and flexible, capable of being bent or stretched at will.

### **3. Submissive**

To be submissive is to be obedient and yielding. Some can only teach people to follow orders, but they can never submit to others. One should realize that the person who can best give orders is the person who can best receive them. Submission is an element of the divine life. Those who possess this life do not consider it shameful but proper to submit and to take orders.

The one who gives orders bears a heavy responsibility; those who take them bear none. How blessed it is to listen to others and to be covered in everything.

## **THE EIGHTH GROUP—SUFFERING, LOWLY, POOR**

### **1. Suffering**

Suffering works endless wonders. There are some things which one cannot pass through without suffering. The more a person is able to suffer, the more useful he is. One who is not ready to suffer cannot accomplish great things. Fitting is the ancient proverb, "He who endures the worst of sufferings is the best among men."

## **2. Lowly**

One should aim high but conduct himself in a lowly way. Romans 12:16 says that we should be “led away to the lowly.” Only by taking a lowly position can one help others. No matter how respected and highly esteemed a person may be, he should take a lowly position. This is not to pretend to be humble but rather to genuinely confess from the heart that one has nothing of which to boast.

First Peter 5:5 says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

## **3. Poor**

The world covets position and riches, but a Christian must be content with and even choose poverty. Poverty has its usefulness as well as its delight. However, one should not make himself poor by being lazy. Such poverty is worthless and futile. A willingness to be poor for the Lord’s sake when one has the ability and even the opportunity to be rich, or a practice of spending all one’s money for the Lord, are both rare and precious. The life of Christ is a life that chooses to be poor. Consider how He left His throne to be born in a manger and to live in Nazareth, tasting all the privation of human life.

## **THE NINTH GROUP—STEADFAST, ENDURING, BEARING**

### **1. Steadfast**

Steadfast means persevering. The best is usually reserved for last. Anything that grows quickly also withers quickly. Nothing that is deep, weighty, and superior can be obtained in a short time or by chance. Specifically, there are no shortcuts in spiritual things. Steadfastness and perseverance are the prerequisites for gaining that which is excellent. Many Bible truths which are at first incomprehensible despite one’s desire to know them eventually become understandable through persistent reading of the Scriptures. To be steadfast is to not covet the grand and quick results. There is an old saying that “drops of water eventually can penetrate a stone.”

### **2. Enduring**

One who is able to endure is able to withstand mistreatment. Do not mistreat others, but endure their mistreatment. A young man should not avoid ill-treatment and take the easy way out; rather, he should suffer abuse willingly. The more difficult the lesson, the deeper and more profitable it is.

### **3. Bearing**

A person of character must be able to bear pressure. Anything that is solid and strong must first be pressed. A diamond is formed through intense pressure. That which grows without restriction usually is not beautiful. However, do not invite others to put pressure on you; rather, you should put yourself under pressure. The combination of the five preceding character traits—suffering, lowly, poor, steadfast, and enduring—gives a person the ability to bear pressure.

## **THE TENTH GROUP—CLEAR, MAGNANIMOUS, GRAVE**

## **1. Clear**

Clarity here does not mean brightness; it denotes understanding. People are often ignorant of their own dullness and stupidity. One should know himself as well as others.

## **2. Magnanimous**

Being magnanimous is similar to being broad. To be broad is to be tolerant of others, and to be magnanimous is to be not cruel to others. In dealing with others, one must supplement affection, ardor, and accommodation with magnanimity. It is difficult to have an enemy-loving life without a magnanimous character. A cruel person is always jealous, while a magnanimous person is able to forgive. It is permissible to speak severely to others, but never cruelly. Neither should one be foolishly kind.

## **3. Grave**

One who is grave is not frivolous. Whatever a grave person does carries weight. Whether a matter is great or small, its importance and weight depend on whose hands it is in. In the hands of a grave person, even a small matter will be taken seriously by others. Conversely, in the hands of a light person, a significant matter will be considered by others as inconsequential. In learning to be grave, first, one should not express his opinions lightly; second, one should not judge or criticize flippantly; and third, one should speak slowly and accurately. It is not that one should be silent but that one should speak with discretion. He who is grave is protected, for evil temptations do not come to him easily. Especially in the case of a young woman, gravity brings protection, while lightness invites harm. Be affectionate, ardent, and accommodating toward others, and conduct yourself with gravity.

The content is extracted from the book "Character" by Witness Lee  
A [printed copy of this book](#) is available from Living Stream Ministry