HONORABLE MEN

OF THE BIBLE

Age 10-13

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

HONORABLE MEN OF THE BIBLE

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Ages 10-13
Written by Sister Megan Carter

Table of Contents

HUMILITY AND PATIENCE 4
HONESTY AND INTEGRITY 9
FAITH AND WISDOM 13
ZEALOUSNESS AND LEADERSHIP . . . 17
COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE 21

Chairman:
Brother Rick Williams

Chairman Elect:
Brother Rick Williams

Contributing Editors:
Elder Mitch Glasscock
Elder Jerry Miller
Elder David Swindle
Elder Todd Fugate

Proofreaders:
Sister Laura Beavers
Sister Megan Carter
Brother Danny Hayes
Brother Randall Henson
Sister Casey Rouse
Sister Deborah Williams
Brother Rick Williams

Booklet Design and Layout:
Brother Cory Glass

Written and published under the authority of Mount Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church

In Cooperation with Fairview Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, Faith Missionary Baptist Church, and Old Union Missionary Baptist Church

Price Per Booklet: $1.60

Treasurer
Brother Randall Henson
10022 Woodburn-Allen Springs Rd.
Alvaton, KY 42122
270-842-4526

ALL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES ARE TAKEN FROM KING JAMES VERSION

©2015 Missionary Baptist Bible School Literature/ Mount Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church

LESSON ONE

HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

LESSON TEXT
Luke 14:7-11; James 1:2-4

WRITTEN BY
SISTER MEGAN CARTER

Introduction to the Series

"…Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ…" (Titus 2:12-13)

These two verses are part of the final conclusion of a well-known chapter in Titus, which is often used as a little-but-mighty instruction manual on the behavior of saved people. There are a few verses in that chapter directed specifically at men and a couple directed specifically at women, but the entire chapter could be taken as profitable advice by the entire population. The verses included above are a good summary of God's intentions for our behavior.

God set men in a position of leadership from the beginning. This is a very unpopular notion in our society, causing many to believe that God's design places women in a less important role. For the simplest example we must go all the way back to the beginning and consider how God made Adam from the dirt, made Eve from Adam's rib, and then set up a family using the two of them. Adam was created independently, coming straight from the Earth, and Eve was formed from the very same Earth that God had used on Adam. Without Adam, there was no Eve. Did God plan it this way so that Eve would always consider herself beneath Adam? In debt to him? As less important than him? So that Adam could rule over her and make her his servant? Certainly not! God's intention was that Adam would love Eve fiercely, caring for and protecting her as he would himself. Eve was literally part of him – an extension of himself living outside of his body. So, not only did Adam love Eve, he undoubtedly felt a strong sense of responsibility for her welfare, as God also intended.

Now, with these things in mind, let's consider how much of God's initial plan carries over to *now* – some 6,000 years later in a sin-filled world. In short, *it all carries over.* Men are supposed to feel a sense of responsibility – not just toward women, but toward anyone to whom they can be an example.

That's what these lessons are about – using the roles in which God places you to be a godly example to those around you. Men and women alike are placed in various positions of leadership,

but there are times when perhaps the only way in which we can lead others is by setting the example of godly behavior.

In the following lessons, we will look at the examples set by various men in the Bible and then consider how someone might apply their good characteristics to modern-day roles and professions. And although our examples for these lessons focus on men, the characteristics we'll study are profitable to everyone, male and female – just like the second chapter of Titus.

DEFINING HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

The attributes of humility and patience make a great starting place for this series of lessons since each are a necessary part of godly behavior, coming *before* the other characteristics we'll study (or at least playing a significant part in those characteristics).

Psalm 34:18 says that the Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who have a contrite (or crushed) spirit. What is humility? A closely-related word that you have probably heard before is *humble*. We sometimes describe prayerful, godly people as being humble and we're able to recognize that attribute in the way that they always honor God first, serve others second, and think of themselves last or sometimes not at all, seemingly. What does that have to do with being broken hearted or having a crushed spirit like the above verse suggests? Sometimes we are humbled by difficult or stressful circumstances in our lives. Our hearts are so broken by what's going on around us that our only comfort is crying out to God and relying on Him for help. Other times, our hearts are broken and our spirits are crushed by the realization of how sinful and unworthy of God's blessings we are. This verse from the 34th Psalm tells us that God will save a humble person: someone whose heart is broken by the weight of the knowledge of their sins. So we can see that humility plays a part in salvation, which is the first and most necessary part of having a godly character. This verse also says that God is close to a humble person, someone whose spirit is crushed either by internal or external circumstances. James 4:9-10 instructs us to turn our laughter to sadness because it's only when we are low that the Lord can lift us up. So, we can see based on all of this information that humility is a necessary first part of being godly and setting a godly example because a humble person is ready for God to work on them and begin to shape them into the kind of person He can use in His service.

Likewise, patience must come before many other godly character traits. A patient person is someone who is able to deal with something upsetting without ever getting upset. Romans 5:3-5 explains that saved people are able to endure tribulations (difficulties or suffering) because of what we gain from them. The direct result of tribulation, according to these

verses, is patience. Each of us must face hard things in our lives. It could be stress brought on by school responsibilities, sickness, a disagreement with a friend, job loss, or any number of other challenging situations, but we will all surely be faced with something difficult at some point in our lives. Seeking God's assistance, relying on Him throughout, feeling His comforting hand and guidance, and finally coming out on the other side of that difficult situation with the knowledge that God has carried us through it all teaches us patience.

IN THE BIBLE

An obvious example of the attributes of humility and patience can be found in the Old Testament account of a man named Job. The very first verse of the entire book calls Job perfect and says that he feared (or respected) God and shunned (or pushed away) evil. We know that no human is perfect like Jesus is perfect. When this verse calls Job "perfect," it means that no one had any reason to accuse Job of doing wrong. So, the first thing we see about Job is his excellent character. The second thing we learn about him is that he's blessed with 10 children and is very wealthy; he owns a huge amount of livestock (11,500 animals based on the numbers given in scripture) and has a large household, meaning many people who work for him. Job 1:3 says that Job was "the greatest of all the men of the east."

Many times, a person in Job's position might think very highly of himself, but soon after Job's greatness is described, the scriptures go on to describe his humility. Verse 5 says that Job was always careful to make sacrifices according to the law under which God's children lived at that time *just in case* any of his children might have sinned and it says he did that continually: *Always!* By this act, we can see that even though Job was recognized as a great man with a great family, he was still very aware of his and his family's sinful nature and need of atonement through sacrifice. Part of making sacrifices at that time was choosing the very best lamb or ox or other creature in your possession to kill and offer to God. This, no doubt, was a very humbling experience in and of itself since it reminded the person making the sacrifice that no matter how important they might be in the world, even the best of what they had (as well as all the lesser things beneath it) still belonged to God.

Immediately after all of this description, still in the first chapter, we switch settings and find ourselves in a conversation between God and Satan. God presents Job's excellent character to Satan and Satan makes the accusation that Job remains faithful only because he's so well taken care of. So, God agrees to let Satan attack Job as long as he spares his life. Please understand that God didn't do this to be mean to Job. Remember that God can see the whole picture from the beginning to the end and He knew everything about Job. God knew that Job would rely on Him and remain faithful even through the most difficult times.

Through the next several verses, we stand helplessly by and watch as Job loses all of his livestock, all of his servants, and even all of his children. At that time, people had traditional methods by which they showed that they were mourning. Job observed these traditions by tearing his clothes and shaving his head, but after he did those things verse 20 says he fell on the ground and *worshipped*. Even after losing literally everything, Job said in verse 21, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." And verse 22 says that he *still* did not sin or accuse God of mistreating him. This is the ultimate sign of his humility that he was able to recognize, once again, that everything belongs to God and that He has the authority to give and take as He sees fit. Job knew that he was nothing and submitted himself to God's will in good times and bad times. Job went through a time of what we might call depression. The majority of the rest of the book outlines the good and bad advice given to him by a few friends. God speaks to Job directly in a few places throughout the book. And Job remains godly through it all, saying later in chapter 13 that even if God chose to take his life, he would still trust in Him and the knowledge that he would be justified. Years later, all of Job's blessings and possessions were restored to him and some of them were even doubled! Job 42 outlines the even greater number of livestock he had (now 23,000 animals!) and tells us that 10 more children were born to him. The fact that Job continued to serve God and submit himself to God's will even through so much difficulty exemplifies his patience. He was distressed by his situation, but never let his distress cause him to do wrong.

The end of the book of Job says that he lived to see his family grow to four generations and finally died a very old man.

LIVING TODAY

Although the attributes of humility and patience apply to every role and profession of those who desire a godly character, a farmer might especially need these traits as he faces the unique circumstances of his profession. James 5:7 examines the actions and character of a husbandman, which is another name for a farmer. It says that he waits for the fruit to come and is patient while waiting for the rains to water his crop.

Let's consider a godly man whose main source of income is farming and just to make it more specific, let's say he raises corn and soy beans and also a nice-sized garden to feed his family. He doesn't have any kind of fancy irrigation system to water his crops. He works tirelessly in his fields and employs a small crew to help him. So much of this

farmer's life is waiting. Whether it's waiting through the growing season, waiting for the right kind of weather, or waiting for his crew to hurry through their harvesting before the rain comes, his life requires patience.

Furthermore, consider the fact that this farmer, who makes his living and supports and feeds his family with the crops he raises, must depend completely upon God's providence. This is true of all of us, regardless of what job we hold, of course, but it becomes much more obvious when a person's livelihood depends so heavily upon nature and weather patterns. If it rains too much, if it doesn't rain enough, if it's too windy, if the wrong insect shows up, the crops and the garden are ruined. Other than planting, treating, and harvesting, the farmer has very little control over the success of his crop. So this godly farmer is sure to begin and end each day in humble prayer, asking God to help him be a better servant and to look down on his little farm and to bless his family as He sees fit. What could be more humbling than looking out across a crop that's standing in a flooded field or that's crumbling under the sun of a drought or that's being eaten up by locusts and knowing that only God can fix it? Yes, the farmer's life is absolutely dependent upon the One who controls all of those things. His is a life of humility.

CONCLUSION

In the end, we can conclude that humility and patience are important attributes, but that they are usually attained through difficult or challenging circumstances. Job's life is one of the most extreme examples of that fact. We can also see, however, that humbling oneself and waiting patiently for the Lord to do His work brings about great rewards. Job prospered in the latter years of his life and was blessed greatly with temporal things, but his greatest reward came at the time of his death when he went to be with the One who had sustained him through his hard days. The same is true for our godly farmer. God might bless him with bountiful harvests each year (and that certainly would be a great blessing!) or he might have to endure years of hardship, leaning on the Lord for comfort and provision, but either way, he has Heaven waiting for him.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. James 4:10

LESSON TWO

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

LESSON TEXT
Psalm 15:1-5

WRITTEN BY
SISTER MEGAN CARTER

DEFINING HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Like the attributes discussed in our last lesson, honesty and integrity are important foundational characteristics a godly person must possess. Humility and patience tend to be more internal, affecting how a person *feels* during any given situation, but a person's integrity plays a big part in how those feelings come out and direct that person's actions. So, we might view this lesson's virtues as a completely different sort of personality building block than those we discussed in our last lesson, while still recognizing how much these building blocks depend upon each other in forming a godly man.

First, let's consider how closely related *honesty* and *integrity* actually are. In some definitions, they're actually treated as synonyms (different words with the same/similar meaning), although it might be more appropriate to say that honesty is a very important part of integrity or that a person can't have integrity without also being honest. Noah Webster compiled a very good dictionary in 1828 which includes biblical teachings in its definitions. In that dictionary, *integrity* is defined as wholeness or entireness, particularly when referring to complete moral purity, soundness, or uprightness. In other words, if you are a person of integrity, you are an all-around good person. You do what's right no matter what. Now, when we think of the word *honesty*, we think of telling the truth, although the same word is sometimes used to refer to a person's general good moral nature. Either way it's used, we can see how honesty and integrity walk hand in hand. For the purposes of this lesson, we'll refer only to integrity, remembering that honesty is an important part of that quality.

If we take these definitions and refer back to our lesson text, we can see that the 15th Psalm is basically a more lengthy description of the virtues we just defined. "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill," it says. And what is the answer? Someone who walks uprightly (meaning someone who doesn't do anything for which they could be accused of wrong), someone who does righteous (good) things, someone who tells the truth and doesn't say ugly things, isn't hateful to others, despises wicked people, honors those who fear God, keeps his promises even if it means he'll have to take a loss, doesn't misuse his money, and doesn't mistreat those less fortunate. A

person who sticks to the things listed there can't help but be a person of integrity! And the only way to really stick to those things is through God's assistance. In the book of Mark, Jesus Himself said, "There is none good but one, that is, God." We know that we can't be as good as God and we know that if we wish to demonstrate any of His good qualities we must surely depend upon His help and guidance.

IN THE BIBLE

There are, of course, so many good examples of integrity among the many men of the Bible, but a favorite of mine is David. He was just a human like we are and he made many mistakes, but when God sought a man after His own heart to lead His people, He chose David. David was an unlikely choice. Even his own father thought every one of his other sons was better suited for the task, but we know that God looks at a person's heart and at their intentions and desires rather than their outward appearance. Based on nothing other than the fact that David was God's choice, we know he must have been special.

Now, Saul was the man the people of Israel chose to be their king because he was tall, dark, and handsome, but he turned out to be a very poor choice indeed, even hiding when it came time for him to be officially announced as king. In our last lesson, we briefly discussed Job offering sacrifices on behalf of his family. There were very specific instructions about how and when these sacrifices had to be carried out. Following Saul's first major battle and subsequent victory he was to wait for Samuel, who was God's servant and Saul's spiritual advisor, to perform a sacrifice. Time passed and Samuel didn't come exactly when Saul thought he should, so he decided to just take care of the sacrifice himself. It was immediately after he made that sacrifice that Samuel arrived and informed him that he wouldn't be king much longer. Because of his disobedience, God had chosen another man who would obey and serve Him. Saul continues in his downward spiral until a few chapters later when David is anointed as Israel's next king. David loves and serves Saul, has an extremely close friendship with Saul's son Jonathan, and even marries Saul's daughter Michal. Saul acts as if he cares for David as well, but is actually sick with jealousy toward him, treating him like a son one moment and attempting to pin him to the wall with a spear the next. Saul's crazed behavior finally drives David into hiding.

This finally brings us to the point where we can see a great illustration of David's integrity. For the last half of the book of 1st Samuel, we watch Saul, who has basically lost his mind, plotting against and hunting David, who is terrified and running for his life, hiding in one cave or another. It's during this time that David wrote many of the Psalms in which he asks God for protection and to strike down those who are against him. During this wild goose chase, David stands over a completely vulnerable, unprotected Saul and chooses to spare his life… twice!

Saul had wronged David greatly many times over. He had made it abundantly clear that he wanted to kill him and was actively seeking to take his life at the times that David could have easily taken his. The first time, Saul came into the opening of the cave where David hid and the scriptures say that while Saul was relieving himself (using the bathroom), David sneakily cut off the corner of his cloak. Afterward, David came out and called to Saul and immediately bowed to him. Even though David was fully aware of all of the wrong Saul had done, he said that he would not raise his hand against Saul because he was "the LORD's anointed." Even though Saul had not been God's choice for king, God had allowed Samuel to anoint him and make his kingship official. Because God allowed that anointing to happen, David knew he should respect God *by respecting Saul* and sparing his life. A few verses later, David says, "The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee (1 Samuel 24:12)." These words along with David's actions prove his great integrity. Even though he recognized that he had been wronged and the fact that Saul had sinned greatly, David was more interested in respecting God and doing what was right in *His* sight than in giving Saul what he seemingly deserved. That is the ultimate definition of integrity: Doing what you know to be right according to God's law and letting Him take care of things even when you've been wronged and would maybe like to take revenge yourself.

LIVING TODAY

Honesty and integrity should play a big part in the character of every godly person, of course, but let's specifically consider how these attributes might be especially important in a policeman's line of work.

By definition, policemen generally work around people who have broken the law in one way or another. Because of their position, policemen are sometimes given privileged information concerning some of the illicit activities that go on in the area they serve. Consider how easily a policeman might be tempted to fall into some of those activities himself. Part of being a person of integrity is resisting the temptation to do wrong. A verse in James says that every man is tempted when he's drawn away by his own desires, but another verse in James says that when we resist Satan (including the things with which he tempts us), he runs away from us. Each of us must resist the temptation to do wrong, but since a policeman so often finds himself in the middle of illegal and sinful situations, Satan might especially tempt him to take part, telling him that no one

would suspect him because of his position. A godly man's integrity would help him to turn away from those practices and to do right instead, regardless of what Satan suggests he might gain.

Likewise, a policeman might be tempted to abuse the power he's been given. There are many times when a policeman is placed in charge of vulnerable, less fortunate people and it's his job to protect them just as he would someone of seemingly great importance. Abuse of power might also come across as disobeying the very laws a policemen has promised to uphold. A policeman who is a person of integrity recognizes that he is subject to those laws just like everyone else and sets an example by observing them. The only way to be a good policeman is by serving with integrity.

CONCLUSION

Although we know that we can never be good like God is good, many times we will hear someone being described as "a good man" or "a good person." Looking back over the ways in which David resisted the temptation to take revenge on the man who wanted to kill him and managed to wait on God's judgment instead, we could certainly place him under that "good" heading. There are many worthy policemen who would, likewise, fall into that category. In each of these situations, we can see men who have been given a level of power or authority (either by God or by the area they serve) and refuse to use that power to mistreat others or elevate themselves. In each set of circumstances, we recognize men who choose to focus on what's right rather than do what could possibly better their personal situation in life. This is similar to our previous lesson's discussion of patience: Waiting on the Lord to take care of things rather than taking it into your own hands brings about good results. Just as Job was finally rewarded, so was David. Saul took his own life at the end of the book of 1 Samuel and David became the next king of Israel. Similarly, many times good policemen are recognized and awarded for their honorable service. Regardless of a person's roles in life, striving for integrity is the right choice.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8

LESSON THREE

FAITH AND WISDOM

LESSON TEXT
Proverbs 9:10

WRITTEN BY
SISTER MEGAN CARTER

DEFINING FAITH AND WISDOM

As we continue through our study of godly attributes, we begin to see more and more how intertwined these characteristics are. Faith and wisdom are no exception, each seeming to be nearly encompassed by the other. Let's begin by being sure to understand that wisdom *is not* the same as intelligence. Webster's 1828 Dictionary, which was mentioned in a previous lesson, gives the following as its simplest definition of *wisdom*: The right use or exercise of knowledge. In other words, possessing and practicing wisdom means that we take whatever knowledge we have and put it to a good use. A person with little to no "book smarts" can still be very wise indeed. Many unsaved people seem to possess what we sometimes call "common sense," but it's important to remember that, like the lesson text says, God is the only source of true wisdom.

So, what is faith? Faith is a tricky thing to define, but, fortunately, we can find a definition in the scripture itself. According to Hebrews 11:1, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, [and] the evidence of things not seen." What does that mean? It means that our faith confirms the things we can only look forward to happening in the future (as well as the things we can only think about having happened in the past) and that it is the only evidence we need to prove things we can't see with our eyes. We can read in the Bible about Jesus returning to judge the world and take His children back to Heaven with Him and it's through our faith that we believe that it's *actually going to happen.* It's our faith that confirms to us that Jesus's life, death, and resurrection we read of in the scriptures actually took place. Likewise, we need no further proof beyond our faith that God created the universe and everything in it from nothing in seven literal days. This faith, like wisdom, can only come from God. It can never be manufactured within ourselves.

And how do faith and wisdom intertwine with one another? There is another defining verse in Proverbs that tells us that fearing God is the beginning, or the biggest part, of wisdom and that it's only through knowing God that we can gain understanding (Proverbs 9:10). The very first step to growing in godliness and even before we can begin to have faith that God is who He says He is, we must hear about

Him somehow. Before you can become friends with someone, you must first be introduced and become acquainted. For those of us who have grown up in church, it seems odd to imagine needing to be introduced to God or to Jesus, but there are those in the world who have never even heard of Jesus. He makes Himself known through preaching, teaching, the testimonies and actions of godly people, and scripture says that even God's creation declares His glory and shows His handiwork. After a person comes to a knowledge of God, by whatever means, they may choose to seek Him further or reject Him. To those who seek Him with a contrite, or crushed, spirit, God supplies the faith they need to be saved and they come to know Him as their Savior. So by this we can see the very beginnings of how these attributes work together. A person who comes to a knowledge of the Creator, recognizes their helpless state before Him, and seeks Him in reverential fear is exercising the "right use of… knowledge" as in the previously discussed definition of wisdom. This right use not only points them toward salvation, but also down a path of growing further in both faith and wisdom throughout their lives.

IN THE BIBLE

The biblical example of faith and wisdom we'll discuss in this lesson is Abraham – the great patriarch of God's chosen people at that time. We'll look at a time when Abraham used wisdom in making a difficult choice and at that time, he was still called Abram. We can trace Abram's family tree all the way back to Shem, who, as a son of Noah, was one of eight people to survive the flood. His family had settled in a place called Ur, but in Genesis 13, we see that Abram's father, Terah, made the decision to leave Ur (along with Abram, Abram's wife Sarai, and his grandson Lot, who was under the care of Abram's father since his own father had died) and move to Canaan. They only made it as far as Haran, which was no small feat considering that Haran was over 500 miles away from their home, but for whatever reason they stayed and Terah finally died there. Soon after, we learn of God's great promise to Abram, which actually began with the instruction to leave his "father's house" and to travel to another land. So Abram set off once again, from Haran this time, to make the roughly 400 mile trip to Canaan, accompanied by his wife and nephew.

After the lengthy trip, Abram finally settled in southern Canaan. Abram was very "rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold," according to Genesis 13:2. So Abram was a great man according to the standards of the day, but we know he was also faithful to God. In this same chapter, we learn that Abram's faith was very important to him and witness him worshipping and praying at an altar he had built.

So, Abram settled in the lands between two places called Bethel and Hai. Abram's nephew Lot also settled here and he was also blessed with many herds of livestock, though not as many as Abram. Eventually, Abram and Lot and their herds became too crowded and their respective herdmen couldn't get along. Abram had a difficult decision to make. Neither he nor Lot could increase as long as they stayed where they were and, more importantly, he would risk their relationship and the peace of their family if they stayed together. So Abram decided that the best thing to do was to separate from Lot. Now, consider the fact that Lot was the last of Abram's father's family that was still living there alongside Abram. Lot was Abram's last connection to home and he undoubtedly loved Lot very much, having likely taken some level of responsibility for him since the death of Terah. To further prove that Abram was more interested in keeping their relationship intact than in getting the best for himself, he allowed Lot to have first choice of the lands around them. In Genesis 13:9, Abram says to Lot, "Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Abram, being the greater of the two, could have easily demanded the first choice and take for himself the better land. Instead, he gave that choice to Lot, insuring that if Lot must leave him, he would at least leave happily and satisfied.

These actions are a great illustration of Abram's wisdom, showing how he took the knowledge he had of his relationship with Lot, each of their flocks and the space they required, and generally how to deal fairly with others and used it for good. It also illustrates Abram's faith in that he was obviously ready to trust God's plan for his and Lot's lives separate from each other, even though he couldn't know for sure what would happen after they parted ways.

LIVING TODAY

Probably the best modern-day example of a role in which a man must grow in faith and continually seek God's wisdom is that of a pastor or missionary. For this example, let's consider a man with a wife and children who has been called to pastor a church many miles from the place they consider home. Like Abram, this man and his family must do something that, under any other circumstances, they would not choose to do. Their situation requires that they sell their home and many of their belongings before moving. They not only leave behind grandparents and other family members, but also their familiar home church, familiar schools and school friends, and perhaps the stability of current jobs. All of these things are stressful enough on their own. After moving, this man must add to that stress the responsibility of preaching or teaching several times a week and visiting and counseling church members when needs arise while still providing

for his family and fulfilling his roles at home. Simply put, these things cannot be done without the help of a loving, almighty God.

For all of the decisions that must be made concerning the many changes in their lives, as well as serving the church to which he's been called, seeking God's wisdom is the answer. Wisdom gives him the ability to take the knowledge he has and use it for good. And if he has sought God's guidance in everything, whether in making decisions for his family or in preparing sermons and lessons for the church he's serving, then he can rest in the faith God supplies that everything will work out for good – just as Abram was able to peacefully send Lot away and rest in God's plan.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes in the lives of God's servants, it becomes necessary to make difficult decisions and even do things that they don't necessarily want to do. Abram likely would have preferred to remain close to his nephew, but the circumstances required something different. It's in these situations that a godly person will seek God's wisdom and lean upon their faith in God to do what's right. God helps us not only to grow in faith and wisdom, but as we grow closer to Him, His desires become our desires, making our difficult decisions easier to face.

…With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

LESSON FOUR

LEADERSHIP AND ZEAL

LESSON TEXT
Ecclesiastes 9:10

WRITTEN BY
SISTER MEGAN CARTER

DEFINING LEADERSHIP AND ZEAL

The qualities we'll discuss in this lesson are perhaps a bit more straightforward than some of the others we've looked at so far in this series. We all have a good understanding of what leadership is; let's make sure we know what leadership *isn't.* Good, godly leadership is full of love; a good leader cares about the people he's leading. Leadership has nothing to do with forcing others to do whatever you want them to do whether they want to or not. A good leader doesn't need to force or even convince others to follow him because it is readily apparent that his foremost desire is taking care of those he's leading as they try to reach their common goal.

Before we go any farther, we must address *zeal* because it plays such an important role in good leadership. Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives two good, simple definitions for zeal; the first calls zeal "the blind conductor of the will." When we hear the word *conductor,* we think of the man who's in charge of a train schedule. His whole job revolves around getting the trains out of the station at just the right time. What if that man was blind? Then he could not easily take anything else into consideration when telling a train to *GO!* He would never hold the train for just a second for a late passenger who's running across the station and he would never consider the weather and decide the train shouldn't try to set out in a bad storm or snow. Granted, he *could* technically get that information from someone else, but for the purposes of this lesson, let's imagine that all of these decisions rest on him alone. So, no other circumstances would affect his decision to keep the train on schedule. The second definition given for *zeal* is "eagerness of desire." Train conductors are extremely eager to get the trains out of the station on time and, in the case of this blind train conductor, no outside forces could alter that desire. Obviously, a blind train conductor might make for some dangerous situations. Zeal is similar, but works a little differently than our blind train conductor.

Another example of zeal we could consider is a child who asks for a pony for her birthday. She absolutely cannot imagine any reason why she shouldn't or wouldn't actually want to have one. She doesn't understand why the pony can't live in her room and can't ever imagine that she wouldn't enjoy cleaning up

after it if it did. She decides, however, that it could live outside and isn't at all discouraged by the idea of having to go out in the cold or rain to feed it and take care of it. All she knows and can feel is how much she wants that pony. Her desire to have a pony blinds her to any other aspect of actually having one.

Now, apply these examples to the qualities of a good leader. The first thing a leader needs is a goal or a place to which he must lead others. The next thing he needs is knowledge of the importance of that goal. Just as the train conductor's goal of getting the trains out of the station on time is the most important thing to him. If a person is going to be a leader to others, it helps if he's passionate about what he believes in. If he is convinced that getting to the desired goal is important, it will be much easier for him to show others how important it is for them to follow him to that goal. Also like the train conductor, a good leader is blind to the hardships that may make getting to his goal difficult. That doesn't mean he will carelessly lead others into danger or situations in which they might be upset unnecessarily. It means that even if the going gets tough, he won't give up and will be there to help and guide others through it. And, like the child who wants a pony, no amount of discouraging details will persuade a good leader to back down from what he believes to be important. All he knows and can feel is how convinced he is that he's doing the right thing and that helps to drive away his doubts and fears in times of trouble.

IN THE BIBLE

A great biblical example of zeal is the apostle Paul. Before Paul was saved, his primary goal in life was to destroy the church and the people who made it up. Not only did he consent to the death of Stephen, a follower of Christ who was one of the first deacons, but Acts 8:3 tells us that he also "made havock of the church" and dragged people from their homes to have them put in prison. Later, in the letters he wrote, Paul openly admitted that he was the least of the apostles because he persecuted the church and even referred to himself as the worst of sinners. It's obvious that Paul was 100% sold out to the cause of making things as difficult as possible for the church to continue prior to being saved. Although it's a very negative example, this shows us the great passion Paul was capable of. He hated the church and was willing to do whatever was necessary to stop it.

Even at the time just prior to being saved, Paul still "[breathed] out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9:1) It was at this time that he requested permission to go to a city called Damascus in search of more people to imprison for serving God. So, he set off for Damascus, but on the way there, a light appeared all around him and a voice spoke to him. Paul heard the voice of God and his

goal was immediately changed. He went from rabidly hunting and destroying God's people to trembling and asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) This is the point at which Paul's zeal shifted. He didn't lose his zeal; it was just redirected. Instead of having people imprisoned in Damascus, he preached to them! The people who heard him were astonished and could not believe that this man was preaching about Jesus after so recently persecuting people for following Him. From that point forward, Paul became a great leader in the Lord's church.

He travelled all around and preached in the modern-day areas of Italy, Greece, and Turkey and wrote great instructional letters to several of the churches in those areas. He also wrote letters to various individuals. These include letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, among others, as well as personal letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. We sometimes call these *epistles* (another word for *letters*) and recognize them as books of the New Testament.

Why was Paul so well-received and able to gain the trust of so many after having been such a nasty person? For that matter, how did Paul switch sides so quickly and so completely that his zeal *for* the Lord matched or even outpaced his prior zeal *against* the Lord? The only possible answer is God. Only God could make such a change in a person's thoughts and desires and only God could adjust the hearts and minds of the people who would hear Paul's teaching. It must have been abundantly clear to the people who heard Paul that he was 100% sold out to uplifting the name of Jesus and caring for, as well as supporting the growth of His church. Paul's new goal was set by God and that goal was obviously of the upmost importance to him. He spent the rest of his life working toward that cause and even gave his life for it in the end. As we discussed in the previous section, Paul possessed those two primary components of good leadership: Having a goal and recognizing the importance of that goal.

God accomplished several very important things by working in Paul's life. Not only did Paul preach the gospel and help several specific churches work through the problems they had in their congregations, AND not only did those teachings make their way down through the years to help our present-day churches as well, but God proved in Paul's life that He is able to change the heart of *anyone* in a big way and He is willing to save anyone and use them in His service in a big way.

LIVING TODAY

If ever there were a role in which good leadership qualities and zeal are needed, it would certainly be those roles of a husband and father. The Bible clearly states that the husband is to be the leader of a household. God set this up

from the very beginning, giving His law to Adam and placing the responsibility of upholding that law within his family solely upon him. Husbands down through time since then have been given and are given the same responsibility. Let's recall from our first section that leadership *is not* the same as dictatorship, having complete control over and forcing someone to do whatever you want. Husbands are not called to be leaders so they can be slave drivers. 1 Peter 3:7 reminds husbands to be mindful of the fact that both he and his wife are "heirs together of the grace of life," meaning that while he is called to lead and she is called to submit herself to his leadership, they are both equally saved and equally children of God.

Furthermore, they must both serve together in submission to God, as He is the head of us all. This is the goal that a godly husband will have for his family. The primary objective in leading a family is first and foremost submission to God's will. A godly husband and father recognizes that submitting to God's will not only brings God glory, but is also the best way to insure a content, peaceful, loving environment for his family. To be truly effective in this role, his goal, like in Paul's life, must be set by God. It's only when that goal is set by God that a man will be able to zealously uphold God's truths, teach them to his family, and lead them in upholding those truths as well.

CONCLUSION

A good leader wants the best for those he's trying to lead and he wants to help them do whatever is necessary to reach the desired goal. He will certainly take into consideration all of the circumstances that might affect reaching that goal, but no outside force will dampen his zeal or change his desire to lead in the right direction. Things might become difficult and there might be negative aspects involved, but a good leader can persevere through those things while still caring for those he's leading and help them to reach their goal.

The best kind of leader is a godly one. A godly leader is firmly grounded in God's truths and leads according to those truths. He desires God's will to be done more than anything else. His unwavering zeal would assist him in proclaiming what is right and declaring that he would not depart from it.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve… but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15

LESSON FIVE

COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE

LESSON TEXT
Joshua 1:9

WRITTEN BY
SISTER MEGAN CARTER

DEFINING COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE

The attributes of our final lesson may be the only ones included in this series that require no definition. Instead, let's discuss our instructions from God concerning these characteristics.

In our lesson about honesty and integrity, we discussed Saul and his problems. Shortly after he became king, God sent him out to destroy a group of people called the Amalekites, so called because their leader's name was Amalek. God's instructions were to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not." (1 Samuel 15:3) So Saul did that… except he decided to keep all their nicest animals to sacrifice. That was Saul's explanation, at least, when his spiritual advisor, God's wise judge, Samuel showed up and asked what he had done. Saul knew he was compelled by God's law to have sacrifices performed on his behalf and thought that would smooth over his obvious disobedience. Samuel responded to Saul, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22) In other words, obeying God's direct instruction is far more important than choosing for ourselves which "right" thing fits the situation. Situations may arise in our lives in which any of several responses wouldn't necessarily be sinful, but if we've gotten instructions from God, those specific instructions become the *only* right response. God will never instruct us to do anything contrary to His Word and obedience trumps everything else when it comes to Him.

Now, if we intend to always obey God, there will be times that it will require a great deal of courage to do so. Sometimes obeying God means standing up to other people who can't or don't want to understand the reasons behind whatever you're doing. Sometimes the most difficult part of obeying God is denying *yourself* of what you really want to do. Such was the case with Saul and the spoil of the Amalekites. For whatever reason, he didn't want to completely wipe out everything they had as God had instructed, whether it was truly because he intended to sacrifice all of their best animals or because he just wanted to keep some of them for himself. It takes courage, coupled with integrity and humility, to deny our fleshly desires. The foundation

of all of that is faith. Moses gave the Children of Israel some good instructions in Deuteronomy 31:6 that we can apply to staying obedient: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of [your enemies]: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." If we intend to be fully obedient, we must build upon first trusting that God knows what He's doing when He gives us instructions. If we trust that God knows what He's doing, it becomes easier to accept that God also knows what's best for us and to believe that He will take care of us no matter what happens. And if we are going through life with a firm knowledge that God is going to take care of us, consider how that will bolster our courage! It's much easier to be courageous if you know what the final outcome will be. And with God, the outcome can only be good!

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Jeremiah 29:11

IN THE BIBLE

For each of these lessons, we could have relied entirely upon the example of one Man: Jesus. During His time on Earth, He perfectly exemplified each of the qualities we've discussed in this series. It could be said that perhaps, for Jesus, everything He did as a man began with obedience. This part can be a little confusing since it's so difficult for us to understand how this man we recognize as a single person can be one and the same with someone else, as is the case with God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost. In one way, we could say that Jesus was obedient to the will of His Father, but we can also say that He acted of His own will, since God the Father and Jesus, His Son, are in perfect agreement on all things. Fortunately, we have access to some scripture in the second chapter of Philippians which shows us how beautifully these things mesh together:

5Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Verse 6 says that Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Jesus clearly recognized and referred many times to His equality with God the Father, stating it most clearly perhaps in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." Although Jesus made this fact clear, it was also very obvious that He didn't attempt to use His important position to His own advantage. No doubt there were some who would have preferred to have Jesus in a royal, kinglike role while He was here on Earth, but verse 7 says He "took upon him the form of a servant." Jesus, sharing the will of the Father, chose obedience over kingship. And in doing so, He became obedient to God's complete plan as well as obedient to death, as we all are. Jesus already shared the will of God the Father, but becoming obedient to death was something that would never have been required of Him. The Bible teaches that the wages of sin is death, meaning that our bodies wear out and get sick or accidents occur, and we eventually die because of sin. We know that Jesus was sinless, so death did not apply to Him. Even though He took on the form of a man, the fact that He was one with God still kept Him from death. But it pleased God, the great Creator of all things, to make a pathway for mankind to come back to Him through the perfect suffering of His Son, who is called the Captain of our Salvation (Hebrews 2:10). And so Jesus submitted Himself to that suffering. He became obedient to that suffering and to that terrible death while His Father turned His back, so that we – *you and I* – would never have to experience God turning His back on us. Because of Jesus's perfect willingness to suffer the death of the cross, He now sits at the right hand of God and has been "given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Philippians 2:10)

Now, we've discussed how Jesus and God, being the same, were in complete agreement concerning the plan for Jesus's life as a man. But as much as Jesus was completely God, He was also completely human. Jesus was very special in that He was sinless; His God-nature made it impossible for Him to sin. Regardless of those things, He still felt every bit as much human emotion as each of us do. Hebrews 2:17 tells us that Jesus had to be made just like us so that He could be merciful and faithful to us. So, based on that information, we can assume that His physical and mental responses to the things He endured are like the responses we might experience under the same circumstances. When the time of His crucifixion neared, Jesus was in anguish as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemene and He asked God, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39) Jesus's human nature desired a way to avoid the suffering He knew He must endure. He dreaded what was to come, just as any of us would. The difference between Jesus and us is that His divine nature kept Him from resisting God's will and thereby sinning. Consider

the courage it must have taken for Jesus to face the days ahead of Him, being completely aware of all the things He would suffer. Indeed, Jesus was aware of those things throughout His entire life on Earth. In the first section of this lesson, we discussed how it sometimes takes a great deal of courage to overcome our own desires, denying ourselves of what we really want. God gave mankind the will to live; that is, it is our natural impulse to protect ourselves and fight to stay alive. Jesus was no different in that respect. He must have had incredible mental strength to be able to live His whole life under the weight of the knowledge of His coming death.

LIVING TODAY & CONCLUSION

As we wrap up this final lesson, let's consider how courage and obedience are intimately connected to each of the other attributes we've discussed so far. How do you become more courageous? How do you learn to be more obedient? As we mentioned previously, the foundation of each of these must be faith. The wisdom born of faith teaches us that we are able to and should approach God boldly and follow Him obediently. If we are to follow obediently, we must sometimes wait patiently for instruction, which is humbling, helping us to remember that we are not our own. All of these virtues work together to add to the integrity of our lives and, of course, we can't hope to be good leaders or examples to others without integrity. Courage and zeal, likewise, work together in our leadership qualities. Each of these characteristics is like a building block and when you stack them all together just right, you get a very good person. It's a fantastic goal to try to apply all of these good qualities to our lives, but we know that even our very best efforts will fail and probably quite often. Only one Man perfectly upheld each of the attributes we've touched on in this study.

There is no earthly profession to which we can compare Jesus's work while He was here with us. His example applies to each and every one of us, regardless of our gender, age, profession, roles, or position in life. Jesus didn't appear to us as a king or a mighty warrior, untouchable to most of the world. He appeared as a man – just an everyday, common-looking person. He spoke with authority and awed scholars from the time He was a child, but He spent most of His time healing and helping those no one else wanted. He is the Son of the Most High, but He came to rescue the most low. He never did anything deserving punishment, yet He courageously faced the worst punishment. He is the only Man who ever lived who could escape death, but He became obedient to it and, in doing so, is victorious over it. As God's children, we share in that victory.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

NO CHARGE FOR DOWNLOAD/PRINTING