

# Showing Affection

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by Jeff Asher

The English word *love* includes a wide range of ideas either when used in every day conversation or as a translation in the New Testament. Webster defines love as “strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; attraction based on sexual desire; affection and tenderness felt by lovers; affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests; warm attachment, enthusiasm or devotion; unselfish loyal benevolent concern for the good of another; a person’s adoration of God.”

## Four Greek Words

There are four distinct Greek words translated by the English word love. **EROS** is the word for the sexual expression of love; this word is not used in Scripture. However, the duty of spouses in this matter is expressed by the euphemism “render...due benevolence” (I Corinthians 7:4- 5). This is also the Greek word from which we get our English word “erotic”.

**STORGE** is the word for the tender love and affection which exists between family members; it is the love of kindred. However, it is only used as a negative and translated as “without natural affection” (Romans 1: 31; II Timothy 3:3). This sin described the fallen Gentiles and the apostasy in the church. To be without the affection of family is a sin.

**PHILEO** is that love associated with friendship. It comes into English in *philanthropist* and *Philadelphia*. In the New Testament it is compounded with husband and children (Titus 2:4), man (Titus 3:4) and brother (Romans 12:10). In Romans 12:10 it is also combined with the word **STORGE**, the love of family, and translated, “kindly affectioned”.

**AGAPAO** is the selfless love of marriage (Ephesians 5:21-31; I Corinthians 13:4-8). It is that disposition of the heart that seeks only what is in the best interest of another. This love is not reciprocal; neither does it depend upon any quality in its object in order to be present. This is the love with which God loves us (John 3:16).

## Tenderness Expected in the Home

As evident from Romans 1:31 and II Timothy 3:3 tender feelings are expected to be found in the home. As a matter of fact to be without them represents an apostasy and characterizes a fallen condition.

Jesus expected men to love, have tender feelings, for their parents (Matthew 10:37), for their spouses (Titus 2:4; Luke 14:26), their children (Titus 2:4) and their siblings (Romans 12:10; Luke 14:26).

The home is in need of serious repair when these tender feelings are neglected or absent (Proverbs 17:1; 15:17; 21:9, 19; 25:24). God wants and expects us to be affectionate toward our family members.

## How to Express Affection

Sometimes we find it hard to express affection. It may be that we do not know how. The Bible gives us examples of several appropriate ways in which to show affection. Men in particular find it difficult to show our tender feelings. Granted we do not all have to be the same, and some of us will be more expressive than others, but we all should learn to show some affection.

**Kissing.** The Orientals are more comfortable with this form of demonstration than most Westerners it seems. Even today in the East, it is very common

for men to “kiss” one another as a form of greeting. In the Bible parents kissed their children (Genesis 27:26; 50:1). Of course, husbands and wives kissed (Song of Solomon 1:2; 8:1); brothers and sisters kissed (Song of Solomon 8:1). Brothers kissed one another (Genesis 33:4). Kinsmen kissed (Genesis 31:55). And, grandparents kissed their grandchildren (Genesis 48:10). Family affection may be so strong as to see in laws kiss (Exodus 18:7; Ruth 1:14). The kiss was even common among mail friends (II Samuel 19:39).

**Hugging or Embracing.** In Scripture it is very common to see kinsmen embrace (Genesis 29:13). Brothers embrace (Genesis 33:4). Certainly we would expect to see parents (Genesis 46:29) and children (II Kings 4:16) freely offering an embrace to one another. Husbands and wives or the betrothed are also shown embracing one another (Genesis 26:8; Song of Solomon 2:6; 8:3).

**Gift Giving.** A time honored way in which we may show affection is through giving gifts. These need not be expensive. Many of the gifts found given in the Bible prove the adage, “It is the thought that counts.” Spouses gave gifts to one another (I Samuel 1:4-5; Genesis 24:22, 30, 47; Ezekiel 16:10-13). Parents gave gifts to their children as expressions of love and affection (Genesis 37:3; I Samuel 2:19; Luke 11:11-13). Siblings gave gifts to each other (Genesis 32:13). The Scriptures recognize the value of gifts in maintaining (Proverbs 18:16; 17:8) and restoring good feelings between the giver and the receiver (Genesis 32:20; Proverbs 21:14). “A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it.”

**Appropriate Praise.** So often it is difficult for us to reward good behavior and gracious deeds with a word of praise. Yet, the Bible recommends praise for those that have done well (Proverbs 23:15-16, 24-25, 25:11; 27, 27:2, 11). Specifically, husbands ought to

praise a faithful wife (Proverbs 31:28). Children ought to speak praise of their parents (Psalm 127:3-5) and parents their children (Proverbs 17:6).

## Learning to Be Affectionate

It is possible to learn how to become an affectionate person. Do not resist becoming such by saying, “I am not; therefore, I cannot.” As with all things right, the Bible points the way.

The first step toward becoming affectionate is to *receive affection from others*. Jesus set the example in this, when the little children came to Jesus to be touched by Him, He refused them not (Luke 18:15-16). There is always time to hug a child. A very wise and experienced parent once told me when we first became parents: “A child only cries for one of four reasons: he’s hungry, he’s wet, he’s hurt, or he wants to be held.” Children need to be held, hugged and embraced. The Lord made time, and we must as well.

Next, you must *start showing affection*. Jesus returned the affection of the little children, “He took them up in His arms” (Mark 10:16). He received gladly and gratefully the gifts that were given to Him (John 12:7-8; Luke 7:37-38; Luke 8:1-3). Jesus clearly demonstrated his tender feelings for those whom He made His companions (John 11:5, 35-36; 12:1-8). Fathers “pity” their children, that is, they show passion (Psalm 103:13).

Finally, let your words convey your tender feelings. True love can, should and must be demonstrated (I Corinthians 13:4-8; I John 3:18); however, the truth is fathers and mothers must *tell* their children that they love them (I Thessalonians 2:11; Titus 2:4). Spouses must do the same (Song of Solomon 8:6-7). Everyone wants to be told that they are loved. Learn to say it, show it and mean it.

Webster defines *chaste* as “not having engaged in unlawful sexual intercourse; virtuous; free from obscenity, descent; undefiled or stainless.” Roget gives as synonyms the words: pure, virginal, virtuous, unsullied, unblemished, innocent, good, wholesome, moral.” In the Bible the word translates *agnon* which is properly “clean” and tropically, “innocent, modest, perfect, chaste, pure” in a moral sense. This word is derived from *agos* (an awful thing) sacred (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially, consecrated. It is the word for *holy* and *saint*.

Unfortunately, we live in a time when chastity is trivialized. Young men and women are ridiculed in movies, music and literature if they have maintained their virginity. Yet, our society is beginning to see the damage that has been done. However, it is a shame that chastity has to be “promoted” and “advocated” like a fad when it ought to be the expected norm.

## Bible Principles that Relate to Chastity

In the first place, we need to recognize that God made us sexual beings (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4-6). It is His intent that men realize and fulfill their sexuality (Genesis 1:28; 8:17). Furthermore, our sexuality is for our good and our pleasure. When God announced His intent to make a woman, it was because it was not “good” for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Numerous times in the Bible God encourages man to find the joy of companionate marriage (Proverbs 5:18; Song 4: 9-5:1ff).

However, the true joy of our sexuality can be found only in marriage (I Corinthians 7:1-5; Hebrews 13: 4). God has so designed man that he is intended only for monogamy. The Bible declares that anything else is “against nature” (Romans 1:26-27). To be

promiscuous is to “sin against one’s own body” (I Corinthians 6:18). Contrary to popular belief, it is not “just sex”. There is a one flesh connection made that is corrupted and perverted through fornication. You cannot demean that and avoid the consequences. Therefore, God has said one should maintain virginity until marriage (Deuteronomy 22:13-21; I Corinthians 7:36-38).

Once married, faithfulness to one’s spouse is essential to a joyful sexuality (Matthew 19:5 Ephesians 5:31). Fornication is the only sin that God regards as serious enough to justify a divorce (Matthew 19:6-11; 5: 28-32). Marital infidelity strikes at the very heart of marriage. It violates a covenant which established trust and created intimacy (Proverbs 2:17; Malachi 2: 14-16).

## Possess Your Vessel in Holiness

Paul states the issue plainly in I Thessalonians chapter four: “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (vv. 1-7).

Whether one understands vessel to refer to himself or the spouse, the truth of the passage is the same, we

are set apart unto our own spouse and none other (cf. I Corinthians 7:3–5). As already noted fornication is a sin against our own body, but it is also a sin against our mate. We are not holy or chaste if we, as the wise man said, “Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets” (Proverbs 5:16).

## How to Be Chaste

In the Bible we read about a man who had a friend that actually encouraged him to commit fornication (II Samuel 13:1ff). In our society today, the billboards, the TV, the literature is filled with inducements to this sin. There is incredible pressure on the young and the old to forsake holiness. How do we wage war against it?

Like the proverbial monkeys, we must protect our eyes, ears and mouth against evil. Protecting the heart will stay the feet (Mark 7:21; Matthew 15:18–19).

Job said that he had made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1). And, David purposed that he would set no wicked thing before his eyes (Psalm 101:3). A first step toward protecting the heart from adultery is to restrain our eyes from wandering and contemplating adultery (II Peter 2:14; Hosea 2:2). *What are you watching?*

We also need to guard our hearts from adultery by protecting our ears. Jesus said, “Take heed what you hear” (Mark 4:24). The music and literature of our day extols “love” (cf. Proverbs 7:18). The popular philosophy is that man was never intended to be monogamous. *What are you listening to?*

Closely related to that is our speech (Ephesians 4:29; 5:3–4). Paul condemned “foolish jesting” and “corrupt speech.” There is a lot of conversation that goes on in the world that is filled with sexual innuendo. Most affairs begin with smutty talk at the water cooler and gossip about one’s mate to a stranger. The adulteress of proverbs chapter seven seduced her young fool with

tales of her loneliness, flattery and the promise of love. *What are you talking about?*

Finally, remember David. He fell into adultery because he was not where he belonged. Had he been in the field doing his duty rather than in the palace he could have avoided adultery (II Samuel 11). Had Bathsheba stayed at home rather than going to the king’s rooms, sin would not have occurred. Often fornication occurs because we use foolish judgment and go to places where we do not belong (Proverbs 7:8ff). *Where are you going?*

## When Purity Is Lost

Sadly, fornication occurs. While one will never be a virgin again once that choice is made, it is not impossible to regain purity.

God is merciful and will forgive (I John 1:7–9; 2:1–2). He will cleanse, restore to a pure condition, every one that will repent of sin and seek His pardon (Acts 8:22). Like the woman taken in adultery, the woman at the well, or the woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears, you can be clean (I Corinthians 6:9–11). To these Jesus said, “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11). Once cleansed possess your vessel in holiness which pleases God.

# Contentment

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by Jeff Asher

Webster defines *contentment* as “the state of being contented: satisfaction...not desiring more than one has: satisfied; resigned to circumstances, assenting, satisfied with things as they are.” In the Bible *content* is from two words. The first word, **ARKEO**; means “to be possessed of unailing strength, to be strong, to suffice, to be enough; passively to be satisfied with a thing, contented.” The second, **AUTARKEIA** describes “a perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed; hence, sufficiency of the necessities of life: contentment.”

## It Is Not...

**Gratification.** Paul did not always have all he needed. Sometimes he even went hungry (Philippians 4: 11). However, he was always content (v. 12). Thus, gratification does not guarantee contentment and one may be content though lacking necessities and comforts.

How often have we seen someone who thought they could be happy if they could just have, or do, or be...only to experience disappointment, once gratified. Contentment is not rooted in possessing or pleasure.

**Lack of Ambition.** There is nothing wrong with wanting to succeed, improve, or do better. As a matter of fact, God’s word teaches us to be thrifty and diligent in the management of our resources in order to increase our substance (Proverbs 10:4). God encourages us to work hard, achieve and rejoice in our success (Ecclesiastes 2:24; Proverbs 10:5; Ephesians 4:28).

What God disapproves is a covetous spirit and an insatiable desire for more and more (Ecclesiastes 5: 10-11; Proverbs 1:19). The real joy in work, success and possessions is the realization that one has enough

and the joy that comes from giving to other (Ephesians 4:28, 29; Proverbs 30:8-9; Acts 20:35).

**Indifference.** Laziness is a sin, and neglect is a greater sin (Proverbs 24:30-34). The man who will not work is unworthy of support (II Thessalonians 3:10). Too many try to ennoble their disorderly conduct by calling it contentment (Proverbs 21:24-25).

## It Is...

**Submission.** In order to be content one **MUST** be realistic (Matthew 6:25-34; Ecclesiastes 1:15). The short man is not going to be tall, nor the bald man grow hair. There are some things we cannot change, but change the things you can and use the things you cannot (Luke 19:4). As one fellow observed they’re not stumbling-blocks or barricades, but stepping stones.

**Pleasure.** The secret to finding contentment is learning to enjoy the things you have, rather than finding displeasure in what you do not (Hebrews 13: 5). This wrong perspective leads to jealousy and envy (Ecclesiastes 4:4; Proverbs 14:30). Life is robbed of its joy when we waste it pining away for what we do not possess while never savoring the what is ours and ours alone.

**Satisfaction.** Paul wrote the Philippians and said, “I am full” (4:18). Contentment comes when one is able to recognize “It is enough.” The wise man says there are four things that are never satisfied: the grave, a barren womb, the earth which drinks in the rain and fire (Proverbs 30:14-16). He describes the men of his day as horse leaches that cry continually, “Give! Give!” (cf. Amos 4:1). There is a point when we have enough (I Timothy 6:8-10).

## Contentment Must Be Learned

The Apostle Paul said, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4: 11). It is obvious then that we do not just wake up one morning and realize we are content. It is a state of mind that we must acquire through the discipline of the word of God. It is something that comes through the faithful practice of the religion of Jesus Christ (I Timothy 6:6).

We may learn to be content by following the example of Christ. Jesus did not possess a lot of things (Matthew 8:20), but surely He was one of the happiest men that ever lived. He understood that life is not measured by the size of one’s bank account (Luke 12: 15; Matthew 6:19-21, 25). He learned to trust in the Providence of God and the goodness of His brethren (Luke 6:27-38; Matthew 6:33). He was a giver not a taker (Acts 20:35).

We can learn contentment from the discipline of suffering. We can be perfected through suffering even Jesus was perfected (Hebrews 2:11). Trials build character which is of greater worth than things (1 Peter 1:5-7). Through suffering we develop greater faith and inner strength (Philippians 4:11-13; Romans 5:3-5).

The experiences of life will teach us how to be content if we will let them. The average or common lifestyle produces the heartiest people and those most likely to be truly reliant upon God (Proverbs 30: 8, 9; cf. Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 6:24). Abundance tends toward dependence upon what one possesses (Ecclesiastes 4:6). Poverty often seduces to despair and cynicism (I Timothy 6:6-10). But a life filled with hard work and a thrifty lifestyle brings one to know that God is good and takes care of the righteous (Ecclesiastes 5:12; Proverbs 11:28; 22:4; 1 Peter 3:12). It is important that men learn it is what you are and do that endures, rather than what you had and spent

(Proverbs 23:5; Ecclesiastes 2:18-19).

We can learn to be content from the examples that are about us. I remember hearing my mother say of the life during the Depression, “We were all poor we just didn’t know it.” What they lacked in material things they made up for in love and affection. The simple life can be a wonderful life if there is love in the home, whereas we can have both fists full and be miserable because we are consumed with things rather than relationships (Proverbs 16:8; Proverbs 17:1).

Strength of character is what gives enjoyment to one’s possessions. Jesus knew it was not having that brought joy but doing (Acts 20:35). When we put our faith and trust in God rather than things (Hebrews 13:5) and get our priorities in order (Matthew 6:33) putting our substance under His authority (Proverbs 22:7; 11:16; 12:11; 21:17), then we will be on the road to contentment.

# Courage

by Jeff Asher

Webster defines *courage* as “the quality or state of mind or spirit enabling one to face danger or hardship with confidence or resolution: the ability to disregard fear: bravery, boldness, intrepidity, valor, fearlessness.” In the Bible *courage* is confidence or assurance in speech (Acts 4:12, 29, 31), virtue, moral excellence, manliness, valor (2 Peter 1:3, 5; Philippians 4:3), the courage of one’s convictions (2 Chronicles 15:8), fearlessness (Hebrews 13:6).

## Bible Examples

There are numerous examples of the exhibition of courage to be found in the Bible. Abraham manifested courage when he left Ur of the Chaldees and came to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1-6; 15:1; Acts 7:1-8). Jacob demonstrated courage when as an old man he went into Egypt to obtain God’s promise (Genesis 46:3). Moses’ mother, Jochebed was fearless when she hid her son for three months and then put him into the River Nile (Hebrews 11:23). Moses showed not a faint heart when he resisted Pharaoh and his magicians and led Israel out of bondage (Hebrews 11:27). And, as the Hebrew writer said, “time would fail me to tell” of all the rest who through faith and courage obtained “a good report” (Hebrews 11:32, 39).

In addition to these numerous examples from the ancient men of faith, there is the supreme example of Jesus Christ who “despised the shame” of the cross and endured “opposition from sinners” leaving us an example so we will “not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

## Bible Truths Concerning Courage

President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his first inaugural address, “The only thing we have to fear is

fear itself -- nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” Roosevelt knew that fear is what holds us back in meeting any enemy, whether it was the Depression or the Axis powers. Boldness is rooted in confidence.

The believer has nothing to fear because he is confident through his God. Paul wrote: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Matthew 10:28). So long as God is our Helper there is nothing that man may do to us that He cannot over rule to our good (Romans 8:28).

When Jesus came to the disciples walking on the water, Peter asked the Lord to call him unto Himself (Matthew 14:27-31). Jesus did, and Peter walked on the water. That is, until he took his eyes off of Christ and focused on the wind and the waves. At that moment, Peter began to sink. Jesus caught him by the hand and asked, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Peter became afraid because he lost his confidence in Christ. Brother and sister we can “walk on the water” so long as we remain confident that we can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13).

This does not mean we will never suffer. When Paul affirmed he could “do all things” he had just admitted there were times when he was hungry. Paul was confident that everything would turn out for his good; however, he was not so certain that it would be good (II Timothy 4:6). The confident believer looks even death in face with calmness and assurance (Ephesians 3:12-13).

## Another Example on Point

When the three Hebrews were facing the decision of either bowing to the golden image or being cast into the fiery furnace, courage is what carried them through. Their decision reflects the reality that boldness does not depend upon a deliverance from every hardship or evil experience. When the king demanded a choice this was their reply: “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:16-18). They understood they might not come out alive, but they would come out well.

## How to Teach Your Kids to Be Brave

**Give them love.** Perfect love casts out fear (I John 4:18). When small children are sure of the love of their parents and siblings then they are confident that they can meet the trials of daily life. They know that Mom and Dad, Big Brother and Sis are backing them up. That experience learned young in life translates into a powerful faith as an adult. When we are loved by God and love Him, then we lose our fears because we know there is nothing that will cause him to forsake us.

**Give them heroes.** Especially in this day and age, youth need real examples of men of courage. Teach your children about the great heroes of the faith in the Bible (Romans 15:4). But, also, point them to men who today walk bravely through life serving God (Philippians 3:17). There are many fine saints who have a story to share with a young person.

**Be courageous.** However, the best heroes they could want are two courageous parents. You need to set the example. We all know that the example of others helps

us (II Timothy 1:7-9). Therefore, children need to see their parents making the sometimes difficult decisions to do the right thing. Help them understand the costs and sacrifices that are involved in wearing the name of Christ (I Peter 3:14-18).

**Share your experience.** Paul was not reluctant to let brethren know how he was suffering (Colossians 4:18; I Corinthians 15:32). As a matter of fact, the knowledge of what was happening to him helped others endure as well (Hebrews 10:32-39; Philippians 1:13, 14). You can build confidence toward God in young people by letting them know how you and others that have influenced you, have stood fast when trials have come.

**Give encouragement.** When your child is going through the tough times do not stand idly by on the sidelines (Isaiah 41:6). Encourage him, counsel him and, if need be, help him. Let him know you are there if he needs you. Pray for him and enlist the prayers of others for him. Even Moses had Aaron and Hur to hold up his hands (Exodus 17:10-12).



# Forgiveness

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by Jeff Asher

According to Webster to “forgive” is to “excuse for a fault or offense; to renounce anger or resentment against, to absolve from payment: pardon, pass over, clear, acquit, absolve, cancel, waive, exculpate.” In the Bible the word “forgive” is a compound of two Greek words. The first, APO, is a prefix meaning “off,” i.e. away (from something near), in various senses (of place, time, or relation); it usually denotes separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal, etc. The latter, HEIMI, signifies to send or send forth, in various applications. This is the word often translated “remit” or “remission.” It takes its significance from the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement which bore the sins of Israel “away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness...unto a land not inhabited” (Leviticus 16: 21-22).

## Biblical Principles Concerning Forgiveness

In the first place forgiveness is something that every Christian must practice. We are commanded to do so (Mark 11:25-26; Colossians 3:13). If we lack the capacity to forgive, we will find ourselves far short on the day of judgment (Matthew 6:14-15). It has been correctly observed that “charity” or true religion (I Corinthians 13:1) “begins at home” (cf. I Timothy 5: 4). Since forgiveness is certainly an integral part of the practice of Christianity where better to observe and learn the exercise thereof than in the family circle?

Believers must possess an inexhaustible capacity to forgive. The Lord taught this to Peter who asked, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him” (Matthew 18:21). We generally apply Peter’s words to other disciples. However, remember that Peter’s brother in the flesh, Andrew, was a disciple (Matthew 10:2). Isn’t this the case with most of us?

Our spouse, our children, our parents and siblings are often “our brethren”. Thus, when Jesus said, “Not... until seven times, but until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22), He meant your “brother” at home as well.

In order for forgiveness to be truly efficacious it must be complete or total (I John 1:9). This is the basis of our confidence in Christ, “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” God pardons us and forgets it. He buries it in the depths of the sea and removes it from us as far as east is from west (Micah 7:19; Psalm 103:12). Concerning our relations with others the wise man said, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Proverbs 17:9). The ASV supplies “harpeth on” instead of “repeateth”. Signifying that it is not so much the revealing of a secret or personal matter (cf. Matthew 18:15; Proverbs 25:9-10), but the continual bringing up of an old injury or wrong suffered. This is what Paul had in mind when he used the word translated “implacable” and “trucebreakers” (Romans 1:31; II Timothy 3:3). The truly forgiving man has a very poor memory when it comes to the sins he has forgiven.

Therefore, to be the kind of person with which the Lord is pleased we must be “ready” or “willing” to forgive. This is God’s disposition toward us (Psalms 86:5). It was clearly demonstrated by the Lord, even as He was hanged at Calvary (Luke 23:34). With respect to the treatment we show those who harm and hurt us we must do good, show mercy and forgive, and that, abundantly (Luke 6:36-38).

In order for forgiveness to be truly effectual it must be of such a nature that our love for the offender is re-affirmed and his contrite heart is comforted (II

Corinthians 2:7-10). The process of forgiveness begins in rebuke that results in repentance (Luke 17:3-4) but it is not complete until there is a restoration, renewal and rekindling of affection. Jesus restored Peter (John 21:15-19), and He urged us to follow His example in order to “gain your brother” (Matthew 18:15-17).

## **A Biblical Example of Forgiveness**

Perhaps, the greatest example of a forgiving man, after Jesus, is Joseph. His story demonstrates that the ability to forgive is something every man must acquire if he is to be a truly happy individual and successful in his family relations. I can think of no man who suffered more evil at the hands of his own flesh and blood than did he. His brothers were jealous of him because of his righteous character and the favor he enjoyed with his father, Jacob, and the Father, God. Their jealousy caused them to hate him and, eventually, to seek his murder. Their wickedness was thwarted by the Providence of God, but still he was sold into slavery, imprisoned and forsaken by his family on account of their lies to conceal their deeds (Genesis 37-50).

Joseph, because he was a man who embodied the principles of forgiveness, did not grow bitter and resentful against his brethren. Rather, when they were reunited his love for them was strong and his desire to help them undiminished. In dealing with them covertly he took great pains to discover their character and learn their intentions. Once it was apparent to him that they were remorseful for their wickedness and transformed by repentance, he made himself known to them and announced his intent to bless them everyone.

What a remarkable man Joseph was. Lesser men would have seized the moment for revenge, doing so they would have destroyed themselves and their family. Yet, Joseph because he could forgive literally saved the lives of his brothers and their families laying the foundation for a great nation. But, beyond this, he

was instrumental in restoring his brothers to God’s service saving their souls and those of untold others.

## **A Parable on Family & Forgiveness**

Jesus often likened the kingdom to a family (Matthew 12:46-50). He chose this figure in order to illustrate the close and tender feelings that ought to exist between its citizens, as well as, the incredible love the Father in heaven has for all of us. One of the most impressive of the kingdom parables on forgiving is based on the family figure (Luke 15:11-32).

In the parable there are three principle characters: the father, an older son and a younger son. You remember that the younger son demanded his share of the inheritance and upon receiving it ran away and wasted it in a far country. Meanwhile the elder son stayed home and worked the farm.

When the younger son came to his senses he went home, ready to confess his wrongs and be treated as a servant in his father’s house. However, while he was a great way off his father seeing him ran out to meet him and with warm embrace restored the son to his rightful place in the family circle.

The elder brother was resentful and jealous of the attention that this prodigal received, pouting he refused to join the joyous festivities. In answer to the complaints against the younger brother (all of which were true), the father said, “It was right that we should make merry and be glad.”

You see this father knew, as did Joseph, that in order to find joy and happiness in life every family must practice forgiveness or else be doomed to live estranged from those that are dearest to us in this world and from Him who taught us to forgive, in the world to come. Let us learn to forgive.

# Friendship

{ <http://www.bibleclassbooks.com> }

by Jeff Asher

A friend is someone “attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard.” A friend is a sympathizer, a helper or patron. Some synonyms for friend are: comrade, chum, pal, boon companion, confidante and mate.

In the Bible a friend is a person whom one loves and trusts; a close companion or comrade (Genesis 38:12). Perhaps the most famous friendship in the Bible was that of David and Jonathan (I Samuel 18:1-4). Abraham was called God’s friend (2 Chronicles 20:7), and God spoke to Moses “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11). Jesus said we are His friends if we obey Him (John 15:14).

## A Bible Example of Friendship

The friendship of David and Jonathan is perhaps the best known friendship in human history (1 Samuel 18:1-4). Why were these two men drawn to one another? A cursory observation might suggest that they were not suitable or likely to be friends. Jonathan was older than David. He was the son of a king, whereas David was the son of a poor shepherd. Jonathan was a mighty warrior and David an inexperienced youth.

However, these two men--and necessarily all men--could build a friendship because the essential ingredients were there for a lasting camaraderie.

First, David and Jonathan became friends because they held a common faith. Both of these men were committed believers in the Almighty (I Samuel 14:6; 17:39). Jonathan took the garrison at Michmash single-handedly and David slew Goliath because both were confident that the battle belonged to God.

Second their friendship formed because they both possessed incredible courage (I Samuel 14:7-13; 17:32-37). No doubt Jonathan saw in David many things

that he knew were true of himself, qualities which are rare among men. Jonathan knew that David was a man he could trust and upon whom he could rely in difficult times (Proverbs 25:19).

Finally, and perhaps most important, this friendship was built upon an admiration for the wisdom each perceived in the other (I Samuel 14:28-31; 17:38-39). In order for a friendship to thrive each must bring to the relationship something that strengthens the other (Proverbs 27:6, 17). Friendships are made for improvement, comfort and achievement. Rarely do men become friends who do not perceive in another either an admirable quality they themselves have or one they desire to possess.

## What Do Friends Do?

**Friends help each other** (Proverbs 17:17; 27:10).

The whole design of friendship is to avoid being left alone when the times of hardship, trial and calamity arise (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). A man with a friend is a threefold cord.

**Friends share everything.** When Jesus told the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, He revealed a fundamental truth about friends (Luke 15:6, 9; Romans 12:15). Jesus illustrated this truth when he sent Peter to pay the Temple Tax (Matthew 17:27). Friends share the joys and the sorrows, the gains and the losses. Where I come from a friend is someone “who would give you the shirt off his back” and “the last dollar in his pocket.”

**Friends are loyal.** They don’t reveal secrets (Proverbs 11:13). They stick with you “rain or shine,” in the good times and the bad (Proverbs 17:17). There’s a great quote from James Bowie, hero of the Alamo. Bowie was complaining that his friends had forsaken

him after a terrible error in judgment on his part. His companion in the conversation asked, in amazement at Bowie's displeasure, "Well, you do know you were wrong." To this Bowie replied, "Well, yes, but that is when I needed them most!"

**Friends offer comfort.** Job lamented the fact that when his friends came to his aid in his time of calamity that rather than comfort him, they began to accuse him falsely of sin (Job 6:14-15). They were "miserable comforters," that is, they offered no consolation and showed no pity (Job 16:2, 20; 19:19). Job endured the failure of his relationships, as did David (Psalms 38:11) and, even, Our Lord (Matthew 26:56). From Jesus we learn what a real friend is (John 15:13). While others may forsake us, we always have a friend in Jesus (Hebrews 13:5-6). Jesus learned this from His Father (John 16:32). Friendship is intended to head us off from and bring us up out of the depths of despair and loneliness (Proverbs 27:17).

**Friends give counsel.** Advice is often worth what you pay for it, and it seems everybody has it to give away. Thus, a man needs good friends as a source of trustworthy counsel in which he has complete confidence (Proverbs 27:9). The good counsel of a friend can make all the difference in life (Proverbs 27:19). The value of this counsel is that it will be honest in its critique and intended for our good (Proverbs 27:6, 17:9a). And, a real friend will never counsel us to go contrary to the faith (Deuteronomy 13:6-9).

## Teaching Friendship

Perhaps one of the greatest skills we will impart to our children is that of making friends. In order to begin, we must teach our child how to be a friend (Proverbs 18:24). This involves our helping him develop all those attributes of character that make him worthy of the friendship of others (Psalms 35:14). As a parent, you must lead your children to be trustworthy, kind, loyal, brave, men and women of faith and love.

You must impart to them an understanding of the difference between friendship and cronyism (Proverbs 6:1, 2; 19:4, 6-7; Luke 6:27-38). There are always people who will feign friendship for what they perceive you are able to give them (Proverbs 6:3; 14:20). In youth we often unwisely confuse popularity with friendship. We mistake pleasurable association with companionship. Being the center of attention and invited to all the parties does not mean one has friends.

Another important life lesson we need to impart to our children is control of the tongue, the lack of which often adversely impacts friendships (Proverbs 16:28; 17:9). They must learn not to gossip, but rather one whose speech is always uplifting and wise (Psalms 141:3; Proverbs 22:11).

Finally, model this behavior before your own children (I Timothy 4:12). Let them see in you how a friend behaves and they will have ready made friends (Proverbs 27:10).

# Honesty

{ <http://www.bibleclassbooks.com> }

by Jeff Asher

Webster defines honest as anyone “Characterized by or exhibiting truthfulness and integrity; incorruptible: not deceptive or fraudulent; marked by integrity or truth; fair or just in character and behavior, not cheating or stealing.” In the Bible honesty is “probity, integrity, trustworthiness, sincerity, uprightness, decency, morality, rectitude, goodness,” (II Timothy 2:1-2; II Corinthians 8:21); (Romans 12:17).”

The basic component of honesty is truth. Thus, in order to be honest one must tell the truth (Proverbs 14:25; 12:19). But honesty goes beyond truth telling and comprehends what is right and lawful (Daniel 6: 12); whatever is without perversion (Matthew 22:16); is actual (Philippians 4:8) and sincere (Philippians 1:8). Ultimately; that which is honest conforms to the reality of the Word of God (John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; I Timothy 1:10). As far as the Scriptures are concerned one is not fully honest or true who speaks or lives contrary to the Word of God (Luke 8:15; Acts 6:3; II Corinthians 8:21; I Peter 2:12; Psalm 119:118).

## Bible Principles Concerning Honesty

First, one must recognize that he can never please God and be anything other than honest. God hates lying (Proverbs 6:17; 12:22; Leviticus 6:2-7; 19:11-13). He regards those that do it as an abomination and evil (Psalm 5:6; Revelation 2:2) and He will destroy all liars in hell (Psalm 5:6; Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15).

An honest man will be truthful in all his business dealings (Proverbs 11:1; 20:10). He will give what is due and more (Luke 3:13; 6:38; cf. Leviticus 19: 35-36). He will be careful to pay his taxes (Luke 10: 25). As an employee, he will be no purloiner, neither

a thief of property nor time (Titus 2:9-10). He will be faithful whether his employer is present or not (Ephesians 6:6-8; cf. Luke 12:42-48). In all of his dealings he will do that which is expected in order to maintain his integrity and the integrity of others because it is the right thing to do (II Corinthians 8:21; Romans 12:17).

An honest man keeps his word (Proverbs 12:22'). The law of truth is in his mouth (Malachi 2:6; Psalm 15:2). He does not promise and then not perform (James 5: 12; Matthew 5:37). The truly honest man will not bear false witness, slander or otherwise malign his neighbor (Psalm 15:3). He does not assume an evil motive against any man (Psalm 69:4; I Timothy 6:4). When he makes a bargain, even a bad one, he keeps his end (Psalms 15:4).

An honest man will does not steal (Ephesians 6:1-4; Leviticus 6:2-7). He recognizes that “finders keepers” is the way of the wicked (Exodus 22:9; Leviticus 6: 3-4). He does not have to come face to face with a lock in order to respect another’s property (Proverbs 23:10; 22:28; Deuteronomy 22:17). Neither does an honest man steal through oppression by taking unfair advantage of the weak or poor (Job 24:1-12; Psalm 62: 10; Proverbs 21:7; Ezekiel 22:29).

## How Children Learn Honesty

In order to teach children to be honest there must be a “no tolerance policy” at home respecting lying (Deuteronomy 19:16-21; Psalms 119:128, 163). A liar must be held in contempt (Psalm 40:4; 101:7; Proverbs 13:5). Bearing falsehood is a habit that is often acquired in youth and practiced for a lifetime (Psalm 58:3). In order to stop it, there must be a known punishment for lying (Proverbs 19:5, 9). In

our home it was certain that wrongdoing would be punished, but lying about wrongdoing would bring a much more severe penalty (Proverbs 20:17).

Integrity is best taught by example. If you do not want children that are dishonest do not demonstrate dishonesty before them (Ezekiel 16:44). Too many parents believe they can exhort their children to “do as I say not as I do” (cf. Jeremiah 7:9-10). However, we must “walk within [our] house with a perfect heart,” if we expect to have any real success in building a godly character in them (Psalms 101:2-8). Lying to the boss, keeping what is borrowed, cheating on taxes, stealing from the office and like acts will only teach a child that dishonesty is the expected and accepted thing.

Another way to build an honest character is through teaching life lessons. Perhaps the most important of these concerns redemption. Every one of us needs to realize that the death of Jesus for the sins of the world was necessitated because the serpent told a lie and Eve believed and acted on it (Genesis 3:1-19). This sad event in the history of our race proves that honesty is the only policy.

Another is taught by the example of Abraham. He is remembered as the “friend of God” and the “father of the faithful” (James 2:23; Romans 4:16). However, this beautiful life is marred by the record of two sins, both of which were lies (Genesis 12:11-19; 20:2-18). From him we learn that lying diminishes the character of an otherwise great man.

Another important lesson to be learned from example is that lying often leads to other sins with far graver consequences. No more horrific example of that is found than in the life of David (II Samuel 11-12). David tried to hide his adultery with another Uriah’s wife by lies and deception. Being unable to succeed, he resorted to murder. A noble man lost his life in order to cover a lie.

## Why Be Honest

Honesty defines character and proves that one is trustworthy (Job 31:5-6; Luke 16:10). This is important and helpful because it establishes our reputation and brings us into the confidence of men to whom we may be helpful (Proverbs 25:19). Being trustworthy we are able to develop relationships that will help us in life (Proverbs 31:11).

An honest man is a truth lover (Psalm 119:163; II Thessalonians 2:10). This love of truth helps develop a mind that recognizes truth rejecting falsehood and error. Thus, the honest man is protected from deception and delusion (II Corinthians 4:2; James 1:22). He is constantly searching for what is true and right (John 7:17; Proverbs 23:23) and only speaks what he knows is the same (Ephesians 4:25; Psalm 8:7). Thus, truth becomes a lamp unto his feet and a light for his path (Proverbs 6:23).

# Kindness

{ <http://www.bibleclassbooks.com> }

by Jeff Asher

To be kind means “having or showing a tender, considerate and helping nature.” Thus, one who is *kind* is friendly, generous, warmhearted, sympathetic, considerate, gentle, affectionate and forbearing.

Synonyms for kind include: *philanthropic, benevolent, tenderhearted, compassionate, gracious.*

In the Bible there are two Greek words translated as kind: CRESTOTE (Colossians 3:12) and PHILANTHROPIA (Acts 28:2). These words describe an attitude of heart that results in a specific character of action (Luke 6:35; Romans 2:4).

## Kindness Is Essential

One is not walking before God as he ought if he does demonstrate kindness (or gentleness in the KJV). It is one trait which is characteristic of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). Its absence in our lives indicates we have yet to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts (v. 23). Kindness is an attribute of the new man raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1, 9-10). Kindness is acquired by the renewal of our minds through a knowledge of Christ in whose image we were created in regeneration (Colossians 3:12).

Furthermore, “kind” is not something that you just are. Kindness must be demonstrated or practiced. The worthy woman of Proverbs had the “law of kindness” in her mouth keeping her words in check (31:26). The men of Malta showed their kindness to the Apostle Paul (Acts 28:2). The servants of Christ prove themselves “by kindness” (II Corinthians 6:4-6). Solomon said: “That which makes a man to be desired is his kindness; and a poor man is better than a liar” (Proverbs 19:22). In other words, what counts is doing what you can, rather than saying what you would do.” The Apostle John put it this way, “My little children let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed

and truth” (1 John 3:17-18). There isn’t any kindness in the heart that says, “Be ye warmed and filled” but sends away the destitute with nothing (James 2:15-16).

## Its Character

The key ingredient in kindness is love. Paul said that “love is kind” (I Corinthians 13:4). This must be true since love by definition must seek the good will of another. Kindness is the expression of that good will. This is true whether we speak of the kindness of God toward man (Titus 3:4) or that of man toward man (Romans 12:10; II Peter 1:7).

Kindness is always manifested without respect of persons. The Christian is not kind to some and not to others. He is certainly not kind on the basis of racial, social or ethnic considerations (James 2:1-9). We should show kindness in the same way in which the Father has shown His kindness toward us--to all men even the unthankful and evil (cf. Luke 6:35). When we withhold kindness from some men we become evil (James 2:4).

We can better understand the necessity of being kind to all men when we recognize that the grounds for showing kindness is grace or favor, rather than merit or worth. God did not show His kindness toward mankind on the grounds of the being particularly worthy of it; it was just the contrary (Titus 3:4-5). When did we ever merit the gift of God’s son (Ephesians 2:7). We can perceive the kindness of God in all His actions toward mankind and through these we are drawn to Him (Romans 2:4; Acts 14:17). It is being kind as the Father is kind that we are truly his children (Matthew 5:44-45).

Kindness is not fickle, that is, on again off again. When we behave in that fashion, we are behaving as

the hypocrites do (Luke 6:33-36). God again is the standard in this. His kindness is constant. It is the one thing on which men can always count (Isaiah 54:10). It is this assurance of the constancy of God's kindness that draws men to Him in repentance. Because we are unpredictable our relationships are hindered and even damaged (James 3:17), sometimes beyond repair (Luke 15:28; cf. I Timothy 5:1; I Corinthians 4:11-13).

## Examples of Kindness:

Here is a list some of the many things which the Scriptures regard as exemplifying kindness. It is by no means an exhaustive list. However, it does help us broaden our perception of kindness and its importance.

One is *kind* when:

1. he is honest in his dealings (Genesis 21:23)
2. he rewards good received from another (Genesis 40:14)
3. he is sympathetic and comforting (Job 6:14)
4. he exhibits honorable behavior (Ruth 3:10)
5. he shares another's burdens (1 Samuel 15:6)
6. he shows friendship (1 Samuel 20:15, 16)
7. he honors the dead (2 Samuel 2:5)
8. he is merciful toward his enemies (2 Samuel 9:7)
9. he demonstrates loyalty (2 Samuel 16:17)
10. he shows gratitude (1 Kings 2:7)
11. he has compassion (Jonah 4:2)
12. he is benevolent (Luke 6:35)
13. he is courteous (Acts 27:3)
14. he is hospitable (Acts 28:2)
15. he is forgiving (Ephesians 4:32)

## How to Teach Kindness

As parents we recognize that the two greatest sources of influence on our children is their contact with family members and companions (I Corinthians 15:33). Children are prone to do what they see and live. If we are not kind in our dealings with our children, it should be no surprise if they learn to manifest a

brutal spirit as adults. Likewise, if they are allowed to associate with peers who are known to be without compassion or proper regard for others that spirit will influence them (Proverbs 22:24-25).

Bible study is important in developing a kind heart in children (Colossians 3:10-12). The Bible is filled with stories and examples of kindness and these should be read to them from their youth and held before them as the standard of right behavior. By far the best example we have is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:21-25) with whom we ought to become intimate respecting the His sinless life.

We learn to be kind by receiving kindness (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:38). The greatest kindness any of us has ever known is that of the Almighty through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:3). In the difficult times in our relationships we must reflect on what we have received in order to properly judge what we should give (Ephesians 4:32). Young people need to be guided into a proper appreciation for the kindness of God that has appeared to us in order to be able to manifest a like kindness toward the world (Matthew 5:44-45).

And, as with anything, practice makes perfect, create for your family opportunities to practice the virtue of kindness (Romans 12:10-18). There are plenty of good works to be done (Titus 3:8, 14).



# Respect

{ <http://www.bibleclassbooks.com> }

by Jeff Asher

We live in a time when respect for others and their property is lacking. It is not uncommon for youths and even adults to show no deference to the aged, those in authority or those who sacrifice and serve in the community. In the Bible the virtue of respect is conveyed in the words “honor” and “esteem” (Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17; Matthew 15:4; 1 Timothy 6:16; Philippians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:15). Christians have the duty to honor those to whom honor is due, and as parents we have an obligation to train our children to render this respect.

## Whom Shall We Honor?

The Bible is specific concerning who is worthy of honor, and why. As a matter of fact, the list is pretty long.

The Apostle Peter enjoins upon us the obligation to “honor all men” (1 Peter 2:17). This duty is apparent when one recognizes that as there is no respect of persons with God (Romans 2:11), there is to be no partiality demonstrated by His people (James 2:1, 9). We are everyone made in the image of our God and equal before Him and each other (Genesis 1:26). The deference and respect we show our fellows says a lot about the view we have of ourselves, and it will determine God’s view of us in the judgment (Romans 12:13; Philippians 2:3; Luke 1:9-14).

We are enjoined to give honor to those who are the representatives of the civil government (Romans 13:7). God asks us to obey government because it is His minister to the saints for their good (Romans 13:4; cf. John 19:11). Thus, disobedience to government is disobedience to God.

There must be mutual respect between husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:33; 1 Peter 3:6-7). This respect

is demanded by the nature of the marriage relation (Ephesians 5:29). Intimacy demands respect and trust (Hebrews 13:4). When these begin to wane greater sins are not far behind.

Likewise, there is to be mutual respect between employer and employee (1 Timothy 6:1-2; Ephesians 6:5-9). The believer who is a supervisor or business owner must regard his employees as worthy of fair dealing knowing God will hold him to account. By the same token, the servant or employee must render true service because he serves the Lord and not man.

The church is called upon to honor their elders “for their works sake” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). It is understood that they are men of remarkable character and by such command respect, but they have humbled themselves and become the servants of all (Matthew 20:26-28) and have taken the additional burden of being responsible for the souls of the entire flock (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17). Such sacrifice and service demands recognition.

Similarly, children are commanded to honor their parents (Ephesians 6:2; Matthew 15:4). This honor is due because parents have sacrificed so much for their children (2 Corinthians 12:14; cf. Hosea 11:3; Hebrews 12:8; Job 1:5). They are the guides, the providers and protectors of their offspring. Their love and sacrifice should command our respect; this is why God says, “It is right.”

The aged are worthy of our respect (Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 20:29). However, it is again assumed that they command that respect by their character (Proverbs 16:31; Job 32:9). The aged have attained wisdom through their experiences and spirituality (Job 12:12). Their lives have been a blessing to

their families and communities because of their accomplishments. Their posterity is indebted to them for their accomplishments. We do stand on the shoulders of giants.

Finally, or should I say firstly, the Scriptures enjoin the honor of God (Revelation 7:12). God is surely worthy of being honored because he is the Creator (Revelation 4:11). Without Him we are nothing. Our very existence and our eternal well being are wholly dependent upon Him (Revelation 5:12). We honor God by keeping his commandments (John 14:15).

## How Children Learn Respect

**They learn through observation.** They learn how to honor their parents by observing how their parents honor one another (Ephesians 5:28, 29), and by seeing how their parents treat their grandparents (1 Timothy 5:4; Matthew 15:6). They learn how to honor government by observing how their parents respect the law (1 Peter 2:13-15; Luke 20:25; 1 Timothy 2:1-2). They learn how to honor their employers by observing how their parents honor theirs (Ephesians 4:28; 6:6-7; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). And, they learn to honor God by observing their parents do the same (Matthew 6:33).

**They learn through instruction.** Parents have a duty to God and to their children to instruct them in the reasons for being respectful (Proverbs 1:8; 4:1; 6:20; Ephesians 6:1-4). These principles equip them for success in life and prepare them to assume their place in the kingdom. Parents harm their children by not instructing and re-enforcing these truths (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

**They learn by correction.** While it is unfortunate, it is nevertheless often necessary to apply correction. A failure to do this when it is called for encourages further disrespect (Ecclesiastes 8:11). For this reason then, God has allowed for government to punish

evildoers (Romans 13:2, 4), the church to correct the unrepentant (Titus 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6), and parents to discipline their children (Proverbs 13:24).

## Being Respected

We observed earlier that when God commands us to respect certain individuals it is assumed they are respectable. One of the difficult lessons to learn in life is that we are sometimes disappointed by those whom we have come to respect. Parents sin (Colossians 3:21); elders digress (1 Timothy 5:19-20); governments become corrupt (Psalms 9:17); men become wicked (2 Timothy 3:13). In times like these, we remember that the honor we give others, even the undeserving, is a reflection of the esteem with which we hold Christ (Ephesians 6:5-7).

Sometimes the young demand respect for themselves. They are certainly entitled to the same honor which others receive (1 Peter 2:17). However, the same assumptions hold for them as well, those honored are honorable and the respected are respectable. Paul admonished Timothy to let no man despise his youth (1 Timothy 4:12). In order to accomplish that task Paul urged him to be an example in all areas of life. If we want to be respected we must learn it and earn it.

# Responsibility

{ <http://www.bibleclassbooks.com> }

by Jeff Asher

Responsibility is defined in the dictionary as, “Involving personal accountability or ability to act without guidance or superior authority.” A person is regarded as responsible when he is “capable of making moral or rational decisions on his own and, therefore, answerable for one’s own behavior.” The principle of responsibility is recognized on nearly every page of the Bible. Here are just a few examples: Matthew 23:16; 27:24; 28:14; Luke 12:42; Acts 5:28; 19:40; Romans 14:4.

## Everyone is Responsible for...

**You are responsible only for today.** You cannot change the past. What is done is done. God can forgive sin. But, the fact remains that your actions are a part of the history of your life. You do not have to live in the past nor let the past rule the present (John 8: 11; Romans 3:25; Mark 16:15-16). But, you cannot change what has happened; you must live through it and with it.

**You cannot affect the future.** By this I mean, there are forces in the world over which we have no control (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Some things are controlled by the immutable laws of the universe and cannot be changed regardless how much we may desire it (Matthew 6:27; Luke 12:25, 26). Other things are in the hands of God and are best left to His will and desires (Matthew 5:45; James 4:13-15). We can make reasonable plans and have expectations, but the future may not turn out as we wish it to be.

Only today is yours (Matthew 6:34). We need to do the very best with it we can and recognize that the choices and decisions we make within it affect us now and forever (Romans 2:6-11; Ezekiel 18:26-28). Today is the only day over which we have any real

control; therefore, the choices we make are important (2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:13; Joshua 24:15).

**You are certainly responsible for yourself.** I think most folks recognize it in principle, while maybe not owning up to it in practice; each one is responsible for his own actions (Romans 14:12; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Ezekiel 18:1-24).

**However, we’re also answerable for what we think and say** (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 5:28-30; 12: 34-37). Now, our thoughts may not always have the same consequences as our actions, but thoughts are what determine our words and our actions (Mark 7: 20-23). We may change our thoughts, and even regret our words, but we are still accountable for having had them and their character determines the nature of the heart from where they came (Luke. 6:45).

We are also responsible for what you fail or refuse to do (James 4:17; John 12:48 Hebrews 10:26-31). All of us are liable to forget some things, but I am not talking about lapse of memory. Rather, it is neglect and rebellion. We are responsible when our will is such that we do not do what we know is right we insist on doing what we know is wrong. There are many things in this world with which we can become entangled and overpowered (II Timothy 2:26; II Peter 2:20). The fact that we are subdued by them does not release us from accountability.

## Choices Have Consequences

In the realm of physical “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” In the spiritual realm for every action there is a consequence.

As already established, all are free men with the power of choice (Joshua 24:15; Romans 10:16; Hebrews 3:

7). You are free to do whatever you want. However, you are not free of the consequences of your actions (Proverbs 1:24; Ezekiel 3:19).

General Gerry Johnson said it very well when he observed, “No man was ever endowed with a right without being at the same time saddled with a responsibility.” We do not have to make some of the choices we do, but we cannot avoid the consequences of our choices, nor shift the blame to others. A lot of men have tried, but God does not release us from our obligations in this matter (Genesis 3:12-13; I Samuel 15:20-21; Exodus 32:22-24; Matthew 27:24).

## Teach Your Children Responsibility

Jesus taught us how to teach responsibility. We can and must do so, for the good of the nation, for the good of the family, for the good of the church and, most importantly, for the good of our children.

First, learn that one is responsible to the limits of his ability. Jesus taught that in the parables of the talents and the unfaithful servant (Matthew 25:15; Luke 12:47-48). Early training, therefore, should consist of gradually giving responsibilities to our children according to their newly acquired abilities (see: Galatians 4:1-2; I Corinthians 13:11). Duties about the home should increase with age and skill with a view to making the child a useful adult when on his own.

Second, when responsibility is given, the recipient must be held accountable. Jesus taught this as well in the above mentioned parables (Luke 12:47 Matthew 18:23). The one talent man was not punished because he did not do as well as the other two servants. He was punished because he did not do what he had the ability and, therefore, *obligation* to do. A wise parent recognizes different levels of ability in his children and deals with each accordingly. But a fool fails to hold all equally accountable according to his

individual ability. When parents do not make children give answer for their actions they eventually will have rebels with which to deal (I Samuel 2:22-26; 3:13).

In order to teach responsibility it is necessary to let the young suffer the consequences of their choices. This is why the prophet said, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3: 27). When parents are giving gradual responsibility they are able to help assuage the severity of the consequences. Children learn that the consequences can be serious by learning young from the results of their lesser responsibilities. It is better to learn that each man must bear his own burden (Galatians 6:5) when that burden is a household chore or a missed homework assignment than a job deadline or a utility bill.

Finally, parents must be an example in accepting responsibility (Job 19:4; Acts 25:11). Your children will never learn to be a mature, helpful, resourceful and responsible member of any community, if all they ever see is a parent that casts blame elsewhere refusing to accept responsibility miserably chaffing under the consequences of bad choices. Be responsible and your children will grow up to be responsible.

Webster defines *self-control* as “control of one’s feelings, desires or actions by one’s own will; the power of controlling one’s external reactions, emotions, etc.; equanimity.” Roget lists as synonyms: restraint, self-discipline, willpower, mettle, resolve, composure and reserved.

The word *temperance* in the KJV conveys this idea of self-control and more. Unfortunately, it is usually now associated only with abstinence from alcohol or other intoxicants. The Greek word is best translated by the word “mastery” which indicates full control over self and the things which one may desire.

## Bible Examples of Self-Control

There are numerous examples of men exhibiting heroic self-control in the Bible. Let’s consider three of these.

Joseph was sold by his envious brothers into servitude in Egypt. As a youth he was purchased by Pharaoh’s captain of the guard, Potiphar. Joseph served his master well and the entire house prospered (Genesis 39:5). After a while, Potiphar’s wife began to seduce Joseph. She wearied him incessantly with her invitations to commit adultery (39:7-10). His response was always the same -- No!

The free thinkers and free lovers of today would “poo poo” Joseph’s Victorian morals. As Joni Meenagh said, “Teenagers are going to have sex; nobody can stop this from happening” (*SIECUS Report*, Apr/May 2003). Their view of things is that teens do not and cannot have mastery over their desires. Yet, Joseph a teen away from home, on his own, with a willing partner refused to sin against God, his master, his master’s wife and his own body (I Corinthians 6:18).

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are four more youths that demonstrated incredible mastery over themselves (Daniel 1). These four teens were brought from Palestine to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. His intent was to train them for service in the government. One aspect of their training involved their diet which was provided from the king’s table. For some reason this food and drink was regarded as unclean by Jews. It may have been unclean because of the kind of food it was, or it may have been so because it had been offered to idols (Leviticus 11; cf. I Corinthians 8) The drink may have been rejected because it was intoxicating (Proverbs 23:31; Isaiah 5:11, 22).

Again, these views would be ridiculed by most men today. The disbelief that youth can possess self-control is popular, even among the most educated. For example, Richard Keeling M.D. said, “Teenagers are going to drink no matter what the legal age is” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 07/15/05). However, here are four teenagers that did not and they proved themselves the better for it (Daniel 1:12-16).

The greatest example of self-control found is that of Jesus. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The test began in earnest after Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights. Having had no food and no water Jesus was hungry (Matthew 4:2). In this time of weakness, Satan came and tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread. But, our Lord refused because man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Luke 4:4).

It was only natural that Jesus should be hungry; there was no sin in hunger. Yet, Jesus understood that he must rely upon God for his needs to be supplied, and,

so, He disciplined Himself. God had brought Him into the wilderness and God would provide (Psalm 78:19).

How foolish this seems to men today. The psychiatrist Theodore Rubin avers we are not human if we exhibit mastery, saying, "I must learn to love the fool in me... it alone protects me against that utterly self-controlled, masterful tyrant whom I also harbor and who would rob me of human aliveness, humility and dignity but for my fool" (*Love Me, Love My Fool*, p. 76). Well, Jesus was ever as much a man as lived (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15) and He gained the mastery over the flesh (Romans 8:3).

## Learning Self-Control

Self-control is something which can be taught, learned, acquired and practiced. The Apostle Paul taught Felix the Roman Governor concerning the principles of self-control (Acts 24:25). Peter urged the Christians in Asia to supply or provide self-control in addition to their faith (2 Peter 1:6). The Hebrew Christians were chastened by Paul because they had not learned through the exercise of their senses to discern good from evil (Hebrews 5:13-14). Each of these examples demonstrates that self control is acquired through a rigorous spiritual education. We acquire it as we become more and more familiar with God's Word.

As suggested by the last text, joined with this instruction is a proper application. As we become skillful in the Word of God our "senses" are able to differentiate between that which is good for us and that which is evil. We are able to make the determinations that Joseph, Daniel and Jesus made. Paul, having acquired this discernment said he buffeted, or disciplined his body daily and brought it in subjection to the will of his mind (I Corinthians 9:25). We must grow in wisdom to the point that we can apply the Word to the various situations we encounter daily.

Another means whereby we acquire mastery over the body is through planning. Paul urged that we make no provisions for the flesh (Romans 13:14). We must learn to avoid those things that tempt us to give in to our desires. Job made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1). Paul purposed he would not eat and drink (I Corinthians 8:13; Romans 14:21). The wise man said we should avoid wine altogether (Proverbs 23:31). Don't be like the drunken cowboy who after taking the pledge continued to tie his horse up in front of the saloon on Saturday. Before long, he was back in the saloon.

We acquire self-control through moderation (I Corinthians 9:25). It is possible to get too much of a good thing (Proverbs 25:16). Learning to deny yourself or restrain your participation in even harmless and beneficial things brings a discipline to life that is helpful (Proverbs 20:13; 23:1-3; Philippians 4:12).

Finally, self-control is acquired only through a constant vigilance (I Corinthians 9:27). Paul "buffeted" his body; literally, he "beat down" the longings of the flesh. There is a constant conflict between the spiritual mind and the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17). Long term success is determined by the daily victories that result in a spiritual walk (Luke 9:23).

# A Work Ethic

{ <http://www.bibleclassbooks.com> }

by Jeff Asher

It is evident from the Scriptures that from before the foundation of the world God intended that men should be employed with useful and productive labor. It is a mistaken notion that considers work a punishment for Adam and Eve's transgressions. God in the creation announced that man was to "subdue...and have dominion" over all the earth (Genesis 1:26–28). In order to facilitate this objective, He planted a garden "eastward in Eden" and placed the man in it with this instruction: "dress it and keep it" (Genesis 2:8–15). While it may seem idyllic to some, God never intended for man to be at his leisure with nothing to do.

However, it is true that sin complicated man's existence in this world affecting his ability to fulfill his intended purpose. Because of sin, the earth brought forth "thorns and thistles" (Genesis 3:18). This caused man "in sorrow" to "eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17). That word "sorrow" literally means "worry, pain, or toil." Sin brought a curse upon the earth and man with the curse came "strength labour and sorrow" (Psalm 90:10).

While some think work is an evil to be avoided if at all possible, God has ordained it because it is good (Ephesians 4:28). The man that works is to be held in honor and esteem by his fellows (I Thessalonians 4:12); whereas, the idle man is worse than an unbeliever (I Timothy 5:8; cf. John 3:18; II Peter 2:20).

God has ruled that the man who will not work should not eat (II Thessalonians 3:10). Such a man is not worthy of the fellowship of the saved (3:11–12). The sluggard is contemned in the Scripture (Proverbs 10:26) and consigned a place with those whom the Lord hates (Ezekiel 16:49). God does not condone idleness

knowing it breeds wickedness (Proverbs 18:9; 21:25; II Thessalonians 3:11; I Timothy 5:13; Ephesians 4:28); whereas, industry promotes thrift, self-reliance, charity and a worthy character.

## The Joy of Work

As parents we must communicate to our children not only the necessity of working (Proverbs 13:4; 14:23), but also the benefits (Ephesians 4:28b). We make a terrible mistake if all we are able to instill in our children is an appreciation of employment for the sake of acquiring things (Proverbs 16:26). Work like everything else ordained of God is intended to affect our character. What we must communicate to our children is the "good" in work and the joy that it brings.

**The Joy of Self-Reliance.** Work makes it possible for us to have sufficiency without relying upon another (I Thessalonians 4:12). The benefit here is that with favorable circumstances we may have more than enough (Proverbs 13:4; 27:23–27). It is a matter of simple economics, when we work there is increase (Proverbs 10:4; 12:11; 14:4); when we are idle there is want for ourselves and others (Proverbs 13:23; 20:13). Aesop understood this truth and taught it in his famed fable of the Grasshopper and the Ant (cf. Proverbs 6:6; Matthew 25:9).

**The Joy of Independence.** The self-reliant are autonomous. They do not seek the permission of others to act (Acts 5:4; Matthew 20:15); neither become slaves to other men (Proverbs 15:19; 22:7; Matthew 25:26–27). Rather, they rule themselves and their circumstances (Proverbs 10:4; 12:24). Industry gives men liberty (Proverbs 10:15; 11:28; Psalm 112)

**The Joy of Satisfaction.** All of us were raised hearing these maxims: “Take pride in your work;” and “any job worth doing is worth doing well.” This “chimney corner scripture” is based upon veritable truth (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Proverbs 10:4; 13:4; 18:9). The rewards in life are the result of the approval of others (Job 7:2; Matthew 25:21) Advancement comes as men recognize in you the ability to do the assigned tasks correctly (Proverbs 22:29). When we are slack and do less than that of which we are capable we are held back (Matthew 25:26–29). This principle is true in life, as well as, spiritual things. Always give your best.

**The Joy of Self-Worth.** However, one need not despair waiting for men to recognize ability. You should find satisfaction in knowing that you have done a good job (Ecclesiastes 5:12). Being a diligent worker and giving a full days work for a full days pay should build confidence and self-esteem (I Thessalonians 4:12). You are worthy of your wages (Luke 10:7; I Timothy 5:18). You have earned them and they are your due (Romans 4:4). Furthermore, the believer has the knowledge that God sees and whether or not our employer appreciates us, we will not lose our reward (Colossians 3:22–25).

**The Joy of Philanthropy.** When we have learned to work and begin to reap the fruits of our labors, we are then empowered by God to have the full blessing. The goal of our labor should not be to consume it upon ourselves, but to use it for good (I Timothy 6:17–18; cf. James 4:3). Jesus taught us that is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). The blessing in having is the power to give it away (Proverbs 11:25; 22:9; 28:27; Ephesians 4:28). There is no greater joy than that which comes from knowing you have really helped a neighbor. Furthermore, the truly liberal soul opens himself up to other opportunities to be used to bless (II Corinthians 9:10; Proverbs 21:26). Through

work we become a channel of blessing. There are so many good things which may be done with the fruit of our labors (I Timothy 6:18; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:6).

## **Four Things that Teach a Biblical Work Ethic**

More than anything else, a good example is important to children (Proverbs 31:27–28). Growing up where everyone works helps instill an appreciation for work. More than this, the habit of working together and dividing the labor in the home makes a good worker (Matthew 4:21–22).

In addition to this, idleness must not be tolerated (Proverbs 10:5; II Thessalonians 3:10) Whether it is a family garden, chores about the house or a part time job, young people need to learn to work (Lamentations 3:27).

A positive example must be joined to a good attitude about work. Children learn what they live. If the parents are shirkers, thieves and malingerers chances are the children will be as well (Ephesians 6:5–8; Titus 2:10; I Peter 2:18–21).

Children also learn to work by learning that employment is necessary to enjoying the pleasures of life (Proverbs 13:4; 16:26). Parents err in this regard when they do not expect youth to begin to earn some rewards. When everything is given that becomes the expectation. Such is unrealistic and harmful for all (Proverbs 10:5, 26; 15:19; 21:25).