

parents (**Eph. 6:1**), in school by respecting the rules and teachers, and in public by conforming to established rules. Those who are older need to set the example for the young and be consistent – not requiring of young people what they do not require of themselves. A good rule for all when it comes to behavior is do not do anything you would not want to be doing when Jesus comes.

**Be Definite in Aim and Purpose.** God created everything for a definite purpose – even you. Be purposeful in living. Do not just drift through life just taking it as it comes. Have an aim in life. Establish proper goals and work hard to reach them. Be determined but not stubborn. Of course, as a Christian, your life is filled with purpose. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil"* (**Eccl. 12:13-14**). Never forget that your ultimate goal is heaven. That will help you keep focused in living each day in the proper manner.

**Build a Home.** Whatever your situation in relation to physical family, do what you can to make it what God would have it to be. If you are a child still living at home with your parents, conduct yourself respectfully. Obey their rules, listen to their advice, seek their guidance. If you are contemplating marriage, choose a companion who not only loves you but also loves God. If you are already someone's spouse, apply the teachings of Scripture to that relationship. Husbands, love your wives (**Eph. 5:25**). Wives, be subject unto your husbands (**Eph. 5:22**) and love them (**Titus 2:4**). If you are a parent, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (**Eph. 6:4**). Often, happiness in this life and the eternal destiny of one's soul in the

life to come is in large part determined by relationships in the physical family. Your true character is tested by how you act and react toward family.

**Be a Christian.** A Christian is a person who wears the name of the Lord. It shows he belongs to Jesus and that he is living in accordance with His will. Do not claim to be a Christian if you are not willing to conform your life – your thoughts and actions – to the doctrine of Christ (**2 John 9**).

### Conclusion

We started this article by citing Jesus' statement at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 7:24-27**) in which He emphasized the need for His hearers to base their lives on His teachings if they were going to be successful. He said to do otherwise is foolish. Build your life on the teachings of Jesus. *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."* (**1 Peter 2:21**).

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# The Voice of Truth



April 11, 2010

## The Cross

By Jimmy Pettigrew

What does the cross mean to you? To me, it means **VICTORY!!!!** The cross gives us the victory over our enemies. Paul said, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (**Galatians 6:14**). Paul glories in the cross of Christ. Let us examine the importance of the cross, which gives US the victory over our enemies.

**The cross gives victory over sin.** The little word sin reveals mans' basic failure and problem. Sin has always been a problem for the whole human race (**Romans 3:23**). Sin is the transgression of the law (**1 John 3:4**). All unrighteousness is sin (**1 John 5:17**). Sin separates us from God (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). Sin brings death (**Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4**). The cross of Christ reveals the tragedy of sin. Christ died for the ungodly (**Romans 5:6-10**). God made His Son a sin offering (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). It wasn't the nails that held Christ to the cross, but our sins and His love for us! Through Christ's blood, men may now be redeemed from the rule of sin (**Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19**); cleansed from the guilt of sin (**Hebrews 9:14**). As Christians *"walk in the light"* of God's word (**Psalms 119:105**), they are kept cleansed from sin (**1 John 1:7; 2:2**).

**The cross gives victory over self.** Sin is basically selfishness. The selfish nature of sin is seen in the personal desires of the prodigal son (**Luke 15**). One of the most difficult things is denying self. Because of the power of selfishness, Christians must *"deny self"* (**Matthew 16:24**), and give ourselves to the Lord. *"Crucify self"* (**Galatians 2:20**). One must be willing to surrender to the Lord to serve Him; give of them selves (**2 Corinthians 8:5**).

**The cross gives victory over Satan.** Satan is identified as the *"god of this world"* (**2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-2**). He uses enticements to lead men into the fulfillment of lust (**James 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 2:11**). Christians, by the power of Christ's blood, can be delivered from the world (**Galatians 1:4; 6:14**). There is power in Christ's death to motivate men to flee sinful, worldly lusts and live for the Lord (**John 12:32-33**). Men can cease to be Satan's servants (**Romans 6:17-18**). Christ gives us the victory if we will follow Him! ♦

## Character Building

By Gene Taylor

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (**Matthew 7:24-27**)

The above text presents every person in one of two classes: wise or foolish builders. In it, Jesus is encouraging those who had heard His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount to apply them in their lives – not to be *"forgetful hearers"* (**Jas. 1:22**).

Each of us is to be involved in that building process by applying the principles of Scripture to our thoughts and conduct, conforming to the will of God in all things – even *"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (**2 Cor. 10:5**). This proc-

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#### Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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ess is described in **Romans 12:1-2**, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" The renewed mind one is to have is "*the mind of Christ*" (**Phil. 2:5**) which is revealed in the New Testament Scriptures (**Heb. 1:1-2**). When one allows the gospel to mold and renew his mind, a transformation occurs. He begins to take on the qualities of character that it sets forth that children of God should have. Every Christian must build such a character (**2 Pet. 3:18**).

We are not speaking of one's reputation. Reputation is what others think you are but character is the person you really are.

There are many standards people in the world use to develop and build character but for the Christian the only correct standard is that which is revealed in the inspired word of God.

### Jesus: Our Perfect Standard

There are many outstanding traits that Jesus possessed that would be good for all of us to have as part of our basic character. As a child, He was subject to His parents (**Luke 2:51; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20**). He was about His Father's business at an early age, i.e., He was interested in spiritual things while just a youth (**Luke 2:49; Eccl. 12:1**). He lived, not selfishly, but for others (**Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:4**). He accomplished God's will in His life (**John 6:38**). He left an example that all believers can follow (**1 Pet. 2:21**).

In this article, though, we want to look at His development that is related in **Luke 2:52**. The four areas in which Jesus grew that are revealed in that passage – wisdom, stature, favor with men, and favor with God – are those areas we must emphasize as we look to our own lives and conduct.

**Wisdom.** To advance in wisdom is to grow intellectually or mentally. Wisdom is "the quality of being wise; the power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action, based on knowledge, experience, understanding." Wisdom's importance is emphasized by Solomon in **Proverbs 3:13-26**. While one should give attention, especially when young, to his education, he should "*give diligence*" (**2 Tim. 2:15**) to gain knowledge of the Bible. A good understanding of its teachings is far more valuable than an education at the finest academic institutions our nation affords.

**Stature.** To advance in stature is to develop physically. Jesus developed a strong, healthy body. Our bodies are to be instruments of our service (**Rom. 12:1; 6:12-13**) and temples of God (**1 Cor. 6:18-20**). There are three essentials to building a strong body: eat proper food, exercise moderately (**1 Tim. 4:8**) and keep it free from diseases.

**Favor with Man.** This is to develop socially. It has to do with human beings living together as a group in a situation which requires they have dealings with one another. Man is created a social being: to live one with the other. It is not in man's nature to live alone (**Gen. 2:18**). He is to be a gregarious being. We need to learn to love people. It makes it easy to live with them. Jesus associated with all kinds of people – publicans, sinners, Samaritans – because He loved them (**John 3:16**). Jesus always tried to influence those with whom He associated to be better people setting the proper example of behavior before them.

**Favor with God.** This is the spiritual development that ought to characterize every child of God. The importance and value of the soul is seen in **Matthew 16:26** where it is shown to be of greater value than all the amassed wealth to be found in the world. Basically, the essentials for spiritual development are the same as those for physical growth: proper food, exercise and freedom from disease. The correct spiritual food is the Bible (**Acts 20:32; 1 Pet. 2:1-2**). Spiritual exercise is the application of the word of God

to one's life which results in proper character development and worthwhile service to the Lord and others. Freedom from disease is being pure and "*unspotted from the world*" (**Jas. 1:27**) by keeping one's lusts in check.

### Helps In Character Building

As the New Testament reveals Jesus Christ to be the perfect standard by which to measure our character and personal growth and development, it also offers some guidelines which will help all of us mold our characters into what our God would have them to be.

**Learn Self-Discipline.** Learn to say "no" to self, friends, evil ways, bad habits, etc. Jesus taught self-denial (**Matt. 16:24**). The apostle Peter taught that "self-control" is to be added to our faith (**2 Pet. 1:5-7**). A lack of self-discipline is one sure sign of immaturity.

**Be Unselfish.** Selfishness, the seat of all sins and wrongdoing, is having too much concern with one's own welfare. It is illustrated in Scripture by both Lot (**Gen. 13:8-13**) and the rich fool (**Luke 12:16-20**). It is impossible to make a right decision and be selfish. Moses, in choosing to lead the children of Israel, acted selflessly (**Heb. 11:24-26**), while, on the other hand, Lot, acting in a purely selfish manner, made a terrible choice which led to tragic consequences (**Gen. 13:8ff**). Someone has suggested that a good rule to follow is "God first, others second and self third."

**Use Proper Discrimination.** Be able to see the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, when there is one. Judge a thing not only by what it is but also by what it will eventually lead to if it is followed to its end – such as social drinking. Additionally, do not choose for the present but the future. The patriarch Lot chose for the present while Moses chose for the future.

**Have Convictions.** Develop strong beliefs on all important issues. Convictions, whether right or wrong, create respect. No one re-

spects a person who is "wishy-washy." Stand with your convictions even if you must stand alone. Consider the apostle Paul (**2 Tim. 4:16**) and Jesus (**Mark 14:50**). Do not be afraid to express your conviction. Consider how the prophet Daniel boldly stated his convictions while a captive in Babylon (**Dan. 1**).

**Form Good Habits.** A habit is a thing done often and hence, usually done easily. It is a practice, custom or act that is acquired and becomes automatic. There are two kinds of habits – good and bad. Form good habits in life and abstain from the bad ones.

**Be and Do Your Best.** "*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might*" (**Eccl. 9:10**). Consider Joseph – he always did his best whether he found himself as a slave, prisoner or governor.

**Learn to Think for Yourself.** Do not be a slave to another's thinking, especially in religion. The importance of thinking properly is stated in **Proverbs 23:7**: "*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*" Therefore, control your thinking. "*Bring every thought in captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (**2 Cor. 10:5; cf. Phil. 4:8**).

**Use Pure Speech.** "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one*" (**Col. 4:6**). Learn how to communicate. A lack of communication causes many problems. Express yourself properly and well. Do not use filthy or profane language (**Eph. 4:29**). Profanity is scorned by all right-thinking people. In reality, it is a sign of stupidity. The tongue may be hard to control (**Jas. 3:1-12**) but it can be and must be controlled.

**Behave Properly.** "*Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity*" (**1 Tim. 4:12**). This teaching is primarily aimed at youth since the apostle Paul told Timothy to conduct himself properly so that no one would "*despise his youth.*" Young people need to behave properly in the home by respecting