

Character – Lesson 4

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

Those of mature character exhibit the qualities listed in 1 Tim 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Character is developed by disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness; by making much effort (taking pains and being absorbed – 1 Tim 4:7-15) in the maturing process. That process involves the Holy Spirit as He uses the word of God to bring about the will of God in the child of God's life – as we learn what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph 5:3-10).

The overarching character quality in mature(ing) believers is that they are above reproach (blameless) – they are free from even the appearance of evil and no charge of evil could be brought against them let alone sustained. Expanding on “above reproach”, a mature believer strives to be:

2. Pure – in thought, motive, and action they are free from sexual immorality.
3. Temperate – they have a clear-headed proper focus on the eternal.
4. Prudent – they are wise with a proper view of God and themselves.
5. Respectable – they have a well ordered and arranged life that adorns the Lord, His word, and Gospel message with honor in every respect.
6. Hospitable – they seek for opportunity to love strangers.
7. Able to teach – they seek to communicate in such a way as to move others to bring Scripture to bear on their lives.
8. Not addicted to wine – alcohol is not their companion and they exercise wisdom when deciding to partake of alcohol in moderation.

9. Not Pugnacious (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7)

(Με |) πλε | κτε | σ: 1) bruiser, ready for a blow; 2) a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person

Pugnacious literally means 'a striker' (KJV). This character quality interestingly follows “not addicted to wine” in both lists (1 Tim and Titus). In both cases one loses control and becomes controlled by the wine or anger. This is someone who does not strike out at people either with his fists or with harsh, angry words, but remains calm and gentle even in difficult situations.

Pugnaciousness... is really anger out of control – not just verbally, but physically. *The Measure of a Man* by Gene Getz, page 153.

By extension, pugnacious can refer to verbal as well as physical fighting and quarreling. It is possible to hurt a person more deeply and permanently with cruel words than with a fist or club. An elder should have no part in meanness, abusiveness, or retaliation, no matter how cruelly provoked. When conflicts arise, he must make sure that they are settled peacefully, reasonably, and without animosity.

MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Titus

Q: Have you ever been in a conflict? Were you on the receiving or the giving end?

Q: Tell about a time that you handled it well and a time you did not.

Several Proverbs speak to sinful anger and anger out of control.

¹A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

²The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

³The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.

⁴A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit. Prov 15:1-4

²⁴Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man,

²⁵Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself. Prov 22:24-25

⁸Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger.

¹¹A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. Prov 29:8, 11 (NIV)

The Scriptures call us to respond to people with kindness, patience, and gentleness.

²⁴The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim 2:24-25

10. Gentle (1 Tim 3:3)

επιεικε | σ: 1) seemingly, suitable; 2) equitable, fair, mild, gentle

Used four other times in the NT:

¹Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ²to malign no one, to be peaceable, **gentle**, showing every consideration for all men. Titus 3:1-2

¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, **gentle**, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. James 3:17

¹⁸Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and **gentle**, but also to those who are unreasonable. 1 Pet 2:18

⁵Let your **gentle spirit** be known to all men. The Lord is near. Phil 4:5

A gentle man exhibits a willingness to yield and patiently makes allowances for the weakness and ignorance of the fallen human condition. He is gracious, reasonable, and considerate. Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership by Alexander Strauch, page 228.

Instead of being **pugnacious**, a leader must be **gentle**. *Επιεικε / σ (gentle)* describes the person who is considerate, genial, forbearing, and gracious, who easily pardons human failure. Such a person remembers good, not evil. He does not keep a list of all the wrongs done to him, or hold a grudge. Many men leave the ministry because they can't accept criticism. A leader, when wronged, must have no thought of retaliation. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy

Q: What is your biggest pet peeve when dealing with people?

Q: Can you think of a time when you gave up your rights in order to serve someone else?

This kind of gentleness emphasizes forbearance when wronged and forgiveness both of which are derived from love.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, **is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,** ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷**bears all things, believes all things,** hopes all things, **endures all things.** 1 Cor 13:4-7

¹²Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions. Prov 10:12

⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Pet 4:8

Matthew 18:21-35 provides an example of gentleness (forbearance, love, and forgiveness).

11. Uncontentious (peaceable – NASB Update) (1 Tim 3:3)

αμαχητος: not contentious; abstaining from fighting. Also translated “not quarrelsome” in the NKJV and NIV and “peaceable” in the NASB Update. Literally meaning “not disposed to fight.”

Used only one other place in the NT:

¹Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ²to malign no one, to be **peaceable**, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. Titus 3:1-2

Q: How do you determine what things to “fall on your sword” for?

The Scriptures call us to pursue living at peace with everyone.

¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Rom 12:17-18

¹⁹So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Rom 14:19

Again, Proverbs speaks to quarrels and strife.

⁷When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Prov 16:7

¹⁶There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ...

¹⁹A false witness *who* utters lies, And one who **spreads strife** among brothers. Prov 6:16, 19

³Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel. Prov 20:3

²¹*Like* charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife. Prov 26:21

Next time we will study: free from the love of money (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7); manages own household well (1 Tim 3:4; Titus 1:6); not a new convert (1 Tim 3:6); and must have a good reputation with those outside the church (1 Tim 3:7).

Homework: Read 1 Tim 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Look up verses on family roles and responsibilities.