

Character Quality Studies

This involves finding out what the Bible says about a particular characteristic of a person in the Bible. You are studying the characteristics, negative or positive, of a person rather than the person himself. The point is that we learn to avoid the negative ones and work on building the positive ones into our lives.

Preparation:

- Select the **Quality**
 - Look up the word or concept in the dictionary and write down the definition.
 - List any synonyms or related words that help you understand this quality.
- Name the **Opposite Quality**
 - There may be more than one. Unfaithfulness is the opposite of faithfulness, but doubt, apathy, and fear could all be the opposite of faith.
 - Write out their definitions.
- Do a Simple **Word Study**
 - Using a concordance or blueletterbible.org, look up when this character quality is discussed in Scripture.
 - Using a Bible dictionary or blueletterbible.org, look for the way the quality was used in biblical times and the Scriptures.
 - Ex. “meek” in the original Greek means “breaking something and bringing it under submission.” The word was used to describe the training of valuable horses, which were brought under submission to their masters. A stallion would still have all the power and strength of its wild days, but is now under its master’s control. Meekness, therefore, is not weakness. As a Christian character quality, meekness is strength that is in submission to Jesus Christ.
- Find Some **Cross-References**
 - Use a concordance, topical Bible, and/or blueletterbible.org to find all the verses you can relating to this quality.
 - Ask some of the following questions about the quality as you meditate on the cross-references: What are the benefits this trait can bring me? What are some bad consequences this trait can bring me? What are benefits this trait can bring to others? What are some bad consequences this trait can bring to others? Is there any promise from God related to this trait? Is there any warning or judgment related to this trait? Is there a command related to this trait? What factors produce this trait? Did Jesus have anything to say about this quality? What writer talked about this quality the most? Is this trait symbolized by anything significant in Scripture? Is this trait listed with a group of qualities, what is the relationship between them, what does this suggest? What Scriptures tell me directly what God thinks of this trait? Do I want more or less of this trait in my life?
 - Write a brief summary of the Bible’s teaching on this quality.
- Do a Brief **Biographical Study**
 - Find at least one person in Scripture who showed this character quality, and ask these questions: What shows this quality in his/her life? How did this quality affect his/her life? Did the quality help or hinder his/her growth to maturity, how? What results did it produce in his/her life?
 - (Occasionally, character traits will be exemplified by animals, especially in Proverbs.)

**All methods and ideas are taken from Rick Warren’s *Bible Study Methods*.

Warren, Rick. *Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods: Twelve Ways You Can Unlock God's Word*. Zondervan, 2006.

Lesson Format:

Title: The **Quality**

Introduction: Provide a short activity, ice breaker, or thought-provoking question to focus the group's thoughts on the topic for the day.

Lesson Body:

- Explain that we don't want to project our own ideas about what it means to live a holy life onto what the Bible says. We are going to acknowledge our own preconceptions so that we can build on them or wipe them away to start from scratch.
- Present the **quality** to the group and ask them to share their understandings of what it means to have that quality.
 - If clarification is needed to narrow the definition/understanding, discuss the **opposite quality** and how that can contrast how we can observe the **quality**.
 - If the real, applicable definition does not come up through the opinions of people in the group, present your findings.
- To address erroneous preconceptions, present your **word study** of the original, Scriptural usage of the quality.
- Discuss how we can identify the quality in someone's actions and observe how the Bible presents the quality in the **cross-references**.
 - You may read all the cross-references or only a select few that epitomize your findings.
 - Ask some of the sample questions that you believe the people in your small group may connect with or relate to.
- Look at an example of how this quality was lived out in the **biographical study**.
 - You may summarize a whole life story and read only a few key verses.
 - If there is time, you may want to read a whole section of Scripture.
 - Discuss some of the sample questions that you think would be most applicable to the group.
- Application: Select a situation or relationship to work on.
 - Situation: Anticipate in advance what you will do when the situation arises.
 - Relationship: Determine ahead of time how you will respond in your interactions with that person.
 - Discuss how our actions might need to change before our heart attitudes change, but righteous living often turns into holy thoughts.
 - Remember that applications should be personal, practical, possible, and measurable (see "Basic Principles for Bible Study").

Suggestions for the Conclusion:

- Find a Memory Verse: Choose one verse that exemplifies the essential ideas of what the people in your small group need to know.
- Plan a Specific Project: i.e. To work on the trait of gratefulness, write grateful letters to five people who have been a blessing to you.
- Put it in Writing: As the week progresses, keep track of how you were able to work on this quality, what was successful, and what was not.

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Things to Remember:

1. Only work on one character quality at a time. It is far better to build one quality solidly into your life than to work on several weak ones.
2. Don't rush it! You may look at a different character quality or Bible lesson each week, but you should probably want to work on one quality for a much longer time.
3. Stay with one quality until you get victory in that specific area.
4. Be alert to a negative quality in your life that is actually a positive one being misused. The Lord wants to turn your weak points into strong ones. Being legalistic and unbending might be misuse of self-discipline that needs to be tempered with compassion and concern.
5. Trust the Holy Spirit to build these qualities in your life. It is God alone who can change your character (Phil. 2:13).
6. **God often builds character in our lives by putting us in situations where we are tempted to do the opposite.**

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