

Christ in Men...

Today

*52 Weeks of Building Spiritual Muscle,
One Character Quality at a time*

By

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Accountability is telling my children, “Don’t do as I say, do as I do.”

“Be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ.” I Cor. 11:1

It seems exactly the opposite of what a humble person would say: “Do what I do.” But that is precisely what Paul says to his Corinthian readers. Keep in mind Paul’s goal was not to create little Pauls, but little Christs. Imitating Paul would not result in perfection, but it would increase righteousness, another step in our sanctification.

How are we doing in modeling Christ for our kids? Do they see our emotions (frustration, anger, bitterness, etc.) and do all in their power to avoid us? Or is Christ’s love, compassion, and patience visible, drawing them closer to us and Jesus?

Today, be conscious of both audiences; those who live with us and the audience of One.

Father, help me remember that my children are always watching me to see if You’re real. May I not abdicate my responsibility or leave it to my wife to model You for them. Help me this week to be the kind of example that, if followed, will bring honor to You.

Amen.

Accountability is using the Internet in the living room

“Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the Lord and whose deeds are done in a dark place, and they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?” Isa. 29:15.

When the things that are unseen are what make up the real world and the things that are seen will all pass away, it's difficult to remember that the all-seeing God is just that – all-seeing. We think if we close our door or turn out the lights or pull the shades, nobody will observe our dark acts.

But don't forget what the Psalmist wrote in 139:12: “Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.”

Could Jonah hide from God? No. Has God changed or gotten more lenient? No. So why do we think we can hide (ourselves or our acts) from God? How would our lives change if we were cognizant of the reality that God watches everything? Would we be nicer to our neighbors? Would our expense report be precise? Could we visit all the same websites?

Today, begin the habit of “Practicing God's Presence”¹ and note any changes in your daily activities in a journal.

Father, it's so easy to think that nobody's looking, that just this once won't hurt. Help me be faithful every time. **Amen**.

¹ Murray's *Practice of God's Presence*

Generosity to others is a response to God's generosity to me.

“Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” Luke 6:38

Expectations based on God's promises are one thing. But demanding that God has to respond a certain way is arrogant, un-Biblical, and God hates it.²³³ You've heard them, the so-called “name it and claim it” proponents. Their message is that we can manipulate God so that He's forced to repay us. Do you really want a god that you can control? That wouldn't be much of a god.

What God is looking for is a man who recognizes everything comes from Him, is grateful for it (not like the Israelites, who got their request but incurred God's wrath)²³⁴, and trusts God to replenish exactly the right amount as he gives it away. Are you that man?

It requires humility and faith. Humility says, “I didn't do it,” and faith says, “I *can* do it with God's help.”²³⁵ It also doesn't matter the amount. It's *always* the heart attitude behind the giving. How about this? Try giving to someone you don't like...start with a smile. Jesus gave us the “formula.” What standard of measure are you using? Why isn't it bigger? Are you barely making it? God has said He will never leave you or forsake you.²³⁶ Are you trusting Him today? Can He trust you today?

Father, my giving is such a clear picture of my heart, and I don't like what I see. Forgive my selfishness and replace it with gratitude and generosity. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

233 Prov. 8:13

234 Psa. 106:15

235 Phil. 4:13

236 Heb. 13:5

Thankful men are not arrogant or discontent

“...in the last days...men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant...ungrateful...avoid such men as these.” II Tim.3:1-5

Arrogance is the spawn of ignorance, i.e., wrong thinking about your abilities and accomplishments vis a vis how you got to where you are. Paul had a first-class pedigree.⁹³⁰ But he didn't flaunt it; in fact, he counted it all as loss when compared to the “surpassing value” of knowing Christ.⁹³¹ Thankfulness and arrogance are mutually exclusive; they can't fill the same space. A thankful man recognizes his acquisitions and accomplishments as gifts from a gracious God. As such, there's not one thing we can do to earn God's favor. It's all Him. The arrogant man doesn't recognize God as the giver of every gift.⁹³² He smugly believes *he* is all that.

We've seen in the last couple of days what God thinks about grumbling, complaining, arrogance. Moses and Aaron learned the hard way. Not only did Moses disobey God and hit the rock instead of speaking to it like God had told him, he proudly asked the Israelites if they wanted *him* to bring forth water for them.⁹³³ It cost both of them entry into the Promised Land. Don't fall into thinking that just because God doesn't zap us immediately when our arrogance and discontent offend Him that He really isn't offended. Just remember Moses. Also consider Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon. Daniel interpreted Neb's dream and warned him that if he didn't abandon his sins and recognize that all rule and authority belongs to God, he would be like an animal for seven years—until he realized that truly God was ruler of all. Exactly 12 months later...it happened.⁹³⁴ One year can lull us into thinking God has forgotten or forgone our punishment. Not. God doesn't forget the bad or good we've done. But here's our hope: We don't have to live with the guilt of our past sins, or the pride borne of man's praise for our deeds (which, by the way, is sin too). Jesus is God's answer to both.

Understand that even our best day isn't enough to sway God's planned punishment for sin. But Jesus is. I sound like a broken record, but there is *only one way* to God: His Son, Jesus Christ.⁹³⁵ Being thankful for what Jesus did for us is the key to defeating arrogance (pride) and discontentment. If we have food and clothing, we are to be content.⁹³⁶ And thank God for trials as well as blessings.⁹³⁷

Father, I know everything I am and have is because of Your plan for my life. Often I forget that and think highly of myself. Forgive me. I want to be content. I don't want to be arrogant. Make me more like Jesus. **Amen**

930 Phil. 3:5, 6

931 Phil 3:7, 8

932 Jas. 1:17

933 Num. 20:10

934 Dan. 4:29-33

935 John 14:6

936 I Tim. 6:8

937 Jas. 1:2