

Character Study I

Fairness - Displaying impartiality and honesty; free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism.

Study the following passages carefully according to the instructions given in Character Traits Bibles Studies Introduction document. Then answer the questions below.

Exodus 18:21 But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

Exodus 23:2 "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd,

Deuteronomy 1:17 Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.

Deuteronomy 16:9 Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain.

Luke 14:12-14 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Romans 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of

Galatians 2:6 As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance--those men added nothing to my message.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:28-29 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

James 2:1-9 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are

dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Notes and Questions:

1. Why do people often prejudge others?
2. What are some of the most common ways that people practice favoritism? Which of these do you find yourself practicing? What can you do to change that?
3. Having a very diverse group of people should add to the richness and quality of a Church. But most Churches have a very homogeneous population. Why is this so? What can you do to change that?
4. One of the universal needs of all humans is for justice. But the big question is, "who gets to decide what is just or fair?" God however insists He alone will decide this question. Is this fair or unfair? Is this good news or bad news? Explain your answer.
5. God doesn't treat people equally. For example he gives people very different bodies, intellectual capacity, and circumstances. How is it that he can do that and still be fair? What do we need to learn from that?
6. What are the things about others that are most commonly prejudged? Which are you most prone to prejudge others? How can you change that?
7. God wants us to be doing all that we can to win those that are lost without Christ, and to all that we can to help fellow believers reach their full potential in Christ? How would keeping these two aims clear in our hearts and minds help us to be fair and impartial in our relationships?

Flexibility - Responding or conforming, without difficulty, to changing or new situations.

Study the following passages carefully according to the instructions given in Character Traits Bibles Studies Introduction document. Then answer the questions below.

Genesis 39:1-3 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did,

Mark 7:1-8 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as

it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Luke 15:1-2 Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1 Corinthians 10:23-31 "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake-- the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Notes and Questions:

1. Can one have strong convictions and still be flexible?
2. Circumstances for Joseph seemed to change drastically several times, what was it that enabled him to adjust so well each time?
3. It looks like one needs to properly understand Christian freedom, and appropriate that freedom in order to be flexible? Is that true or false? Explain?
4. Think through some situations that call for flexibility and then think through situations that call for steadfastness. What can you learn from this exercise?
5. What might be some wrong applications of flexibility?
6. Insecurity, lack of personal convictions, traditions, personality types, and immaturity can lead some people to be flexible in the wrong ways but these things can lead others to be too rigid. Find examples of these things in your own life and in the lives of others. What lessons and applications can you draw from these observations?

7. The Bible gives us guidelines like, what is beneficial, constructive and agrees with conscience. Think through situations where you might have used these guidelines in the past or might use them in the future.