

**Leadership Principles & the Pastoral Epistles – 2015**  
**WEEK 6: PURSUE GODLY CHARACTER**

**Interpretive comments on 2 Tim. 2:19b-23**

A new metaphor of contrast—two kinds of vessels:

- “to honor”
  
- “to no honor”

Progress in godly character *will* result in leadership/ministry effectiveness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12,16; 2 Pet. 1:8)

We can all *choose* to cooperate with God and become “vessels of honor”

**Why is this so important?**

Because progress in godly character *commends* sound doctrine and *inspires* others to follow his lifestyle of love

Because hypocrisy *repels* others from Jesus and the gospel

**How do we make progress in godly character?**

Progress requires “abstaining”—not grieving the Spirit’s moral leadership/keeping a “good/clear conscience” (1 Tim. 1:5,10; 3:9)

Progress requires “pursuing” godly character

- “Righteousness”
  
- “Faith”
  
- “Love”

- “Peace”

REMEMBER: “Pursuing” does not mean reaching a perfectionistic standard, but genuinely *valuing* this way of life and making evident *progress* (1 Tim. 4:15).

Progress requires “fleeing . . . lusts . . . with a pure heart.” This involves more than staying away from tempting situations; it also involves in-depth and ongoing repentance from heart-idols that drive many of our besetting sins.

- James 3:13-4:10 describes the dynamics of this kind of repentance

Sinful behaviors

Sinful attitudes

Lust (*epithumia*)

Idolatry

Repentance

- The “Idolatry & In-Depth Repentance” chart gives another description  
Prayerfully identify your “over-desires” & the idols connected to them
  - Inordinate emotional reactions

SELF-REPROACH

ANGER/RESENTMENT

ANXIETY

DESPONDENCY

BOREDOM

- “*Why* do I keep doing this/adopting this attitude? What is it that I feel I *must* have that I am willing to disobey God’s will to get?”

Idols are fueled by unbelief in specific aspects of God’s grace

Repentance from idolatry involves:

- Considering how this idol has failed you & corrupted you
- Confessing that this idol-worship & unbelief in God’s grace is *more* sinful than the behavioral &/or attitudinal sins they led to
- Agreeing that Christ died for this idolatry & unbelief, and casting yourself on God’s mercy

God will often ask you to take a specific action in keeping with your repentance

Fruits of repentance from idolatry:

- Greater insight into your depravity & (consequently) deeper appreciation for God’s grace
- Renewed vitality in your relationship with God, including His peace, hope & joy
- Gradual, deepening change in character & renewed motivation to love others

NOTE: Growth does *not* mean that you never struggle with this idol again! Rather, it means that you identify it and repent from it more quickly.

## OTHER EXAMPLES:

Progress requires doing this “*with* those who call upon God with a pure heart” (2:22; Heb. 3:13; Jas. 5:16)

- Closely observe other godly Christian workers (Phil. 3:17; 4:9).
- Conversely, be careful about spending too much time around carnal Christians (Prov. 13:20).

SPURGEON: “We shall often find ourselves in danger of deteriorating our zeal by the cold Christian people with whom we come in contact. What terrible wet blankets some (Christians) are! . . . If these frost-bitten men should happen to be the officers of the church, from whom you naturally expect the warmest sympathy, the result is chilling to the last degree, and all the more if you are young and inexperienced . . .”<sup>1</sup>

- Cultivate and maintain Christ-centered peer friendships! Don’t regard these as luxuries that you can’t afford because of other ministry responsibilities. These friendships are a stewardship responsibility because they keep you in the race for the distance.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, p. 83.