

Undying Gratitude

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Seven “Uncharacteristics” That Can Change the World in 2017– Lesson Two

As Christians, we were given two critical assignments that, successfully executed, can change our world: Present and represent Christ everywhere we go, in all circumstances, and to all people. I began this series by sharing a strong reminder the Holy Spirit impressed upon me regarding Christ’s mandate.

Characteristics of Christ that should be ever-present in our lives as biblical Christians are too often *uncharacteristic*. That confuses or puts off unbelievers. No chance to change the world.

Following is a key-point summary from the last lesson on the first characteristic – ***unconditional love***.

- Has its roots in what Jesus called “the greatest and foremost commandment”. (Matthew 22: 38)
- The Good Samaritan was an indictment on all religious people who pass by those suffering right in front of us, to whom we refuse the love of Christ given freely to us.
- The Woman at the Well presented a real-life example of Jesus crossing racial and political hate and prejudice to save people because of His unconditional love for them.
- Loving the “deplorables” reminded us we were all deplorables as sinners apart from Christ. His love saved us. Jesus’ equation: Loving “the least of these” = Loving Him.

- Mission Impossible. Unconditional love is a God thing – not humanly possible. BUT Jesus sent His Spirit to love and work in and through us. So, it is possible to accomplish His mission (should we decide to accept it). His power, not ours.

The next six characteristics flow from the first. Their order is subject to discussion, but I doubt there would be much debate with the choices. For the second uncharacteristic, I chose ***undying gratitude***.

Undying Gratitude – For those born again in Christ, we develop a deep, profound sense of gratitude both for the Giver and the Gift. The most memorized and quoted verse in the Bible explains.

“For God (the Giver) so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son (the Gift) that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NASB)

It is true to say the first Gift begot the second one – eternal life. As one raised in the church, I memorized many Bible verses from early childhood through high school. I confess that was more about recognition than understanding and assimilating them. It produced no real sense of *gratitude* in my heart.

That preceded a season in my life when my relationship with the Lord went from a walk to a crawl to a halt to backsliding reminiscent of Michael Jackson’s moonwalk. Thankfully, I finally began to seek the Lord and study His Word intentionally for His meaning and application in my life. Only then did the concept of ***undying gratitude*** become something I began to grasp. The more real and personal the Gift became, the more overwhelmed I became. His life for mine? He covered my vanity with His humility and the entirety of my sin with His blood, extricated in the most inhumane way possible. This reality produced great remorse and repentance. And a real

sense of *gratitude* for what I now understood.

The undying part? I believe if Christians pursue the heart of God as revealed in His Word, we will come to a place in our lives we cannot think of God's Gift and our gain without being overwhelmed with gratitude. If you are like me, it can take years to get there. This gratitude overflows because we realize nothing can remove the most indescribable expression of unconditional love-His Gift, our Savior and Lord.

Some of you have similar testimonies to mine, while others are not there yet. Do not fret. We are all works in progress no matter how old or young we are in the Lord. I simply want to encourage you keep searching until you find this kind of *gratitude*. As you consider how to begin (or renew) your quest, consider this exhortation from the writer of the book of Hebrews.

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe." (Hebrews 12: 28 NASB)

Your desperately grateful brother in Christ,

Walter

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