

#258 "Twelve Characteristics of a God-honoring Spirit" (Part 1 of 2)

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Proverbs 20:27 says, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being." In our spirits, we deal with our conscience and the Spirit of God ministering to our hearts, teaching us right from wrong. It is a dissection of truth and error (1 John 4:6) and of love for self versus love for God at the deepest soul level (1 Corinthians 2:11). If we yield to the Spirit's inner workings, we will see fruit outwardly that is reflective of the true state of our hearts. Thus, if we want to see true and lasting change in our lives, it starts in the inside, in the depths, and in the spirit. The following gives twelve characteristics of a God-honoring and God-following spirit.

1. God has called us to have a spirit that is different from most.

Numbers 14:24 says, "But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it." Caleb, like Joshua, believed that God could enable Israel to conquer the promised land despite the overwhelming opponents because it was just that, the land promised to them by God. He had faith that God could do what He said He would do and that nothing could thwart His plan or power. Few possess this kind of faith because most prefer to live their lives based on what is easy, safe, comfortable, and within their own control. But those with a different spirit will go wherever God has called them and do whatever God has asked of them, no matter how far-fetched it might seem and regardless of the cost. It requires a refusal to compromise, and it is unwilling to settle for less than God's best according to His promises that exceed our ability to even ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

2. God has called us to have a spirit of wisdom.

Deuteronomy 34:9 says, "Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses." Wisdom is a gift from God that He gives those who ask in faith believing that they will receive what they have asked (James 1:5-8). But they cannot ask with doubting, for they must have full confidence in God that His will is not a will of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33) but of clear and true direction. Anything less results in a life of double-mindedness and spiritual paralysis. God gives us His wisdom in His Word and by His Spirit within us, for in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). God has even given us the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) so that we can think as He thinks by seeing the world through a right Biblical view. The spirit of wisdom is rare because few have faith in a God Who still gives this kind of insight.

3. God has called us to have a sensitive and responsive spirit.

Ezra 1:5 says, "Then the heads of fathers' households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem." The fact is that God is always working and moving, and sensitive spirits allow

themselves to be moved by God rather than resisting Him. We ought to listen to God's Word and be led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14) as God's Word is opened and taught. Furthermore, we are to pay attention to what God is doing around us (Acts 17:15-17) and to what doors He might be opening for us (1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12). A sensitive and observant spirit is critical to being in tune with what God wants for us and how He would have us spend our time and invest our lives. As long as we remain humble enough to be moved by God, He will get us to where we need to go and make us into the people that He desires us to be.

4. God has called us to maintain a steadfast spirit.

Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." This mindset and attitude corresponds with the teaching of 1 Corinthians 15:58 which says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." The steadfast spirit retains a clear vision of what life is about, it appreciates the brevity of our time on earth, and it focuses on the rewards to come in eternity. It evaluates every life decision through the grid of what God values and how God wants a life to be spent. A steadfast spirit does not give up easily, and even after defeats, it, by the power of God, is moved to continue on until God calls the person home. Steadfastness is perseverance with conviction and vision, knowing what life is about and not veering from that charted course no matter what obstacles come and get in the way.

5. God has called us to have a willing spirit.

Psalm 51:12 says, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." A willing spirit is one that does not become stubborn and stiff-necked against the plans and purposes of God (Psalm 78:8). It is broken enough to admit wrong-doing and humble enough to receive God's mercy (Proverbs 29:23). It is open enough to listen to the truth of God's Word and pliable enough to be trained in righteousness. It is a heart attitude that wants to learn and is eager to grow and to serve. Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We know our flesh is weak and that we stumble in many ways, but at least our spirits should be willing to do what is right. It is all about God changing us from the inside out so that we want what He wants and willingly seek out those things.

6. God has called us to have a diligent and fervent spirit.

Romans 8:15 says, "Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Isaiah 26:9 adds, "At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently; For when the earth experiences Your judgments The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." Those who long for the truth and who are diligent and fervent for righteousness (Acts 18:25) will keep opening the Scripture, keep asking questions, keep laboring in Christ's kingdom work, and keep opening the door when Christ is there knocking with new things to teach from His Word and new mercies to show (Revelation 3:20). Our diligence and fervency are not about fleshly energy and mere high-octane, caffeine-fueled spurts of

action, but rather our fervency and diligence depend upon how well we keep seeking and how often we keep letting Christ dissect our hearts and teach us new and wonderful things that we hadn't yet known.