



Choose Your Character

25 BIBLE PERSONALITIES
WHO INSPIRE INTEGRITY



RON MEYERS



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Choose Your Character: 25 Bible Personalities Who Inspire Integrity

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God is creative and the Author of creativity. When an idea develops in our spirits, the Creator is at work in tandem with one of us creatures. I base this opinion on Isaiah 26:12. It says, “All that we have accomplished you have done for us.”

Partnership with God is marvelous. He works through our personalities, vocabularies, and temperaments in an amazing blend of the divine with our human elements. I may be tempted to think it is I who wrote this book. However, I know that whatever I appear to accomplish happens only with God’s enablement. For this reason, my first acknowledgment is to God for His partnership in this writing project. This is not to blame Him for the imperfections (those would be mine) but to acknowledge His involvement.

Not only has God helped conceptually; He has also providentially provided the time to write the chapters. I enjoy the challenges and demands of our conference work but consequently our schedule is quite rigorous. But God has changed that several times.

Due to local elections in the northern part of the Congo in June 2008, an Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conference was canceled. We had just finished one in Brazzaville and with the sudden schedule change, I offered to conduct a partial conference featuring character development using Bible characters. The teachings from Bible characters were very warmly received. That is how this book got started. Then a three-week ministry trip to Mozambique the following August was canceled, and I used those weeks to write more chapters. Finally in August 2010, another ministry trip cancellation afforded the time to put the finishing touches on the chapters.

Today, these character studies are available in book form. They can be used as an independent study by individuals or for mere reading pleasure. You may also use them as the basis to conduct your own teaching series to help other Christians grow in character.

In the early stages of the development of these ideas, I read the first manuscripts to my wife Char. I am grateful for her patience as we read the chapters through together. Our good friend Kay Watson in Ontario, Canada also read the manuscript and made thoughtful comments. I am thankful for these. My missionary friend Millard Parrish also helped edit these pages. His sharp eye, biblical insights, and theological understanding have benefited me greatly.

I recently re-connected with my missionary hero Cecil Murphy. He has become an author and a developer of authors. He offered me the gracious gift of a scholarship with a professional Christian writer to edit the manuscript of this book. That is how Kathy Ide and The Christian PEN became involved in this work. Her keen mind and literary skills have helped make this book what it is today. I will always be indebted to her.

This is the third book for me to publish with Soar with Eagles and Carrie Perrien Smith. She maintains friendly personal warmth while at the same time displaying a high degree of professional competency. She and her team are a joy to work with. Carrie did a great job with the cover design, and her artistic talents are obvious throughout the pages of the book.

In summary, through various circumstances and multiple persons, God has helped with this book. I hope it brings praise and glory to Him. That is my intention.

Ron Meyers

For more information about Ron Meyers and Leadership Empowerment Conferences, please visit www.leresources.com.

INTRODUCTION

In 1986, after thirteen years of a teaching, preaching, administrating, and church-planting ministry in Korea, our family of four prepared to return to the United States. We knew our work in Korea was completed. Many of our former students had become pastors. When they came to say good-bye, many told us things like, “We learned a lot from you in the classroom and from your sermons, but we learned more by watching your family in your home.” From that observation, my wife Char and I learned that our actions at home speak more loudly than our public words.

I tell that story whenever I teach at Leadership Empowerment Conferences because I want my listeners to live family lives that validate, illustrate, and support the sermons they preach. I teach that family life is not an interruption to our public ministry; rather, it is an opportunity to demonstrate the credibility of our message.

So it is with the Bible’s characters. The writers of the Bible speak to us with their words, and the Bible’s characters speak to us with their lives. Some of their messages are so powerful, their actions need only a few observations to bring to light the spiritual inspiration and brilliant insight the human writers and the divine Writer intended.

What can we learn today from Noah’s life? How could Esther’s wise dealings with her husband help us to be more influential and effective for God? What traps would we avoid if we examined Balaam’s behavior? Why might Paul’s strong recommendation of Phoebe reverse much of what the Christian Church has believed for centuries about women ministers? Times, cultures, traditions, and societal values may change from century to century, but human nature does not change. Bible characters can teach us biblical character.

According to Romans 15:4, we are to learn life lessons from the Old Testament. “For everything that was written in the past was written to

teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”

First Corinthians 10:11–12 says, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”

Following those principles, we can learn lessons from the narratives and characters in both Testaments. Their stories still speak to us today.

Many more Bible characters could have been added to this book. Here are three criteria I used for selecting the ones to include.

First, I tried to choose stories that contained valuable lessons for Christians who want to increase their influence. In my travels in Europe, Africa, Asia, South Pacific, and North America, I have met many intelligent, dedicated, sincere, zealous, and teachable brothers and sisters. It is my hope that the ideas in this book can help them, and others like them, become even more effective, successful, influential, and fruitful in the work God gives them.

Second, I wanted to deal with a broad range of subjects. I feel an obligation to avoid a rehash of themes already addressed in other books. Instead, I chose to point out new applications drawn from familiar stories.

Third, I looked for the human interest factor. Good lessons should be couched in literature written as interestingly as possible. Even though I don’t expect you to read these chapters just for entertainment, I do harbor the hope that they will be interesting.

I used a few of Joel Rosenberg’s ideas in the chapter on Ezekiel and Joel David Hamilton’s ideas in the chapter about Phoebe. With those two exceptions, these lessons are my own observations made from years of studying the Bible. In 1963, when I was nineteen, I began to read the Bible through a couple of times each year. After about seven years, I cut back to reading it through just once each year, a habit I have maintained ever since.

After all these readings, I have come to feel like I know the Bible characters. I have a sense for what they thought, why they acted the way they did, and what they did right and wrong. In teaching and preaching,

and now in this book, I have used their lives to teach people how to live biblical and principled lives.

Here I present to you twenty-five acquaintances of mine as I have come to know them. I have chosen to present them in the order in which they appear in the Scriptures. This does not in any way indicate the importance of any one character over another; each reader will find some chapters more applicable than others. There is something here for everyone.

We tend to become like persons we highly regard. Our behavior, vocabulary, and even facial expressions give testimony to this phenomenon. Whom do you admire? With whom do you like to converse? Which of the personalities in the Bible do you esteem? Whose story do you most enjoy reading? Your selection of whom to respect and whose company you keep reveals your personal character. Can you see ways in which you are becoming like them?

We normally appreciate the person who does what he says he will do — his actions match his words. Likewise, we value the person who says what he means and means what he says — his actions and words reflect his true thoughts and intentions. Both of these ideas are included in my personal definition of *integrity*, a word included in the subtitle of this book.

Integrity, as it relates to personal character, usually refers to a person's honesty and morality. It might be helpful though to take a closer look at this word *integrity*. It comes from the same root word from which the words *integrate* and *integrated* come.

Persons of integrity purposely *integrate* their own thoughts, words, and behaviors. Growing Christians work at making their own hearts and minds, thoughts and ideas consistent with the godly character portrayed in Scripture. With integrity, they will also work at making what they say and do completely consistent with these thoughts, ideas, and intentions. This ensures that their words and actions will accurately reflect who and what they are on the inside and what they are becoming. There will be no trace of guile, deception, or hypocrisy. Those of us who follow the Lord instead of the world will work together with God to transform ourselves internally and externally, developing and maintaining personal consistency and integrity.

As you review the personal character of the people in this book, I hope

you will cultivate a desire to become a person of integrity. If you do, you will find that you are consistent with yourself, and therefore happier with yourself. You will also increase your opportunities to favorably influence others by your example. This is character worth choosing.

I hope that as you read this book and spend time with these people from the Bible, your character will more closely reflect the best of theirs. You are already making choices about who you will become. When you choose those people with whom you spend time, or about whom you read, you choose your character.



CHAPTER 1

NOAH

Noah's life has poignant messages for Christians today. For example, did you realize that when God contends with us, He is complimenting us? And did you know that God protects us from bigger punishments and more severe judgments by giving us smaller, merciful judgments? Did you know that Noah was one of the most thick-skinned persons in the Bible?

This story introduces us to some important concepts that help us understand how God works and why He does what He does. They enable us to appreciate His motives and goals and the limitations He places on Himself in pursuit of His eternal plan and purpose. Because Christians are God's representatives on earth, it is to our advantage to understand these lessons. The story of Noah also provides a foundation for principles we will learn from the other twenty-four characters presented in this book.

Two major players dominate this story: God and Noah. We will learn important lessons from each of them by looking at the way they relate to each other.

God Reacts to What People Do

God does not perform His works arbitrarily or unilaterally. He watches what people do and acts accordingly. He sent a flood in Noah's time because people were sinning grievously. He acted in a way that was appropriate in view of what people were doing. He still does that today.

Of course God loves everyone. Nevertheless, when people acknowledge,

love, and worship Him, they please Him more. Consequently, they receive more of His favor. When people sin against Him, He is merciful to judge them so the human race learns there is a moral authority in the universe.

Observe what God is doing and question Him. We learn something if we stop and look at what mankind is doing that may have precipitated God's reaction.

In the case of the flood, it is easy to see that God was responding to man's condition. "When human beings began to increase in number on the earth, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. *Then* the Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with human beings forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years'" (Genesis 6:1-3 emphasis mine). God did what He did when humankind did what humankind did.

This principle is explained further in the following verses:

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. *The Lord regretted* that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. *So* the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created — and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground — *for* I regret that I have made them." (Genesis 6:5-7, emphasis mine)

God's treatment of us is contingent upon our attitude and behavior toward Him. He watches us and responds accordingly. "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:8). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6). If we do not like the treatment God is giving us, perhaps we need to examine our attitude toward Him to discover why He is treating us the way He is.

The judgment of the flood was God's appropriate response to the behavior of the human race.

People are responsible for their actions. The curses and blessings in the Bible are contingent on our behavior.

God's responses are more dependable and predictable than ours. Man is

capricious; God is principled. The best use of the human power of choice is to pursue God. When we do that, He responds in ways we like.

Why Does God Contend with Mankind?

“Then the Lord said, ‘My Spirit will not contend with human beings forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years’” (Genesis 6:3).

Three alternatives in dealing with mankind were before God.

- He could ignore the progress of increasing sin and eventually destroy everyone or let them destroy themselves.
- He could violate the free will with which He created mankind and force them to repent and become godly.
- He could contend with them.

Let’s examine these alternatives.

He could ignore the progress of increasing sin and eventually destroy everyone or let them destroy themselves.

God acts in ways consistent with His love and is, therefore, merciful. He loves the human race He created. His lofty desire is for us to develop into the something good He knows we can become. Because of that, He elected not to abandon the race, but instead to lead us toward righteousness.

He could violate the free will with which He created mankind and force them to repent and become godly.

God created mankind with a free will. He wanted to enjoy fellowship, love, and worship from thinking creatures who — as a result of their own volition — fellowshiped, loved, and worshipped Him. Overriding the free choices of the human race would have aborted God’s plan for intentional and willing fellowship. God did not abandon His hope for such meaningful fellowship. Illustrating God’s commitment to the free choice principle, He not only created mankind with volition but also created an environment in which humankind’s power of choice could be exercised. God was unwilling to abandon His plan.

He could contend with them.

God was left with the third alternative: He could still reach out in wisdom and love in an attempt to win the hearts of people and yet give them a choice. So He sent His Spirit to contend with man. He continues to operate this way. In much the same manner as in Noah's day, so even now the Holy Spirit is holding back evil. The Scripture says, "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

God's children can cooperate with God and prove more useful to Him when we understand that He is not willing to either abandon the people He loves nor violate their freedom of choice. This is why we must reason with, cajole, coax, urge, and lovingly attempt to persuade people to receive Christ. In this way, we follow God's example, neither abandoning nor using force.

Furthermore, we have a deadline. The day will come when God's Spirit will no longer contend with the human race. But until He stops, we too should continue. We must be urgent but loving, giving others good reasons to turn to God.

Judgment Is an Act of Love and Mercy

God is powerful, loving, and perfectly wise. Everything He does is consistent with these qualities. Whatever powerful action He takes emanates from His love and perfect wisdom.

How can we find the most useful interpretation of this principle in the story of the flood? The flood displays God's amazing control and power over natural phenomena. Waters from multiple sources, wonderfully timed, converged on the surface of the earth just when the ark was complete. This illustrates God's power to initiate the plan He conceived in wisdom and love. His impeccable wisdom, operating in conjunction with His love, led Him to the best and most loving of plans.

Without the flood, millions more souls would have been born into a corrupted and ruined race. The flood was wisely designed and powerfully implemented in order to avoid the necessity of punishing and condemning millions more souls to suffering forever in a godless eternity. For that

reason, the judgment of the flood is a flawless display of His love toward the human race. One could shudder to think what evils might have reigned and what wretched existences might have occurred had the pre-Noah race continued. The flood was an act of mercy. It would have been unloving for God to have allowed the human race to continue as it was.

“The judgment of the flood is a flawless display of His love toward the human race.”

God is slow to anger and quick to forgive. Yet because of His perfect holiness, He must punish sin. A distorted view of God’s character leads some to imagine that God is vindictive. But God’s judgments are not mere punishments. They are merciful warnings, corrections, and lessons from which we are expected to learn. He corrects once to avoid the necessity of punishing forever.

What lesson can we learn from God’s gracious correction and judgment? Understanding mercy and judgment enables us to correctly help the people around us grow and become more responsible. In the long run, correction (appropriately administered) and discipline (given in love) are much more caring, merciful, and effective than permissiveness and leniency.

Noah Had Thick Skin

The Bible does not state that the unrighteous people of Noah’s time ridiculed or mocked him. However, we can assume that people did so. History, psychology, and morality teach us that unrighteous people mock righteous people. They ridicule anyone who attempts to warn them of their error and unrighteousness. This is true even when the warnings are motivated by love and concern and based on a correct evaluation of their wickedness.

Noah was a righteous man in an ungodly world. Noah’s generation was so corrupt God determined to destroy the entire human race. In the midst of this moral darkness, Noah’s life was radiant with righteousness.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. (Genesis 6:8-12)

Because of evil and violence, God divinely revealed to Noah that a great flood would destroy mankind from the face of the earth. God furthermore gave Noah an unusual and humanly impossible responsibility: to build a huge boat, forty-five feet (13.716 meters) high, 450 feet (137.16 meters) long, and 75 feet (22.86 meters) wide, capable of saving his own family and representatives of the animal kingdom.

So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle, and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish." (Genesis 6:13-17)

“Noah endured the mocking, suffered as the laughingstock of his day, and year after year patiently continued to build his boat.”

This task, conducted in an atmosphere of unrighteousness and ridicule, required faith, physical labor, and tremendous persistence. Surrounded by curious, godless, and unbelieving neighbors, Noah endured the mocking and suffered as the laughingstock of his day. But year after year, he patiently continued to build his boat. The consistence of his faith, his dogged obedience, and his steadfast belief in his impossible task demand

our respect and appreciation. Noah did not yield to peer pressure. His example challenges us to more staunchly pursue our assigned tasks.

We need Noah's thick skin. We too labor year after year. The wicked seem to escape punishment, and the righteous suffer. We would do well to remember faithful Noah. He eventually received his reward. So will we if we persist in the face of pressures.

Believe the Unbelievable

From a scientific standpoint, the universal flood is perhaps the most difficult story in the Bible to accept as true, second only to the creation of the universe. The unlikelihood of the events in this story requires the reader to believe what is impossible or consider the tale as only an allegory.

The lessons to be learned from Noah's experiences are not mere symbols. Noah's story is history, and history is God's allegory, written for our instruction. Just as individuals can learn from their own personal experiences, humanity can learn from our collective experience.

If we toss the story of Noah out as fiction, parable, or myth, we must toss out other portions of the Bible, because this story is referred to by many other Bible writers. Toss out Noah and the flood, and you might just as well toss out the whole Bible. Belief in a universal flood is therefore also a test of the credibility of the rest of the Bible.

In Ezekiel's writings, for example, Noah is placed along with Daniel and Job as an illustration of a righteous person who could only save himself.

Even if these three men — Noah, Daniel, and Job — were in it [a country], they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Lord ... as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20)

The story of a universal flood has been ridiculed by many liberal theologians, unbelievers, and atheists. Yet both Jesus and Peter referred to Noah. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:37). Peter warned the people of his day as Noah had warned his neighbors of coming judgment. "... if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly

people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others ... By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed" (2 Peter 2:5; 3:6). Peter also referred to "those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20).

If the story of Noah was fiction, Jesus and Peter would have been wrong to refer to it as fact.

Even the Chinese language reflects the reality of a worldwide flood. The Chinese character for *ship* is made up of three parts: *eight*, *people*, and *boat*. Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives would make eight people in a boat.

Years ago, I read of a mountain hiker who found a large wooden structure in the icy mountains of Ararat. I certainly do not base my belief in Noah's story on secular speculation. But what if God, for the benefit of a future skeptical generation, is saving evidence of the truth of the Bible by preserving Noah's ark in the mountains of Turkey?

Grace Is Also Found in the Old Testament

"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). This short sentence introduces the reader to the wonderful concept of God's grace.

Some preachers and Bible scholars contrast God's grace in the New Testament with His rigid requirements in the Old. But the Bible contains many references to God's firm justice in the New Testament. It also contains numerous illustrations of His compassion, loving kindness, and mercy in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the book of Hebrews states that God is unchanging and has fixed purposes. "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath" (Hebrews 6:17). God is firm and merciful. Both aspects are a part of who He is.

Today, we often hear an emphasis on the grace of God. We are indeed blessed to live in New Testament times. But some have an inaccurate concept of God as weak, unconditionally forgiving, always merciful and compassionate, and never judging. That image is inconsistent with who God is. Such teaching leads to what some call "cheap grace." Cheap grace

stems from an inappropriate emphasis on forgiveness with no appreciation for justice and righteousness. Satan wants to lull us into unjustified ease and rest, sung to sleep by the lullabies of God's graciousness.

God gave people in Old Testament times the law, but His grace is also shown repeatedly. How many times did David say, "His love endures forever"? If He had judged harshly, no one would have had a chance of ever

pleasing God. Noah found grace in God's eyes. As a result, he and his family were saved. That same grace extends to us today. You are I are given the same opportunity Noah had. We can obey God, live righteously, and enjoy abundant life. The alternative is to ignore God and eventually suffer serious consequences. God needs Christians today who appreciate and value grace.

“But some have an inaccurate concept of God as weak, unconditionally forgiving, always merciful and compassionate, and never judging.”

Noah Had Faith

Did Noah know about the law of buoyancy, by which the air within the shell of the ark would displace enough water to make the ark weigh less than the water it displaced so it could float? How could he know that principle would apply even with the ark's heavy beams, animals, and food supplies? How much understanding did he have that the ark would be safe when the rains came? Surely obeying God required Noah to exercise blind faith. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

By his faith — clinging to and trusting in God's word to him — Noah became an heir to the righteousness of (right standing with) God. In doing so, he condemned his world. He showed it was possible to believe and obey, thereby removing any excuse from others in his generation.

Noah's kind of faith was later demonstrated by Abraham. By it, they both became perfect in God's sight. We can too. We are saved the same way Noah and Abraham were, by faith expressed and proven in obedience, in works. "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (Genesis 6:22). "And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him" (Genesis 7:5).

God needs men and women today who will complete their hard tasks as Noah did in his day.

Noah Was Honored by God with an Everlasting Covenant

God promised Noah He would never again send a great flood to destroy the earth. "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9:9-17).

God gave the human race the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Every rainbow we see is a reminder of God's favor on Noah, who was blessed because he believed and was obedient. The treasured lessons of resilient faith in the face of obstacles – and obedience in the face of ridicule – can be for us "pots of gold" and the end of every rainbow.

Speaking through Isaiah, God referred to this covenant and compared Isaiah's day with Noah's. "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again" (Isaiah 54:9). Because Noah served God faithfully, we have God's promise that no worldwide flood will happen again.

Noah's Sin after the Flood Teaches Us to Be Careful after Great Victories

Just after the narrative about God's covenant with Noah, we read a story of failure. "The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth" (Genesis 9:18-19). After that, a problem developed.

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness (Genesis 9:20-23)

The vineyard was not the problem. Even drinking wine was not the problem, as indicated by these Scriptures:

- "... wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts" (Psalm 104:15).
- "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do" (Ecclesiastes 9:7).
- "The Ephraimites will become like mighty warriors, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the Lord" (Zechariah 10:7).
- "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses" (1 Timothy 5:23).

Noah got intoxicated. What can we learn from Noah's sin of drunkenness? He was right to plant a vineyard and all right to make wine "that gladdens human hearts," but he was wrong to get inebriated. Drunkenness causes one to lose control of one's mind. God says we are to be in charge of our thoughts.

“God says we are to be in charge of our thoughts.”

Drinking moderately, with the use of biblical self-control, is a debated subject in the international body of Christ. Each person should be persuaded in his own mind. For me, it is better to abstain from any drinking than to offend a brother with the use of liberty and possibly cause someone to stumble.

While controlled drinking may be debated, to be inebriated is clearly wrong according to the Bible. Here are some verses that address this issue:

- "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and

drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy” (Romans 13:13).

- “... and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).
- “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3).

Noah is credited with building the first recorded altar, perhaps the first altar ever built (Genesis 8:20). But neither building an altar nor enjoying the distinction of having built the first recorded altar is of any value, because his behavior did not match his worship.

One sin led to another. Noah’s inebriation led to the foolishness of unnecessary exposure of his nakedness. Sin contaminates, breeds evil, and produces an atmosphere for further sinning. One person’s sin too often brings out the worst in others.

Sin develops momentum. It escalates. It increases. It is easily compounded. But in all instances, we have a choice. God’s people must be men and women of self-control twenty-four hours of every day.

The Immoral Level of Noah’s Time Will Be Reached Again before Jesus’ Return

Jesus taught that we should be ready for His return just as Noah was ready for the flood.

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Matthew 24:36–44)

Jesus taught that the morality of the end times would be comparable to Noah's time. We would do well to consider this lesson when interpreting events in our society. The slide of today's civilizations into immorality is so gradual that it would be easy to miss. But anyone who has lived sixty years or more on this earth will recall, for example, it was considered a shame when someone had to get married because of premarital sex. Today, however, an unmarried woman with the courage to marry the father of her child and allow the fetus to live is considered virtuous in comparison to the woman who kills her unborn baby. Have we forgotten that premarital sex is against the Word of God?

The current increase of immorality is just one of the signs that Jesus will soon return to earth. Our later study of Ezekiel will provide another kind of information about Bible prophesy and reading the signs of our times. His return need not take us by surprise. The flood may have surprised the wicked of Noah's day, but it did not surprise Noah and his family.

For Further Thought

- Do you think it would be easier to believe the rest of the Bible if we believed the story of Noah?
- What do you believe about the grace and severity of God? How does that belief impact the way you present the message of Jesus to others?
- How can faith enable you to be thick skinned, resilient, tough, and persevering in the assignments God gives you?
- What have you learned about the rewards God grants to the faithful and obedient?
- How can what you believe about drinking bring glory to God and a positive influence to others?
- In what way(s) is the morality of this generation an indication of how soon Jesus may return to earth?



AFTERWORD

The people whose lives are recorded in the Bible are not fictitious storybook characters; they were real people. How they dealt with life issues in their time can help us today. I trust you have been able to grasp some of the rich lessons available from studying their lives.

I also hope this study has stimulated a desire in your heart to think carefully about other characters in the Bible not included in this volume. As you read of their adventures, imagine what they may have looked like or what clothes they might have worn. Maybe even give them a nickname. Try to think of what life lessons they have for you.

Another benefit of this book is to show the power of regular Bible reading. I highly recommend this beneficial habit. As I wrote this manuscript, I thought over the life messages of each of the persons I selected. If you become a regular reader of God's Word, you too will find understanding and insight into life issues that you will want to share with others.

Just as the Bible's personalities speak to us, our lives speak to those around us. What we say will have more meaning if it is supported by how we live. Our loudest voice is our actions. What if people a hundred years from now were to examine your life, how you lived, and what you did? What will they learn? What will they write about you to benefit their generation? What is your life saying? Do your good works glorify your Father in Heaven? Just as you've learned from analyzing the stories of people in the Bible, so may your actions illustrate life lessons from which others can learn.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Meyers

Ron Meyers was born in 1944 and raised in a pioneer pastor's home. In July 1965, he began pastoral ministry as a student pastor in a rural community seventy miles from the Bible College he attended in mid-Ohio.

From 1996 until 2006, he served as the Professor of Missions and Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Missions program in the School of Theology and Missions of Oral Roberts University. During those years, Ron traveled to African, Asian, European, and Middle Eastern nations during his summer breaks from university responsibilities.

He, with his wife, Char, have served more years outside the United States as pastors in Canada and missionaries in Korea, China, and Africa than their years in the U.S. Since January 2007, Ron and Char have lived in Africa and traveled full-time to African nations Conducting Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conferences. Ron has a PhD in Intercultural Studies and Char has an EdD. The Meyers have two adult sons, one daughter-in-law, and eight grandchildren.

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This website provides additional resources for Dr. Meyer's mission work abroad. It includes information on:

- **Books:** Resources written by Ron Meyers for expanding your wisdom and knowledge to use in any way that serves your purpose in helping to enrich the lives of Christians you know
- **Leadership Empowerment Conferences:** Ron and Char Meyers' Africa-based vehicle for strengthening His Church by training the leaders of churches
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Habits of Highly Effective Christians Book and Study Guide

Habits of Highly Effective Christians Makes a Great Bible Study Program

When Ron Meyers followed his passion for international missions work forty years ago, he never imagined the rich educational curriculum God had in store for him.

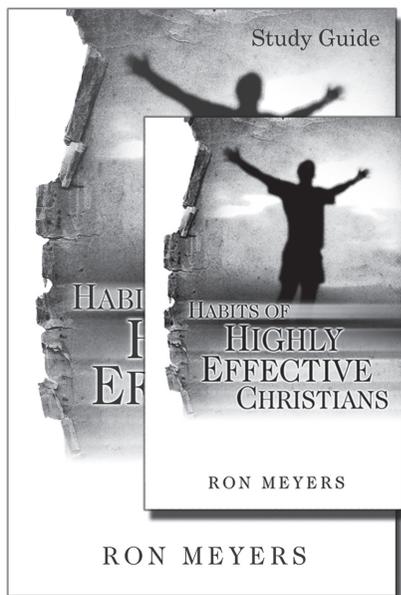
A lifetime of spiritual challenges groomed him for his role at the School of Theology and Missions at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Then, after ten years educating Christian ministry candidates at ORU and serving as Coordinator of the Master of Arts in

Missions program, he and his wife moved to Africa where they now train pastors and missionaries throughout the southern African nations.

Meyers wrote his book with life application in mind. He weaves his stories into each habit by providing real-life, insightful, and applicable examples. *Habits of Highly Effective Christians* guides you through biblical resources for creating a rich tapestry with the fibers of your own life.

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Proven to create rich discussions, *Habits of Highly Effective Christians* is perfect for small-group Bible studies or college classroom discussions. Meyers has also written the *Habits of Highly Effective Christians Study Guide*. Together, this study combo will etch biblical principles on every aspect of the lives you encounter.



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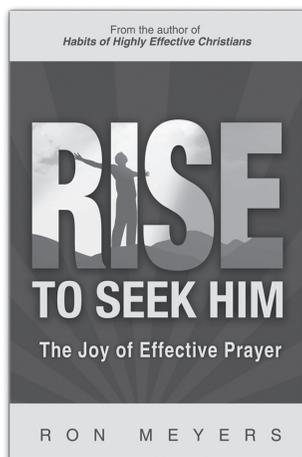
Effective prayer is more about becoming useful tools in God's hands than imposing our plans and desires on Him. In *Rise to Seek Him*, we learn that we accomplish much more when God uses us through prayer than when we try to use God to accomplish our objectives.

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Rise to Seek Him offers practical solutions to the questions we all ask:

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- How can we know what to pray for?
- Why is it difficult to pray?
- What is the focus of prayer?
- Does prayer really "work?"

This book testifies to the expansion in influence, effectiveness, and success possible with increased personal prayer. As in *Habits of Highly Effective Christians*, Meyers again describes self-discipline as a fruit of the Spirit to increase personal spiritual growth and improvement in public ministry. God-fearing Christians of any vocation who are serious about serving God at maximum levels of effectiveness will benefit from this book.

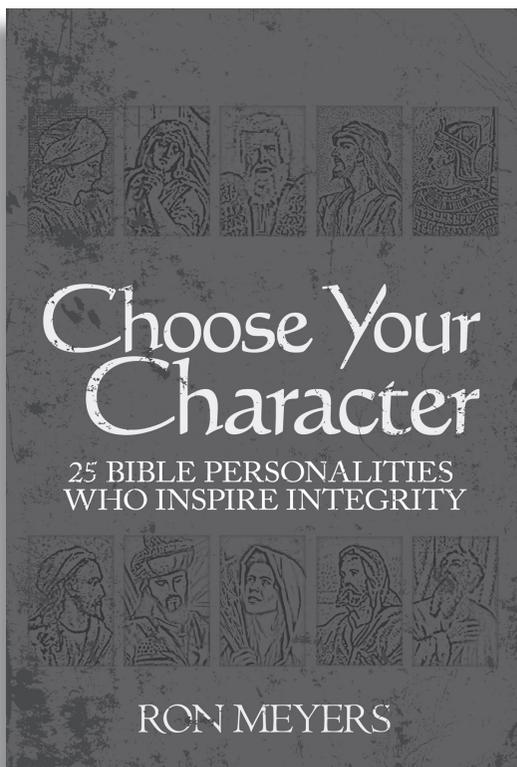


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Ron Meyers, PhD was raised in a pioneer pastor's home. When he followed his passion for international missions work forty years ago, he never imagined the rich educational curriculum God had for him. He, with his wife, Char, served more years outside the U.S. as pastors in Canada and missionaries in Korea and China than their years in the U.S. From 1996 through 2006, he served as the Professor of Missions and Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Missions program in the School of Theology and Missions at Oral Roberts University. He and Char now live in southern Africa and train pastors in the more than forty sub-Saharan nations of southern Africa.

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