



## The Virtues and Character Development Project

*The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*

I Thessalonians 5:24

### Growth toward Human Flourishing

The foundation for *human flourishing*, i.e., becoming all that God desires for each person, is a personal relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit leads the person to understand that it is essential that a person accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the way for atonement for one's sins.

This is not the end of the journey. It also is essential that a person continues to grow spiritually throughout one's lifetime. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the person learns more about depending on God in daily living. This involves spiritual disciplines (e.g., silence and solitude, Bible study, prayer, worship), which allow the person to be brought into the presence of God. Here, God is able to transform the nature of the individual to grow deeper in the walk with God. Evidence of this often appears through the fruit of the Spirit (i.e., love, joy, peace). As one grows, the individual becomes more Christ-like in his spiritual nature, which is evident to those in his community.

Unfortunately, often, only spiritual formation is considered for the life of the believer. N. T. Wright wrote, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. Here, he points out that development of Christ-like character also is important. Sam Storms stated it this way:

*Holiness/Sanctification is primarily about having one's character shaped by the Holy Spirit and how that transformed inner life expresses itself in conduct. Holiness should never be defined merely in terms of what you don't do but primarily in terms of how closely you resemble Jesus in your relationships, how closely you reflect Jesus in all your behavior.* – Sam Storms – *10 Things You Should Know about Sanctification* (<https://www.samstorms.org/all-articles/post/article-10-things-you-should-know-about-sanctification>).

These insights remind us that a Christian needs to grow in godly character if that person is to flourish as God desires. This is more than one's spiritual life. It includes all forms of relationship and conduct. The foundation is Christ, but there is so much more. A baby is fully human, but needs to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually across the lifetime. In the same manner, a Christian needs to grow to become more like Jesus. One's character is central in this growth. The image of the *Tree of Virtues* is a helpful reminder of the process. In this manner, the Holy Spirit transforms the person as these virtues are developed through daily habits until they become second nature. Then, they are part of one's godly character.

