

The CIVIL SOCIETY TUTORIAL PROJECT

GOOD CITIZENS

*A Guide to Dual Citizenship
for Disciples of Christ*



www.forgeleadership.org

“If you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you ... if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures ... then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.”

Proverbs 2:1–10

The CIVIL SOCIETY TUTORIAL PROJECT

We are devoted to serving servant-leaders and centers of excellence within higher education, business, government, and nonprofit organizations to accelerate the transference of the essential disciplines of civil society necessary to self-governing free people.

We are dedicated to delivering virtuous leadership professional development for local government, faith, education, service, business, and civic leaders to refamiliarize the next generation with essential leadership character ethics, unite leaders in a collaborative culture, and equip leaders to effectively enrich their communities together.

CHARACTER + COLLABORATION = COMMUNITY

Copyright 2009, 2021 by Chip Weiant. Complete, author-credited reproduction of this booklet by co-advocating government and non-government organizations for non-resale and non-commercial use is herein granted. The *UncommonSense*® Framework is used by permission of the author and its national trademark steward, the Better Business Bureau; it is intended for non-commercial resale educational use only. Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. May not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible.

CHRISTIAN VIRTUE & BECOMING AMERICAN: A GUIDE to DUAL-CITIZENSHIP DISCIPLESHIP

American coinage bears the Latin expression *E Pluribus Unum*—“Out of Many, One.” Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson proposed this motto for the first Great Seal of the United States in 1776. The Latin statement, engraved in a scroll and clenched in the beak of an eagle, proclaimed the founders’ desire to throw off the corruptible regime of “Cross and Crown” for a less corruptible and more durable triad of hope: “self-governance, under God, together.” From her very beginning, America emerged as an exceptional constitutional republic.

The founders anchored the American experiment using three ancient boundary stones:

- 1 A religious heritage** anchored in the Judeo–Reformed Christian perspective
- 2 A philosophical heritage** made alive by both Athens—to search out the human things—and Jerusalem—to search out the Holy things
- 3 A cultural heritage** forged in a unique fusion of the Scottish enlightenment (reason and the life of the mind) and the spiritual Great Awakening (revelation and the life of the Spirit)

The Greeks applied the word *kairos* to talk about “when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action.”¹ It is the perfect word to describe the exceptional self-governing, constitutional republic born in 1776. This new birth of ordered liberty, which the founders preached as “endowed by the Creator,” was to rest squarely on the character of the governed. It is a paradox deliberately designed in this peerless republic.

CAN GOD-GIVEN SELF-GOVERNANCE BE SELF-SUSTAINED BY THE GOVERNED?

In short, yes. But this new republic would require the minting of exceptional, self-governing citizens of both earth and heaven, schooled in a **dual-citizenship model**.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP: CIVICS *and* DISCIPLESHIP

“What is dual citizenship?” you ask. Dual citizenship was a bedrock assumption by America’s founders that Americans could be citizens of heaven and citizens of an earthly country. This compatible duality is supported by statements of Jesus himself, which are reflected in the United States Oath of Citizenship. Taken together, we see fascinating implications of what we might call the “Founders’ Presumption of Dual Citizenship in America and in Heaven.”

JESUS ON DUAL CITIZENSHIP

1 In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaimed, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

Principle: Christians are to seek the Kingdom of God first, but not exclusively. They prioritize their heavenly citizenship over their earthly citizenship.

2 When challenged about kingdom loyalty, Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17).

Principle: Dual citizenship will require dual obligations. We owe obedience to earthly authorities, and we owe obedience to God, who is our heavenly authority. Both matter to God.

3 Peter asked Jesus about the responsibilities of individuals, and Jesus replied, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48b).

Principle: God sovereignly placed us in an exceptional constitutional republic, increasing our obligation to steward uniquely American privileges.

NOW CONSIDER THE UNITED STATES OATH OF CITIZENSHIP

When an alien becomes a citizen of the United States, they swear the following oath. The practice of swearing such an oath to the United States of America dates at least as far back as the Revolutionary War, although Congress has amended and added to it over the years:

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.²

Principle: At the core of the oath of citizenship is a presumed understanding of and agreement to defend the US Constitution, an oath of loyalty possible only with God’s help.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

American Christians are twice duty bound—first by the principles underlying Jesus’s statements, and second by the obligations of their earthly citizenship. How do the principles underlying these statements coalesce, inform, and support one another?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM & THE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN

Our American constitutional republic is built on the greatest covenant among men since God's covenant with man. Taking our history as a whole (warts and all), American Christians have a proven record of fulfilling their dual citizenship obligations to their heavenly kingdom and to their earthly country.

Spreading the gospel to all nations stands as America's greatest world-influencing export, and God will hold American Christians accountable for the task of taking his gospel to the "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Showing mercy and advocating for justice is America's next greatest export. Micah 6:8 makes our marching orders clear: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" God will hold us accountable for the common-grace acts of protecting human dignity, administering justice, and promoting ordered liberty—the combination of which create a public square in which Christians can communicate the gospel. Living by these standards has lifted billions worldwide from poverty and bondage as America has exported ordered liberty and promoted individual responsibility, the rule of law, limited government, free markets, and religious freedom by an educated and disciplined citizenry.

TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN...

America is not a country of haves and have nots. She is a country of haves and have mores. As in the Parable of the Talents, American Christians have been given a range of resources and opportunities to accomplish the tasks for which God has sovereignly placed them in America. Like the parable, we will be called to account for the wealth of our resources.

Because of the freedom and material blessings that Americans enjoy, Satan targets us with twin idols: materialism and authoritarianism. American Christians must not bow at the altars of concentrating wealth or abusing power personally or nationally—and we should warn others to be self-aware, self-inspecting, and self-disciplined to avoid arrogance or abuse.

PRIVILEGED, OR BLESSED?

Some people today hesitate to describe America as exceptional, lest they be seen by their friends as endorsing every outcome (good or ill) of the American experiment in self-government. Ironically, many of these same people are quick to demonize the blessings of American exceptionalism as mere privilege.

In 21st-century usage, the word *privilege* is hurled like an accusation. The concept underlying contemporary usage has a humanistic connotation, built on the cornerstones of scarcity and human sovereignty. Scarcity presupposes a culturally favorable attribute or status that comes at the cost of oppressing someone else. Human sovereignty rests on the assumption that power is unearned and possibly even stolen.

"Blessing" refers to God's perfect (holy), sovereign assignment of our genetics (sex, ethnicity) and origin (birth epoch, place, and family). The humanist ego eliminates this holy assignment with the term "privilege."

An alternative to this humanistic view is a biblical worldview centered on the term *blessed*. The Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes credits a sovereign and abundance-centered God with distributing the sovereignly balanced combination of gender, race, genetic predispositions, family dynamics, as well as potentials and limitations to different people groups. Within these God-ordained distributions, humans operate in free will to cultivate Christlike character through trust and obedience.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

Given these presuppositions and potential implications, what does Scripture have to say to the American Christian? Are there implications for the local church, which should be concerned with making disciples? Should churches teach believing Christians the concepts related to their dual citizenship?

If American Christians are freedom-empowered and grace-blessed, these dual luxuries carry eternal implications when we each will give account at the Judgment Seat. If so, Christians citizens must be disciplined to optimize their contributions to furthering God’s Kingdom and the God-honoring outcomes of their nation-state goodness.

The curriculum in the American church abandoned robust citizenship training long ago, and resources for church education or individual families are sparse.

Growing citizens who embrace their dual citizenship need a fresh framework to guide their theory, insight, propositions, and discussions. The quest begins with personal introspection that will reveal where each one of us stands on the different elements of good governance.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP: BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW FRAMEWORK for GOOD GOVERNANCE

A good governance mentality grows out of a biblical worldview. This requires us to form theology of anthropology, believing that every person is made in God’s image, and that every human has God-given dignity requiring our respect for their life and welfare.

A theology of anthropology also recognizes the dark side of humanity: every human is born with a sin nature. As humans, we should expect to be seeking forgiveness on a regular basis. Establishing a just society is a process of trial and error—and involves extending grace when we don’t get it right the first time.

Let’s begin the introspective process by utilizing the Biblical Worldview Framework for Good Governance (hereafter Good Governance Framework). The following evaluative tool introduces 12 dimensions for thinking through how we view the role of citizens, the role of government, the motivations behind self-governing, and the means for building institutions of good governance.

This framework utilizes a Goldilocks rubric—too hard, too soft, just right. It will help identify where we err by pushing to one extreme or the other. It seeks to challenge and provoke us to ask questions, identify exceptions, and seek resolution. In essence, it will challenge you to ask, “How biblical is my view of governance?”

Read through each row slowly, but don’t make your selection until you have processed through every row. On this first read, take inventory of the whole framework. On your second pass, read each row and mark the description that expresses your position most accurately. After this critical-thinking exercise, you would do well to note any questions or thoughts that come to mind. When you complete the Good Governance Framework, consider discussing it with a friend.

THE GOOD GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Left-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Humanism or State Worship	Biblically Balanced Civics Discipleship	Right-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Deism or Dominionism
1 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT & THEORY of CHANGE (SOLUTIONS)		
Security for all, fueling federal focus for all policy and issues. Focus is on humanist-statist and on federal solutions first, then state, then local community, family, and individual solutions	Ordered Liberty* The quest for voluntary individual/community flourishing requires a focus on God, the individual, family, and local community (in this order), and then on the state, and finally on federal solutions.	Freedom for all, fueling radical Individualism (anarchy) or Theocracy. Focus is on Individual (or God) first, then family, then local solutions (to prevent state and federal dominance).
2 HOW TO VIEW & USE POWER		
Concentrate power in the federal government and in large institutions. BIG ERROR: Authoritarian/elitist regimes applying to institutions Scripture intended for individuals.	The quest to distribute power (per the Bible) to individuals and enumerate reserved power to “Holy” government institutions, insisting that God alone can handle concentrated power, not mankind.	Radically distribute power to the individual. BIG ERROR: Libertarian anarchy and/or applying to individuals Scripture intended for institutions.

* Components of ordered liberty: religious freedom, individual virtuous responsibility, rule of law, limited government (sphere sovereignty), and regulated free markets.

Left-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Humanism or State Worship	Biblically Balanced Civics Discipleship	Right-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Deism or Dominionism
3 HOW ONE VIEWS CULTURE		
Social Liberal, Deconstructionist Culture is a social contract of appropriated power for which a few of the most qualified must contend so they can deconstruct error and error-prone institutions to lead us all to a better future.	Classical Liberal, Conservatist- Constructionist A quest to define culture (and good culture-making) as a transcendent set of timeless, enduring, and inviolable ideas about the True, the Good and the Beautiful, for which all people should freely contend to best serve one another.	Traditionalist, Preservationist Culture is a dogmatic heritage kept by a vanguard of religious watchmen to preserve the past.
4 THE PURPOSE of LAW & JUSTICE		
Justice is all about fairness and appropriating the most security for all.	A quest toward justice and its resulting laws which more perfectly reflect God's glory and character. Optimally ensures the promise of justice: "to each person their due."	Justice is all about fairness and appropriating the most freedom under God for all God-fearers.
5 CONTENDING for TRUTH		
Indoctrination Blend sources of human knowledge with holy Scripture and oversimplify complex issues to seek solutions that satisfy "the greater good."	Illumination A quest to illuminate—to classically educate (practice critical thinking, reason, and logic) with deep respect for both transcendent authority and temporal self-interest to build better neighborhoods and nations.	Indoctrination Blend biblical sources with extra-biblical transcendent ideals to overpower and win allegiance from neighbors and national allies.

Left-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Humanism or State Worship	Biblically Balanced Civics Discipleship	Right-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Deism or Dominionism
6 THE MODEL & IDOL ERROR		
Strong Man Idol Elevates the role of social justice warriors as overcomers who search for and cultivate "strong persons" who can concentrate power.	Great God, Good Men Model A quest to build and maintain focus on a great God and on Christ as the God-Man, as opposed to on great or strong men. Man is properly seen as fallible and sinful but capable of exercising goodness in the service of God and others.	Great Men Idol Elevates the role and strength of the founders to a reverential (rather than merely honoring) and nearly infallible status and consensus.
7 CREATION CARE BIAS		
A bias of yielding to government-led tactics to manipulate global political-economic solutions to address the preservation of the commons to serve future generations.	A quest to generate a conservatory view of God-owned commons that results in public policy that searches for collaborative mechanisms of joint stewardship insights, to benefit current and future generations.	A bias toward regulated localized private-market mechanisms to leverage the renewability of nature as a utility to serve primarily the present generation.
8 THE GREATEST GOVERNANCE SIN to AVOID		
A tendency to blame the sin of greed for most inflicted human suffering and a resulting tendency to align with worldly theories of victimhood.	A quest and tendency to own the idea that self-deceived disobedience to God is the main deterrent to ordered liberty within both individuals and institutions.	A tendency to blame the sin of covetousness by others as the driver of most self-inflicted human misery.

Left-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Humanism or State Worship	Biblically Balanced Civics Discipleship	Right-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Deism or Dominionism
9 HOW GOVERNANCE SOLUTIONS <i>are</i> SOUGHT		
A bias to trust the unheard voice to become the loudest in the room by engaging in an unending search to discover every solution via diverse and unbounded inclusion.	A quest toward transparent, deliberative dialogue among the highest-character stakeholders, and among the searchers of history, Scripture, wisdom literature, and timeless core documents. Results in these tools speaking for themselves and pointing to the solution.	A bias to trust a heralded voice as the smartest in the room, resulting in the tendency to overweigh past/traditions, status quo, and exclusive dogma as the seedbed of solutions.
10 THE GOAL <i>of</i> GOVERNANCE		
A bias of mercy rightly applied to the individual is wrongly applied to government, resulting in an overweighing of “rewarding good” and erroneously seeking equal outcomes for all.	A quest for the good governance dual role of rewarding and punishing evil, to the end of assuring God-given liberty to all. Results in the goal of equal opportunity for all.	A bias of merit can result in protecting an overweighted meritocracy that can become absorbed with solely punishing evil , often truncated to the credo of law and order and equal odds for all.
11 THE NATURE OF MANKIND IN COMMUNITY		
The tendency is to view mankind as basically flawed but vulnerable and therefore he just needs the right assets to undergird him, not punishments or correction. So, we try to empower him with socioeconomic favor and benefits.	A quest that presumes mankind is basically a mixed community of redeemed, pre-redeemed, and unredeemed sinners requiring clear limits to community behavior and authentic inspiration to do better—together.	The tendency is to believe unredeemed man is basically evil and we should expect the worst at all times and never allow a concentration of human power as a result.

Left-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Humanism or State Worship	Biblically Balanced Civics Discipleship	Right-Wing Christian Error Trending Toward Deism or Dominionism
12 ESCHATOLOGY VIEW		
The Lord’s return is considered far off, if ever , so the Cultural Commission can be twisted into a utopic earthly undertaking to ostensibly obey the Great Commandment at the cost of neglecting the Great Commission .	A quest in expectation of the Lord’s return being truly imminent , so the Cultural Commission, Great Commission, and Great Commandment must be co-pursued as both our unique ends and our uniting means.	The Lord’s return is considered to be tomorrow , so the “take dominion” Cultural Commission must be hastened to support the Great Commission even at the cost of neglecting the Great Commandment .

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Many argue this unique set of Good Government features is what makes America exceptional. What do you think?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

DUAL CITIZENSHIP *and* CULTURE-MAKING

Every kingdom has a culture. This is true of every country, every city, and even every company.

Generally, culture is set in motion by community leaders, but culture is grown, shaped, and redirected by engaged community constituents—in a word, citizens.

There are theological and eternal implications for biblically aligned citizenship. But from a practical standpoint, what should the objective of our dual citizenship be? What is our real goal? How will we know if we are succeeding?

Is there a scale of “the good, the true, and the beautiful” by which to rank superior cultures versus inferior cultures?

Better yet, is there a single cultural paragon to emulate?

Yes. The Garden of Eden presents us with a flawless kingdom culture—the gold standard for culture makers. This Kingdom was first revealed in Genesis, is reviewed by Jesus in the Gospels, and is promised to be restored in the Book of Revelation. Dutiful dual citizens transplant the Garden culture into their earthly city culture, as they journey toward the New Jerusalem.

THE DUAL CITIZEN’S CULTURE-MAKING GOLD-STANDARD

GARDEN EXCEPTIONALISM

God is present and is the undisputed Creator and first and final authority.

He endowed his flora and fauna to flourish.

He empowered agency-filled, image-bearing humans endowed with godly conscience to work and cultivate it.

He ordered all of life around God-defined roles and identity.

He established minimal prohibitions and abundant freedom (i.e., love God and obey him).

He granted mankind the freedom to make choices, even allowing humans to be tempted by Satan, with the ultimate design of working all things together for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 8:28). God coerces no man but reminds man that there are both temporal and eternal consequences for choosing sin. There are blessings for walking in the truth and curses, threats, and peril for supplanting the truth with lies about God’s and man’s natures.

He established in the Garden the foundations for image-bearers to practice building the institutions of holy marriage and holy government.

He promised that the perfect Garden will one day become a perfect City, no matter what rebellious humans do (Rev. 21:2, 22:14).

Are there any exceptional world cultures that support the Garden-to-City Transformation dual citizens should concern themselves with?

Yes—there are two, and only two:

- **Ancient Hebrew culture**, fashioned after a “chosen people model” designed by God and adopted by citizens, governed by a theocracy and later a monarchy, most emblemized by Israel under King David and King Solomon.
- **Modern Western culture**, fashioned after a “chosen God model” designed and adopted by citizens, governed by a constitutional republic, most emblemized by the affirmation of universal truths in the founding documents of the United States.

Considering that recreating Ancient Hebrew culture and reconstituting its form of government is a non-starter, it is little wonder Lincoln called the United States “the world’s last best hope,” which it is indeed. This is an extraordinary claim of exceptionalism.

What are the exceptional features of a constitutional republic, including of the most exceptional one among them—that of the United States?

- Religious Liberty (God is first; religious-freedom-centered family is second)
- Individual Responsibility (humanity flourishes when supported by God-designed expectations)

- Free markets and private property rights (all have enough agency, free will, and property protection to prosper)
- Rule of Law (boundaries are conscionable, clear, knowable and apply to all equally)
- Limited Representative Government (good governance around protecting all of the above)

... MUCH SHALL BE REQUIRED

Jesus makes clear that God expects much from those to whom he has given much. God has sovereignly placed American Christians in the center of the exceptional culture and form of government supportive of the Garden-to-City Transformation. What must we do with this knowledge?

- **Repent** from preaching a “salvation alone” gospel fragment, toward preaching the full “saved from and saved for” gospel.
- **Revise** discipleship misconceptions that discourage shaping the temporal culture, as though eternity forward does not include each day between now and Christ’s reign in the New Jerusalem.
- **Recover** interpersonal discipling in community with believers, fleshing out a complete biblical worldview (Genesis to Revelation).
- **Rediscover** and help other sojourners discover that making disciples includes discipling believers in the whole counsel of God, including mankind’s dual citizenship responsibilities.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1

2

3

DUAL CITIZENS REFLECT CHRIST’S CHARACTER

Growing dual citizens begins with tending to our own inner growth of conscience-convicting Christlike character. Self-governance as a community begins with *myself-governance*: a virtuous disposition and a willingness to constrain our temptation to practice vice and do harm rather than to love and bless our neighbor.

High-minded Virginia moralists like Thomas Jefferson strived to work this out through self-effort. The more gospel-centric Massachusetts Christians like Samuel Adams³ knew that reliance on the in-filling and sanctifying power of “Christ alone” was necessary.⁴

Given our founding documents’ emphasis on religious freedom and our uniquely Christian roots, disciple-making American Christians ought to be hitting *myself-governance* out of the park as we are transformed by the Holy Spirit and disciple others, so that we are “no longer conformed to the pattern of this world” (Rom. 12:1–2).

But tragically, many generations of American pastors, church planters, and churchmen have practiced “passive discipleship.” Passive discipleship in the pews passes along “Christian competencies,” such as gathering, worshiping, and supporting the church. While this is not wrong, it is dangerously incomplete.

The next generation of American Christians must move from the “duty” of passive discipleship to the “delight” of active discipleship, which means becoming more expert on the Spirit-driven virtues of Christlike character.

This Christlike character—what we have titled the *UncommonSense*® Framework—is a defined set of 20 servant-leadership virtues essential to good citizenship. We must become much more intentional about reflecting on these 20 attributes, strive to practice them daily, and learn to patiently restore ourselves and others to this civic lifestyle.

There is no better solution to dual citizens’ culture-making challenge than to *build character* reflecting transformation by the Holy Spirit, so we can build collaborative relationships to build better community. To that end, we created *UncommonSense*—“Uncommon” because American education largely abandoned virtue formation decades ago—but “Sense” because robustly defined character virtues still resonate with our image-bearing conscience.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE *of* TRUTH:

1 Seeking Wisdom – I will seek something greater than intelligence and knowledge; I will seek wisdom. “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6). “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom” (Job 28:28).

APPLYING TRUTH FIRST *to* OURSELVES:

2 Fidelity – I will be true to my beliefs. My beliefs will drive my behavior. “A faithful man who can find? The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him” (Prov. 20:6–7). “I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness” (Ps. 26:1–3).

APPLYING TRUTH *in* OUR RELATIONSHIPS:

3 Integrity – I will strive to do what I say I will do. My word is my bond. “Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out” (Prov. 10:9). “O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?... He who swears to his own hurt and does not change” (Ps. 15:1, 4).

4 Compassion for Others – I will be genuinely benevolent and giving. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:12–14).

5 Honesty – I will speak the truth with compassion. “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). “So my honesty will answer for me later...” (Gen. 30:33).

6 Justice – I will uphold truth and expose error and correct wrongs. “Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another” (Zech. 7:9). “Justice, and only justice, you shall follow” (Deut. 16:20). “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you ... have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matt. 23:23).

7 Accountability – I will inspect myself and invite the inspection of others. “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Cor. 11:28). “...Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21). “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

8 Respect – I will demonstrate respect for others; treat others as I would want to be treated. “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.... For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:37–39). “Give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom. 12:17–18).

9 Promise-Keeping & Trustworthiness – I will consistently and persistently act on my strong convictions. “But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (2 Chron. 15:7). “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9).

10 Excellence – I will strive to be my best, enabling me to do my best. “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things” (Phil. 4:8–9). “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God” (1 Pet. 2:12).

11 Servant Leadership – I will put the success of others and the group above myself. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). “Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet” (John 13:5). “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:15). “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves” (Luke 22:25–26).

12 Unity – I will strive to build relationships and foster harmony and collaboration. “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). “Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1–3).

13 Forgiveness – I will forgive others and seek forgiveness. “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). “Leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:24).

14 Honoring Authority – I will abide by legitimate regulations and boundaries established by legitimate authorities. “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment” (Rom. 13:1–2).

15 Liberty – I will exercise restraint and self-control so that the need for public controls is minimized. “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22–23).

16 Learning & Mentoring – I will seek to learn more and share that knowledge with others. “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity” (Titus 2:7).

17 Stewardship – I will seek to add value to every role and every resource to which I have been entrusted. “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48). “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness” (Luke 16:8).

18 Seeking Counsel – I will regularly seek the wisdom of others of high character. “But in an abundance of counselors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14). “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prov. 15:22). “But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward” (Jer. 7:24).

OUR ABILITY *to* CHANGE

19 Submission to Truth – I will accept change and seek personal improvement. Eph 4:15 “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph. 4:15). “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:14).

20 Validating Transformation – I will strive to exhibit consistent, positive, and intentional commitment to high character. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

UNCOMMONSENSE[®]

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The *UncommonSense*[®] Self-Assessment is easy to administer. However, to be useful, you need to be painfully honest—so keep this tool and your responses in a safe place. Additionally, since we are all prone to self-deception, we will eventually want to seek authentic feedback from someone we trust and who knows us well. Remember that perfection is not the goal; we all fall short of that. The goal is a humble willingness to strive to improve.

Prior to the taking the Self-Assessment, study the *UncommonSense*[®] Framework, which is the companion piece that describes each character ethic, and become familiar with its 20 defined character ethics. Very few people actually reflect on these attributes. Take your time; it is good to linger and ponder. As you reflect, think of the typical (habitual) behaviors that you actually practice (not those that you aspire to practice) daily. Temper this by thinking also about what traits “characterize” you on your best and your worst days with respect to each character ethic. The most helpful perspective is to focus on the question “How do others view me?”

ORIENT YOURSELF TO THE SELF-ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT:

- There is a 1...2...3...2...1 balance scale; the “3” represents the bull’s-eye or an optimal/balanced expression of the character ethic. A “1” or a “2” (in either direction) indicates less of this balance.
- Each character ethic under the “3” column is labeled and simply defined.
- The words below the character ethic contain amplifying information.
- Below this is an abbreviated definition for the character ethic.
- The “1” and “2” columns running along each side of the character ethic in the center contain word expressions that might describe us if we were NOT (more or less) consistently practicing this character ethic.

REFLECT & SELF-SCORE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT:

- Carefully read and consider one character ethic at a time. Consider the descriptions in the center AND THEN the border columns.
- On the scoring bar that runs below each character ethic, circle the corresponding number (and/or feel free to write in a “1.5” or or 2.75”). **Strive to be consistent in your scoring logic. Score the way you sense those whom you most trust, respect, and care about might honestly score you.**
- Remember, no one is perfect. At various times you will demonstrate different behavior levels of the ethic. You are looking to identify your general tendency, character habits, or characteristics.
- If you are not painfully honest with yourself, the assessment will lose its value to you and to others.

TAKE ACTION TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT:

- After completing the self-assessment, select two to three of the character ethics in which you feel convicted to improve. Congratulations! You have just self-selected what is strong and what needs to be strengthened.
- Next, think about the “why” of your imbalance. Take your time. Write your brief thoughts in a safe place.
- Now review the scores (and your “whys”) with the person you most trust and to whom you are willing to be accountable for positive change. If you are fortunate, this exchange will lead to more exchanges that will help you improve relational habits.
- TIP #1: This accountability person is critical to your improvement.
- TIP #2: Intentionally striving to become “one person of high character consistently across your entire spectrum of relationships” is a key predictor of the future success of one’s pursuit of high character.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE of TRUTH

1 SEEKING WISDOM: I seek something greater than intelligence (knowing what is); I seek wisdom, knowing what is right or true.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Self-Righteous Opinionated	SEEKING WISDOM Principled Prudent Contemplative Humble	Foolish Ignorant Naïve

1 2 3 2 1

APPLYING TRUTH FIRST to OURSELVES

2 FIDELITY: I will be true to my beliefs.
My beliefs will drive my behavior.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Hypocritical Shallow Unfaithful	FIDELITY Genuine Reflective Faithful Single-minded Promise keeper	Self-absorbed Non-committal Promise breaker

1 2 3 2 1

APPLYING TRUTH in OUR RELATIONSHIPS

3 INTEGRITY: I strive to do what I say I will do.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Rigid Inflexible Legalistic	INTEGRITY Reliable Consistent Predictable Orderly	Inconsistent Flaky Fake

1 2 3 2 1

4 COMPASSION FOR OTHERS: I strive to extend unmerited kindness to others as an act of my will.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Cruel Unkind Uncaring Mean	COMPASSION Kind Gentle Patient Generous Encouraging Benevolent	Gullible Oversensitive Fragile Thoughtless

1 2 3 2 1

5 HONESTY: I strive to consistently speak the truth with compassion.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Blunt Harsh Brutal Crass	HONESTY Truthful Straightforward Discreet Discerning Precise	Deceptive Manipulative Vague

1 2 3 2 1

6 JUSTICE: I strive to uphold truth, expose error, and correct wrongs.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Unfair Biased Prejudiced	JUSTICE Decisive Unbiased Impartial	Vacillating Enabler Avoider

1 2 3 2 1

7 ACCOUNTABILITY: I strive to self-scrutinize and seek the critique of others.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Secretive Unknowable Self-Isolator	ACCOUNTABILITY Open Disclosing Up-Front Transparent	Compulsive Overly Revealing

1 2 3 2 1

8 RESPECT: I strive to treat others as they would want to be treated.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Haughty Discourteous Impolite Rude	RESPECT Inclusive Honoring Engaging	Devotee Idolizer Blindly Loyal

1 2 3 2 1

9 PROMISE-KEEPING &

TRUSTWORTHINESS: I strive to consistently and persistently act on my strong convictions.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Reckless Selfish	PROMISE-KEEPING & TRUSTWORTHINESS Resilient Tenacious Unwavering Bold Persevering	Weak-Willed Cowardly Fearful

1 2 3 2 1

10 EXCELLENCE: I strive to be my very best as I do my very best every day.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Perfectionist Prideful Obsessive	EXCELLENCE Pure Whole Consistent Focused Determined	Self-Defeating Insecure Undisciplined

1 2 3 2 1

11 SERVANT-LEADERSHIP: I strive to set the sacrificial example for others to follow.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Controlling Vindictive Belligerent Dictatorial	SERVANT-LEADERSHIP Selfless Optimistic Sacrificial Visionary	Risk-Avoiding Actionless Negligent

1 2 3 2 1

12 UNITY: I strive to foster oneness among those to whom I am bound.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Divider Coercive Contentious Troublemaker	UNITY Mediator Reconciler Integrator Bridge Builder Collaborator	Loner Entangled Smothering

1 2 3 2 1

13 FORGIVENESS: I strive to extend and receive from others unmerited acceptance.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Impatient Hateful Vengeful Merciless	FORGIVENESS Patient Grateful Merciful	Condoning Lax Enabling Indulgence

1 2 3 2 1

14 HONORING AUTHORITY: I strive to respect boundaries and yield to those given responsibility for others.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Rebellious Disobedient Unruly	HONORING AUTHORITY Dutiful Civil Law-Abiding	Intimidated Powerless Unquestioning

1 2 3 2 1

15 LIBERTY: I strive to fulfill my personal responsibilities as a good citizen.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Out-of-Control Chaotic Wild	LIBERTY Self-Governing Self-Controlled Self-Disciplined	Careless Thoughtless Unreliable

1 2 3 2 1

16 LEARNING & MENTORING: I strive to grow in wisdom and pass it on.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Tyrant Taskmaster Moving Against Others	LEARNING/ MENTORING Curious Creative Teachable Inspirational	Abandoning Withdrawn Moving Away From Others

1 2 3 2 1

17 STEWARDSHIP: I strive to add value to all that has been entrusted to me.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Reckless Squanderer Prone to Waste	STEWARDSHIP Careful Generous Watchful Ordered	Lazy Slothful Prone to Hoard

1 2 3 2 1

18 SEEKING COUNSEL: I strive to overcome indecision and ignorance by securing wisdom from others.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Rash Uninformed	SEEKING COUNSEL Thoughtful Inquirer Researcher Listener	Dependent Clinging

1 2 3 2 1

OUR ABILITY *to* CHANGE

19 SUBMISSION TO TRUTH: I strive to accept change and seek personal improvement over time.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Negative Stagnant Unyielding	SUBMISSION TO TRUTH Positive Growing Self-Starting	Posing Feigning Growth Flip-Flopping

1 2 3 2 1

20 VALIDATING TRANSFORMATION: I strive to demonstrate constantly improving positive high character.

NEGATIVE TRAITS	POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
Pursuing Vices Corrupt	VALIDATING TRANSFORMATION Pursuing Virtue High Character Ethical Conscientious	Pursuing Unmerited Validation Broken

1 2 3 2 1

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Kairos,” accessed August 23, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kairos>.

² Oath of Allegiance, Policy Manual vol. 12, part J, ch. 2, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual/volume-12-part-j-chapter-2#footnotelink-1>

³ “Principally, and first of all, I resign my soul to the Almighty Being who gave it, and my body I commit to the dust, relying on the merits of Jesus Christ for the pardon of my sins.” Samuel Adams, Last Will & Testament, attested December 29, 1790, quoted in Biblia.work, s.v. “Adams, Samuel,” Sermons and Biblical Studies, accessed September 7, 2021.

⁴ “In some cases—for example, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, John Jay, Roger Sherman, and John Witherspoon—there is abundant evidence that these Founders embraced and articulated orthodox Christian ideas. But the lack of records often makes it difficult to speak with confidence on this issue.

“Nevertheless, in light of the many and powerful claims that the Founders were deists, it should be noted that there is virtually no evidence that more than a handful of civic leaders in the Founding era—notably Benjamin Franklin, Ethan Allen, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and (if we count him as an American) Tom Paine—embraced anything approximating this view. Moreover, a good argument can be made that even these Founders were influenced by Christianity in significant ways—and it certainly does not follow that they desired the strict separation of church and state.” Mark David Hall, “Did America Have a Christian Founding,” The Heritage Foundation, June 7, 2011, <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/did-america-have-christian-founding>.

“You go, and do likewise.”

— Luke 10:37



www.forgeleadership.org