

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Building True Character (#1)

- 1—Introduction to the Study
- 2—Origin of "Bad" Character
- 3—Origin of "Good" Character
- 4—Characteristics of a Person of Character
- 5—Building Christian Character
- 6—Adversity Forges Character

Prepared by
Paul E. Cantrell
84 Northview Dr.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

2009

Lesson One

"Introduction to Study"

"That person has character!" What do we mean by this statement? Do all people have character? Do some people have no character? Do you have character?

Read **Daniel 6:1-10!**

1. How did these men know that Daniel would pray to God after the decree was made? _____
2. Did they know that he had character? _____
3. They had seen enough of his life, so they could predict what he would do.

What is Character?

Words are used in various ways and the context usually shows up how we are using the word. To illustrate:

"That person is a character" (Funny, Entertaining, Different).

"That person has character" (Very desirable and noble qualities).

"That person does not show character" (Poor qualities in his or her life).

Generally, the word "character" has a good connotation to it! But the word can be used to indicate that a person has "good" character or "bad" character!

The following thoughts will suggest a general definition of this word:

- a) The real person;
- b) The true state or condition of a person;
- c) The heart and soul of a person;
- d) The truth about the person;
- e) The real you—without all the frills!

Some have tried to distinguish between "character" and "personality" in this way:

- a) Character is the real you.
- b) Personality is what we try to make people think we are.
- c) Personality can often hide a weak character for a while.
- d) The above may depend upon how genuine we are.

The Desirable concept would be: *"Character is what God wants us to have or*

possess. In this sense—Character is defined as those desirable qualities or traits in one's life! Or, we might say that Character is the sum total of the good qualities in one's life.

What are some good qualities that God is encouraging women to have in their lives? 1 Pet. 3:1-4? _____

While the older versions of the English Bible may not use the word "character," it does use several synonyms. The following terms are generally given as synonyms: **Nature, Quality, Temperament, Personality, Disposition, Spirit, Moral Fiber, Make up, Integrity, and Reputation.**

"**Quality**" is identifying the good things in a person's life. His life is a "notch" above others.

"**Integrity**" says that the person's word is good—he/she is trustworthy.

"**Moral Fiber**" says that the person takes a stand for that which is morally good and right.

Let's take a closer look at a few of these terms!

A person of Integrity!

Eph. 4:25 _____

He is Honest! His word is his bond! He stands behind what he says. He does not go back on a deal. He does not lie or deceive others. He pays his bills and takes care of his debts. He does not cheat or steal. Guile and falsehood are offensive to him. (Prov. 20:7)

Rom. 13:6-8 _____

Phil. 1:10 _____

"He is what he appears to be!" He is a sincere person. He is not a hypocrite; nor is he a "put on!"

Phil. 2:15 _____

He is not a perfect person, but he is blameless! He is one who deals with sin in his life. He is one who is truly striving to live right!

A young man wanted council from an older person. The Older man stated that he had two questions to ask him.

"Suppose you would never be found out and no one would be harmed, at least not in any physical way. If these circumstances were guaranteed, would you tell a lie for \$1,000.00?" The young man thought for a minute and said: *"Yes"* *"Then, would you tell that lie for a dime?"* Furious, the young man said: *"Of course not! What do you think I am?"* The older man said: *"I already know what you are. I am now trying to establish your price."*

One measure of a person's integrity is what he would do if he knew he couldn't be found out! We only have integrity when we allow God's truth to rule our lives!

Dependability!

1 Tim. 3:10

This person is one who possesses a sense of duty. Daniel had a sense of duty to pray to God. He continued doing it in spite of the dangers involved. This kind of person can be counted on through *"think and thin."*

Give him a job and it will be done to the best he can do. The passage deals with appointing men to be deacons who have been "proven!" They have shown "character." They have passed the test of their character.

A Person of Moral Purity!

Heb. 5:14

This person has strong moral qualities. This becomes obvious by the choices we have made between good and evil. It is making the right moral choices and staying with it! It is shown by our speech (Eph. 4:29); by our course of action in face of temptation like Joseph (Gen. 39:10-12); and by the way we dress (1 Tim. 2:9).

Our Challenge!

Our challenge is to develop those traits that God gives us to follow. He gives the direction we should go—the goals, ideals, and traits that are needed; but we make the choices that determine our character. Character building is like a man building a brick wall:

- 1) We lay one brick at a time until the wall is built.
- 2) We add character traits to our lives one at a time.
- 3) All together, they make up our character!

Concluding Thoughts

A significant fact! A person's character is all he takes with him out of this world! This is what he is—what he has accomplished (with God's help and guidance)! This is how he will stand before God in Judgment! In the Judgment, it is not WHO we are, but WHAT we are that will count. Do we have our minds set on developing a righteous and godly character? Will our character stand the test of trials and temptations? What about in the Day of Judgment?

Questions for Discussion

1. How did Daniel show "character?"

2. In what ways can the word "character" be used?

3. What is the difference between "character" and "personality?"

4. What are some synonyms for the word "character?"

5. How does "Integrity" play a part in determining our character?

6. Why is "Dependability" so important in character building?

7. Why is "Moral Purity" so important in character building?

Lesson Two

"Origin of 'Bad' Character"

Why do some people have "bad" character or a "lack" of character? Is this "badness" built into us by God at our birth? Is our "nature" originally "bad?" Or, is our character, or lack of it, built over a period of time? It is an obvious fact that we are born into a world "filled" with SIN! As we develop in life from our birth—do we develop a "good" character or a "bad" character? Is it something we can do something about or are we just "programmed" by God to be good or bad? How we answer these questions will really determine whether we should continue in this study or not! If we are programmed by God—then, we are wasting our time with this study! I don't think we need to stop this study, do you? Then, from where does "bad" character come? If it is not from God, then from where does it come? If it is not from God, then it can't be from the Bible either!

Rom. 1:32-2:4 _____

God's Word would seem to place the responsibility of a "bad" character upon the individual's choices that he makes.

Rom. 2:5-10 _____

We develop "bad" character because we choose to become such. No one makes us! We can try to place the "blame" on everyone and everything else; but, if we are honest, we know where the "blame" needs to be placed—on myself!

2 Cor. 5:10 _____

Choices We Make!

1. We can choose to go against our Conscience!
Acts 23:1 _____
Acts 24:16 _____
1 Tim. 4:1-2 _____
2. We can choose to listen to Deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons!
1 Tim. 4:1 _____

3. We can choose to associate with "**evil companions**" whom we allow to influence us in the wrong direction!

1 Cor. 15:33 _____
Prov. 1:10-16 _____

3. We can choose to allow **selfish** and **unfit** parents to affect the decisions that we make!

Prov. 13:24 _____

Col. 3:21 _____

4. We can choose to allow ourselves to be **deceived** by others!

1 Tim. 2:14 _____
Gal. 6:7-8 _____

Rom. 16:18 _____

5. We can choose to deceive ourselves!

1 Cor. 3:18 _____
Rom. 1:26 _____

6. We can choose to believe the **lies** of Satan!

Rev. 12:9 _____
2 Thess. 2:9-10 _____

Remember!!! We are the ones that make the choices! No one can force us to make a wrong choice. Thus, we are forced to believe that "bad" character comes from making bad choices! It is certainly possible that the list above is not complete, but these are sufficient to show the importance of our choices in life!

People with Lack of Character!

We want to look at some people in the Bible who seemed to have a "lack" of character or would be considered a "bad" character!

1. **Lot's Wife.** What is she known for? (Lk. 17:32). What bad choice did she make? _____

2. **King Saul.** What was one of his great weaknesses? (1 Sam. 15:24-26).

3. Uzzah. What bad choice did he make? (2 Sam. 6:6-7). Was Uzzah forced to make the choice that he made that cost him his life? _____

4. Judas. Why did he betray Jesus? (Jn. 13:25-28; 12:6) _____

Did Judas have a weakness that he catered to? _____

5. Demas. Why did he leave Paul? (2 Tim. 4:10) _____

6. Diotrephes. What was his choice and why did he make that choice? (2 Jn. 9-10). _____

7. Scribes and Pharisees. Why did Jesus condemn these people? (Matt. 23:23-25). _____

8. Saul of Tarsus (Apostle Paul, later). Why did Saul persecute Christians? (1 Tim. 1:13) _____

Did he feel responsible for the decision that he made to persecute them? _____

Concluding Thoughts

God made us with the "power of choice!" This is one of the things that separates us from the lower animals—we can choose! But with our choices, we have outcomes or consequences (Gal. 6:7-8).

So, let's stop blaming everyone and everything for our "bad" character and start making the right choices in our lives.

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house---we will serve the Lord!"
(Joshua 24:15)

Questions for Discussion

1. What is meant by those who use the expression: "*Man's sinful nature?*"
2. How has God programmed us in respect to our character?
3. What part does the Conscience play in our character?
4. What part do evil companions play in the development of our character?
5. What part do our parents play in our character?
6. Can we keep others from deceiving us?
7. Can we deceive ourselves into believing something false?
8. Who are some persons in the Bible that illustrates bad choices?
9. Can we rightfully blame others for our "bad" choices?
10. Do you believe that "bad" character is developed by "bad" choices?

Lesson Three

"Origin of 'Good' Character"

We are discussing the question of the "Origin" of "Character." In the past lesson, we looked at the question of the "Origin of 'Bad' Character." In that lesson, we concluded that Character (good or bad) is not something that God has programmed into us; but rather, it is developed by the choices that we make. Everyone is free to choose which road we will walk on—The Narrow Road that leads to life or the Broad Road that leads to death! (Matt. 7:13-14). No one can force us against our will! Thus, we believe that "good" character is also developed by the choices that we make in our lifetime. The way that God has made us, we are able to determine good from evil (Rom. 1:32; 2:14-15). So, we make a choice as to which road we will walk on. (Isa. 7:14-16; 66:3).

Things that can Influence our Choices!

God--It is obvious that God does not force Himself on us, nor does He forced us to choose to do right. But, He does and wants to influence our decisions for good. He has given us His inspired Word to guide us into the right paths that lead to life eternal—but we have to read it, learn it, and put it into practice before it can bring about a "good" character.

Prov. 23:23 _____

Hosea 4:6 _____

Prov. 2:6, 10-13 _____

2 Thess. 2:9-12 _____

Godly People—A person is truly blessed if he grows up in a home where both husband and wife are dedicated Christians. Their loving spirit can appeal to the heart of their children and influence them in the way of righteousness. They cannot make you become a Christian nor live a godly life; but, they can certainly exert a powerful influence over your life. The same can be said of other godly people you know and respect.

1 Tim. 4:12 _____

Heb. 13:7 _____

Heb. 13:17 _____

But, in addition to parents, there are those whose lives touch ours that can have an additional influence over us—if we allow it!

Love of Truth—It is amazing what a person will do if he truly loves some one or some thing like God does! Love is the fulfilling of the Law! (Rom. 13:8). People will also perish if they do not love the Truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12). We are encouraged to *"buy the truth and sell it not!"* (Prov. 23:23).

- Jn. 17:17 _____
- Jn. 8:32 _____
- 1 Pet. 1:22 _____

Exalting the Word of God—We are to not only love God's Truth, but to exalt it above all other words of men! If we will do so, it will impact our life for GOOD!

- 1 Cor. 1:18-21 _____
- Ps. 119:104 _____
- Ps. 119:105 _____
- Ps. 119:72 _____
- Ps. 119:97 _____

We are also exhorted to prove or test all things and hold fast to the good (1 Thess. 5:21).

The Person I marry—There is probably no person in my life that can influence my choices any more than my mate! But, again we emphasize that my mate cannot force me to make my choices, but only influence me in making my choices. You will need to have a mate like the description below:

- Eph. 5:21 _____
- Eph. 5:24 _____
- Eph. 5:25 _____
- Eph. 5:28 _____
- Eph. 5:33 _____

It is very important that we open up our lives to the good influences so that we will walk in the good way and build a good character!

Example

We want to look at two women in the Old Testament (Naomi and Ruth) who had "good" character—and the influence that each one had upon others. These women lived during the time of the Judges in Israel (before they had a king). It was about 1300-1400 BC. (Ruth 1:8-18). A famine had struck in the land of Israel. Elimelech and Naomi, with their two sons, left Canaan and went into Moab. While there, Elimelech died. The two sons married Moabitish Women—Orpah and Ruth. And then, the two sons died. Naomi decided to go back home, since the famine had ceased. She encouraged her two daughters-in-laws to go back to their parents. Orpah reluctantly did return to her family. But Ruth would not—she was determined to stay with Naomi. Among the "good" characteristics of both of these women, the one we want to look at carefully is their "Respect" for one another.

1. **Mutual respect influenced them to choose to stay together.**
2. **Ruth listened to the advice of her mother-in-law.** The advice was for her safety and her virtue. She listened and obeyed (Ruth 2:22; 3:1-4).
3. **Ruth was respectful of the customs and Laws of Israel (Ruth 3:5).**
4. **She was respectful of God's Laws of Marriage and Moral purity (Ruth 3:8-11).** She conformed to God's Law and was praised and blessed. She was listed in the lineage of David and of the Messiah.

It is important that we have respectfulness in our lives.

- 1 Tim. 1:17 _____
- 2 Pet. 1:17 _____
- Rom. 13:1 _____
- 1 Tim. 6:1 _____
- Eph. 5:33 _____
- 1 Pet. 2:17 _____
- Rom. 12:10 _____
- Lev. 19:32 _____

Concluding Thoughts

The respectfulness of these two women brought some very good rewards into their lives and there is no telling neither how many nor how far their influences have been on mankind!

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you believe that our choices determine our character? Explain.

2. How does God influence us in our choices?

3. How do godly people help us in our choices?

4. Why is it so important that we exalt the Word of God in our lives?

5. When will my mate be the most effective in helping me make the choices in life.

6. In what ways did Ruth show respect for Naomi?

7. Why is it so important for us to show respect for people?

8. What kind of rewards are given to respectful people?

Lesson Four

***"Characteristics of A Person
of Character"***

Christianity is practical—that is, it works! When followed, it brings about the desired results. The "key phrase" is ***"When followed!"*** This is what the Letter of James is trying to get across to people—you must be a doer, not just a hearer only! (Jas. 1:21-25). It is the doer that is blessed! It is important that we have the **right beliefs**; but as well the **right actions or practices!** The 12th chapter of **Romans** helps us to see many of the attributes or actions that makeup a good "character." The chapter begins with (1) The commitment of the Christian; and (2) The characteristics of the Ideal Christian.

Expected Commitment

(Rom. 12:1-8)

1. To be a living sacrifice for God. (1)

- 1) Animals were slain as an offering to God.
- 2) He wants man to be a living sacrifice to Him.
- 3) One that continually brings glory & honor to His Redeemer.
- 4) The basis for his appeal is because of God's mercy to His people.

2. To offer a reasonable sacrifice. (1)

- 1) To offer yourself as a holy & acceptable sacrifice to God.
- 2) This is only reasonable in view of what God has done for us.

3. To allow God to transform our minds. (2)

- 1) The world would like to press us into their mold—be like them.
- 2) They want to impress our minds with what they have to offer.
- 3) But one committed to God needs to allow the One He worships to transform his thinking.
- 4) We are to be committed to learning God's will.

4. To think soberly about ourselves. (3)

- 1) Man's tendency is to think too highly of himself.
- 2) Jesus warns us about this in Luke 14:11—***"For whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted."***
- 3) Be committed to have a correct view of ourselves among our fellow human beings.

5. To be a functioning part of the great body of Christ. (4-5)

- 1) The Lord's people are one—unified in Christ.
- 2) It functions like a human body made up of many members.
- 3) Each member carrying his part of the load as he has ability.

6. To use our special abilities (gifts) in God's service—to help His people and others. (6-8)

- 1) All members are needed—all are important to the success of the body.
- 2) Whatever the ability—find a way to use it to the upbuilding of the Lord's church.

Ideal Characteristics

(Rom. 12:9-21)

1. Verse 9—Love that is sincere.

- 1) Don't feign love—be sure it is real—sincere—genuine.
- 2) Love is not real until it is shown in action for the good of others.
- 3) Hate what is wrong—cling to the right.
- 4) Be on the side of righteousness!

2. Verse 10—Be affectionate.

- 1) Be affectionate—devoted to one another as brothers & sisters in a family.
- 2) Let your heart be touched with your concern for one another.
- 3) Show preference for your brothers & sisters.
- 4) Gal. 6:10
- 5) Instead of trying to get honor—give it.
- 6) Outdo one another in giving honor.

3. Verse 11—Diligent and fervent in Service.

- 1) Let your service to the Lord be diligent and fervent.
- 2) Matt. 25:26—*“His lord answered and said unto him, you wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reaped where I sowed not, and gathered where I had not strewed....”*
- 3) Not to be a half-hearted servant—but actively involved—giving full measure.

4. Verse 12—A strong Hope.

- 1) *“Where there is hope, there is life.”*
- 2) Keep your hope strong—greatly rejoice that you have such a hope.
- 3) Tribulations will come—a time of testing.
- 4) Tried faith brings patience & maturity.
- 5) Praying keeps us close to God and our purpose.

5. Verse 13—Be generous.

- 1) Be generous to those who have need—not stingy.
- 2) Be willing to share your blessings with others.
- 3) Be known for opening up your home to others.

6. Verse 14—Do not curse others.

- 1) Do not call down a curse upon those who persecute you.
- 2) Rather, ask that they be blessed with a true knowledge of righteousness—so they can be saved.

7. Verse 15—Rejoice and weep with others.

- 1) Identify with your fellow-man.
- 2) Share his happiness as well as his misfortunes.
- 3) Show your sincere concern.

8. Verse 16—Do not think too highly of self.

- 1) Be of one mind among yourselves.
- 2) Or, Have equal regard for one another regardless of their station in life.
- 3) Syriac Version—“*And what you think concerning yourselves, the same think concerning your brethren; neither think with an elevated or ambitious mind; but accommodate yourselves to those who are of humbler condition.*”
- 4) Christ aspired to be among the more humble in life—not among the rich or the great.
- 5) Do not think too highly of yourself.

9. Verse 17—No an avenger.

- 1) Do not avenge yourselves when evil is done to you.
- 2) Rather, as Jesus said, do good to them, pray for them, bless them.
- 3) Have a high regard for that which is good in the sight of all men.
- 4) Or, See that you are above reproach in the eyes of everyone.

10. Verse 18—Love peace.

- 1) “*Blessed are the peacemakers*”
- 2) Christians are lovers of peace—they help to make for peace.
- 3) If it is within our power—be at peace with all men.

11. Verse 19—Let God avenge the wrongs.

- 1) The Christian is not to take vengeance into his own hands.
- 2) Let God’s way of retribution run its course.
- 3) “Don’t take the law into your own hands.”
- 4) God’s retribution will be just and right—free of unrighteousness.

12. Verse 20—Return good for evil.

- 1) Rather—do good to your enemy.
- 2) Feed him if he is hungry.
- 3) Give him a drink if he is thirsty.
- 4) Find a need that he has and satisfy it—show concern for him.
- 5) Hopefully, by doing this—he will realize the error of his way.
- 6) His conscience will prick him.

13. Verse 21—Overcome evil with good.

- 1) One of the great principles of Christianity—overcome evil with good.
- 2) When we react wrongly to evil—we are guilty of the same act of unrighteousness.
- 3) When we react righteously—we have victory over evil.
- 4) Never let evil get the better of you; get the better of evil by doing good.

Concluding Thoughts

The Christian life is a high and holy life—one of great challenge. It is the Ideal life. To live such—we must open our minds, wills, and hearts to God. Have you begun your walk with God yet?

Questions for Discussion

1. What is meant by saying that Christianity is practical?
2. How does God transform our mind?
3. What is a person called if he is not sincere in his efforts?
4. Why is hope so important in our life?
5. How can we overcome evil?

Lesson Five

"Building Christian Character"

Have you ever known about someone's reputation, but were disappointed when you came to know them? There may be a good reason for that! Reputation is what people think of us; while Character is the real person. Reputation and Riches can be deceitful, but Character is the real you. It is certainly desirable that our Reputation be the same as our Character.

Prov. 22:1 _____

People in the world may be busy building a reputation for themselves; but Christians should be busy building a great Character!

Observations about Character

1. Real character is what makes Bible heroes acceptable to God. Take a look at Daniel. He had position, power, fame, and wealth; but they were all incidental and secondary. He had a great reputation (Dan. 6:4-5; 9:23); but his character was the same! He believed in God—no matter what. He did right—no matter what. He trusted in God's way of righteousness as the only way to live.

Now take a look at the Apostle Paul. He had position, power, fame, and wealth; but he gave them all up to become a Christian (Phil. 3:7-8). He gladly did it to gain Christ. He has come down to us as a man of "real" character.

Then, take a look at the early Christian Martyrs. They gave up what this world counts as precious in order to stay faithful to Christ. They had the character to stand in the face of trials and death itself and not give in to the persecution.

Rev. 2:10 _____

2. Remember—we build what character we have. We are not born with it. Nor is it automatically given by God—He does not do it for us! We must put forth the effort to build our character. It is acquired through our effort, with God's help and guidance, and the help of others.

2 Pet. 1:5-8 _____

3. Remember also—Our character determines our destiny! Judgment is based on our character. The one-talent man learned this the hard way. He was not condemned because he only had one talent, but because he did not make proper use of that one talent! The Rich Fool was not condemned because he had worked hard to make a living, but because he had not properly prepared himself for the judgment. Character is not determined by riches, poverty, friends, or good intentions. But character is built by our working, our attitudes, our helpfulness, and our convictions. God is well able to judge between reputation and character.

Rev. 20:12 _____
Matt. 25:24-30 _____

Basic Things that Build Character

1. We need to keep a good conscience. Our conscience approves or disapproves our actions by what we have been taught. We are warned of the dangers of going against our conscience (Rom. 14:22-23). Paul spoke of those who had *"seared their conscience."* (1 Tim. 4:2). He said he had set an example of: *"I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day."* (Acts 23:1). Younger people need to take need to the inspired statement about our conscience.

2. We need to exercise Will Power! So many times we know what we ought to do, but don't! James calls this sin (Jas. 4:17). When we fail, we are often miserable and unhappy with ourselves. When we exercise our Will Power to do right—it leaves us with a great feeling. However, it is easier to follow the course of least resistance. This does not build character. A man without will power is like driftwood—no telling where he will end up.

John 7:16-17 _____

Gwen Sims was elected Homecoming Queen of Rio Linda High School. She made her speech before 1000 faculty and students. As Homecoming Queen, she was supposed to have reigned over the Camelot Ball. Her remarks were: *"I think the majority of the seniors know about my religious convictions. I do not know about the faculty or underclassmen. My religious convictions will not permit me to attend the dance. I hope none of you will feel badly toward me, but will understand my holding up for my belief."* She received a tremendous applause at the end of the speech. Would you say that she had developed character? It would have been easier to compromise and go!

3. Strive to keep Thoughts Pure! The need to guard our hearts should be obvious to all of us. Wrong-doing starts in the heart (Matt. 15:17-20). We need to go to the source of the wrong-doing—the heart! Change needs to begin in our hearts if we are ever to change our actions. The heart, heart, heart—we need to work on our hearts!

Prov. 23:7 _____

Prov. 4:23 _____

Phil. 4:8 _____

4. Let Christ truly live and abide in us. It is one thing to say that I believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God; and, quite another to truly let Him live and abide in us! We have a mind through which Christ can be understood (Phil. 2:5). We have a voice that can speak up for Christ (Mark 16:15). We have ears that can willingly hear the message of Jesus, as well as to hear the cry of others in need (Lk. 8:18). We have eyes that can be compassionate like Christ's eyes (Mk. 1:41). We have hands that can do the works that glorify Jesus (Matt. 5:16). But all of the above requires that we be crucified with Christ!

Gal. 2:20 _____

The Outcome of Character

To develop "character" will assure us of the promised rewards here and hereafter (Matt. 19:29). It can give us an assurance that we have striven to glorify our Master! (Matt. 5:16). Our conscience will not condemn us (Acts 23:1). Hopefully, we have influenced others to live right with God. We can die in peace with ourselves and God.

But if I fail to develop character:

- 1) I can never truly be free in this life (Jn. 8:32);
- 2) I can never feel I have done what I should (Jas. 4:17);
- 3) My lot will be the common lot of man kind—to live and die without being right with God.
- 4) And after death—there will be an eternal reminder that I failed in life's greatest purpose.

Closing Thoughts

It takes a good and honest heart to become a productive and fruitful Christian. Or, we could say that it takes "character!" How is our "character" coming along?

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between "reputation" and "character?"

2. Why are Daniel and the Apostle Paul examples of "character?"

3. How does God build character in our lives?

4. How does character determine our destiny?

5. How does one keep a "good conscience?"

6. Why is the exercising of our Will able to build our character?

7. How does one keep his thoughts in control?

8. What is the reward of building character?

Lesson Six

"Adversity Forges Character"

James, the inspired brother of Jesus, tells us that there is value in trials and tribulations in life. He says that they produce **Patience!** And when patience has completed its work, we will be complete, lacking nothing (Jas. 1:2-4). This is the reason that he tells us to **"count it all joy"** when our faith is put to the test!

While living in Pittsburgh, I studied with a man that would be tied to his wheelchair for life. It was easy to look at him and feel sympathy. It is natural for us to feel that way. But, he dealt with that handicap and was very active in spite of it. He drove his own car. He went pretty much where he wanted to go. He had a job that he went to and enjoyed. He had overcome his handicap—with the help of others and God! Did the man have "character?" Do I need to answer further?

Bible Examples of People Facing Adversity

Abraham—He was asked by God to leave his homeland and go to a strange land. He faced a lot of adversities. He wandered in this strange land with all of its dangers. He lived years of disappointment because he had no son. And when he had one, God told him to offer him as a sacrifice—testing him! He became the Father of the Jewish Nation—but also, the Father of the Faithful! Why? Because he was shaped in adversity to learn to depend upon God!

Heb. 11:8-12, 17-18 _____

Moses—He made a decision that caused him to lose all that Egypt had to offer. He went into a hard land to serve as a shepherd for 40 years. It was only then that he was ready to be God's leader of His people. All that he went through helped to develop a strong character.

Heb. 11:23-27 _____

David—He found early fame in the court of King Saul. But later, he had to flee for his life for years—enduring much hardship. Only then was he prepared to be the King over God's people. His importance can be seen by how many time

his name appears in the Scriptures—1059 times!

Acts 13:22-23 _____

The Apostle Paul—He had to give up "fame" and "fortune" to become a Christian! He had to endure many hardships in order to do God's Will. In addition, he was given a thorn in the flesh to buffet him. All of this was for Paul's good and God's glory. As a result of all of this he could write the following thoughts.....

2 Tim. 4:7-8 _____

In order to illustrate the concept further, look at the difference between two Roman Emperors. Nero was pampered and indulged with royal luxury from birth. Vespasian was of lowly birth. He worked his way up through the ranks of the Roman army to the position of general. And then, he saved the Roman Empire from almost sure destruction. Nero was one of Rome's worst rulers. Vespasian was one of the best! Why?

Why Trials or Adversities?

We may not be able to fully see or realize why at the time, but as we look back it becomes more obvious—there is purpose and value in having to face adversities! They can truly be a blessing in disguise!

Jas. 1:3-4 _____

Rom. 8:28 _____

1 Thess. 5:18 _____

Phil. 4:11-13 _____

God is trying to tell us that we are to give thanks, not only when things are going good, but especially when things are not going so well. **Concluding Thoughts**

Can we draw this conclusion? Can we say that "character" is not built by ease, but by adversity? Can we say that "character" is forged, not by avoiding adversities, but by handling them properly? God says that Patience and Maturity comes from joyfully facing our trials of life.

How well are we doing?

Heb. 11:32-40 _____

Can we handle both blessings and adversities? Can we see growth in our lives as a result of handling adversities?

Questions for Discussion

1. What helps the Christian to be joyful over the trials that come into his life?

2. Could you say that a handicap is good for you?

3. What were some adversities that Abraham faced?

4. What were some adversities that Moses faced?

5. What were some adversities that David faced?

6. What were some adversities that the Apostle Paul faced?

7. Why has God allowed for His people to have to face trials and adversities?

Take Notes

