

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

# *Building True Character (#2)*

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## ***"Character in Contrast"***

A good way to study something out is not only to define the word in a positive use, but then to find it's opposite and show any similarities or differences. Some of the synonyms for Contrast are as follows: **Difference, Dissimilarity, Distinction, Distinguish, Disparity, Gap, Similarity, Compare.** When you study "character" in contrast, you can see what it is and then what it is not! Contrasting actions, thinking, or concepts will help to make a more clear-cut distinction between "good" character and "bad" character.

Jesus used this method of teaching over and over. You can see this clearly in His teachings of the Parables. Let's look first at the **Parable of the Talents** that is found in **Matthew 25:14-30.**

1. Notice that He showed the differences in three men by the amount of money that was given them:
  - a) One was given 5 talents;
  - b) Another was given 2 talents;
  - c) To a third 1 talent was given.
2. He gave them money to be invested to bring a return. But he gave them differing amounts according to their "ability."
3. The Parable now shows clearly the differences in the character of these three men:
  - a) Two of them made good use of the money—showing they could be depended upon.
  - b) One of them was called "fearful" and "wicked and lazy," and "unprofitable."
4. Jesus made it very clear what kind of character He wants His followers to have by this contrast.

The **Parable of the Soils or Sower** helps to show a contrast in good or bad character of those who hear the Gospel message (**Matt. 13:3-23**).

- a) **The wayside soil**—No response—hardened heart.
- b) **The stony soil**—Quick response—but no durability.
- c) **The thorny soil**—Positive response—but no fruitfulness.
- d) **The good soil**—Positive response—became fruitful.

What an effective way to help us see what "kind" of character we have by our receptivity and endurance to the Gospel. Another way to identify the characters of the 4 persons above is as follows:

- a) **The wayside soil**—A very poor character.
- b) **The stony soil**—A very shallow character.
- c) **The thorny soil**—A weak character.
- d) **The good soil**—A good and honest character.

**Wayside Soil—Poor Character**

**Lot's Wife**—(Gen. 19:1-29)

1. She was a wife of a righteous man named Lot.
2. She heard the warning of God to flee the city for God will destroy it.
3. She and her two daughters and Lot were forcibly dragged from the city of Sodom by God's "messengers!".
4. She partially obeyed God, but ignored a simple command—do not look back!
5. She perished in spite of the above things.
6. Jesus uses her for an example to warn us today—"don't look back!"
7. **Lk. 17:28-32**
8. **Lk. 9:62**

**Stony Soil—Shallow Character**

**Simon, the Sorcerer**—(Acts 8:1-24)

1. Philip had preached to the people of Samaria and many believed and were baptized.
2. Among the above people was Simon (called the Sorcerer) who was also baptized.
3. However, later when he saw the power that the Apostles had been given by God, he wanted that power.
4. Peter rebuked him and showed him what kind of character he was showing (it wasn't good!)
5. **Acts 8:21-24**
6. We are not told if Simon remained faithful after this.
7. But, it did show how shallow his character was.

**Thorny Soil—Weak Character**

**Saul, 1st King of Israel**—(1 Samuel 15:10-35)

1. God regretted that He had made Saul King over Israel.
2. He had great promise, but could not handle the position.
3. His character was weak—he had a divided loyalty.
4. When the real test came—Saul failed miserably.
5. **1 Sam. 15:22-23**
6. Saul made an effort to show repentance, but it was short-lived (if he was sincere). (1 Sam. 15:24-35).
7. Saul died a pretty undesirable death.

**Good Soil—Good Character**

The Bible is full of good and honest people who have been used by God to help His people! One of those is Esther, the Queen of the Persian Empire.

**Esther**—(Esther 4:13-17)

1. Esther was a beautiful Jewish woman that became the Queen of the Persian Empire.
2. She learned of a plot by Haman to kill all the Jews in the Kingdom of Persia.
3. Mordecai Ask his "niece" to go to the King and see if the Jews could be saved.
4. She was the only one that could possibly make a difference.
5. She was afraid for her life, but went ahead anyway—"***If I perish, I perish!***"
6. She prevailed upon the King—Haman was hung—Mordecai was raised to an important position in the Empire of the Persians.
7. She showed Character!

**Concluding Thoughts**

A person can give the impression that they have character, but when the testing time comes—everyone knows if they have character by their actions! It is easy to be a Christian when there is no persecution or people giving you a hard time. But when the testing time comes, may we show that we are men and women of character!



Lesson Two

***"Characteristics of Sin"***

Character and righteousness are closely tied together with one another; but Sin is usually thought of as being the opposite of character. While there is no perfect person; yet, there is a difference between those who walk in the way of sin and those who walk in the way of righteousness. However, some men can "talk a good talk;" but do not "walk a good walk!" Some people can appear to have "real character;" but when the testing time comes—their character wasn't found to be real! Sin is usually at the bottom of such—that is, giving in to sin under pressure or persecution.

A French Philosopher made this observation: *"Man first became conscious of sin some 6,000 years ago. The cycle is just about completed; he is practically unconscious of it again."* Our society does not like to use the word "sin" because it makes man accountable and responsible. They would like to erase the concept of sin altogether so they can do more sinning, but call it something else. But when men respect the Bible and are honest with themselves, sin will still be sin!

**Terms that Identify Sin**

- 1. Evil.** Identified as that which ought not to be done or that which is morally or legally wrong. It is also identified as that which is troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive or baneful (Thayer's definition). (Jonah 3:10).
- 2. Iniquity.** A person that does not adhere to Law either out of ignorance or not caring. It is to be unjust toward someone or wrong them. (Acts 2:40; Leviticus 16:21). "Sin" refers to the action, while iniquity may refer to the character or description of the action (Psalm 32:5). It is to forgive the badness or guilt of one's sin.
- 3. Offense.** Refers to a trigger of a trap against which an animal strikes, springing the trap. It is a snare, stumbling block, or an occasion which leads to sin.
- 4. Transgression.** To go beyond or over. It is to do that which is not authorized by God or doing that which is forbidden. Not every sin is a transgression, but every transgression is a disregard of the Law. Sin is acting without law, whether a man is ignorant of it or not, but a transgression is going beyond a definitely known law.
- 5. Trespass.** To fall beside. It is a failure to do what is right. Both Trespass and Transgression have the same meaning in English.
- 6. Unrighteousness.** Injustice towards another person. A person may do what is right and not be a Christian.
- 7. Ungodliness.** A lack of reverence toward God.

**8. Wickedness.** Similar to the idea of evil. It is malicious wrong doing.

**9. Wrong.** In English, a man may do the wrong thing without committing sin, but in the Bible it is always an act of unrighteousness.

### **Characterization of Sin**

**1. Sin comes of evil parentage.** Sin is not of God, but is of the evil one (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8). Sin originated with the Devil. For one to continue to walk in sin shows who his real father is. To deny it is useless. The Devil loves evil, God hates every evil way. To be of God, we too must hate every evil way.

**2. Sin is a deceiver.** Sin must work deceptively. To come parading as sin would defeat its purpose. Once that sin enslaves us, then who cares! But at first, he must come in a garb of pretended good. It is trying to do us a favor. Look at the Devil's offer to Christ: *"I will give you all the kingdoms of this world."* (Matthew 4:8-9). There is a real danger that one can become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). It helps sin's purpose if it can pose or be similar to righteousness (Matthew 7:15; Matthew 23:27; 2 Corinthians 11:14). Sin promises great things, but cannot fully deliver. It promises us the moon, but gives us the grave (Hebrews 11:24-26). The outcome of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

**3. Sin is a Robber.** It robs us of our confidence in God. The Devil made God out to be a liar to mother Eve (Hebrews 3:12). Sin robs us of our time. It leads to wasted bodies, energies, health, possessions, as well as time. It enslaves men for years, so there is little time left to serve God (Ephesians 5:15-16). Sin robs us of helpful companions. You can always have evil companions to help you to sin (1 Corinthians 15:33), while the righteous want to help us to flee from sin (James 4:7). The Prodigal Son had plenty of help to get into the depths of sin, but where were they when he needed them most? To whom did he turn for help? Sin will rob us of our promise of Eternal Life in Heaven. This is the child of God's birthright. We were created to be with God. To lose Heaven is to lose our birthright (Revelation 21:8).

**4. Sin is a Tyrant.** He comes in as a temporary guest. "It won't hurt anything," "It is so small a thing," "It requires so little," "Nobody will ever notice." But soon, sin demands the best room in the house. One thing leads to another. One drink often leads to drunkenness. Going to a chaperoned dance often leads to night clubs, drinking, etc. Sin never stops short of tyrannical rule, if possible, to completely enslave us (John 8:34; Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:14, 19).

**5. Sin is a Destroyer.** It destroys relationships with both God and man (Isaiah 59:1-2). It destroys peace of mind. We no longer have a clear conscience. Peter



wept bitterly after his sin of denying Jesus. Judas hanged himself in his remorse. We cannot be at peace with God, while we continue in the way of sin. It destroys man's will to serve God (2 Peter 2:20-22). Men can go to the point of sinning where he cannot be brought to repentance (Hebrews 6:4-6). Sin destroys the body (1 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 6:7-8). It will ultimately destroy the soul in Hell (Romans 6:23).

**Concluding Thoughts**

Jesus came to release man from the bondage and hold of sin—to set us free (John 8:32). He wants us to become a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:16-18). He offers to give us release from the burden of sin (Matthew 11:28-30). But this can only be done when we realize the true character of sin and what it has done to billions of people before us and continues to do to mankind today. We need deliverance and our only hope is to be found in God.

If we ever build character that is pleasing to God, it will have to be based on the Truth of God and not on a sinful way of living!

**Questions for Discussion**

**True or False**

- \_\_\_ 1. The idea of sin is the invention of self-righteous people.
- \_\_\_ 2. Sin can only deceive those who are unlearned of its ways.
- \_\_\_ 3. Sin originated in this world through Adam and Eve.
- \_\_\_ 4. Sin imitates righteousness, but righteousness never imitates sin.
- \_\_\_ 5. Sin offers no real pleasures.
- \_\_\_ 6. Sin can make a person healthier and happier.
- \_\_\_ 7. We only sin when we are lead into it by evil companions.
- \_\_\_ 8. Sin's goal is to occupy our time with enjoyable things.
- \_\_\_ 9. Righteousness enslaves us to God, but Sin sets us free from such.
- \_\_\_ 10. Only the worse of sins can destroy our relationship with God.
- \_\_\_ 11. All sickness is the results of sin.

- 12. Not every sin is a “transgression.”
- 13. Every “transgression” is a sin.
- 14. Character and Sin are inter-related.
- 15. A person can continue in the way of sin and still have "character."
- 16. Christian character can only be based on following the Truth of God.
- 17. Man's refusal to recognize sin for what it is will keep him from having real character.

**Lesson Three**

***"Strong back, but Weak Character"***

One of the outstanding values of studying the Old Testament is:

- a) To see both good & bad characters;
- b) Men and women of great faith & strength;
- c) As opposed to those who do not have such.

1 Samuel gets its name from one of the chief characters of the book. But Samuel is only one of several persons that stand out. The book portrays both good and bad characters. Our main thrust of this study will be to learn lessons from these characters.

**Background Information**

- 1) **Judges**-----Over 300 years that God used Judges to help his people.
- 2) **1 Samuel**-----Transition from Judges to Kings over Israel (Saul is 1st).
- 3) **2 Samuel**-----United Kingdom under David.
- 4) **1 Kings**-----Solomon as king—then, the kingdom divided.
- 5) **2 Kings**-----Kings of the Northern Kingdom and their fall in 722 B.C.  
Kings of the Southern Kingdom--their captivity in 606 B.C.

**Divisions of the Book of 1 Samuel**

- 1) **Chs. 1-7**—Career of Samuel
- 2) **Chs. 8-15**—Career of Saul up to his rejection.
- 3) **Chs. 16-31**—Career of Saul after his rejection.

**Some Observations**

- 1) 1 Samuel is a phase-over book from Judges to Kings.
- 2) During the Judges, Israel was largely independent tribes loosely federated, and their unity was in the central place of worship.
- 3) Under Samuel, the need for a king was stressed by the people. They wanted a centralized government with all the pomp & ceremony and power. God gave them a king, but showed the dangers & weaknesses of such. Later He used David as the good example of what kings should be like.

**Study of Five Characters**

**1. Hannah:**

- a) A godly and faithful woman.
- b) Childless.....great reproach to her.

- c) Prayed earnestly for a son (1 Sam. 1:10-11).
- d) Her prayer was heard (1 Sam. 1:24-28).

**2) *Samuel:***

- a) Was a Prophet, Priest, and Judge.
- b) Primarily known as a Prophet (3:20).
- c) Was dedicated to the Lord—lived up to that expectation.
- d) Main thrust was spiritual:
  - ◇ Called people to come out of Idolatry.
  - ◇ Helped them to come to a true devotion to God (7:3-4).
  - ◇ Brought about strong religious reforms.
- e) Helped to lead nation in their time of crisis with Philistines (7:13).
- f) Known for his fairness, justness, and impartial dealings (12:3-5).
- g) Enjoyed unquestioned confidence of people.
- h) He had established centers where he could help the people:  
RAMAH, BETHEL, GILGAL, MIZPEH (7:16-17).
- i) He also taught schools of prophets at these centers.
  - ◇ He sent them back to their homes to help the people.
  - ◇ One of the primary reasons for improved conditions spiritually.
- j) Was greatly respected even unto his death (25:1).

**3. *Saul:***

- a) Anointed as first king.
- b) Physical characteristics were outstanding (9:2).
- c) Very modest and humble at first—he did not seek to be king (10:21-24; 15:17).
- d) Was respectful of God's Prophet & of God's Will in his life.
- e) Good leader, organized, able to execute his plans (14:47).
- f) His successes began to turn his head.
- g) Upon one occasion, he assumed a priestly role—openly disobedient to God.
  - ◇ He had a hard time facing up to his disobedience.
  - ◇ 15:11, 13-14, 23, 35.
- h) From this time on—his remaining years were tragic:
  - ◇ Mind seems to have been affected by an evil spirit (16:14).
  - ◇ Soothing music seems to have helped—David employed to play.
  - ◇ But Saul became extremely jealous of David (18:8-9, 29).
  - ◇ Became morose, melancholy, and insanely jealous.
  - ◇ The Lord no longer spoke to Saul through any means (28:6).

- ◇ His tragic end came from a spirit of rebellion & self-will.
- ◇ He reaped the bitter fruits of his own folly.
- ◇ He used his power for evil purposes—not righteous purposes.
- ◇ Instead of devoting himself to constructive planning for his kingdom—he wasted his time pursuing David to kill him (23:14; 26:21).

**4 .David:**

- a) His character developed carefully.
- b) He was to replace Saul at the proper time.
- c) His character was being refined for the great work ahead of him.
- d) As a young man he was good looking (16:12).
- e) Very brave & courageous (17:37, 45-47).
- f) Behaved himself very wisely—even under trying circumstances (18:5).
- g) Well received by the people (18:5, 7, 16).
- h) Made a good & just leader (18:13).
- i) Showed great respect for Saul as God’s anointed—even though Saul had evil intent to kill him (24:10).
- j) More information given in 2 Samuel.

**5. Jonathan:**

- a) Known for his unselfish love for David:
  - ◇ Refused to be envious & jealous of him & his popularity.
  - ◇ He even knew that David would be the next king—not himself.
  - ◇ Truly a great spirit on his part (18:1, 3-4; 20:17).
- b) He helped to save David’s life that assured him he would not be king (19:1-2).
- c) He was courageous—with great faith in God.
  - ◇ Single-handed, he went against a garrison of Philistines twice.
  - ◇ With God’s help, he defeated them (14:45).
  - ◇ He died in battle later with his father & his people against the Philistines.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The Word of God reveals both the good and bad characters. Some have a strong back, but a weak character like "Samson." But there are also some people with great courage, faith, and fidelity. Character is built by listen-ing to God and doing His bidding.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Who is one of the chief characters in the book of 1 Samuel.
2. For how long did God make use of Judges to help his people?
3. How much of the book of 1st Samuel is dedicated to recording the life of Saul?
4. What help to keep the unity of the twelve independent tribes of Israel?
5. Who was Hannah?
6. Was Samuel a Prophet, Priest, and Judge over Israel?
7. What were the four cities that Samuel met with the people to help them?
8. What physical characteristic identified Saul?
9. Why was Saul jealous of David?
10. What are some good characteristics of David?
11. What was Jonathan known for?

Lesson Four

***"Examples of Good Character" (#1)***

One of the best ways of teaching is through examples. But in particular, Bible Examples are the best, because they are recorded accurately by God's Prophet!

**Rom. 15:4** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Jude 3-11** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**2 Pet. 2:4-13** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**2 Pet. 3:3-9** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Selling of One's Soul!**

Examples to illustrate:

- 1. Esau**—The twin brother of Jacob (Gen. 25:19-34).
  - a) He sold his birth-right to his brother.
  - b) He was the first to be born and would receive the greater portion of the inheritance.
  - c) Jacob wanted it and bargained Esau for it.
  - d) Esau gave it up for a "mess of pottage."
- 2. Judas**—One of the original twelve apostles (Matt. 26:14-16).
  - a) He offered to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of Silver.
  - b) **Matt. 16:25-26** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Rich Young Ruler** sold his soul for money (Lk. 18:18-23)
- 4. The Jewish Leaders** sold their soul for popularity, prestige, or social acceptance (Jn. 12:42-43).
- 5. People** can sell their soul to keep their PRIDE! (Matt. 13:13-16)
- 6. People** can sell their soul so they can enjoy the pleasures of this life (Lk. 8:14).

Most people sell their soul too cheap! Jesus tells us that our soul is worth more than all the riches of this world (Matt. 16:26).

**People with True Character**

**1. Enoch** (Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5).

- a) Very little is given about Enoch in Scripture, but what is said gives us some great insights.
- b) He Walked with God.
  - ◇ He believed in God in the midst of an unbelieving world.
  - ◇ His faith was an obedient faith—walked with God.
  - ◇ He did not walk in darkness, but turned his back on the way of evil, sin, and wickedness.
- c) He pleased God.
  - ◇ **Prov. 16:7** \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ **Eccl. 7L26** \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ **Rom. 8:8** \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ **1 Thess. 2:4** \_\_\_\_\_
- d) He did not see death because God took him.

**2. Noah** (Gen. 6:5-8; Heb. 11:7).

- a) Quite a bit is said about Noah.
- b) He lived in a very wicked world (Gen. 6:11-13).
- c) His faith in God was demonstrated by his actions (Heb. 11:7).
- d) He did all that God commanded of him (Gen. 6:22).
- e) His obedient faith condemned the world about him.
  - ◇ God told Noah that He was going to do something not done before.
  - ◇ Noah, therefore, had to base his faith on the word of God—to accept it because God said so!
  - ◇ He was moved by godly fear and obeyed God.
- f) He was righteous and blameless (Gen. 6:9).
- g) He walked with God also (Gen. 6:9).
- h) He was a Preacher of Righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5).
- i) Because of him, mankind could start over again.

**3. Moses** (Exo. 2:11-15; Heb. 11:23-29).

- a) A lot is said about Moses in the Scriptures.
- b) We will just hit the high points of his character.
- c) He had great parents who strongly believed in God (Heb. 11:23).
- d) He chose to suffer affliction with his people rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin.



- e) He looked to the reward God offered rather than the reward of staying in Egypt.
- f) God used him to deliver His people from bondage.
- g) God was able to do great miracles through Moses in leading Israel out of Egyptian bondage.
- h) He was faithful to God (Heb. 3:1-2).
- i) The name of Moses is still a household word all over the world because of His faith in God.
- j) In a few words—"**He had character!**"

**4. Phinehas** (Num. 25:1-13).

- a) He lived during the time of the "Wilderness Wanderings" for 40 years.
- b) They were about ready to go in and conquer the people in the land of Canaan.
- c) But the Moabites enticed many of the people to sacrifice to their idol god (and all that went with it).
  - ◇ The men committed fornication with the Moabite women.
  - ◇ The Lord's anger was raised against Israel.
  - ◇ Action was required by God.
  - ◇ 24,000 were slain by the Judges over Israel.
- d) The Zeal of Phinehas:
  - ◇ While the people were weeping, an Israelite man walked up before them all with a Midianite woman.
  - ◇ Phinehas took a javelin and killed them both.
  - ◇ The plague was stopped among the Israelites.
- e) These actions may sound quite gruesome to us today.
  - ◇ But don't be too quick to judge this before you know the facts.
  - ◇ A closer look may help better to understand why God highly commended Phinehas' actions.
  - ◇ Phinehas showed openly his zeal for God against open sin.
  - ◇ **Num. 25:11** \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ **Num. 25:12-13** \_\_\_\_\_
- f) God's full stamp of approval was given to Phinehas' actions.
- g) He is a foreshadow of the Messiah to come that would also deal with sin.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Will we profit from these examples? Will we follow in their footsteps? Can God depend upon us and use us as He did these men?

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What is one of the main reasons for our reading and studying the Old Testament Books?
  
2. How does the New Testament make use of the Old Testament Books?
  
3. How does a person sell their soul?
  
4. Name some Examples of people who "sold" their soul and what the price was.
  
5. For what was Enoch praised by God?
  
6. For what was Noah praised by God?
  
7. For what was Moses praised by God?
  
8. For what was Phinehas praised by God?

Lesson Five

***"Examples of Good Character" (#2)***

In this lesson we want to look at the spiritual leadership in the home and used some examples to help illustrate some vital points. There are some questions that need to be asked and answered in this area of study on the leadership in the home.

1. **Why are families having so many problems today?**
2. **What are some underlying reasons for these problems?**
3. **What makes a good father in your sight?**
4. **What motivates a man to be a good father?**
5. **Why are fathers important to the family?**

Recent surveys have shown the importance of the father in the home:

*"The personality and background of the husband, not the wife, were the important factors in the success of a marriage."*

*"Studies of delinquency repeatedly indicate that fathers are more influential than mothers in the development of delinquent behavior in their children."*

*"If the father attends church regularly, the children will be more likely to attend regularly—regardless of the mother's attendance record."*

*"Dad is destiny. More than virtually any other factor, a biological father's presence in the family will determine a child's success and happiness."*

There should be no doubt that both the father and mother play important roles in the raising of children. The Bible strongly emphasizes such—but, places the responsibility upon the father in particular.

The following examples are chosen to emphasize the father's role in the raising of children.

**Abraham**

God gave Abraham a great compliment when He said: ***"I know he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment...."*** (Gen. 18:16-22).

1. **Spiritual leadership is shown by proper attitudes!**
  - a) Abraham's attitude towards God—Fear, Respect, Faith, Submission.

- b) Abraham's attitude towards himself—Humility before God and others.
- c) Abraham's attitude towards others—Concern and Caring (Lot is an illustration).

**2. Spiritual Leadership in the church is shown by:**

- a) 1 Tim. 3:2—Temperate (Patient), Hospitable to others.
- b) 1 Tim. 3:3—Not a brawler, not violent, not greedy for money, not quarrelsome.
- c) 1 Tim. 3:6—Not prideful.
- d) Tit. 1:7—Not self-willed, not quick-tempered.
- e) Tit. 1:9—A lover of what is good, sober-minded, self-controlled.

**3. Application to fathers:**

- a) He should be the spiritual leader of the family.
- b) His attitudes toward God, himself, and others should be correct.
- c) To be a true spiritual leader—he must cleanse his heart of the wrong attitudes that undermine that leadership.
- d) *"To lead without loving can be cruel, and to love without leading is a 'cop-out.'"*
- e) A spiritual leader in the home should feel the weight of that responsibility.
- f) He must set the proper example.
- g) He must lead well.
- h) He must exercise proper training and discipline

**Sarah**

Her original home was in the Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 11:31). She lived with her father, Tereh (Gen. 20:12). Her name at first was "Sarai" (contentious). Abraham was a half-brother to Sarah (Gen. 20:12). They had the same father, but not the same mother (Gen. 20:12). She was 10 years younger than Abraham (Gen. 17:17). She was married to Abraham before leaving the Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 11:31). She was 65 as they came into Canaan. She was said to be barren—unable to bear children.

**Things for which she was known:**

**1. Her beauty** (Gen. 12:11). This was said of her after 65. Two different kings desired her because of her beauty. But there is no indication that her beauty "went to her head!" In fact, the opposite seems to be the case! Godly women (today) need to put stress on having inward beauty (1 Pet. 3:2-4).

**2. Her Respect for her husband** (1 Pet. 3:6). She obeyed him—even when she was compromised in order to protect her husband. She is held up before women as a godly woman to follow.

**1 Pet. 3:1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Eph. 5:24** \_\_\_\_\_

She called him lord! This was a respectful term that denoted their relationship. She recognized, respected, and encouraged his headship in their home.

**1 Pet. 3:5** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Her faith in God.** God made a promise to them of having descendants (Gen. 12:2, 7; 15:5). But 10 years later—no child (Gen. 16:3). Sarah worked out a plan to have a child to be born through Hagar. This obviously did not work out. God repeats his promise to them again—Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89. (Gen. 17:19). That promise was fulfilled when she was 90 years old (Gen. 21:6). Her faith was enlarged. In God's own time, the promise was fulfilled. Faith is built with patience—waiting on God's time (Heb. 11:11).

**Concluding Thoughts**

Both Abraham and Sarah are held up in Scripture as examples for us to follow—not only in our relationships in the home, but in our relationship to God. Both relationship require faith or trust in each other. Such people will be honored by family and friends. Leadership appointments in the Lord's Church gives recognition to both fathers and mothers and the job they have done.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. From the survey done, which was the important factor in the success of a marriage—husband or wife?
  
2. What has the studies shown about delinquency?
  
3. What compliment did God give to Abraham?
  
4. How should spiritual leadership be shown in the home?
  
5. How should spiritual leadership be shown in the church?
  
6. What relationship did Abraham and Sarah have before they were married?
  
7. For what was Sarah known?
  
8. How strong was her faith in God?
  
9. How old was Sarah when God first made the promise of a child and how old was she when the promise was fulfilled?
  
10. Why is trust so important in the home and in our relationship to God?

**Lesson Six*****"Examples of Good Character" (#3)***

The world is full of Heroes of all kinds—in sports, business, politics, in professional areas, as well as in Religion. In generation after generation, men and women are honored by their peers for their willingness to take giant leaps of action that has brought them acclaim. While all of these are often needed in every society and usually are a blessing, there is one source to which we can go for some of the great spiritual lessons in the lives of Bible Heroes. Romans 5:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11 both tell us to go to the Scriptures and learn some very helpful lessons from the lives of these men and women of faith in God. They made a difference in their period of existence, and their influence lives on because God had their actions recorded for our learning or profit!

Our examples in this lesson will be men whose names begin with a (J).

**Jacob**

The story of Jacob's life is covered in 25 chapters in Genesis (25-50). It is a long and eventful story of a man who lived up to his name that was given at birth, but finally overcame his first name and was given a better name towards the latter part of his life. God chose Abraham to be the Father of the Israelite nation, but in reality it was Jacob's sons that composed the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob's life can be viewed in three parts.

**1. Jacob's birth and early years** (Gen. 25:19-28:22). Jacob was a grandson of Abraham—and a twin-son of Isaac and Rebekah. When he came of age, he was sent by his parents to find a wife at his uncle Laban's in Haran (Paddan-aram). God appeared to Jacob in a dream as he traveled to Haran and made a promise to bless him.

**2. Jacob's stay in Haran** (Gen. 29:1-34:31). He worked for his Uncle and wound up marrying both of Laban's daughters (Leah and Rachel). From these two women and their concubines (Zilpah, Bilhah), they had 12 sons and 1 daughter. These 12 sons became the head of the 12 tribes of Israel that made up the nation of Israel. God told him to return home. On the way the 12th son was born, Rachel died, Jacob made peace with Esau, and Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Prince of God).

**3. Jacob settles at Bethel** (Gen. 35:1-50:14). God repeats his promise of a descendant to bless all nations. Jacob spends his last days in Egypt, dying at the age of 147.

**Lessons to be learned:**

1. God is able to use a person even though he isn't what he should be at first.
2. God may bless a person He chooses to use, but also allow him to suffer some of the consequences of his bad actions or choices.
3. Those who deceive others may themselves also be deceived.
4. Showing partiality to children can bring its consequences.

**Joseph**

The story of Joseph covers some 20 chapters in Genesis (30-35) and is probably as well known as any person. His story has the ability to hold our attention because of so many unusual things that happened in his life. He was remarkable—especially for his age and surroundings. He rose from being a slave in Potiphar's house to be the caretaker of all that Potiphar owned. He also rose from prison to be next to the Pharaoh in power in Egypt. He never seemed to give up, but made the best of his situation.

Some of the lessons to be learned from his life:

1. He dealt with circumstances in his life (good or bad) with faith in God. (Heb. 11:22).
2. One way to deal with temptation is to flee from it. (1 Thess 5:22)
3. Forgiveness is better than being filled with hatred and enmity against others. (Eph. 4:31-32).
4. Love for an elderly father is illustrated in the lives of all of Jacob's children (finally). (Eph. 6:1-3).
5. Joseph's moral conduct, goodness, purity of life, self-control, devotion to duty, and wisdom makes him one of the best persons to emulate in the Old Testament.
6. Joseph was a model prisoner.
7. He gave God the glory for his interpretation of the dreams.
8. Joseph seems to have had a good attitude whether in bad circumstances or good.
9. Joseph illustrates the providential care of God in His peoples' lives.
10. What good work is God preparing us to do?

**Jephthah**

Our hearts usually go out to the boy or girl that is denied a chance to make good in life. We not only hope that they can get a break and make good, but we try to help if we can. Jephthah is one of those success stories of one who, seemingly without a chance, made good in spite of his obstacles. He became one of the great Judges in Israel.



Let's look first at his obstacles:

**(Judges 11:1-12:7)**

1. He had a bad beginning—he was born out of wedlock and denied a normal home situation.
2. He was denied any inheritance and robbed of any material advantages from his parents.
3. He was driven from what home that he had—to be on his own early in life. Evil influences began gathering about him and he became the head over such people.

Let's look now at his triumph over his obstacles:

1. He evidently had made the best of his situation and was respected by his comrades.
2. In a time of national distress, he was offered an opportunity to deliver his people from their enemy.
3. He accepted the task and succeeded. The people's confidence and judgment in him was justified. He rose above his own hurt to stand in the way of great things to be done for his country.
4. He judged Israel for 6 years after this. He ruled over the very people who at one time had disinherited him.

Jephthah is listed in the Old Testament "Worthies." (Heb. 11:32-34)

Let's look at some lessons to be learned:

1. Men often judge others upon the basis of their misfortune, rather than from their personal misdeeds. (Jas. 2:9, 12-13).
2. Heredity and environment do not have to determine our destiny (Jas. 1:12).
3. The things that we feel to be against us may be actually for our advantage (Rom. 8:28).
4. He recognized God in his victory over their enemies (Judges 12:3).
5. Every man has a chance with God (Matt. 5:11; Acts 10:34-35).

**Concluding Thoughts**

God believes in us. He gives us every opportunity to become his child and to make something of ourselves to His glory. He wants us to be happy, at peace, useful, and hopeful. But only **YOU** can determine if that faith in you is in vain. Let's meet the challenge and rise to greater service!

**Questions for Discussion**

1. How would you define a "hero" and do you have any?
  
2. Could the Bible characters that we are studying about be considered heroes?
  
3. What was Jacob's biggest problem in his early years?
  
4. Why would God have changed his name?
  
5. Who composed the 12 tribes of Israel?
  
6. Does God allow us to suffer some of the consequences of our bad decision making? Name one!
  
7. Was Jacob's parents partial to their children?
  
8. What do you remember most about Joseph?
  
9. How did Joseph's faith allow God to use him?
  
10. Why did Jephthah make good in spite of his poor circumstances?
  
11. Why did the people of Israel call on Jephthah to help?



