

Series Review

Consistent Character 10

We began our series with this definition:

“Character is defined as strength of moral fiber. A.W. Tozer described character as 'the excellence of moral beings.' As the excellence of gold is its purity and the excellence of art is its beauty, so the excellence of man is his character. Persons of character are noted for their honesty, ethics, and charity. Descriptions such as 'man of principle' and 'woman of integrity' are assertions of character. A lack of character is moral deficiency, and persons lacking character tend to behave dishonestly, unethically, and uncharitably.

A person's character is the sum of his or her disposition, thoughts, intentions, desires, and actions. It is good to remember that character is gauged by general tendencies, not on the basis of a few isolated actions. We must look at the whole life."

And we began by affirming that Christianity required a devotion to good works. Or, in essence, a devotion to the development of character traits that would allow us to maintain good works.

Titus 3:8

8 ¶ This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

(ESV "to devote themselves to good works...")

And we devote ourselves to good works, not for the purpose of gaining favor with God, but for the purpose of pleasing God out of gratitude and a genuine desire to serve Him!

We have this desire because we have been radically changed - having been dead and are now made alive by Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-10

1 ¶ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
4 ¶ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

By being devoted in this way, and walking in this way, we are who we were created to be.

As our relationship with Christ continues to alter our character and our behavior, there are dangers. One of the key dangers is that we will fail to maintain perspective, not stepping back far enough to see our lives in context.

So we talked about perspective...

2 Corinthians 4:5-7

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 ¶ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

We spoke extensively about Christ's light being seen through us, as our job is to reflect Him in the world. Knowing that the excellency of the power may be of God, not of us.

At this point, we began to provide Biblical models for character. We observed those who were mere "earthen vessels" like us, walking in faith, meeting big challenges.

A young man like David, a shepherd, just doing what he had been told to do. He was delivering bread and cheese when he was confronted by a challenge that made the fighting men of his country "sore afraid."

But in his character-development process, he had been meeting the smaller challenges along the way - and he was ready.

When the time came to prove that he had the character to carry out the good works God had ordained for him, He said this:

1 Samuel 17:45-46

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

He was able to maintain his perspective, both understanding that the Lord must do the work, and that it must be for the Lord's glory.

We read of Joseph, from a "dysfunctional family," prospering after being sold into slavery. Blessed of the Lord. Walking in obedience to the Lord. Met in private by a challenge that could be considered just as big as Goliath, and yet he fled - in perfect accordance with God's will.

He saw the entire situation with the clarity only a person of character could see it...

Genesis 39:7-9

7 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 ¶ But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

And when she persisted "he got him out!"

Job had the character to maintain his integrity when life fell apart. He was a man that feared God and avoided evil. God saw his faithfulness and allowed Satan to afflict him.

When life fell apart...

Job 1:20-21

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

As we continued in our study, we realized that based on what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount, there must be things going on behind the scenes.

He commanded us to let our light shine, but said we should avoid the hypocritical in our religious activity...

Matthew 6:5-6

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Our word for that day was "authentic."

- not false or copied; genuine; real:
- having an origin supported by unquestionable evidence; authenticated; verified:
- representing one's true nature or beliefs; true to oneself or to the person identified:
- entitled to acceptance or belief because of agreement with known facts or experience; reliable; trustworthy:

This is the kind of character we must have.

We made the Biblical case for models of character from Hebrews 11, among other passages, and outlined the qualifications for our modern examples.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

But we reminded ourselves of this D.A. Carson quote: "The criteria mentioned are demanded of all Christians everywhere. Which is another way of saying, elders are first of all to be exemplars of the Christian graces that are presupposed as mandated on all Christians."

Last week, we made modern application to our character study, focusing on our families, our work, our communication, and our commitments.