

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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December 03, 2023

Volume 43, # 49

How to Form a Good Character

Character is the accumulation of qualities that distinguishes one person from another. Character is not just one single trait, but the accumulation of all a person is, the sum total of all his traits.

Someone has suggested that reputation is what others think us to be, character is what God knows us to be.

How does a person develop and maintain a good character?

By getting in touch with yourself. Aristotle was not far off the mark when he suggested that one should "know thyself." Personal integrity is the key to developing a good character. We have to ascertain and admit to what we need in order to form a good character. In order to know where you're going, you must first realize where you are. "He that speaketh truth in his heart" – that's necessary to the development of a good character (see Psalms 15:1-2).

By a constant contact with God. It is He who defines what is a good character, for it is He who has defined what is good in the first place. His word is not only an expression of Who and What He is, but a revelation of how we can become like Him, or be a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). His word tells us which way to go. A man of character does not walk just anywhere, but "his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditate both day and night" (Psalms 1:2). "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Psalms 119:9). A man's character is developed by paying due attention to where he is going, to his path of pursuit, and that means a constant contact with the Father.

By accumulating – a little at a time – the right pieces of holiness. Holiness is not some huge characteristic (notice the word, please) that a person somehow suddenly develops, but rather the piecing together of small bits and pieces of goodness and piety. Small habits – those little acts of kindness and goodness – are what define a person's character.

Holiness helps to define a man's character by setting him apart from the trivial dross of life; it is observed in his habitual acts of goodness. Holiness illustrates in one's life the character of God. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15).

By regular exposure to right influences. One of the ways we develop good character is by observing and associating with people whom we know to be of good character. Time spent with a good person will increase your chances of having a good character and being good yourself. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . ." (Hebrews 10:24). We need each other. What one man lacks, another man has. What another has, one man lacks. "Be thou an example of the believers" is good advice, and to find and follow those who set good examples helps to formulate right courses and plan right avenues of pursuit. Character is helped considerably by associating with those who have it.

By looking forward to the reward. Character and hope run on the same track. One who has an abiding trust in God and His word will build the kind of character that assures for him an eventual heavenly home. "Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that worketh righteousness," we are told (Psalms 15:2). Those who have placed a high value and importance on a well-orchestrated life are fit for an entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). Our hope helps us see the need for a holy character by connecting us to that which has the highest quality and value – eternal life.

Please be advised — the absence of these things in our lives will result in our having a distorted view of what is important in life, and cause us to place emphasis and enthusiasm on the wrong things.

- Dee Bowman (1934-2021)

Count Your Blessings

Within an eight-day period I had four flat tires and had to be towed in by a wrecker twice. My air conditioning went out in the van. The transmission went out in the car (I know, you've heard of shiftless preachers!). The deep freeze quit working. And I was late to preach a funeral.

No one tried to get me to quit Christianity because of "hard luck." In fact, in some ways I have been helped by this. It makes me realize that I am blessed to have-a car, a van, air conditioning, tires, and a deep freeze. And I was fortunate that it was not my funeral. God hasn't promised us a rose garden on earth.

Job's wife tried to get him to curse God and die. I have had none of the problems Job had (loss of family, all possessions, health). Job had none of the problems I have had (he didn't own a van, a car, air conditioner, deep freeze, etc.). My family enjoys 'reasonably good health - a lot to be thankful for when many do not enjoy good health. I am able to provide a living, my family is happy, and I can laugh about my problems. Others have been able to laugh about my problems, too (some of them laugh all the way to the bank!).

"Count your many blessings, name them one by one ... " That's the way the chorus, begins on one of our favorite hymns. The apostle Paul said, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 4:6, 7). This drawing only shows the blessing of food for our bodies. How many non-food blessings could we add to the picture? Let us remember that our blessings come daily. Doesn't it make sense to express our gratitude daily instead of annually? When Jesus healed the ten lepers, only one returned to thank him (Luke 17:17). Will we be like the nine?

My "hard luck" has been beneficial in the following ways:

(1) I have been reminded of the nature of earthly possessions. Earthly possessions wear out, rot, corrupt, and can be stolen (Matthew 6: 19-21). This world is not my home.

(2) It has helped me become more patient - a needed lesson. We often want too much too soon (Luke 21:19).

(3) I have learned to be more thankful for what I have. I could be pushing a cart! Every good gift is from God (James 1:17). "Be ye thankful," (Colossians 3:15).

If my ordeal is of spiritual benefit to anyone else and helps you reflect on the nature of earthly possessions, or causes you to become more patient and more thankful, then maybe it was worth it.

- Dick Blackford, via The Manslick Road Speaker, 06/22/1984 [slightly edited – GFS]

Share a Quote ...

Learn hence, (1.) That Satan's temptations are all beguilings, his arguments are all fallacies, his allurements are all cheats; when he speaks fair, believe him not. Sin deceives us, and, by deceiving, cheats us. It is by the deceitfulness of sin that the heart is hardened. See Romans 7:11; Hebrews 3:13. (2.) That though Satan's subtlety drew us

into sin, yet it will not justify us in sin: though he is the tempter, we are the sinners; and indeed it is our own lust that draws us aside and entices us, James 1:14. Let it not therefore lessen our sorrow and humiliation for sin that we are beguiled into it; but rather let it increase our self-indignation that we should suffer ourselves to be beguiled by a known cheat and a sworn enemy.

- Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

Who Will God Pronounce as Righteous?

- A believer in Christ whose sins are forgiven (Romans 4:6-8).
- People cannot live good enough to earn righteousness. When people are regarded as righteous by God it is by God's grace, not by man's merit (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- There are conditions which must be met in order to be accepted by God (Acts 10:34-35); "in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."
- The same grace that brings salvation also instructs us how "to live sensibly, righteously and godly" (Titus 2:11-12). These conditions are given by grace. They are not works in conflict with grace.
- One is saved (declared righteous) by faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Ephesians 2:8; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6). He is not saved by faith only (James 2:14-26; cf. John 12:42-43)! Faith alone, faith by itself, never makes anyone righteous. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." (Galatians 5:6). Faith working through love is "the keeping of the commandments of God." (1 Corinthians 7:19), and faith working through love makes one "a new creation." (Galatians 6:15).
- If one desires to be righteous, he must meet all of the conditions that the Lord requires to make forgiveness effective: he must repent and be baptized (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2:38; Mark 16:16).
- When one is buried with Christ in baptism (not sprinkled), he goes from being "dead in ... transgressions" to being a new creature, whom Christ has made "alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions," (Colossians 2:12-13).

- Having been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4), the Lord now counts him as righteous. Having come to the Light for forgiveness, the righteous must continue to walk in the light in order to continue in forgiveness (1 John 1:5-10) as a righteous person.

Does the Lord regard you as a righteous person? There must be a strong desire for righteousness in order to obtain it (Matthew 5:6). It doesn't just happen.

- Gary Smalley

* "Light shines from the center of the lantern, through the glass; when truth is kindled within, its brightness soon beams forth in the outward life and conversation!"

* "The best medicine for depression is to go out and do something for somebody!"

* "Grief cannot be dry cleaned away; it must be washed in tears!"

* "He is wise who takes God as a teacher!"

* "He never said it would be easy; He only said it would be worth it!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)