

“One can acquire everything in solitude except character.”

Stendhal
(French writer 1783-1842)

Christianity that does not begin with the individual does not begin.

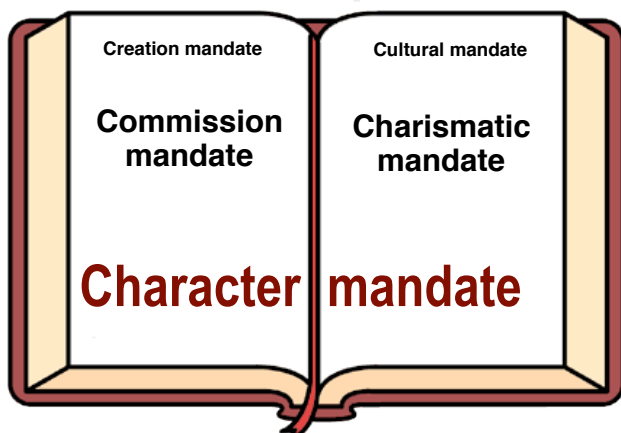
Christianity that ends with the individual, ends.

Where are we going?

1. Character and Christianity
2. Character and the image of God
3. Character and the Body of Christ
4. Challenges that shape and show character.

1. Vision - expectations
2. Fear - faith
3. Relationships - community
4. Conflict - differences
5. Change - growth
6. Success & Failure - stress
7. Private life - the heart

Biblical Emphasis



1. Character is about Jesus.

Ephesians 4

“ „ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, „ for the equipping of the saints for the work of service,

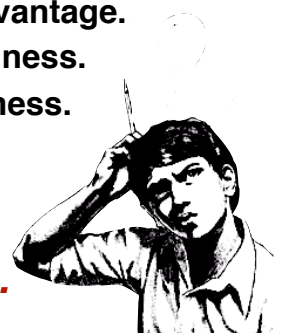
to the building up of **the body of Christ**; 13 until we all attain to the **unity of the faith**, and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a **mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to **the fullness of Christ**.

„ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; „ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, „ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Character is NOT about

- ✓ My personal comfort.
- ✓ My superiority to others.
- ✓ My competitive advantage.
- ✓ My spiritual fruitfulness.
- ✓ My spiritual giftedness.

**It involves me
but is not
centered on me.**



GODLY CHARACTER

is the image of God in
Jesus

is the essence of being
Human

is our highest form of
Worship

Intimate Connection leads to a
shared character



Bride / Groom
(Ephesians 5:22-32)



Building / Cornerstone
(1 Peter 2:4-7)



Body / Head
(1 Corinthians 12:27)



Branch / Vine
(John 15:1-16)

2. *Character is about stability.*

Ephesians 4

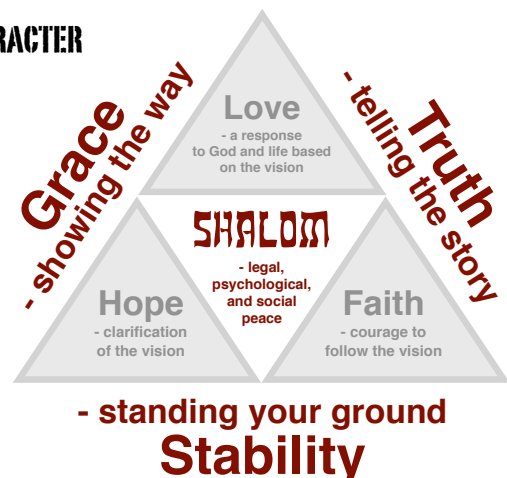
“¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

14 As a result, we are no longer to be **children**, **tossed** here and there by **waves**, and **carried** about by every **wind** of doctrine, by the **trickery** of men, by **craftiness** in **deceitful** scheming;

¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

- ✓ The world is full of spiritual **wind**, **waves**, and **tricksters**.
- ✓ Stability has to do with doctrinal **discernment**, spiritual **experience**, and kingdom **priorities**.
- ✓ Character is identified with three great virtues - **Grace**, **Truth**, and **Stability**.

CHARACTER



3.

Character is developed over time.

Ephesians 4:12,15,16

“the building up”

“grow up”

“the growth of the body for the building up of itself”

- a. **Discipline** - don't expect an easy way.
- b. **Persistence** - don't stop working.
- c. **Patience** - don't become discouraged.

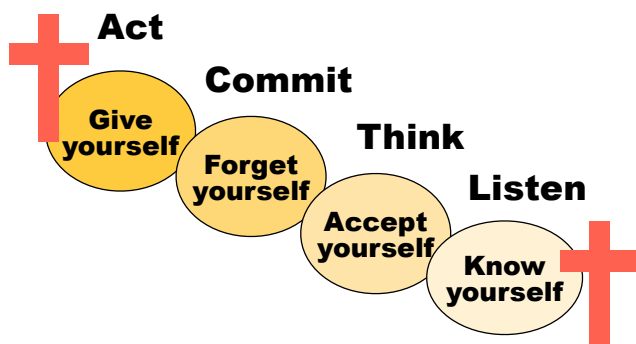
The New Testament is a series of documents devoted to spiritual development.

1. The word **disciple** means student.
2. Jesus and the Apostles were **teachers**.
3. The Epistles were devoted to **building up believers**.
4. Evangelism was only the **first step** in a process of growth to fullness in Christ.

4.

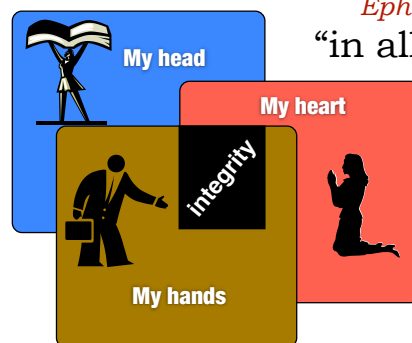
Character development needs our participation in every area of life.

Character is not centered on us but it can't exist apart from us.



Ephesians 4:15

“in all aspects”



Character = an integrated life

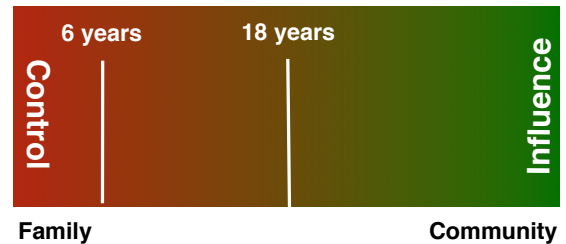
Our character is measured by our **integrity.**

We must give attention to our weak links.

- Our thinking
- Our attitude
- Our private life
- Our theology
- Our tongue
- Our behavior
- Our public life
- Our testimony

Most of the trajectory of our character is shaped in the first 8 years of life.

Give attention to the yearly years.



5. *Character development is a corporate venture.*

Ephesians 4

“¹¹ And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors and teachers**, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

.. until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. .. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; .. but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

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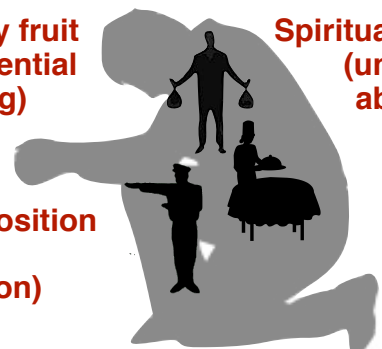
- ✓ Character is an **acquired taste** that comes from:
 - being around **different** kinds of people with different roles.
 - using our uniquenesses to **expand** the horizons of others in knowing Jesus.
- ✓ Character development has a lot to do with how we use our **tongue** and how we **listen**.

Don't confuse character with:

Ministry fruit
(providential blessing)

Spiritual gift
(unique ability)

Official position
(human recognition)



Godly character (universal calling)

*Character's breadth and depth
come through the discomfort of diversity.*



**Four principles of church growth
that may retard character
development**

1.
**Charismatic
leadership**
(personality sells)

2.
**Classy
marketing**
(win people to the church
and then to the Lord)

3.
**Constrained
focus**
(target audience)

4.
**Common
culture**
(like attracts like)

6.
**Character
development is
interactive.**

Ephesians 4

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- ✓ There is power in the **spoken word**.
- ✓ A controlled **tongue** is very important.
- ✓ How well we **listen** will shape our lives.
- ✓ A **loving** posture wins a hearing.

Take home points

***Make wise choices when it
comes to church fellowship.***

***Discipline your tongue
and learn to listen.***

***Welcome diversity and get
outside your comfort zone.***