

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.”

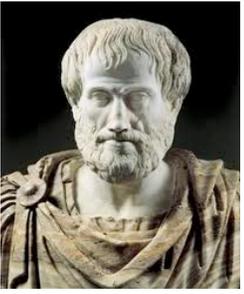


*Matthew 7:24*



“Character is power.”

**Booker T. Washington**



“A good character carries with it the highest power of causing a thing to be believed.”

**Aristotle**

*What do we mean by*

**Character**

*The distinguishing attributes of a person’s soul expressed in their life*



## 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.
  - Vision - expectations
  - Relationships - community
  - Fear - faith
  - Conflict - differences
  - Success & Failure - stress
  - Change - growth
  - Private life - the heart

### Today's lesson

## Character and Christianity

1. Character is the heart of a life built on the rock.
2. The pursuit of happiness apart from character is like building on the sand.
3. A cut flower life is unstable.

### Matthew 7:24-27

“<sup>24</sup> Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. <sup>25</sup> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. <sup>27</sup> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.”

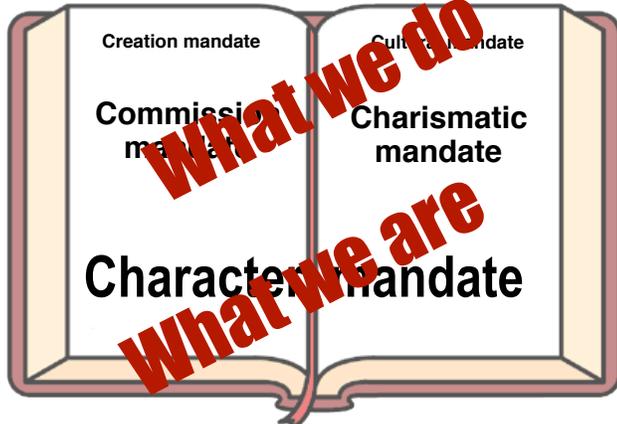
## 1.

**Character is  
the heart of  
a life built  
on the rock.**

## Biblical Mandates

- ✓ **The Creation mandate**  
*We are stewards of the planet.*
- ✓ **The Cultural mandate**  
*We are our brother's keeper.*
- ✓ **The Commission mandate**  
*We are ambassadors to a broken world.*
- ✓ **The Charismatic mandate**  
*We have distinct callings and roles.*
- ✓ **The Character mandate**  
*We bear the image of God.*

## Biblical Emphasis



In a worldly culture  
we find our significance in  
what we accomplish  
and how we feel.

**The Fruit of the Spirit is not**  
happiness, productivity, health,  
respect, comfort, freedom, fame,  
fortune, etc.

In God's Kingdom  
we find our significance in  
Christ and who we become  
**(character).**

### **The Fruit of the Spirit**

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,  
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,  
self-control, etc. [Galatians 5:22-23](#)

## **Godly character brings**

- ✓ **A perspective, purpose, and passion for living a life that is worth dying for.**
- ✓ **The dignity and fulfillment of being fully human - bearing the image of God.**
- ✓ **The ability to make a positive difference in the lives of all who know us.**



**2.**  
***The pursuit of happiness apart from character is like building on the sand.***

26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them,

***The original sin of Adam - independence from God led to three unforeseen challenges:***

- ✓ **The challenge of materialism.**  
What does it mean to be human?
- ✓ **The challenge of pluralism.**  
What constitutes common good & evil?
- ✓ **The challenge of responsibility and peace.**  
How can I manage blame and shame?



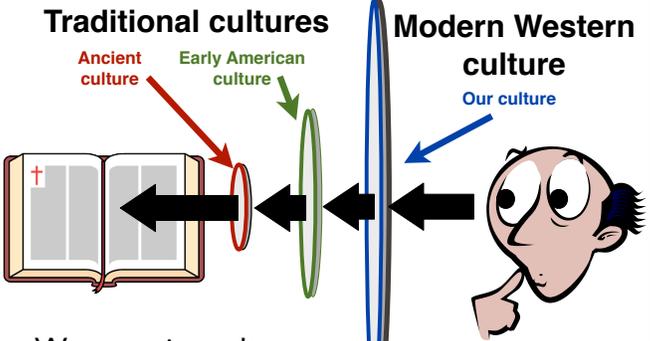
“Sacred Cows”

are questionable values that are so deeply embedded in our lives and culture that they are assumed and seldom challenged.”

**Traditional cultures**

Ancient culture      Early American culture

**Modern Western culture**  
Our culture

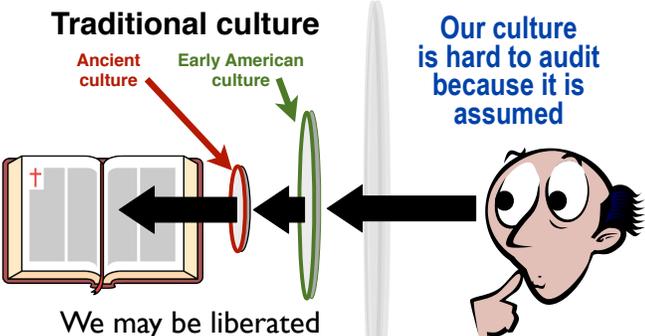


We see prior cultures through the lens of our present culture.

**Traditional culture**

Ancient culture      Early American culture

**Our culture is hard to audit because it is assumed**



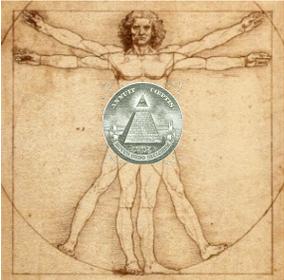
We may be liberated from past ages & cultures but not from our own.

**Secular Humanism**

Defining reality and making decisions as though God did not exist or did not matter.

( some of our sacred cows)

- Total **Temporality**
- Radical **Relativity**
- Absolute **Autonomy**
- Egocentric **Entitlement**
- Metaphysical **Materialism**
- Comprehensive **Contingency**

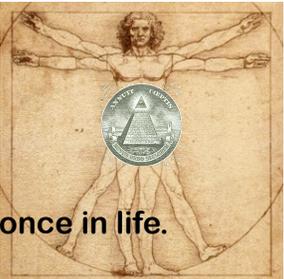


**Secular Humanism**

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- You only go around **once in life.**
- Live and let live.
- I do it my way.
- I am entitled to the American dream.
- Only science deals with reality.
- Problems lead to blame or shame.



*Romans 1*

“<sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not **honor Him as God, or give thanks**; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and **exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man . . .** <sup>25</sup> For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.**”

## ***“The Pursuit of Happiness”***

| MODERN HAPPINESS  | CLASSICAL HAPPINESS  |
|---|--|
| <b>Pleasure</b><br>“to feel good”<br>Devoid of suffering<br>Productivity<br>Peace & Contentment | <b>Virtue</b><br>“to be good”<br>Included suffering<br>Character<br>Truth & Wisdom |



### **3. A cut flower life is unstable.**

***Character - a national crisis***  
✓ We live with a cut flower ethic.

embracing  
the flower's  
glory (beauty)



while denying  
its basis (root)

### ***Character - a national crisis***

- ✓ Changing social contracts are not enough to inspire living sacrifices.
- ✓ We have too much to live with and not enough to live for.

## **Take home points**

***Make character development  
“a main thing” in your life.***

***Seek to develop character as  
a key to fulfillment in this life.***

***Give attention to the roots  
of life and culture.***