“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

1. Character is about Jesus.

Biblical Emphasis

Character mandate

Creation mandate
Cultural mandate
Commission mandate
Charismatic mandate

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.

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; 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.”
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.

- 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.

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; 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.

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"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."
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.

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**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.

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4. **Character development needs our participation in every area of life.**

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

- **Act**
- **Give yourself**
- **Commit**
- **Forget yourself**
- **Think**
- **Accept yourself**
- **Listen**
- **Know yourself**

**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.

Control

Family

6 years

Influence

Community

18 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, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

12 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.

14 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.”

Don’t confuse character with:

- Ministry fruit (providential blessing)
- Spiritual gift (unique ability)
- Official position (human recognition)
- Godly character (universal calling)

✓ 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.
Character’s breadth and depth come through the discomfort of diversity.

Serving  Exhorting  Diversity
Leading  Teaching  Giving
Evangelizing  Showing mercy

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.

✓ 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.

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; 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.”

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.