

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

WHY CHARACTER MATTERS

What is Character?

- Character is who you are *consistently* before God.
- Character is NOT:
- **Your reputation (what people think about you) 1 Samuel 16:7 “...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”**
 - Reputation is “public opinion”, character is *private reality*
 - God sent the prophet Samuel to Jesse’s house to anoint one of his sons and the next king of Israel
 - As soon as Samuel saw David’s older brother Eliab, he was certain he had to be the one God wanted him to anoint as the next king
 - Samuel was struck by the external appearance of Eliab
 - God told Samuel don’t look at his face, his height or his build because that’s not what I’m looking for
 - Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart
 - God evaluates based on godliness, humility, obedience, integrity, etc.
 - Social media lets people build an online image
 - But what people see “online” is not always *who we are* offline
 - God isn’t looking for good looks, style, and charisma, He’s looking for *character*
 - God rejected Eliab and *all* of Jesse’s sons because they are only impressive on the outside
 - People see “the external presentation”, but God sees *the internal preparation*
- **Your giftedness/talent (what you can do) 1Corinthians 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**
 - It is possible to be extremely gifted and still lack love
 - Giftedness is “ability”, character is *integrity*
 - 1 Corinthians 13 says you can have *all* the spiritual gifts and anointing, but if you don’t love people, your gifts and abilities don’t benefit anyone, they’re meaningless
 - Giftedness, talent and abilities will not cover character flaws
- **Your platform (where you are seen) Luke 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.**
 - A *platform* is where you are seen, heard, and have influence
 - Character is who you are when the spotlights are off
 - Platforms can be given quickly, but character is developed slowly
 - You can get “a platform overnight”

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- Character formed through time, testing, obedience, and process
- The platform does not give you character, it reveals it
 - You can be elevated faster than you are developed.
- God is more concerned with your *character* than your “platform”
- God is not impressed by your “platform”; He is concerned about your *heart*

Why Does Character Matter to God?

Romans 5:3-4 KJV And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

Romans 5:3-4 NIV Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

- Character matters to God because He cares more about *who* you are than *what* you do
- The KJV calls character, experience
- Experience means proven, tested character formed through trials
- God prioritizes *formation* over *function*
 - Your *function* is your gifts, calling, future impact
 - Your *formation* is the process God takes you through to shape you to fulfill your function
- Formation doesn't happen instantly, it happens through pressure, time, and obedience
- Your formation is what sustains your function
- What God does *through you* will only last if it's supported by what He's done *in you*
- Paul uses this passage to give a clear path of spiritual formation:
 - *Tribulation* (pressure) is not meaningless
 - *Perseverance* (endurance) staying under it
 - Character (proven maturity) being tested and approved
 - *Hope*, confident expectation in God
- Our faith is tested like fine gold **1 Peter 1:6-7 NLT** **6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.**
- Experience is what *happens to you*, character is what is *produced in you* through what happens to you
- **Illus.: If you're trying to build muscle, you'll probably have to start lifting weights. Nobody gets stronger by lifting something light. Strength comes**

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from resistance. In the same way: God uses resistance in your life to build spiritual strength.

- What you're going through right now may not be punishment, it may be development
- Joseph's story is the perfect example of God prioritizing formation over function:
- Joseph's function (*the dream*): leadership, influence, authority
- Joseph's formation (*the process*):
 - The Pit developed humility
 - Potiphar's house developed integrity
 - Prison developed patience
- God didn't "rush" Joseph into position, He *formed* him for it
 - Function without formation leads to failure.
- Character matters to God because character aligns you with His will **Romans 8:29** "**For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...**"

The Danger of Skipping Character Development

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

- We live in a culture that celebrates visibility, success, and influence
- Proverbs 16:18 reveal a sequence: *pride* (internal condition) leads to *destruction* (external consequence)
- When you skip God's formation process, you skip developing humility, discipline, wisdom, and self-control
- So, when opportunity comes and you've "skipped" God's formation process, you're not ready for it, you can't sustain it, or it exposes you
- God's formation in you is not "optional", it's *foundational*
- If Joseph had been elevated at 17, he likely would have been arrogant, insensitive, and focused on himself
- **Question:** If God gave you everything you asked for *right now*, would your character be able to *sustain* it?

God Uses Pressure, People, and Process to Shape Us

- God has specific tools He uses to develop your character.
- God shapes our character three ways:
 - 1. Pressure (Trials) James 1:2-4 NLT** ***Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.***
 - Trials are problems, circumstances, and situations you *didn't* choose

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- The trying of your faith you develop endurance
- Testing is not meant to “break you”, it is meant to:
 - *reveal* your faith
 - *strengthen* your endurance
 - *mature* your spiritual walk
- If you avoid pressure, you avoid growth

2. People

- God uses people shape us into the person He wants us to be
- God sends people to encourage, mentor and help us
- God sometimes also sends difficult people our way
- The difficult person may be part of your development plan
- Some people are assigned to *bless you*; others are assigned to *build you*

3. Perseverance (Discipline and Time) **Hebrews 12:11 NLT No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.**

- Character is not built in moments; it’s built in consistency over time
 - What you stay committed to, God uses to shape you.
 - Joseph experienced all three:
 - Pressure: betrayal, prison
 - People: his brothers, false accusations
 - Perseverance: despite being forgotten and years of waiting
 - And all Joseph went through produced humility, wisdom, and leadership
- Before we step into Joseph’s story, we need to ask ourselves:
 1. Where is God developing your character right now?
 - Is it in a place of waiting?
 - Is it in a difficult relationship?
 - Is it in a season that doesn’t make sense?
 - The process is not *punishment*, it is *preparation*