

Building Character

Earthly vs. Heavenly

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth (Colossians 3:2).

And do not be *conformed* to this world, but be *transformed* by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). Finally, brethren, whatever is *true*, whatever is *honorable*, whatever is *right*, whatever is *pure*, whatever is *lovely*, whatever is of *good repute*, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, *let your mind dwell on these things* (Philippians 4:8).

Everyone is to keep himself separate from the world, which is full of iniquity. We are not to walk with God for a time, and then part from His company and walk in the sparks of our own kindling. There must be a firm continuance, a perseverance in acts of faith. We are to praise God; to show forth His glory in a righteous character. No one of us will gain the victory without persevering, untiring effort, proportionate to the value of the object which we seek, even eternal life (White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* 511).

If we would but think of God as often as we have evidence of His care for us we should keep Him ever in our thoughts and should delight to talk of Him and to praise Him. We talk of temporal things because we have an interest in them. We talk of our friends because we love them; our joys and our sorrows are bound up with them. Yet we have infinitely greater reason to love God than to love our earthly friends; it should be the most natural thing in the world to make Him first in all our thoughts, to talk of His goodness and tell of His power. The rich gifts He has bestowed upon us were not intended to absorb our thoughts and love so much that we should have nothing to give to God; they are constantly to remind us of Him and to bind us in bonds of love and gratitude to our heavenly Benefactor. *We dwell too near the lowlands of earth. Let us raise our eyes to the open door of the sanctuary above, where the light of the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, who "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."* (Hebrews 7:25) (White, *Steps to Christ* 102).

Character Development: A Lifelong Process

Character does not come by chance. It is not determined by one outburst of temper, one step in the wrong direction. It is the repetition of the act that causes it to become habit, and molds the character either for good or for evil. Right characters can be formed only by persevering, untiring effort, by improving every entrusted talent and capability *to the glory of God*. Instead of doing this, many allow themselves to drift wherever impulse or circumstances may carry them (White, *Messages to Young People* 163).

No wonder there is so much emphasis on the mind. As the mind goes, so goes the body. When we refuse to get involved in the battle before the battle, there is no hope for change at the behavior level. By then it is too late (Stanley, *The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life* 151).

God's way to overcome is through a long process called sanctification. The reason for this is that God's primary concern is not a quick fix for the problem, but rather that we will grow in our relationship with Him as He provides power one moment at a time.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1).

Christ paid an infinite price for us, and according to the price paid He desires us to value ourselves (White, *Ministry of Healing* 498).

Little Things Matter

The little attentions (things God prompts me to do: a note, a look, a smile) and the small acts of love and self-sacrifice (little things I do for others that they do not even know about) *that flow out from the life as QUIETLY as the fragrance from a flower—these constitute no small share of the blessings and happiness of life*. And it will be found at last that *the denial of self for the good and happiness of others, however humble and uncommended here, is recognized in heaven as the token of our union with Him, the King of glory, who was rich, yet for our sake became poor* (White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* 82).

Life is chiefly made up, not of great sacrifices and wonderful achievements, but of little things. It is oftenest through the little things which seem so unworthy of notice that great good or evil is brought to our lives. It is through our failure to endure the test in the little things, that the habits are molded, the character shaped (*Ministry of Healing* 490). Little things for good: decide each day to spend time with my Father, decide to

forgive another and seek the why that motivated them to need forgiveness. Little things for bad: decide to sit in front of the TV each night, decide to “live to eat” and not “eat to live,” decide to stay up late.

The work of beneficence is twice blessed. While he that gives to the needy blesses others, he himself is blessed in a still greater degree. The grace of Christ in the soul is in developing traits of character that are the opposite of selfishness—traits that will refine, ennoble, and enrich the life. Acts of kindness performed in secret will bind hearts together, and will draw them closer to the heart of Him from whom every generous impulse springs.

Whatsoever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do *ALL* to the glory of God (Corinthians 10:31).

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).

Cure for Gossip: If Christ is in you “the hope of glory,” you will have no disposition to watch others, to expose their errors. Instead of seeking to accuse and condemn, it will be your object to help, to bless, and to save (White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* 128).

Cultivate the habit of speaking well of others. Dwell upon the good qualities of those with whom you associate, and see as little as possible of their errors and failings (White, *Ministry of Healing* 491).

Letting Our Light Shine

Let your light shine forth in good works. Said Christ, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his Savior, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” I fear that there are many who are in this condition. All have not the same work to do; different circumstances and talents qualify individuals for different kinds of work in God's vineyard. There are some who fill more responsible positions than do others; but to each one is given his work, and if he does his work with fidelity and zeal, he is a faithful steward of the grace of God (White, *Reflecting Christ* 41).

God does not intend that your light shall so shine that your good words or works shall bring the praise of men to yourself; but that the Author of all good shall be glorified and exalted. Jesus, in His life, gave to men a model of character. How little power did the world have over Him to mold Him according to its standard! All its influence was thrown off. He declared, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work!” *If we had this devotion to*

*the work of God, doing it with an eye single to His glory, we should be able to say with Christ, "I seek not mine own glory." His life was full of good works, and it is our duty to live as our great Example lived. Our life must be hid with Christ in God, and then the light will be reflected from Jesus to us, and we shall reflect it upon those around us, not in mere talk and profession, but in good works, and by manifesting the character of Christ. Those who are reflecting the light of God will cherish a loving disposition. They will be cheerful, willing, and obedient to all the requirements of God. They will be meek and self-sacrificing, and will work with devoted love for the salvation of souls (White, *Reflecting Christ* 41).*

Character Comes From Christ

Ever since the fall of Adam, Christ had been committing to chosen servants the seed of His Word, to be sown in human hearts. During His life on earth He had sown the seed of truth, and had watered it with His blood. The conversions that took place on the Day of Pentecost were the result of this sowing, the harvest of Christ's work, revealing the power of His teaching (White, *Reflecting Christ* 42).

Under the training of Christ the disciples had been led to feel their need of the Spirit. Under the Spirit's teaching, they received the final qualification, and went forth to their lifework. No longer were they ignorant and uncultured. No longer were they a collection of independent units or discordant, conflicting elements. No longer were their hopes set on worldly greatness. *They were of "one accord," "of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 2:46; 4:32). Christ filled their thoughts; the advancement of His kingdom was their aim. In mind and character they had become like their Master, and men "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (White, *Reflecting Christ* 42).*

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

If the love of Christ is compelling me, then I will treat others as Christ would and it won't happen by my conscious effort to be like Christ, it will be an automatic response because it is He living in me. I will be like Him at the heart of my motives and not just on the surface.

The life that Christ lived in this world, men and women can live through His POWER and under His instruction (9 Testimonies 22). The people of God are to come close to Christ in self-denial and sacrifice, *their one aim* being to give the message of mercy to all the world. (9 Testimonies 26).

In a word, as God's dear children, try to be like Him (Ephesians 5:1).

The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. *By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image . . . Not all who profess to be workers for Christ are true disciples . . . Christ has given us a perfect example. He bids us follow Him (White, Ministry of Healing 493).*

Character and the Holy Spirit

We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people “to will and to do His good pleasure” (*Desire of Ages* 672). When I consider what God is doing in me I must realize that it is the Holy Spirit *in* me that is making me grow in every area. I must not be pleased with self; but rather thankful for the workings of God’s Spirit in me.

But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22, 23).

The Character of Love

1 Corinthians 13: Love is patient, kind, doesn’t envy, doesn’t keep a record of wrongs, *doesn’t focus on self* or puff up with self importance, thinks the best, doesn’t enjoy evil, finds joy in truth, bears all things, hopes for all things, endures all things, never fails . . . There are three important things in life: *Faith in God, Hope for the future, and Christ-like love, but the greatest of these is love.* If I want to see how closely I resemble Christ, apply this check list to the life of Christ, then see how many areas of your life get a grade of A+.