

Lesson One: A Character Crisis

Topic: [character](#)

Character flaws - everyone has them. Some recognize their flaws and wisely avoid situations that would bring out the worst in their character. Others, however, are not so wise. They do not realize that a small character problem left unchecked can build up to a character crisis. This lesson will look at some famous people in the Bible and the serious character flaws they had. Their stories show how a lack of character is a problem with serious consequences.

Starter

1. *How would you describe character to a child?*
2. *How does a lack of character usually exhibit itself?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

2 Samuel 12:9-10 (NIV2011)

⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

2 Samuel 12:9-10

David is most often described as a shepherd, a poet, a giant-killer, an ancestor of Jesus - in short, one of the greatest men in the Old Testament. But alongside that list stands another: betrayer, liar, adulterer, murderer. Although David was described by God as a man after his own heart ([Acts 13:22](#)), he had serious lapses of character. David's character flaws cost him dearly - murder was a constant threat in his family, his household rebelled against him, some of his concubines were taken by his son Absalom, and his first child by Bathsheba died. The story of David shows us that even a person of strong faith can struggle with character problems and can suffer painful consequences when those problems are left unchecked.

3. *Do you think David is remembered more for his strengths or his weaknesses? Why?*

4. *Why do you think God described David as a man after his own heart?*

5. *What does it mean to you that God loved David in spite of his character flaws?*

6. *Why is it important for us to realize that even small character weaknesses are a serious problem?*

1 Kings 11:9-10

1 Kings 11:9-10 (NIV2011)

⁹ The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

¹⁰ Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command.

For all his great wisdom, Solomon had some weak spots in his character - he gave in to idolatry and worshiped other gods. Solomon's downfall did not occur all of a sudden. Over the years, he made poor choices, one at a time, until he had completely departed from God's laws. The little sin in Solomon's personal life grew until it split his kingdom! In the end, even the wisest man who ever lived could not rely on reason alone to overcome his character flaws.

7. *If Solomon was the wisest man, why do you think he made such unwise choices?*

8. *For what reasons are people tempted to compromise their integrity?*

9. *How does compromise affect a person's character?*

10. *How can we keep our character from eroding over time?*

Galatians 2:11-13

Galatians 2:11-13 (NIV2011)

¹¹ When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

¹² For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

Peter did not always live up to his name, which meant "rock." Instead of demonstrating strength of character under pressure, Peter acted like a hypocrite. As a leader of the church, Peter knew better. Yet his fear of what others would think drove him to compromise the truth of God's Word. Fortunately, Paul publicly confronted Peter about his error before his actions injured the church. Serious character flaws can lead to serious church problems.

11. *What do Paul's actions in this story reveal about the importance of displaying Christian character?*

12. *How can one Christian's lack of integrity affect the whole church?*

13. *Why do you think some Christians willingly compromise their integrity?*

14. *When a person stumbles because of a character weakness, what steps can he or she take to get back on track?*

Summary

Israel's greatest king, the wisest man who ever lived, and one of the leaders of the early church all had one thing in common: Each one demonstrated a lack of character and suffered pain and humiliation for his mistakes. The way to avoid a character crisis is to recognize the areas in which we are most vulnerable to temptation. If we strengthen those weak spots in our character, we may be spared a great deal of pain and grief.

15. *What weaknesses do you recognize in your character?*

16. *What steps can you take this week to strengthen those weak spots?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Genesis 38:1 - 39:23](#).

This chapter vividly contrasts the immoral character of Judah with the moral character of Joseph in [chapter 39](#). Judah's lack of integrity resulted in family strife and deception. Joseph's integrity and wise choices resulted in blessings greater than he could imagine, both for himself and his family. The problem for most of us is that our character is a little like Joseph's and a little like Judah's.

17. *Why is it possible for two people from the same family to have such a wide difference in character?*

18. *How can a person's lack of character result in pain and suffering for others?*

19. *What kinds of blessings do people of high moral character enjoy?*

Read [Judges 16:4-21](#).

God gave Samson enormous physical strength in order to accomplish God's will. But Samson also had a serious character flaw: He willingly gave in to sexual temptation. Great strength in one area of life does not make up for great weaknesses in other areas. Samson's desire for love and sexual pleasure kept him from reaching his potential. His passion overtook him, and in the end, Samson the mighty warrior became a slave.

20. *What does the way we use our abilities and talents reveal about our character?*

21. *What happens when we use our God-given talents and resources for our own selfish purposes?*

22. *How can we guard against being controlled by our selfish desires?*

Read [Acts 5:1-11](#).

Ananias and Sapphira gave generously to the work of the early church, but they compromised their integrity to try to impress others. They lied to God and God's people, saying they gave all the money from the sale of their land. But in reality they held back some of the money for themselves. God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira shocked the whole church - their lack of character cost them their lives!

- 23.** *When has a person you admired shown a lack of integrity? What consequences did he or she suffer?*
- 24.** *Why is strong character especially important in matters related to serving in the church?*
- 25.** *What can you do to protect yourself from compromising your integrity?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Character.

Lesson Two: The Perfect Model

Topic: [character](#), [role models](#)

All of us have heroes. Unfortunately, sooner or later they let us down. When our most admired role models show serious character flaws, we can become disillusioned, not knowing whom to believe in. This lesson will show you the perfect hero to turn to, believe in, and imitate - Jesus Christ.

Starter

1. *Who was your childhood hero? Why?*
2. *What kind of people do we usually put on pedestals or greatly admire?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[1 Peter 2:21-23](#)

1 Peter 2:21-23 (NIV2011)

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

The apostle Peter urged us to follow in Christ's footsteps. This is the way to develop perfect character. Yet this does not come without a price. Attempting to imitate Christ often leads to suffering because the world hates Christ. Molding our character after Christ's may not be easy, but it is definitely worth the cost.

3. *How would you describe the character of Jesus?*
4. *If your friends were asked to describe you using only three words, which words do you think they would use?*

5. *What one character quality in Christ's life would you like to see displayed in your own life?*

6. *What process would you follow to develop this character quality?*

Leviticus 19:1-2

Leviticus 19:1-2 (NIV2011)

¹ The LORD said to Moses,

² "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

Scripture's command to "be perfect" does not mean we can be flawless, but we can aspire to be as much like Christ as possible. These verses clearly show us that the character of God is absolutely perfect. And in [John 14:9](#) we see that the character of Jesus is identical to the Father's. We can be conformed to his likeness by studying his life through the Gospels and by the Holy Spirit making changes in our hearts and lives.

7. *How does God's demand for perfection make you feel?*

8. *Is it possible to develop perfect character in this life? Why or why not?*

9. *How does the Holy Spirit help in the character development process?*

10. *In what way do you need to set your sights higher in your own character development?*

Hebrews 12:1-3

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV2011)

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Jesus calls each one of us to rise above mediocrity and to mature in every area of our life, becoming more like him. But developing Christlike character does not happen automatically; we must actively seek to imitate Jesus' life. Keep your eyes on Jesus, and you will keep them off the bad examples all around you.

11. *Why is character development such hard work?*

12. *What will encourage us to develop character?*

13. *What hinders us in developing Christlike character?*

14. *What is distracting you from your goal to be like Christ?*

Summary

No one is perfect except Jesus Christ. While every human hero will let us down, Christ will always surpass our expectations. He provides the perfect model to follow. The best way to develop character is to imitate him.

15. *In terms of character, what can you do this week to become more like Christ?*

Supplemental Questions

Read Galatians 6:4

Galatians 6:4 (NIV2011)

⁴ Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else,

Comparing ourselves with others is a dangerous way to judge the quality of our character. Pride can settle in because we think we are better than others. On the other hand, we may lose hope because we are so far behind everyone else in our Christian walk. But when we measure ourselves against Christ's example, we realize we have no basis for pride. We will also realize our great need to depend on him. When you are tempted to compare yourself to others, look to Jesus first. His example will inspire you to do your very best, and his loving acceptance will comfort you when you fall short of your expectations.

16. *When is it most tempting to compare yourself with others?*

17. *How can you avoid comparing your character to the character of other believers?*

18. *What are the benefits of continually comparing yourself to Christ's example?*

Read [1 Corinthians 1:30-31](#).

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 (NIV2011)

³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

We can develop godly character only through Christ's power. Our union and identification with him results in righteous living and holy character. Seek to know Christ, love him, remember him, and imitate him - only then will you become like him.

19. *How does Christ's power help us to develop our character?*

20. *When have you felt discouraged about your character faults or weaknesses?*

21. *What do you want to do the next time you feel discouraged about your lack of character growth?*

Read [Galatians 5:22-26](#).

We cannot expect to develop our character on our own. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to produce Christlike character traits in our lives. We will never get to a point where we have arrived and are flawless. But as we obey the Spirit's leading and consistently deny our sinful natures, we will become more and more like Christ.

22. *How does the list in this passage compare to the character traits the world admires in people?*

23. *If the Holy Spirit is the one who produces character in our lives, what role do we have in our own character development?*

24. *Which of the qualities in this passage needs further development in your character?*

Read [1 John 3:2](#).

God wants our character to become like Christ's. Although we will not be exactly like him until we see him face-to-face, knowing that is our ultimate destiny should motivate us to keep on making progress. In the meantime, we must keep on struggling against sin in this life.

25. *Why is it so difficult to imitate Christ?*

26. *What practical steps can we take to cultivate pure character?*

27. *In what area of your life have you seen progress in becoming more like Christ?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Character.

Lesson Three: More than a Good Book

Topic: [character](#), [strengthen your character](#)

Have you ever seen a Bible sitting on a shelf collecting dust? Many people own a Bible, but few people read it, and fewer still let it affect their daily lives. They may say they follow Jesus, but their lack of character development over time shows they are not becoming like him. This lesson will reveal how God's Word can be used to shape and strengthen your character. You will be challenged to spend more time reading the Scripture with the goal of being changed by it.

Starter

1. *What types of books do you most enjoy reading in your spare time?*
2. *How do you think you are affected by what you read?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[Psalm 119:9-11](#) **Psalm 119:9-11 (NIV2011)**

9

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

The psalmist asked a question that troubles us all: How can we stay pure when we live in a filthy world? We are surrounded by temptations that threaten to weaken our character. We will not be able to stay pure on our own. We need counsel and strength more dynamic than the tempting influences around us. The psalmist encourages us to turn to Scripture. As we obey God's Word, we will overcome sin, and our character will be strengthened.

3. *How is hiding God's Word in our hearts different from rote memorization?*

4. *How can memorizing Scripture strengthen a person's character?*

5. *How has God's Word helped you stay pure in the face of temptation?*

6. *What are some of the obstacles you face in memorizing Scripture?*

Hebrews 4:12-13

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NIV2011)

¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

The Bible is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life changing, and dynamic as it works in us. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals our true character, who we are and who we are not. It penetrates to the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word but also let it shape our character.

7. *How does it make you feel to know that God knows your true character (your thoughts, feelings, motives, and attitudes)?*

8. *Why do we often try to hide our character flaws from God?*

9. *What is an example of something that God's Word has revealed to you about your character?*

10. *How can you let his Word transform your character to an even greater extent?*

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV2011)**

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God has given us his Word to train us to live righteously. The world tells us to live for ourselves, but the Bible tells us how we can live for God. Do not study God's Word simply to impress others or win petty arguments. Remember, God's Word is not merely for our information - it is for our transformation!

11. *What does this passage teach us about the usefulness of the Bible for character development?*

12. *How can we be transformed simply by reading passages from the Bible?*

13. *Why is it important to know that Scripture is inspired by God (God-breathed)?*

14. *In what ways do you want God's Word to shape your character?*

Summary

The Bible is central to developing Christian character. We should read it, study it, memorize it, and live it. God shapes our character through his Word. Commit yourself to regular Bible study, and ask God to transform your life.

15. *What specific change can you make in your Bible study habits this week to allow God to shape your character more thoroughly?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [2 Kings 23:1-3](#).

Even when we have failed in the past, God wants us to turn to his Word. King Josiah and the people of Israel had not obeyed God's law. Upon learning how they had strayed from God's plan, Josiah began to make drastic changes in the kingdom. The Word of God should cause us, like Josiah, to immediately take action to change our old patterns and begin to live in harmony with God's will. As you allow God's Word to affect your decisions and actions, God will shape and mold your character.

16. *What impresses you about Josiah's response to God's Word?*

17. *Why do we sometimes feel uncomfortable when we read the Bible?*

18. *How can you tell whether or not your character is being changed by the truths of God's Word?*

Read [Daniel 6:7-10](#).

Daniel's strong character enabled him to boldly continue his habit of daily prayer even though he knew he would be persecuted for it. He willingly risked his life out of obedience to God. Such conviction comes from strength of character and enables us to withstand even the greatest pressure.

19. *What principles can we learn from Daniel's life about character development?*

20. *What spiritual disciplines in your private life have strengthened your character?*

21. *Which of your habits or hobbies are not contributing positively to your character growth?*

Read [John 17:13-19](#).

In this prayer, Jesus asks the Father to sanctify us (set us apart for God's use, cleansed and holy.) Daily application of Scripture has a purifying effect on our character. God's Word points out sin, motivates us to confess it, renews our relationship with Christ, and guides us back to the right path.

22. *How does a Christian's character set him or her apart from the world?*

23. *When has God's Word protected you from compromise or corruption?*

24. *Where do you think you are now in the process of developing pure character?*

Read [John 15:1-8](#).

Many people try to be good and honest, always doing what is right. But Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to the vine. One way to remain in Christ is to study his life and teachings. A person who seldom reads God's Word cannot expect to grow more like Christ. In contrast, a person who digs deep into God's Word and puts it into practice will display a depth of character than comes only from God.

25. *In what ways has God "pruned" your life to improve your character?*

26. *In light of this passage, how can you show yourself to be Christ's disciple?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Character.

Lesson Four: Growing Pains

Topic: [character](#), [pressure](#)

When life is going well, it is relatively easy to be a "good" Christian. But the strength of our character is not revealed in the good times. In fact, we really cannot know the quality or strength of our character until we see how we react under pressure. This lesson will challenge you to accept the problems and pain in your life as opportunities to grow in your Christian character. You will learn that God can use difficulties to help you become more like Christ.

Starter

- 1. When have you seen someone display strength of character during a time of great suffering?*
- 2. How did that person's example influence you?*

Study

Summary

Though we usually want to avoid pain and hardship, God uses them to strengthen our character. Consequently, we can choose to accept our problems as character builders. When we do, we have an opportunity to (1) honor God, even when he allows rough times, (2) turn to God for help to endure and grow through painful experiences, and (3) rejoice even in suffering because we believe that God knows what is best for us.

- 15. In what way do you need to adjust your attitude toward certain difficult situations you are facing at this time?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Exodus 5:22-23](#). Exodus 5:22-23 (NIV2011)

²² Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me?”

²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”

Moses expected faster results and fewer problems in delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. But God had already decided that the situation would become worse before it became better. In order for your character to grow, life may have to become worse for a while before it becomes better. Instead of fighting the difficulties, thank God for those opportunities to grow and deal with them in his strength.

16. *Before you were a Christian, how did you react to problems or difficult circumstances?*

17. *How has your attitude changed now that you are a believer?*

18. *What message do we send to the world around us when we display strength of character and joy in Christ during difficult circumstances?*

Read [2 Thessalonians 1:3-5](#). 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5 (NIV2011)

³ We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

⁴ Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

⁵ All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

Trying hard to have good character can get us through some days. But trouble, pressure, or pain will quickly reveal our thin veneer of goodness unless our strength of character comes from God. Paul commended the Thessalonians for persevering and keeping the faith, even during persecution and trials. When we draw our strength

from God each day, we do not have to worry about what pressure may reveal about our character.

19. *What principles about enduring difficult times can we learn from this passage?*

20. *What are you like when everything is going wrong? Do you tend to give up, tough it out, or turn to God?*

21. *How do our attitudes and actions while experiencing trials reveal the depth of our character?*

Read [James 5:10-11](#).

To teach a lesson about character development, James referred to the book of Job. In that book, the main character, Job, could not understand why he was suffering so much since he was sure he had done nothing to deserve punishment. Even when we do not understand why God would allow the pain and problems we are experiencing, we can still trust in him completely. Knowing that he loves us can help us to persevere through suffering.

22. *Why do some of us question God's judgment or goodness when facing trials or suffering?*

23. *Under what circumstances is it most difficult for you to trust God?*

24. *How ready are you to accept new problems in your life as God's way of strengthening your character?*

Read [Genesis 22:1-19](#).

God tested Abraham in order to deepen his capacity to obey God and thus develop his character. Testing is difficult, but the result is often a deeper relationship with God and a stronger character. If you feel that God is testing you, remember that his purpose is to strengthen your character, not defeat you. Instead of complaining or trying to escape, accept God's work in your life as an opportunity to grow in character.

25. *Why is growing in Christian character sometimes painful?*

26. *In what ways has God tested your character?*

27. *How have you grown in character as a result of God's testing?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Character.

Lesson Five: A Good Example

Topic: [character](#), [example](#)

Sometimes we just need to see an example in order to understand. When we are unsure of the direction we should take in life, it is helpful to have someone to follow. Watching other exemplary men and women of God live in today's world can challenge us to become more Christlike in our character. This lesson will challenge you to seek out mature believers to help you in your Christian living and to be more aware of the example you set for younger believers.

Starter

1. *What one character quality do you think best distinguishes a person as a Christian?*
2. *Who is someone you purposely try to imitate? In what ways do you imitate that person?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[1 Corinthians 4:15-17](#) 1 Corinthians 4:15-17 (NIV2011)

¹⁵ Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

¹⁶ Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul could not tell the Corinthians to read the Bible because the Gospels were probably not yet in circulation. Therefore, he urged them to imitate him – a powerful testimony to his character. God was Paul's example. Therefore, Paul's life could be an example of godly character to other Christians. Paul was not expecting others to imitate everything he did but to imitate his character. Just as the Corinthians were challenged to follow Paul's example, we are challenged to imitate other believers who demonstrate Christlike character today.

3. *How can you tell the difference between an adequate role model and an excellent one?*
4. *What dangers are involved in imitating the character of other believers?*
6. *Who has had a significant impact on your character development? Was that person aware of his or her influence on you?*
7. *How can you appropriately thank that person for challenging you to grow more like Christ?*

Esther 4:12-14 Esther 4:12-14 (NIV2011)

¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai,

¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape.

¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Mordecai was a man who refused to compromise his convictions. His example of godly character and his willingness to lovingly confront Esther caused her to risk her life to save her people. Mordecai had shown Esther through his own life how to display strong character, even in the worst situations. We could all use a friend like Mordecai - someone who loves us enough to confront and challenge us when we need it.

7. *Why do you think Esther willingly followed Mordecai's advice, even though it involved risking her life?*

8. *What kind of foundation needs to be established before friends or relatives can confront one another about character issues?*
9. *How do you usually respond when someone reminds you that you are responsible to do something you do not want to do?*
10. *When have you challenged someone to display strength of character in a difficult situation? How did that person respond?*

Titus 2:7-8 Titus 2:7-8 (NIV2011)

⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness

⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Paul urged Titus to be a good example to those around him so that others might see Titus's good character and imitate him. Today, mature believers must - through their words and example - help younger believers develop strong Christian character. If you are of an age or position where people look to you for guidance, make sure your example is motivating younger believers to live in a way that honors God.

11. *What motivates you to set a good example for others?*
12. *What are some of the likely results of mature believers displaying weak character around younger believers?*
13. *When has the positive example of another believer had an affect on your character development?*

14. *What does your lifestyle reveal to others about your character?*

Summary

The importance of Christians' spurring one another on to deeper and stronger character cannot be emphasized enough. Some believers are distant models - we learn from watching their examples. They can have a big impact on our lives without even knowing it. Other Christians know and love us enough to demand change in us. Their strong character and willingness to confront us inspires us to imitate their example. As you go through life, keep in mind that younger believers will be affected by your example - whether you like it or not.

15. *What mature Christian displays a character quality you would like to see evidenced in your own life?*

16. *What steps can you take this week to develop that character trait?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [Genesis 6:9](#). Genesis 6:9 (NIV2011)

⁹ This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

The Bible says that Noah was righteous and blameless. He wholeheartedly loved and obeyed God and displayed godly character. For most of his life he walked in faith as a living example to his generation. Like Noah, we live in a world that constantly pressures us to compromise our integrity. But as we stand against the world's pressures, we show other believers how to maintain godly character in an evil world.

17. *What steps can we take to help younger believers develop Christlike character?*

18. *How can you tell if your example is influencing others for good?*

19. *How can you remind yourself this week that other people are noticing your example?*

Read [2 Kings 15:1-4](#).

Although Azariah accomplished a great deal, he failed to rise above the poor example set by his father, Amaziah, and grandfather Joash. Azariah imitated the kings he had heard stories about and had watched while growing up. Even though Azariah's father and grandfather were basically good kings, they were poor models in some important areas. To rise above the influence of poor role models, we must seek better ones. No matter how you were raised or who has influenced your life, you can move beyond those limitations by imitating people who consistently display solid Christian character.

20. *When have you been negatively influenced by a poor role model?*

21. *How can we determine whether the people we admire are good role models for us?*

22. *Why is it important to realize that even the best role models make mistakes?*

Read [Hebrews 12:10-13](#).

God pushes us to our limits and requires that our lives display his character. As we obey him and draw on his strength, we can use our growing strength to help those around us who are weak and struggling. We cannot live with only our own survival in mind! Others will follow our example, and we have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ.

23. *What does this passage reveal about your responsibility to develop and display good character?*

24. *Does your example make it easier for others to know how to live for Christ, or would those who follow you end up confused and misled?*
25. *What changes do you need to make in your life to be a better example to those around you?*

Read [Philippians 3:17-21](#).

Paul challenged the Philippians to pursue Christlikeness by following his own example and pattern. He did not mean, of course, that they should foolishly copy everything he did. He himself said that he was not perfect ([Philippians 3:12](#)). He was able to make this statement because he was following Christ. All mature believers should live in such a way that they are not afraid to let their lives be an example of what it means to follow Christ.

26. *What motivates people to look for good examples of Christian living?*
27. *How comfortable would you be with inviting someone to imitate you?*
28. *What problems might a new Christian have if he or she imitated you?*

Read [1 Corinthians 15:33](#).

Keeping company with those who deny Christ can corrupt a believer's character. Do not let your relationships with unbelievers lead you away from Christ or weaken your character. Instead, keep company with those who motivate you to live righteously. Choose friends who will have a positive influence on you rather than a negative one.

29. *How do our friends influence the quality of our character?*

- 30.** *What advice would you offer a friend who was associating with bad company and beginning to show signs of character decay?*
- 31.** *Short of avoiding the person, what could you do if you felt one of your friendships was weakening or corrupting your Christian character?*

Life Application Bible Topical Studies - Character.

Lesson Six: Step by Step

Topic: [character](#), [developing character](#)

Now, more than ever, the world needs people of strong character. But developing character is not easy - it is a long process that requires hard work! Trying to live a perfect Christian life is so difficult that it can leave us drained and discouraged. We may feel so far from perfect that we think we will never please God with our life. But this lesson will teach the importance of perseverance and patience. Even mature Christians should press on in the Holy Spirit's power, remembering that one day they will be made perfect - when they see Christ face-to-face.

Starter

1. *When have you been frustrated with your spiritual progress in a certain area of your life?*
2. *How did you deal with your frustration?*

Study

Read the following three sets of Bible passages and application notes. Answer the questions for each set before moving on to the next.

[Philippians 1:4-6](#) **Philippians 1:4-6 (NIV2011)**

- ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy
⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,
⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

When God starts a project, he completes it! His work in us begins when we first believe in him and continues until his Son, Jesus Christ, returns. He has given us his Holy Spirit, who lives in us and shapes our character to be more like Christ's every day. When you feel incomplete, unfinished, or distressed about your weaknesses, remember that God will not stop helping you until he has completed his work in your life.

3. *What can happen when we have unrealistic expectations about our character development?*
4. *When have you felt as though you were on a plateau in your Christian growth?*
5. *What future hope motivates you to persevere in your struggle to develop Christlike character?*
6. *The next time you feel discouraged about your character growth, how could you remind yourself of the promise in this passage?*

Philippians 3:13-14 Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV2011)

¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul said that his goal was to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ had in mind for him. This goal absorbed all of Paul's energy, allowing him to forget his past. And Paul had good reasons to forget what was behind - he had persecuted some of the first believers. He even held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr. We have all done things of which we are ashamed. We live in the tension of what we have been and what we want to be. Because our hope is in Christ, however, we can let go of past guilt and look forward to what God will help us become. Do not dwell on your past. Instead, believe that you are forgiven, and then refocus your energy on knowing Christ and becoming like him.

7. *How can guilt prevent us from trying to imitate Christ?*

8. *What else can interfere with our character growth?*

9. *What is holding you back from allowing Christ to develop your character?*

10. *In light of Paul's advice, how can you eliminate this hindrance from your life?*

[Joshua 14:8b-10](#)

Joshua 14:8-10 (NIV2011)

⁸ but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.

⁹ So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'

¹⁰ "Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old!

Caleb's life reveals the rewards of perseverance. He was a man of strong character - he stood up for the truth, no matter how many people disagreed with him. As one of the original spies sent into the Promised Land, he believed God would help the Israelites conquer great cities and giants to gain the land. Because of his faith, God promised him a personal inheritance of land. Forty-five years later, the land was given to him. Caleb remained strong from the start to the finish! Likewise, we must be committed to God and be open to his continuing work in us, not only at the start of our walk with him, but through our entire life.

11. *What revealed Caleb's strength of character?*

12. *What do you think kept Caleb going?*

13. *What causes some Christians to give up the struggle to grow in character?*

14. *What can you do when you feel impatient about your progress?*

Summary

Developing character takes time - a lifetime! God will complete the work he has begun in your life when you meet Christ face-to-face, but until then you must be patient and persevering. With the single-mindedness of an athlete in training, you must forsake anything that distracts you from becoming a person of strong character. Remember, God will not give up on you, so do not give up on him!

15. *How can you be sure you are doing all you can to strengthen your character?*

16. *What steps can you take this week to begin a lifetime of developing Christlike character?*

Supplemental Questions

Read [2 Samuel 7:18-21](#).

David's character was displayed in the way he accepted his obligation to show love and mercy to others. David realized that God was the one who shaped his character and blessed his life. Just as God was patient with David, he is patient with us. We do not have to feel overwhelmed when we see how much we have to change - we can trust God to do the work in us. He will guide us, step-by-step, until we become people of strong character.

17. *At what point in your life have you felt most burdened by the amount of change you needed to make in your character?*

18. *How have you seen God's faithfulness in shaping your character over the time you have been a Christian?*

19. *How does remembering God's faithfulness to you in the past encourage you to trust God's work in your life in the future?*

Read [Mark 4:26-29](#).

This parable about the kingdom of God reveals that our development and maturity as Christians is a continual, gradual process that requires patience and endurance. Jesus helps us understand the process by comparing it to the slow but certain growth of a plant.

20. *How does this parable help you better understand the process of developing Christian character?*

21. *What encouragement have you gleaned from this parable about your character growth?*

22. *How can we develop patience and endurance in our lives?*

Read [Hebrews 10:10-14](#).

We have been made perfect, yet we are "being made holy." Through his death and resurrection, Christ, once for all, made believers perfect in God's sight. At the same time, he is making them grow in character and holiness in their daily pilgrimage here on earth. We should not be surprised, ashamed, or shocked that we still need to grow in character - God is not finished with us. We can encourage this process by

deliberately applying Scripture to all areas of our lives, by accepting the painful times as opportunities to grow, and by following the example of other more mature believers and the perfect example, Jesus Christ. Though we are responsible to do our part, we must also be patient and persevering as God does his. Do what you can, and leave the rest of the work to God.

23. *In what areas of your character do you still need to be changed by God?*

24. *In what ways do you need to be more patient with God's work in your life?*

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