

How to Form a Good Character

by Dee Bowman

Character is the accumulation of qualities that distinguishes one person from another.

Character is not just one single trait, but the accumulation of all a person is, the sum total of all his traits.

Someone has suggested that reputation is what others think us to be, character is what God knows us to be.

How does a person develop and maintain a good character?

By getting in touch with yourself. Aristotle was not far off the mark when he suggested that one should “know thyself.” Personal integrity is the key to developing a good character. We have to ascertain and admit to what we need in order to form a good character. In order to know where you’re going, you must first realize where you are. “He that speaketh truth in his heart”—that’s necessary to the development of a good character (see Psalm 15:1-2).

By a constant contact with God. It is He who defines what is a good character, for it is He who has defined what is good in the first place. His word is not only an expression of Who and What He is, but a revelation of how we can become like Him, or be a “partaker of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). His word tells us which way to go. A man of character does not walk just anywhere, but “his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditate both day and night” (Psalm 1:2). “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word” (Psalm 119:9). A man’s character is developed by paying due attention to where he is going, to his path of pursuit, and that means a constant contact with the Father.

By accumulating—a little at a time—the right pieces of holiness. Holiness is not some huge characteristic (notice the word, please) that a person somehow suddenly develops, but rather the piecing together of small bits and pieces of goodness and piety. Small habits—those little acts of kindness and goodness—are what define a person’s character. Holiness helps to define a man’s character by setting him apart from the trivial dross of life; it is observed in his habitual acts of goodness. Holiness illustrates in one’s life the character of God. “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15).

By regular exposure to right influences. One of the ways we develop good character is by observing and associating with people whom we know to be of good character. Time spent with a good person will increase your chances of having being good yourself. “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not

forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." (Hebrews 10:24). We need each other. What one man lacks, another man has. What another has, one man lacks. "Be thou an example of the believers" is good advice, and to find and follow those who set good examples helps to formulate right courses and plan right avenues of pursuit. Character is helped considerably by associating with those who have it.

By looking forward to the reward. Character and hope run on the same track. One who has an abiding trust in God and His word will build the kind of character that assures for him an eventual heavenly home. "Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that worketh righteousness," we are told (Psalm 15:2). Those who have placed a high value and importance on a well-orchestrated life are fit for an entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?" (2 Peter 1:11). Our hope helps us see the need for a holy character by connecting us to that which has the highest quality and value—eternal life.

Please be advised—the absence of these things in our lives will result in our having a distorted view of what is important in life, and cause us to place emphasis and enthusiasm on the wrong things.