

Pillar 3: Character

**Without Character, there is no trust.
Without trust, there are no followers.
Without followers, leadership does not exist.**

Leadership can be a serious challenge for people. Abraham Lincoln, a lawyer who served as the 16th president of the United States and abolished slavery said this. "Nearly all men can stand adversity. If you really want to test a man's character, give him power".

There are two main components, or sides, to character, Integrity and morality. An intelligent leader or business owner will understand that character is a key to the success of his organization or business. In the following section we will take a look at both of these.

Integrity is being consistent in thoughts, words, and actions.

We often think of the word "integrity" as associated with good moral character. This is ok but it is good to really understand the technical meaning of the word integrity. Integrity means "whole, complete and undivided". As in the description above, a person who thinks, talks, and behaves in a way where all three of those actions agree with each other, we can say they are a person of integrity. This is an important concept to understand because people of integrity in a technical sense can be evil or godly, it is all about consistency. That said, we will be thinking about integrity in the godly sense as the word is used throughout this lesson.

Morality is the second part of character. Morals are a standard of behavior that judges what is right and what is wrong. Moral behavior is what a society will generally

consider to be “good” behavior. Immoral behavior is what a society would consider to be “bad” behavior. Morality, or the source of a societies moral standards can be produced by the culture and/or religious beliefs. When we talk about godly behavior, we are talking about behavior that is influenced by morals that are inspired by what we learn from God’s word.

Different people may have different views on what it means to be a “good person”. Morals can also be subjective for some people, this means that they can change in different situations. Sometimes a person may feel that telling a lie may be ok – even for what they feel is a good reason but others may not be able to trust an individual like that. When are they telling the truth? When are they not telling the truth?

Strong moral convictions mean that a person will consistently apply their morals in all situations. This is called having strong morals.

Now that we understand integrity and morality in a deeper way, let’s see how they can come together and form the kind of character that builds trust. A definition of character can be expressed like this. The combination of mental characteristics and behavior that distinguishes a person, group or nation. Leaders who have strong morals and who’s morals are based on biblical principles can inspire moral character in others. Integrity and good morals join together to form good character, good character develops trust.

Being a person of Integrity can be difficult at times. There are times when we will face temptations, times when our integrity will be tested. As Christians, we know that even when we are alone, we are not alone. I heard it said once, that, “Who you are when nobody is looking is who you really are”. Character is not a suit that people change in and out of on different occasions but is the core of who they are. Character is however, something that can be changed.

Character development is hard work and requires intentional effort, you cannot just read a book or what I have written here. David Horsager suggests starting by asking the question: Am I doing the right thing? Here are a few examples to help in that process.

Many leaders know that it is better to be honest, but it is easier at times to tell people what they want to hear instead. So many politicians do that in order to get elected.

People know they should help those in need but it is easier to remain focused on one's own needs.

Doing the right thing can be hard work! Thoughts, words, and deeds, all practiced consistently.

A true story about a politician in the United States. A man was running for office and the story came out about his unfaithfulness to his wife. Some people called for him to abandon his political race, while others said what happens in his private life has nothing to do with his public life? How does this stand up to the test of thoughts, words, and actions? He did end up dropping out of the race but the question in my mind would be, if he is willing to break a commitment in his private life, he is likely to break commitments in his public life as well. How did he get to that place in his life?

Jesus said that sin begins in our thoughts. Matthew 5: 27-30 "You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

This is one example involving sexual sin but all sin starts in the mind before it turns into talk and action. John Boe, a US army captain and author made this quote.

“Watch your thoughts, for they become words.

Choose your words, for they become actions.

Understand your actions for they become habits.

Study your habits, for they will become your character.

Develop your character, for it becomes your destiny.”

The convictions we hold that guide the decisions we make are often referred to our values. Values are the things in our lives that we hold as important or that have worth to us. They can be tangible things like a car, a home, or other physical things. They can be preferences such as a style of clothing or decorations in a home. They can be personal desires or goals, like having lots of money or professional success. Other values may be moral qualities, such as being a person of integrity or living a God-honoring life. Some values are more important to us than others; some values may be something we hold as individuals, while other values may be shared within our cultural group. The values that we hold, regardless of the source, are a big part of who we are as people. These values not only shape the way we understand life and relationships, but they also guide our decisions. They’re also a large part of what makes up what we call a person’s worldview.

In Romans 12:2, the apostle Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” What he is talking about here is that we are to be looking at the values that are important to the world, in our personal cultures, and test them against what God’s word says, and make adjustments where needed. By doing this we will know what

God says are important values and in knowing that we can understand how to make decisions that will be good according to His will.

Think about your personal, church, or organizations values. It helps to be intentional! Having shared values leads to trust.

Apply it!

My Personal values:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Apply it!

My Team's values:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Knowing your values and making your values known helps answer the question above, Am I doing the right thing? Remembering that it is our values that guide our decision making we can more easily understand whether or not we're doing the right thing. For the Christian, doing the right thing will always be honoring to God. Achieving good character will have an impact on every area of your life. It will impact your family, your ministry or business, your community, your country, and maybe the whole world.

Accountability: How to create it

Accountability is a powerful tool for motivating integrity. Creating accountability can be difficult but following are some ideas that may

be helpful. Remember that anything worth doing requires some investment of time and effort.

- **Start an Integrity Group, Likeminded people can support each other.**
- **Set clear expectations of behavior and outcomes. (Look back at Pillar 1. Clarity)**
- **Create goals and objectives with the group. This will promote ownership which will help increase commitment to follow through.**
- **Make your goals visible. When expectations are made public, things will be accomplished.**
- **Make your goals measurable, achievement inspires people to continue pressing forward.**
- **Help people understand how results are a product of actions taken.**
- **Regularly ask how people are doing with their goals.**
- **Give appropriate feedback.**
- **Make sure that upper leadership are all in agreement with the goals desired.**

Five Ways to Build Character

1. **Be Humble.** Humility is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 15: 33
2. **Live out your principles and values.** Whether it is “Love others” or “Do the right thing,” living by your principles will make decision making easier and your character more steadfast.
3. **Be Intentional.** Integrity does not happen by accident. We are all products of our thoughts and habits. Be intentional about filling your mind with good thoughts. Good thoughts help develop good habits. Good habits help develop good character.
4. **Practice self-discipline.** Being of high character takes the ability to do what is right over what is easy.
5. **Be accountable.** Surround yourself who have high expectations for you. Be responsible to God and yourself first. Lose the pride. Open yourself up to accountability.

Character

- Habits are made by what you do in private.
- Integrity builds trust in you; The first step in trusting anyone.
- Building integrity takes work, but gives the biggest reward.
- Ask yourself: Am I doing the right thing?
- To beat stress, do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, whether you feel like it or not.
- Demonstrate Character through: Humility, Principles, Intention, Self-discipline, Accountability.

Some questions to start discussion.

- Who do you admire for high character?
- What is it about that person that makes you think of them that way?
- Morality and Integrity combine to create character. Why do you think both of these are necessary?
- If you lead a church, an organization, or manage a business, how do you handle a member of your organization who does not show good character?
- Do you think people in general are more tolerant of low character in certain areas than they used to be? If so have there been any consequences?
- What does integrity mean to you?
- How do you live it out in your life every day?
- Do you remember your top 5 personal values?