

Character Building and Shaping Lives

-- prepared by Dr. Edward Watke Jr.

Character is the result of six things:

- 1. The choices you make,**
- 2. the values you embrace,**
- 3. the thinking that directs you,**
- 4. the truths you hold on to,**
- 5. the crisis you experience, and**
- 6. the mentor or discipler you choose."**

How can we sharpen and shape the lives of the children God has entrusted to us? Are there some things we could do that would bring great benefit? If so, what could they be? If we are going to mentor or disciple our children as we ought, what are the most important things we can teach?

I think we need to do much more than read the Daily Bread or some other devotional booklet each day. We did much of that when our children were young and I feel that what was shared from the Word of God and from the booklet was good -- BUT the lack we now recognize was from what we did not teach. There are famous preachers who preach well -- but possibly the biggest problem stems from what they do not preach rather than what they do share. So in molding character -- we must consistently and comprehensively teach the Biblical principles that will make the difference. Consider the following:

1. Start Studying the Book of Proverbs:

Many a young family have found there are wonderful character building truths to be gleaned from the Book of Proverbs.

Such a study will bring you to many different categories, including:

1. major character traits you could study with your kids,
2. you will find proverbs that share contrasts, and
3. proverbs that are double-complete, where the second line agrees or adds to the first. (Mark these, use a notebook, study them together.)
4. And there are many comparative proverbs where "then" sometimes begins the second line. (Consider the context of Proverbs 2:1-12)
5. You would discover positive and negative qualities, and their, consequences.
6. Consider together the many times the subject of righteousness is shared in Proverbs, chapters 10- 13, here the word is used over 30 times. When you apply these verses it should help to build character.
7. Studying the words instruction and upright will bring great insight.
8. Consider the eight action verbs of Proverbs 2:1-4. If you will study and apply this portion your children will have great gain.
9. Then a study of the "fear of the Lord" would be of great benefit.

Focus on one word idea for a week. ***And we need to discuss how to discover the "fool", the "wise," or maybe the "slothful" in our own lives. We need to recognize the "scorner," "the simple" or "the wicked" and "the wise" around us.*** Share ideas on how to apply the verses to your lives. If you look every text about these themes you will discover a wealth of character building truths.

Or look up these for a start: "wise/wisdom" contrasted with the "fool," the "heart," the "tongue," "honest/lying," "friends/neighbors," "give(ing)/wealth," "home/parents;" "honor; instruction; wise; wisdom."

2. Consider The 10 Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17

Five commands deal with our relationship with God, the other five emphasize essential relationships. Nine of these 10 are commanded in the New Testament.

We need to memorize these in order, and review them regularly; they are the heart of law, and the stability of any nation, culture, and home. You will find more about this on our web site for you can study all the Ten Commandments there. (Look at our web site: bring up studies, then Old Testament and then click on Ten Commandments.)

3. Think Through The Sermon On The Mount, Matthew 5-7

Why did Jesus share all that He did in this section of Scripture? Surely there are many truths for us to apply that He taught the great crowds about Him.

Here are many life related truths that Jesus taught which our children and teens need to apply to daily life. This won't happen unless we as adults make much of what Jesus taught here. Verses on fruitfulness, obedience, and sanctification that brought conviction to my own life years ago, are still alive and working in my heart today.

4. Meditate On The Upper Room Discourse, John 14-17

Here is one of my favorite portions of the Word of God. These words were spoken by the Savior just hours or minutes prior to going to the Cross. They are His last words to His own. They are precious indeed. Imagine standing at the bedside of a loved one about to depart who gives his bequest to the whole family. These words are Christ's bequest to His own. They are as much for every saint today as they were for the disciples when Jesus spoke these words to them. If you study these chapters together in detail over a period of many months or a year character will be build in the lives of those you love.

These chapters ought to be read, discussed and studied by every Christian family. They are one of the richest passages in the Bible, revealing Christ's invasion into the life and work of every believer. Here Jesus introduces to us the Holy Spirit, fruitfulness, His care for us, His love, our need of obedience, our relationship to the world, and many special promises from Him who loves us supremely. He promises His -- peace, joy, home, presence, power, Name, etc.

5. Consider: Christlike Attitudes Are Listed As the "Fruit of the Spirit":

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Walking in the Spirit is a must for every believer. Children must be taught **HOW** to walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:15-26) Attitude is everything with God, because our attitudes reveal the real us. The Christian life can only be lived by walking in and by the Spirit. **The Christian life is a walk -- how do we walk?** (See the word "walk" as found in the Book of Ephesians.) And where do attitudes come from? Why do we FEEL as we FEEL and DO as we DO?

6. In Growth Steps We Can "fine-tune" Our Spiritual Life: 2 Peter 1:4-7

There are essential building blocks that keep our spiritual house growing. Concentrate at least a week on each word, and how to appropriate it: "Add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance; to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love."

This means adding to faith -- moral character, knowledge, self-control, endurance, piety, brotherly affection and love. We need to meditate on these

character qualities and pray the verses and qualities into our lives. Memorize the portion! Ask God to reveal it and to build it into your life. Believe Him for it. The power to apply the Word of God comes as we surrender to be controlled each day by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)