

Character, Values, and Leadership

Purpose: To create the desire to develop character, values and leadership.

Objectives: By the end of the lesson the students will:

1. Be able to explain how character is developed as well as how to be guided by their values and why leadership must be based upon character and values.
2. Be willing to develop character, to be guided by values and to develop leadership qualities in their lives.

Key Verses: I Timothy 3:2-10

Note to instructor: Tell a story or come up with an example of someone in any leadership position who has failed because of character or poor value choices. Reading a short newspaper article or vividly describing a leader's moment or impact of failure would be effective.

An example could be former President Clinton. He was one of the most talented politicians of the 20th century and now his reputation will be forever marred.

Often the fall of a Christian leader, especially one that was looked up to, can be devastating to those over whom they have leadership. Ask if there are examples (which they would be willing to share) of such leaders who either devastated themselves or someone they knew. This should be a powerful example. Only do this if there is enough time.

The object of this section is to show that character and integrity are key components of spiritual leadership, particularly leadership in the church.

I. Character and Leadership

A definition of character: Character is the sum total of traits and values that have come to define a person. An honest person is recognized as being embodied by the trait or value of honesty. A godly person exhibits or embodies traits and values that we commonly associate with God. For us, today, the question is, how does character relate specifically to spiritual leadership?

What do we learn about character and spiritual leadership from these verses? Write down your thoughts.

Acts 6:1-6;

I Tim 3:2-10;

Titus 1:5-9;

Titus 2:7-8

Note to instructor: Have the students get into groups of 3 or 4 to discuss what they came up with. After about 5 minutes, have some share answers with the class.

Leadership in the church, especially higher leadership, needs to have impeccable and proven character. Proven, public character builds ethos, or trust, and is the foundation for relational leadership

II. Developing the necessary Character

Upon knowing the importance of character, the question then arises as to how we can develop the character necessary for spiritual leadership. To answer that, turn to the Scriptures. The following verses show how God develops a person's character.

James 1:2-4 - **The testing of our faith** produces endurance. Endurance works on us and makes us mature, strong, whole, perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.

1 Peter 1:6 & 7 - **Trials and testing** of faith proves our faith. This proof is more precious than gold and results in praise and glory and honor at revelation of Jesus.

2 Peter 1:3-8 - **Obedience** leads to knowledge, **knowledge** to self control, **self control** to perseverance, **perseverance** to godliness, **godliness** to brotherly kindness, **brotherly kindness** to love.

Romans 5:3-5 - **Tribulations** bring about perseverance, perseverance proven character, and proven character hope, and hope will never fail because of the love of God.

Why does God use these means? Write down your thoughts before continuing.

Note to instructor: Ask the students to share what they wrote here. See if any have something to add to what follows.

He uses these means because He is teaching us that apart from Him, we can do nothing. Trials show us our impotence. True character is Christ in us. The character qualities of Jesus are the qualities we want in our lives. Colossians 3:10 helps us understand how character is built in Christians. It reads: “And (Christians) have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” God is the one who develops character in us as we are pliable in His hands.

Character is **developed** over **time** and is **proven** by **testing**. It is a process that is sometimes difficult and painful as we die to the flesh and become alive in new ways in Christ. We need to be aware of the process and not become discouraged when things don’t happen over night.

The great leaders of Christianity became so through enduring God’s testing. As a result they experienced character development. Moses spent 40 years in the desert developing his character. Paul, despite being highly educated, spent many years maturing before Barnabas brought him into full-time ministry. Although David had been anointed king, he spent seven years running from Saul before he actually became king. Joseph was an innocent prisoner in a foreign land before God promoted him to be the second most powerful person in the world.

Can you point to a challenging time in your life through which your character was developed? What was the difficulty, and how did you see it develop character in your life?

Note to instructor: Have the students discuss this in their groups. After about 5 minutes, ask if any would like to share with the class.

Character, obviously, is critical for spiritual leadership because it is the foundation of leadership. Now, how do values fit into the picture?

III. Values and Leadership

Values are ideas to which we give weight, worth, or merit. They provide the grid through which we make decisions. There are absolute values which are true in all places, at all times. There are also personal values or preferences which help shape who we are.

The values (ideas) that we act upon give content to our character, and direction to our lives. Therefore, we need to choose our values carefully. Based upon your knowledge of Scripture and what we read earlier what are some values God would have us to hold? Why might those values be important for leadership? Write down your thoughts.

Note to instructor: Have the students discuss this in their groups. After about 5 minutes, ask if any would like to share with the class.

Practically every Christian value can be derived from the Great Commandment (Mark 12:39-41) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commandment tells us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. The Great Commission gives us our marching orders. What values should be very high in our lives **because of** the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?

Note to instructor: Ask this question to the class. Let some share. If not mentioned, be sure they know that we should love Jesus, talk about Him, and obey Him. Have them discuss the following question in their groups.

Are there some values that need to be changed in your life?

IV. Summary

Spiritual leadership is founded upon godly character and values. The great breakdown in spiritual leadership today is that we, too often, found it upon skill. Those with great vision, planning, organization and communication skills are most often given leadership. Though these are critical to effective leadership, without godly character and values, they will not produce enduring results. God raises people up to leadership, first on the basis of character, then on the basis of skill.

V. Application:

It is not enough just to know these truths we must apply them to our lives. How do we make the pursuit of character and values a part of our lives?

Talk to the Lord about your character, values and leadership. How are you doing? Are there some areas that need changing? Are you willing to let God develop your character – which may likely be through challenges over time? What may be hindering development of godly character in your life?

Note to instructor: Have the students discuss what they wrote here and in the next set of question. After about 8 minutes ask if any would like to share with the class. With the time that remains, have the students talk about the Discussion Questions in their groups.

Are you willing to be guided by godly values? In your life, what values sometimes replace the godly values mentioned in this session?

Study the character qualities that God looks for in a leader and pray for their development in your life. Find a friend that will hold you accountable for your character and values.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how character develops as well as how to be guided by your values.

2. Explain why leadership must be based upon character and values.