

CLASS 6

Building Godly Character

CLASS OVERVIEW

In this class we will review:

- The definition and meaning of character.
- The importance of character to true Christians and especially godly leaders.
- The relationship of ethics, morals and honesty to character.
- How to build and maintain character.

Opening Group Question:

- What is character, and why is it essential for a leader to possess?

"Every time we say or do something unethical we chip away at the foundation of our moral character."

Bethel, S.M. (1990). *Making a Difference: Twelve Qualities That Make You a Leader* (p. 68). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

I. Introduction

"The importance of character goes all the way back to the philosopher Aristotle, who emphasized that character is a habit, daily selecting right from wrong. Character is developed during peacetime and must be a part of a general's [leader's] makeup in both peace and war" (Puryer Jr., E.F. (2000). *American Generalship* (pp. 360-361). Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc.)

Our character is the sum total of our distinguishing mental and ethical traits. It is how we think and act and it reveals who we really are as individuals. Our character reflects the values we *actually* believe in and live by. The character of a leader is important because a leader provides an example that influences and sets a *standard* for other people. Knowing, developing and using the right elements of character are key aspects of leadership.

Character Defined:

- one of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual
- the complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person, group, or nation
- moral excellence and firmness

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 1/11/06, <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/character>.

- "Perfect, holy and righteous character is the ability in such separate entity [person] to come to discern the true and right way from the false, to make voluntarily a full and unconditional surrender to God and His perfect way—to yield to be *conquered* by God—to determine even against temptation or self-desire, to *live* and to *do* the right. And even then, such holy character is the gift of God."

Source: Armstrong, H. W. (1985). *Mystery of the Ages* (p. 58). Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God.

II. Character and Leadership

Wise and effective leaders build good character, maintain high moral and ethical standards for themselves and for those they lead and serve. Morality involves thinking—*knowing* right from wrong. Ethics involve action—*doing* the right thing.