

# Character Formation

By Dana Chau

Jeff Iorg wrote in The Character of Leadership:

*“The biblical qualifications for leadership stress character more than skill, education, or experience. Conversely, for ministry leaders, character failure undermines and cancels out prior results to a greater degree than for leaders in other fields. Character failure for ministers often invalidates everything done prior to the sin. Churches are devastated, people leave wounded and discouraged, and ministries take a long time to recover.”*

No one is endowed with good character at birth. Good character is not forged by crisis. Crisis only reveals character. Good character is always formed intentionally.

## John 13:1-17

Jesus faced the crisis of his life. He would soon be betrayed, arrested, abandoned, tortured and crucified. Jesus was mindful of these forthcoming events. And this passage revealed Jesus' character and His desire to pass on His character to His disciples, to you and me, if we are willing.

Christian character is vital, because we all face temptations and trials. Without strong character, life's challenges can devastate a person. Break up a family. Take away opportunities that can bless our lives.

The time to form Christian character to guide our decisions and actions is before the crisis comes. Let's consider some components for character formation from Jesus' life.

## The REASON: Love (Verse 1)

The character of Jesus was motivated by love. Love for you and me.

Love is like the weed killer and fertilizer combination. When love is the reason for character formation, love keeps bad character from taking root and enables good character to bloom.

Love wants the best for self, for others and for God. When love is the motive, Christian character will be the result.

## The GOAL: God's will (Verse 3)

Paul Powell wrote, “God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. His goal is not to pamper us physically but to perfect us spiritually.”

If we want to develop good character, we must see life's difficulties as character-forming opportunities to obey God. Pray often, “Father, not my will, but Yours be done.”

## The EXAMPLE: Christ (Vs 4-16)

People, especially Christians, want to possess godly character. But many are relying on will power. The honest ones will agree with 1 John 1:8, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

Jesus Christ, however, was perfect. He was without sin. And He offers to develop His character in us.

Christians are not called to a method or a list of virtues. We are called to follow Christ as our loving Example.

To make this practical, we need to be familiar with the Gospels. To meditate on Jesus' responses to life's circumstances. To learn His attitude toward people and toward God the Father.

## The MEANS: Behavior. (Verse 17)

Jesus in Matthew 7:24-27 reminds us to be doers of His Word. One of my mentors, Bill Moyer, said, “Dana, don't kid yourself. Insight is good. But until behavior changes, nothing changes.” Character formation is one behavior at a time and repeated over a long time.

Our character formation is an expression of love for God and love for others. We are not going to be perfect on this side of Heaven. The good news is that Christ is our Example and Helper (His death broke the sin barrier for us, and His spirit empowers us). He loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way.