

Character Examination

Romans 5:3-4 NKJV but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

The goal of Character Examination is to begin to develop a skill of self-awareness. If we are not objectively and carefully analyzing our actions and discerning their benefits our defensive reasoning can easily convince ourselves nothing is wrong. We can come to believe all is good within us. Yet it doesn't make sense to agree that we have sin, but do not need to change anything. That would be like saying, "I'm good enough" without really digging in to know if it is true. There is no objectivity without a thorough evaluation.

Evaluating ourselves can evoke emotions, fears, impatience, intolerance, and frustration. Sometimes it can involve a fight against ourselves because something inside tells us not to do it. So it is normal to experience delay, postponement, and avoidance of completing the evaluations. It takes courage, humility, and self-discipline to look squarely at our personal truth and own it.

Most of us will not want to look. We might quickly change the subject or develop reasons why we really don't need to do it. The suffering referred to in Romans 5 leads to Godly character development. Many want such development, but few will be willing to step into the "suffering" process to with "perseverance" to let such character be developed.

If we have given ourselves over to God then we are willing to let God develop us for God's good. Perfection is a journey, not a destination. We strive toward what is perfect, little by little, letting go of our old beliefs to build new understandings about God's ways and interests. We continue to learn how God's grace is good. Humility, sincerity, and love moving toward peace is the continued goal. As we learn to grow such character within us and outward with others, we can experience the good that comes from it.

New action is necessary for us to change. We must move from thinking, talking, listening, and reading (passive learning) to new active experiential learning to witness and experience new results.

We ought to move our evaluations of ourselves from our minds onto paper. Information in our minds can easily become minimized, exaggerated, forgotten,

or hidden. Developing Godly character requires a continued conscious effort to see how we can correct ourselves further toward Godly character. We make a list of our character traits both evil and good. Evil may sound like a bad word tempting us to avoid it or use another, but that would disagree with the Bible. Perhaps our uncomfortable feelings about evil may have some good behind them. To grow, we will need to face situations that are uncomfortable and persevere.

Judgement

Martin Luther King Jr. “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

One important point about judgement. We need to judge what is good and what is evil. The Bible is full of messages about judging good from evil. Our minds are to set toward what is good, but first we will need to gradually develop an understanding of good and evil. Such understanding about invisible and intangible material will be best brought about through experience.

Let’s begin judging ourselves by the content of our own character. In order for us to be any good at character judgement, we will need to learn correctly what good character looks like in ourselves and others. We will need to develop and experience good character to really understand it. Two recommended concordance studies are provided below.

[Good Character](#)

[Evil Character](#)

Shame or guilt

One character defect involving shame can involve mental self abuse. Thinking evil thoughts toward one’s self for whatever reason can rarely be good. This kind of thinking involves intention to punish, put down, or hurt. It can be a habit developed from childhood through years of parental criticism. But how it came to be is not as important as how to begin to gradually make corrections. Forgiveness, mercy, love, truth, and justice can help bring about good spiritual growth with such thoughts and attitudes. Our mental attitude toward life, God,

others, and ourselves will need to be closely evaluated little by little to learn how to make corrections.

Even with this evaluation we can easily uncover some actions we may fear to see. It is crucial to own our choices and actions and muster up enough courage to be clear about it.

Evaluate

We evaluate ourselves for facts about our actions. What do we do with our time? The following worksheet is provided based upon an 8 hour sleep schedule. There are 16 spaces provided for the left over hours in a day. Due to our cognitive bias nature and self deceptive tendencies (see [mind tricks](#)) it can help us to be humble and thorough to find the facts about ourselves. We ought to be careful not to be guarded or protective in this evaluation process. Fear, pride, and self-seeking can block the process. If we get defensive we may distort the information. We ought to be clear and as objective as possible to see the facts while learning enough humility to accept correction. Doing this with someone who knows us can sometimes help us be more accurate. We must be truthful in this process with humble sincerity for spiritual conviction. We can see the facts for what they are so we can make better choices. We can learn a lot about our thinking and decision making process through this experience. Our minds unchecked can interfere with truth or objective analysis.

The first and perhaps easiest examination is write down precisely what we spend time doing.

Examples:

Necessities: Eating, hygiene, school, chores, exercise, etc.

Leisure: Music, videos, games, puzzles, books, sports, shopping, art, etc.

Spiritual unpaid: Prayer, meditation, reflection, mentoring, groups, church, reading, serving, helping others etc.

Other: Each of us are unique in what we do and how we do it. Some of us are black and white thinkers, some perfectionists, while others seeking to apply as little effort as possible. It's best to think diligently with this process while not

Going Inward

Evaluate our inward purposes:

Our goal is to seek God; love, mercy, peace, truth, justice, etc. Yet we may have other inward motivations like fear, anger, vanity, lust, etc. Such thoughts and attitudes can affect our choices, actions, relationships, and inward spiritual condition.

Here are some varied descriptions of thoughts we ought to watch for: Complaining, happy, excited, hopeful, loving, peaceful, compassionate, empathetic, caring, condemning, faultfinding, fearful, worried, angry, wandering, obsessing or fixed, drifting, empty, task focused, critical, pessimistic, optimistic, regretful, doubtful, confident, pleasing, depressing, slow, racing, distracted, unfocused, etc.

A Thesaurus can be helpful to increase our learning. Here is a link to one online: <https://www.thesaurus.com> just type in a word to see other related terms.

Character List

Our actions can often reveal the character we are developing within us. The character we practice is the character we are developing. We ought to seek to practice God's character more and more to continue to develop it.

If we say we want to develop peace and yet we rarely slow down then we may be deceiving ourselves. "Trying" without really doing anything different can be of little value. Our results will prove what we obey. If we are obedient to God's truth then we will move in that direction. God is good and if we can give ourselves over to it we can taste and experience that good.

More Examples

(Godly examples - Truth, Love, Mercy, Forgiveness, Generous, Just, Peace, Compassion, Patience)

(sin - dishonest, resentful, withdrawn from intimacy, hold grudges, impatient, miserly, anxious, fearful, selfish, irritated, discontent, uncaring, unfair)

Some examples of destructive character - I lied to my friends, avoided taking responsibility for my actions, didn't show up for things I said I would, held grudges, kept secrets, focused on negative things and blamed other people, used others for selfish gain, blamed, complained, and avoided actions toward solutions. I isolated or avoided people. I mostly thought or did for myself, my own benefit. I upset others for entertainment purposes and participated in useless arguments. I stole things. I cheated.

Examples of corrective actions - Spoke the truth, took responsibility, improved attendance, practiced forgiveness, confessed, thought more positively, served others, owned mistakes, present and approachable to others, built integrity, took action toward solutions, repaired damaged relationships, practiced generosity, and demonstrated empathy.

We ought to make the list and be specific. This can help us learn about ourselves so we can set some goals for corrective action. God gave us free will and the power of choice. We will need to choose and act. Our goal is to move forward toward building results with increased godly character traits in our lives. One measure of success is when others close to us are seeing and experiencing change in us where they are describing our demonstration of godly character. Quite often, such reports are spoken with joy.

Attitudes List

We write down descriptions of our mental attitudes. How would we describe our mental attitude with our friends, self, family, and acquaintances. What do we think about ourselves and the world we live in? What kind of feelings do such thoughts provoke within us? Do our actions align with our thinking or are we thinking one way while acting another? How do our attitudes, thoughts, and actions affect our relationships?

Examples of destructive attitudes - I don't care, avoid intimacy, don't trust others, defensive, guarded, don't let people know what I really think/dishonest or fake, try to take advantage of others/selfish ambition, grudges toward self or others/resentment, avoid people/withdrawn, want to be in control, avoid making decisions, blame everyone else for all my problems, think I'm the victim.

Examples of corrective action: Prayers to learn and do God's will, speak sincerely, begin trusting in small doses, find good in others, share something

about self with others, do something that benefits others, practice forgiveness, help others and ask for help, find humor with love, see how we are all victims and how we can help each other.

We ought to write down the impacts of our mental attitudes.

Attitude Affects of fear, anger, worry etc.: people seem to avoid me or don't like me, I hurt those close to me with my choices and actions, I get confused and have lower confidence, feel alone, ashamed, and embarrassed by my actions. I've lost income from poor choices, lost trust, or my quality of life seems lower due to my reactions. I have lost faith or hope. I'm uncertain what to do.

Corrective Action

“It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer.” Albert Einstein

The Einstein quote “stay with problems longer” means it is wise to stay with the problem seeking a solution and not moving away from the problem until we have a solution. Einstein was seeking solutions for problems, but he needed to keep focused to continue breaking the problems down into their finer parts to see how they worked. Then he would continue looking at how to fix it while persevering until he arrived at a corrective answer.

Many people recognize Einstein as a genius, but the quote is suggesting it's not his DNA that was genius, but the use of his time and mental focus. He persisted toward solutions. This is true with any genius. To increase intelligence about something will require a higher level of time and energy toward it.

Another example is a man named Stephen Hawking. He would sit and think for hours about space, physics, etc. His mind invested a tremendous amount of focus upon such things.

Moses and Jesus both agree we ought to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Philippians 4:8 NIV “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Reflection and meditation about God's ways, purpose, will, and character is a necessary regular activity for our development. We ought to do it each and every day throughout the day. Yet, progress is the focus, not perfection.

We ought to be imperfectly progressing toward perfection.

Fear and Anger

Fear and anger can impede our development. We learn more how fear and anger can be harmful to us and how God's faith and forgiveness can be helpful.

We evaluate ourselves for fear and anger and get it down on paper. We make a list where we experience fear or anger. We describe the who, what, when, where, and our reasons for it. We seek an objective description of our inward condition. We "stay with the problems longer." We stay with 'our problems' not someone else's. We can change our thoughts and choices if we understand them better and how to improve them.

We ought to seek growth with God's character. As we grow others can witness and be affected by our changed attitude. Our improved character can inspire and influence others. Sharing our experience can be the light of hope for many others to find freedom.

Once we make our lists we ought to share and discuss them with another person who is also on this path. This discussion can further our understanding even more if we can remain humble, and seek spiritual solutions. We can learn more about ourselves through sharing and with each other deeper spiritual truth.

Example List

I'm angry or resentful at/about:

1. Boss
2. Spouse
3. Parent
4. Friend
5. Government
6. Life

Next we can refer to the number and write down our reasoning:

1. Not promoting me.
2. Being unfaithful
3. Never around
4. Lying
5. Evil and manipulative
6. Unfair and cruel

We will need to review our attitudes and actions with these situations. We ought to see if our actions and attitudes brought about any problems with the above situations. We can use the number system again to keep consistent.

1. (Boss) I was late a lot and complained.
2. (Spouse) I yelled at and belittled my spouse. I would make myself unavailable.
3. (Parent) As a teenager, I avoided my parents a lot and felt uncomfortable around them.
4. I shut down and wouldn't talk at times.
5. I was selfish and would not volunteer or contribute to society.
6. I was pessimistic, distrusting, and uninvolved.

There are many ways where we have fallen short of God's goal for us and just as many ways where we can receive correction with God's Goodness/Righteous Adjustments. It is important to improve our ability to see, recognize, identify, and understand how our choices and actions affect the spiritual condition within ourselves and others.

We seek spiritual truth within our thoughts, motivations, attitudes, and actions. We examine what we are about with the goal of learning how to be more about God. We set our attention toward one way we can improve our alignment with God's grace and see how our participation with it feeds our souls. We must be patient with perseverance willing to continue long enough to witness and experience the spiritual results. Growth takes time. When we water a dying bush it doesn't flourish green in a day. If we continue to feed our souls with God's good character with sincere truth and humility we will experience amazing grace.

Daily spiritual evaluation and adjustments (Example list)

Sin	What happened?	Mind & Heart affects	Righteous Adjustment
Greed	I kept money for myself not thinking about or caring for others. Focus on selfish gains.	Fear of what others think-having less, decreased self-esteem, guilt, feel separated or emotionally distanced, competing.	End idolatry, humbly increase sharing with others, generosity, mercy, seek building Love, belonging, and peace. Create thoughts toward these Godly character traits.
Lust	Envy others, want more, judge others by appearance, sexual gratification.	Feel inadequate, unsatisfied, emotionally empty, alone, superficial, shallow, bored, desire physical gratification.	End idolatry, humbly correct deceptive thoughts, build empathy, focus on the hearts of others. Discuss and redirect temptation toward God and pray.
Gluttony	Seeking food for good feelings or avoiding feelings, filling stomach for satisfaction, indulging in taste and smell for pleasure.	Feel ashamed, insecure, weak, anger, fearful, helpless or hopeless attitude. Bored, deprived, spiritually empty, and the need for control. Goal is always more...	End idolatry, instead of food or body image we humbly seek spiritual connection with others, confess and share our feelings, seek compassion and intimacy. Seek the truth.
Pride & Vanity	Worry about what other people think. Focus on self-image, have the last word, be better than others	Feel alone, angry, untrusting, unsafe, guarded, fear of disapproval.	Humble ourselves, pray for acceptance, help the needy, talk about faults, and weaknesses. Learn to laugh at self and mistakes.
Resentment	Hold grudges, fault finding, complaining, victim thinking, defensive, expect the worst	Angry, guarded, hard hearted, hold grudges, protective, untrusting, seek retaliation, passive aggressive.	Forgiveness, mercy, seek peace, humbly seek to understand others with empathy. Pray for others good. Realize our own faults first.

<p>Self - Condemnation</p>	<p>Think how bad things are going to happen. Deny compliments. Sabotage good things.</p>	<p>Focus on fear daily, feeling afraid and anxious. Believe hopeless thoughts and focus upon helplessness.</p>	<p>Stop sabotaging and let good things happen. Own the one sided thinking and see the other side. Receive compliments with love.</p>
<p>Dishonesty</p>	<p>False flattery to make others feel good, lie to control others, manipulate to get our way. Avoid responsibility.</p>	<p>Think about manipulation and control over relationships. Learn ways to take advantage of others. Lie to ourselves about our spiritual damage. Emotionally fake and spiritually empty.</p>	<p>Humbly confess our dishonesty and take responsibility for our corruption. Be real/genuine, sincere, & honest with others. Seek God's character of compassion, truth, justice, and peace. Let Godly character have control.</p>
<p>Idolatry</p>	<p>Trust in things other than God. Love money and material things/electronics. Rely on money for safety more than God.</p>	<p>Place security and/or dependency upon money, material, status or people. Feel empty, uncertain, lost direction, confused, and alone.</p>	<p>Reduce superficial practices. Increase practices with compassion, truth, love, peace, etc.. Make God a higher priority in thoughts and actions. Practice the greatest commandment each day.</p>
<p>Approval from others</p>	<p>Worry about what other's think. Seek to win approval. Control and manipulate others.</p>	<p>Nervous, anxious, & fearful of not being accepted. Fear mistakes. How other people view us can dominate our thoughts.</p>	<p>Reduce thought about others and increase thoughts about God. View others as God's people. Learn to be okay with others not approving of us.</p>
<p>Control</p>	<p>We must be in control. Do not trust others. Want something done right, do it yourself. Be a step ahead of everyone else.</p>	<p>Responsible for everything and everyone all the time. Feel anxious and fearful frequently. Fear mistakes and problems.</p>	<p>Learn the good in struggles and conflict. Let go of controlling results and let Godly action create Godly results. Evaluate Godly results. See how it works when we trust more with God.</p>

Sloth	Do it later. Avoid discomfort and postpone action. Excuses... I don't feel like it. I'll wait until it feels right.	"To do" list is piled up. Can feel shame, overwhelmed, or insecure. Others can think less of me due to lack of productivity. Lost belief in abilities or hope.	Humbly seek God in prayer and seek support from others. Confess feelings and thoughts. Stop listening to self direction, take small steps toward goal, take action daily for gradual improvement.
Self-pity	Nothing seems to work. Focus on the negative. Bring others down. Think I'm the victim. Feel hopeless and helpless.	Feel miserable & unmotivated, reduce interest and concern for self. Sabotage solutions others suggest. Not trying seems like a better idea.	Own the lack of effort and negative thought messages. Practice God's truth, confess fear & anger, think sincere affirming positive thoughts daily. Spend time with others who have overcome their self pity and ask questions then listen.
Isolation	Keep others out. Don't trust people.	Loss of intimacy, connection, increased loneliness.	Spend time with others daily, build intimacy, and practice compassion.
Dishonest	Bend the truth to make it more agreeable with my beliefs. Just lie, it's easier. Lie to avoid conflict or make others feel better.	Fear of conflict with others. Avoiding accountability feels a lot better than facing personal truth. Avoid others who speak truth because it's uncomfortable.	See how uncomfortable truth has helped many people. Learn to face personal fears of discomfort with truth. Let the truth teach us through trial and error. Balance the truth with love and patience toward peace.

Creating such a list can involve seeing parts of ourselves we may wish to avoid. Avoiding corrective action is a problem. We ought to act toward solutions. Progress will not happen without progressive action. Taking corrective action may feel counter to our normal ways of living. Our minds may resist due to our brain being wired to perform differently. We will need to retrain our thinking through practicing new action. Even after we have progressed and have mastered such progression, we will need to continue to challenge ourselves for new growth to occur. We can always improve and grow, if we continue to apply ourselves toward such growth.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. WEB

We ought to guard against arguing, blaming, faultfinding, fighting and distractions. Instead we ought to patiently seek out what is Godly right. If we think or say the words, “ya, but” then we may be listening to the resistance within our beliefs. We ought to go in prayer to God about such matters. Pride, fear, selfishness, lies, anger and resentment can be involved. Once we remove these and take on an attitude of humble and sincere love, mercy, forgiveness, generosity, peace, truth, justice, and compassion the defensive manners within us can fade away. We will need to practice choosing to follow God over our own understandings.

We ought to see how we can demonstrate God’s Goodness, Righteousness, and mercy more than showing everyone how right we are or how much we know. We can begin to practice highlighting God’s character instead of our self-image. Humble sincere love may be the best attitude for spiritual development. We ought to continuously clothe ourselves with humble sincerity.

We ought to practice examining ourselves continually to improve spiritual awareness. It can be tempting to evaluate others, but we ought to always know our own weaknesses and sin more than others. We ought to practice sharing our own faults and how we correct them before trying to help others with their faults. Our practice of Godly good will help others in Godly ways. Demonstration can often times be the best teacher. As we make Righteous Adjustments we can often witness different responses from those around us. This is a gradual process that requires perseverance and patience.

We can use the blank chart below as a guide to to work through our own inward conditions. We can easily draw one of these up on any blank sheet of paper. It’s best not to be too proud about the appearance of the work or trying to have done perfectly. We will learn as we go and will improve our ability as we do it. Delay can often lead to avoidance. So we ought to get right to it.

Sin	What happened?	Mind & Heart affects	Righteous Adjustment

As we do this we ought to seek God in prayer for guidance, truth, and strength to better do God's will. Facing ourselves is essential to make the much needed corrections and adjustments. It may be best to confess our sin with spiritual brothers and sisters. It can often times help others as much as it helps ourselves.

If we are having trouble identifying our sinful ways we can consult those around us for some ideas. Chances are they might know a few things about us we can't see. If we approach others with humble and sincere love they may be ready to help. If are impatient, aggressive, angry, or sarcastic they may be less interested in helping out. Our attitude can greatly affect our spiritual work. Humbling ourselves in prayer, even if all we do is humble ourselves, can be helpful.