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STUDY GUIDE I – “CHARACTER”

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT

Everyone wants "a good reputation." After all, it's our reputation that goes before us and opens many of the important doors in life. And yet the words of Abraham Lincoln remind us that **reputation** is only the reflection of an even greater quality; that of **character**. Lincoln wisely observed that "Character is like a tree and reputation is its shadow. The shadow is what we think it is and the tree is the real thing."

So how do we grow and develop a strong character... 'the real thing'. This study has been purposely developed to assist any individual or small group of like-minded individuals, in grappling with the difficult questions surrounding the development of a stronger character.

OVERVIEW

What makes up a person's character? There are many ways to look at this question, but all roads ultimately lead to the same destination: simply put, a person's character consists of those qualities that determine his or her response to the circumstances and challenges of life.

Character is what motivates us to respond in the way that we do when confronted with the realities of life that require us to make choices or decisions.

But character is NOT what we do... it's who we are. It's not the choices or decisions themselves; rather it's the moral fiber of our being from whence those choices and decisions flow.

Consider the following:

1. A man determines to exercise every morning before work, and then proceeds to follow through on his decision. It's the discipline of following through that reflects his character...
2. A team leader understands that the team's success depends on every member's contribution, and so she directs all accolades and recognition toward the entire team rather

than soaking up the spotlight. It's the humbleness of putting others first that reflects her character...

3. A high-school student musters the strength to say "no" in refusing to go along with others in performing a hurtful prank when he knows that it will cost him dearly in popularity and approval ratings. It's the courage of standing on principle that reflects his character...

4. An employee decides not to seek reimbursement for illegitimate expenses on her expense report even though no one will know the difference. It's being truthful at all times that reflect her character.

These four character qualities: Discipline, Humbleness, Courage, and Honesty are critical traits to which we will direct our attention in this study.

The Greek word for character is "charaktér," which is the word originally used to describe an engraving tool or the impression left by an engraving tool. In Scripture, the word for character means "express image." Christ is referred to in Hebrews 1:3 as the "express image" of God. And we find in Romans 8:28-29 that one of Christ's primary goals is for us as Christians to be conformed to His image.

Before you begin this study, please spend a minute quietly asking God to use this material and His Word to help you develop stronger character by conforming more into the image of His Son.