

Character Matters

by Glenn Meldrum

Glenn Meldrum's sermon highlights the critical role of character in shaping our lives, relationships, and effectiveness in ministry.

Duration: 1:02:44

Topics: "Character"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of possessing and utilizing the power of God. He contrasts the lack of silver and gold in the biblical story with the abundance of material resources in America today. The preacher calls for a return to a genuine relationship with God through prayer, highlighting the need for pastors and believers to spend more than just 15 minutes a day in prayer. He also emphasizes the significance of prayer in transforming marriages and parenting, urging believers to possess and demonstrate God's love to their children. The sermon concludes with a reference to the Song of Solomon, highlighting the longing and pursuit of the beloved (Christ) by the Christian.

Transcript

For more messages by Glenn Meldrum and his Presence Ministries, go to www.ihpministry.com. You are welcome to make additional copies of this CD for free distribution. There is a God that changes us, and if we begin to understand what character is all about, He's a God that changes our characters from bad, fallen characters to that which is a godly character. And as we look at this issue of character, we're going to see something about how healthy it is to our own persons, to our families, and to communities, and to the church, and so on.

It is life. And what is death to marriages, what is death to children, what is death to communities, is the fallen, sinful, wicked nature. Every single divorce that has ever happened is all about sin being unleashed in a home.

It's all about a sin nature. That's what it's all about, sin unleashed in a home and reaping the wages of sin in that household. You take care of the bad characters, and guess what? You have healings in homes.

That's just the way it works. So what is character? Our character is our nature, our temperament, our disposition, our personality, our moral fiber. It is who I am as a person.

It is literally who I am. It's how I think, it's how I act, it's how I talk, it's what I am when nobody else is around. It's what I am in private.

It's what I am in the home that the family just sees, that I may act one way at home and another way at church, but my character is the reality of what I am wherever I am. If I'm faking it in church, then acting like a nightmare at home, what I am at home is what I really am. There are no shortcuts to the move of God, no shortcuts to godliness.

We must go through the path and deal with the things that he brings before us that we might be changed by the power of God. Let me give you a story about this that I think is very helpful, because when we look at the move of God, and though this isn't going to be directly about the move of God, this is so integral to the move of God. So I want to touch on the revival that was in Wales.

One of the primary evangelists of that revival, his name was David Morgan. David Morgan was preaching at the city called Devil's Bridge. As what happens often when the power of God is really made manifest, and the glory of God falls, there's this thing of the weight of his presence, because in the Hebrew the word glory means weight, and so it refers to the weight of his presence.

And I have seen this time and again in the revivals I've been a part of, and meetings that we've had, and so on, where his presence will fall in such a way, and the weight of his glory is there, and sometimes people don't want to move. The service is done and they just sit there in silence as the holiness of God has descended upon the people, and the power of God was in the service this night, and finally in the wee hours of the morning, David Morgan is walking home with the pastor, spending the night at the pastor's house. They walk in silence for a time until eventually the minister breaks the silence and he goes to David Morgan and he says, my, we had a wonderful service this evening, didn't we, Mr. Morgan? And he says, yes we did, but God would do greater things if he could trust us.

And that took the minister back, and the minister responds and says, what do you mean if he could trust us? David Morgan says, if he could trust us not to rob him of his glory, and at the top of his voice he screamed out, not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto you be glory, power, honor, and might. Now, this is a bigger issue than we understand, am I trustworthy? Because if I'm not trustworthy, God will not give me his glory to any great extent. Now, we don't really believe that, I don't think we're really convinced that, we don't understand how important character is, that if I'm not an individual that he can entrust his glory to, he will withhold it.

They have this old saying that says, few survive the anointing, and what that means, basically the thought that's behind it, is that there have been many, many a man that has been destroyed, not by the power of God, but by bad characters, and when the power of God was made manifest, it brought to light the bad character, and as a result they were destroyed by it. Can we really handle the glory of God, are our characters as such, that if the heat of God, the heat and the fire of his presence came, what would start to come out of us? Would it be that which would be good and beautiful, or would it be that which is ugly things of our character? You know, I don't want to go through names, but we can think of names of individuals within the last 30 years, big name people that once saw the power of God, that fell in sexual sins or fell in greed and other things like that. There are people that are big names right now, that their entire ministry has changed from once to that which was for the glory of God and the salvation of the lost, to that which is now about offerings and they have their multi-million dollar homes.

They've been destroyed not by the power of God, but by bad characters that never came under the Lordship of Christ. They never allowed their characters to be changed. So when the glory came upon them, and the power started pouring forth, they were ruined, because the glory revealed what was in them.

Let me make this very personal. Let me bring it down to my life. I was saved in a genuine revival.

After being saved about 6 years, when I was 24 years old, my wife and I went to the streets of Detroit and we pioneered a church in the streets. Being saved in revival, I took that same heart into the church in Detroit and we had a very vibrant, active, alive church, a soul winning church, a church that was just aggressive in reaching the lost. It was very radical, filled with young people.

I mean, from all kinds of situations, we had bikers out of one of the most violent clubs in Detroit called the Iron Coffins, just some violent individuals that some of them got radically saved. And then we had people that came out of the punk rock situation with Mohawks, and I mean, it was just, it was a different church. It was a different church, and God had saved many people out of it.

We had constant prayer meetings for revival. We ached for revival. We desired God to pour out His power to save in Detroit, to see a move of God happen.

Year after year, I preached on it. I desired it. I tried to move the church in that direction, but we never saw revival.

Then I went to the next church and my final church. Those were all issues that I preached because I desired the power of God to be unleashed in the church. I saw it as the remedy, the necessary thing that was needed to make the church grow in tremendous ways was to see that power unleashed.

And it wasn't until I became an evangelist that God could finally reveal to me the truth because I was not able to handle it. You know what the truth was? He was good to hold revival from me and from that church because my character was not of such that He couldn't trust me with it. I was too proud.

I was too self-willed. I was too filled with me. And do you want to know how much that hurts? To start looking at the reality of what we are.

I could not see it in those days. I wish I could have because then maybe something could have been done about it. Maybe I could have been changed in such a way that God could have done something tremendous in my life.

But because I could not handle it, I didn't have ears to hear it, it was only when I finally started maturing to the point that it could open my understanding and I was willing to look at myself. You know, that's a real difficult thing. Do we really want to look at ourselves? Do we really want to see what is causing the problems in our marriage? Do we want to look in the mirror because for so long we pointed fingers at our spouses.

We pointed fingers at bosses and everybody else in our life. Why we have breakdowns of relationships. Why things aren't the way that they should be.

So we blame all kinds of other people but we never change until we accept responsibility and start looking at ourselves. And so a principle that we need to understand is that we can only give what we possess.

Let's just pretend for a moment that at the end of church I'm going to write every one of you a check for a thousand dollars.

This is just pretend. But if it wasn't pretend and you got the check, you would be a very sad person come tomorrow when you went to the bank to try and cash it. I cannot give you what I don't possess.

I can be sincere as can be but you want to know that sincerity has nothing to do with the ability to give that which I don't possess. I could want with everything within me to give each of you a thousand dollars but I don't got it. So guess what? You'd never get it.

Same thing. If I don't got the power of God, there is nothing that I can give you then. If there's no anointing in my life, I have nothing to give you.

If there's not holiness in my life, I have nothing to give you. That is of good. I do give.

We all give. It's just a matter of what are we giving. Are we giving life or are we giving death? There's only two things.

If I'm not giving life, I'm giving death. If I'm not giving life to my children, guess what I'm giving to my children? It's gonna be one or the other. I can only give what I am.

So if bad character is coming out of me, guess what? I am bringing death. I am destroying. I am harming individuals.

Now that's not a pleasant thought but that's a reality. And you want to know what? We'll never change it until we begin to see the realities of ourselves. So everything reproduces after its own kind.

Everything. That's a principle that begins right in the beginning of Genesis 1. Sets the standard for the whole entire Bible in essence. It says in Genesis 1.11 that vegetation would reproduce after its own.

Apples reproduce apples. They don't produce oranges. I mean it's just the way that it is.

And then he tells us in the 21st verse that sea creatures and birds reproduce after their own. The beginning of Genesis brings out the reality of how creation took place and that evolution is an absolute lie. We did not come from slime on the sea.

You do not get everything that is out of nothing. I'm not going to take the time to go into how that is thoroughly against logic. It is just so unbiblical, unlogical, unreasonable.

There's no proof for evolution. In Genesis 1.24 it says that mammals would reproduce after their own. That means that dogs beget dogs and cats, cats and monkeys, monkeys and monkeys don't become men.

I do not have one ape in any of my ancestry. And then in the 28th verse it says that mankind reproduces after its own. Spiritually, this is a truth as well.

I can only reproduce what I am. I can only reproduce what I am. If I'm a carnal worldly man, that's all I'm going to be able to give.

That's all I'll be able to offer to another. My father was an unsaved man. Do you know what my father could offer his kids? Only death.

In his rebellion, in his selfishness, in his self-absorption, that's all he could teach. You know, we think of it in this way, that if you have this man that's a drunk, he says, well, yeah, he's teaching his kids wrong. But you can have a man that's a nice man, a nice man and still going to hell and guess what he's going to give his children? So you can be as nice as you can be if you're not saved.

What are you really doing to your children? You can only give what you are. Now, if you call yourself a Christian and you have a bad character, guess what that's going to do to your children? You're going to give death to your children because they're going to see you go to church. They're going to see you sing songs and they're going to watch you be a nightmare in the home.

And then they're going to say, why do I want to be a Christian? Look at what my father, look at what my mother was. That was a joke. Why would I want to be that? Do you know how many people have been turned off to Christ because the parents had such bad characters? They did not allow their characters to be transformed by the power of God.

They justified bad characters. So as a result, they were never changed. We can only give what we possess.

One day, Peter and John are walking along and Acts, the third chapter, and they see this lame man in the gate, beautiful. And he's begging for money and Peter and John walk up to him. And Peter turns to this man and he says, silver and gold, I don't have what I have.

I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk. Peter says, what I have, I give you. He didn't have silver and gold, so he couldn't give that.

But what he had, he could give. And the man stood up and walked. And you know, today, what we can do in America, we can say silver and gold.

We have. Why don't you go to the doctors? We can't say anymore. Rise and walk.

We're not disturbed by that. Are we disturbed that we can say no longer in America, rise and walk? But in other parts of the world, unbelievable things are going on. You can only give what you possess.

And so as if we don't have it, the only way that it begins to change, that we got to become honest with God. Say, God, I'm tired of praying for people, not seeing miracles. I'm tired of it.

We need to become a people that starts seeing the reality of it and begin to get on our face, restore the power, bring the reality back to us. We can only give what we possess. Now turn with me to the book of Galatians to the fifth chapter.

I want to just touch on a point about the works of the flesh versus the work of the spirit. And as you're turning there, let me share with you a story. I was preaching on the East Coast at this church a few years earlier, and I had come back and I had preached at another church in the area for a couple of years that was probably about 30 miles away or so, and they heard that I was there at the Southern Church and a few people came.

And this one woman came. We happened to know her because of being at that church. So I preached and gave an altar call, and God was doing some wonderful things.

The altar was packed full of people in repentance at the altar. And as what I often do is I'll go along and start praying for people, and I came up to this woman that had come down into the front. And when I came up to her and laid my hands on her and got ready to start praying for her, she turned to me and she says, God has showed me that I have a spirit of lust and a spirit of anger.

She says, I get so angry at my husband just over nothing, and then I've had such a problem with lust, and then I need this thing cast out of me. And I looked in her eyes, and I spoke her name, and I says, you don't need the devil cast out of you. You got a bad character.

And you want to know what? She was at that altar crying. After I told her that, she was at that altar bawling. Sure is easy to blame the devil for my life.

Sure is easy to blame the devil for my bad character, for my bad actions. Sure is easy to point the finger at somebody else. It wasn't a demon that she had.

She had a bad character. She had a character trait that she was not willing to allow Christ to conquer. It was bad character.

Nobody can make us angry. We get angry because we choose to get angry. It's a character issue.

You got an anger problem, it's a character issue. People never take care of the character issue. The character dimension of sins, you know what happens? The anger destroys marriages.

It separates. It becomes nightmares in the home. And then what you do? You teach your children how to be angry.

You teach them how to respond. Men teach their boys how to treat mothers one day, or wives. And so as if a husband treats his wife like trash, guess what the children will do? Do you hear what I'm saying? That's important stuff.

It's character issues. It's bad characters that are in us that we've not allowed Christ to conquer. And because we put this little Jesus stamp of approval on our lives, we think everything's fine and dandy, but our lives do not line up with the gospel.

It's a character issue. Galatians, the fifth chapter, and the sixteenth verse. Paul begins by saying, So I say, lead by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

He's just basically saying, if we live truly according to the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. So what if I am fulfilling the lust of the flesh? What does that mean? I'm not living according to the Spirit. What do we do? We say, well, I just got this little problem.

My, how we like to water it down, how we like to make ourselves look so much better than what we are at times. Romans 8 tells us in verses 5 through 8, puts it in a little stronger words. It tells us that the sinful nature is hostile to God.

So let's go back to the anger issue. You got an anger problem? Do you understand your anger is hostile to God? Not just hostile to your spouse, or not just hostile in the workplace, or not just hostile in a church meeting. It is hostile to God.

But so is lust, so is pride. So is self-will. Those things are hostile to God.

They are hostile to Him. Now that's disturbing. But let's go on, let's read again.

In 19th verse, he says, the acts of sinful nature are obvious. Let's stop there for a moment. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious.

Are the acts of the sinful nature in your life obvious? Are they obvious? If they're not obvious, it's not that they're not there. It's that some reason or another you become blind to them. Because I guarantee you the acts of sinful nature are in your life more than you comprehend.

This is what I touched on just briefly at the beginning of the message about self-righteousness. I don't understand it because I see the acts of sinful nature in my life. I see them wanting to rear their ugly head on a constant basis.

I understand what works inside of me. And I understand that the only way I can overcome them is deal with the reality of it and find myself like Paul that says, I die daily. It's the only way.

If you don't see the acts of sinful nature obviously in your life, then you need to get on your knees and you need to say, God, the biggest act of the sinful nature that I'm being plagued with is self-righteousness. God, deliver me from that. Because that's a work of the sinful nature.

The acts of sinful nature are obvious. Now, Paul's going to give a list here. But you know what, he has lists in other places of what the acts of sinful nature are.

So these are just some of them. If you read all of Paul's lists, if you just sat down and put Paul's lists all out, I guarantee you there'd be a whole bunch of them that'd be pointing a finger at you. I could demonstrate that every single one of us in this room, every one of us, unless of course you're an angel.

Is there an angel in here? No angels? So I can guarantee, I can demonstrate very easily that every one of us has broken every one of the Ten Commandments. Every one of us have broken them all. Now, let's read his list.

He says the acts of sinful nature are obvious. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage. This is an interesting American one.

I mean, it's a human one, so it was in his day. But I think it's really seen in a very strong way in America. Selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Now, that's a very scary statement. That if I live according to these things, I will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

How many people are church folk that are not going to inherit the Kingdom of God? How many? If you do it by the statistics of the Word of God, it's going to be only one out of three. That call themselves Christians. If you look in the book of Zechariah, and you look at the book of Revelation, it says they're only one out of three.

And that's a disturbing thing. That's why it's so important that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, like Paul said, so we know that we are right with him, and so that we're not deceived on that day of judgment when we stand before him. Because he says those who practice these things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Every single work of the flesh, and I want you to understand this, every single work of the flesh is destructive to marriages. Every single work of the flesh is destructive to children. Every single work of the flesh is destructive to churches, and to communities, and to nations.

Every single work of the flesh. If you have the work of the flesh operating and working in you, guess what? It brings death to your family. It brings death to relationships.

It separates. It divides. It is the very nature of what sin does.

That is one reason why Christ so much wants to deal with our character, to give us a new heart and a new mind. He wants to literally change who we are, how we think, how we act, how we talk, what we do, why we do it. He wants to get to the very core of it, because if he doesn't get to the core of it, we've only got a band-aid on our bad characters.

He wants to deal with it. He doesn't want to just kind of deal with your pride a little bit and put a band-aid on your pride. He wants to kill your pride, because your pride is absolutely evil to God.

It is hostile to God. Pride is hostile to God. Not a small issue.

Now let's look at the flip side, though. Just for a little passing thought here, when you read the Scriptures, look at transitional words, like then and but. They tie thoughts together, so here you have a transitional word.

So he's bringing a contrast here. He says, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with his passions and desires. Every fruit of the Spirit is life to a home, is life to children. There's an answer to bad marriages.

There's an answer to rough marriages, and it's the fruit of the Spirit. There's an answer to it. But the answer to it, the means in which it comes, means that we have to die.

He says those who are his have crucified the affections and lusts, those things that are destructive to relationship, those bad character traits. And let's look at it like this now. Let's take Bible language and make it modern to our day and age.

What is the sinful nature? Character traits. Bad, evil character traits. What is the fruit of the Spirit? They become godly character traits.

What we do often is when we look at the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of the flesh, we think of it as fruit. We kind of put it in the side. We don't look at it as character traits.

But if I've got the fruits of the flesh in my life, that is bad character. It is a bad character trait in me. And guess what he said, that the works of the flesh produce death.

But if I've got the fruit of the Spirit, if I've got godly character traits in my life, they will be made manifest in the home. They will be made manifest to others. And it gives life.

I can only give what I possess. I can only give what I possess. Let me give an illustration here that I think is kind of interesting about it.

Let's just say Jesse and I had a little bit of free time and we go for a walk in some woods around here. And while we're walking through the woods, I trip over this rock, this big old rock. And when I trip over this rock, I break off a little piece, a little edge of it.

And I look at it and it's this gold. So we lug the big old thing back to our car and stick it in the back of it, bring it to the motor home, and I'm scrubbing it up and washing it. And the more I wash it, the more it's this huge hunk of gold.

And I'm going, wow. And I keep scrubbing it and polishing it. And I talk to somebody and we find out that it's real gold.

So I found this big huge hunk of gold out there. And we decide to do something. We take this big hunk of gold that is so beautiful and shiny.

And I put it out here on the communion table. And you're all going, ooh and ah, where did you get it from? Well, I'm not going to tell you. It was the only piece there.

No more was around. We get a pot. We get a fire under it, a raging fire, and we start melting it down.

And so we look at this pretty gold liquid now. I come and take a little bit of flux and I pour some flux in the top of that. And the flux starts mingling with stuff, and all of a sudden this junk comes all to the top of it.

And we go and say, ooh, where did that garbage come from? And so we scrape it off. And now there's that pretty gold again. And we pour a little more flux in it.

And as we pour a little more flux in it, and more of this junk comes to the top, we say, where did that come from? And you know, it's always been there. The heat brought it out. We don't like that idea in our own lives.

When the heat comes on and we start seeing bad dimensions of our character come out, but that's what we have been. That's what we actually are. The heat brings out what we are.

The arguments in the home bring out what we are. The tensions in the home bring out what we are. The difficulties, the trials, the pain, even the success brings out what we really are.

And in those times, do we like what we are? Do we like what is really there? What we do is we deny them because they're not there on a constant basis. So we say, well, that's not really me. That's just this trouble in my life.

No, it's not. That's who you are. Do you want to deal with who you are? Or are we going to continue ignoring it? Because the price is very high.

If I don't deal with the reality of my character, my character stays bad. If it stays bad, what does it do? It keeps imparting death at times in my life. The worse my character is, the more death I impart.

There may be areas of my life that I'm imparting death a lot. But you want to know what? If I don't have the life of God radiating through me, then I have nothing to really give. Think about that.

Do you have anything really to give? Do you have anything really to give your children? They need more than Bible stories. They need the presence and power of God upon your life. And you can only give them what you possess.

And you know what? Sunday school can't give it to them unless they got it. Now that can be a very disturbing thing. And I could go on from situation after situation.

If we don't got the goods, we can't give it. If a Sunday school teacher doesn't have the goods, she can teach a nice little lesson from the Sunday school book and give nothing to those children. Actually give death to the children.

Let me give a story I once heard. I think it's kind of a disturbing one. I'm not saying this because a pastor, so this isn't to you pastor.

It's an old Puritan story. And this Puritan was in England. And he's walking along the streets.

And he's walking along the streets. He sees the devil preaching on the street corner. And he is just totally shocked.

The devil preaching. And so he goes up to the devil and says, Devil, why are you preaching? Why are you preaching the gospel? Then he looks at him with a sneer and just laughs. Says, what do you mean? Says, one of the most powerful tools I have for destroying lives is preaching without the anointing.

Preaching without power. Well, you know that goes for Sunday school teachers. Take little children and preach them without the power of God.

And guess what? It produces death to them. Because they'll go and they'll be so bored to death. They'll see no life.

They'll see no vibrancy. They'll see nothing worth following. That when they're 18, they're gone.

Do you hear what I'm saying? There's more to this than just going through motions. Character is of such a tremendous importance. This woman, Madam Jeannie Guyon, made this phenomenal statement.

She says, it will only be seen in eternity who are the true friends of God. Nothing pleases the Father but Jesus Christ and that which bears His mark of character. Nothing pleases the Father but Jesus Christ and that which bears His mark of character.

So you want to know how I can be pleasing to the Father? By looking like Jesus. The more I look like Him, the more I will be pleasing to Him. Now let me touch on this just for a moment.

Character and responsibility. In the Old Testament, there is no forgiveness for intentional sin under the Old Testament dispensation. No forgiveness for intentional sin.

So if you were a person who intentionally murdered an individual, there was no place you could hide. The avenger of blood could seek you out anywhere and take your life if you were guilty of murdering somebody intentionally. But if you accidentally killed somebody, unintentionally killed them, you could run to what

was called the city of refuge.

And in that city of refuge, as long as you stayed in that city, you were totally safe and He could not execute you for your crime. So there was no forgiveness for intentional sin, only for unintentional sin. In the Old Testament as well, if you committed adultery, there was no forgiveness, period.

The only thing that was left for the adulteress and the adulterer was to be the man and the woman. It somehow got mixed up that only the women were stoned, but they were supposed to both be stoned to death because God has very strong opinions about sexual sin. King David sinned in two ways.

He sinned in adultery and he sinned in intentional sin. He was guilty of unforgivable sins in the Old Testament. Psalm 51 is a psalm that comes out of his repentance.

David had sinned and then ignored his sin. He hardened his heart to God for a time. And finally, in the mercy of God, God sent Nathan the prophet to come and confront David in his rebellion.

And when God confronted him through Nathan, David did repent. There were consequences. I'm not going to go through the whole issue of consequences.

David suffered for that sin all the days of his life. Israel suffered for his sins. But there was a statement that David made in Psalm 51 where he says in the third verses, For I know my transgressions.

That's such an important thing. It goes back to the acts of sinful nature are obvious. They finally became obvious to him.

He realized that he committed adultery. He realized that he committed murder. He knew it, but he was in denial.

I'm the king. I can get away with it. And God says, No, I'm the king.

You can't. For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

There is a problem with humanity as a whole because it begins right in the garden of Eden and it's of the whole blame game. Adam and Eve sin and when they're naked in the garden and they see their nakedness because of their sin, they're hiding from God and think that they can get away with it and God confronts them with it. So what does Adam do? Adam blames Eve.

He says, Well, it's the woman you gave me. So Adam went in one fell swoop, blamed both God and Eve. It's the woman you gave me.

If you wouldn't give me this woman, I wouldn't have this problem. What did the woman do? It was the serpent's fault. He did it.

And what did the serpent do? He laughed. But we Americans have mastered the blame game. We master it.

That's why we have lawsuits that are coming out of our ears. We're not happy you did something to me. I'm going to sue you.

I'm going to get you. We blame all of the things in our life on somebody else rather than accepting responsibility. Like I said earlier, nobody can make you angry.

You know, if you get angry, you get angry because you choose to get angry. So what do we do? We blame our spouse. We blame our children.

We blame so and so. And what it is, is our characters that have gone out of whack, that have not come under his lordship. It's a problem in my heart.

It's a heart problem. It's a way of thinking problem. And so my heart and my mind need to be changed that my actions might change.

And so we will never change until we accept responsibility. There may be some of you in here that you have some very difficult marital issues. When you get a lot of hurt and pain in a marriage, they are not easy to deal with.

But I will tell you that there is an answer. And you know what the answer is? That if you really sit down before God or get on your knees and look in the mirror, spiritually look in the mirror and see what you are doing. Stop pointing at your spouse.

Stop pointing at your wife or at your husband. Stop blaming. And begin to deal with your character flaws, the sin in your life.

I guarantee you, if you change, your marriage will change. What we do is we point the finger at our spouses. Well, the marriage wouldn't be like this if she would change.

If she wouldn't do this, we wouldn't have all these problems. Well, you're the problem. So you deal with it.

Do you hear what I'm saying? That's very serious. Let me give this to you as an absolute. Almost 16 years I pastored.

Every person that came before me for marital counseling, every single one, those that would go the path of repentance and would not sit and blame each other but would deal with their own sin, there was healing for that marriage. Every single couple that sat before me and just pointed a finger at each other and says, well, she's such a jerk and he's so stupid. And all the things that come out of blaming each other, there was no hope.

No hope for that marriage. You knew where it was going to be. You knew sin was at the very core of it all.

Sin would be the destruction. It would end up in divorce. And all the divorce would do is perpetuate the sin in other ways because then they would go into adulterous relationships and I'm not going to go further with that one.

But all kinds of nightmares go further and deeper as a result. Let me touch on another issue of character and it's character in the tongue. The tongue really reveals our character a whole lot.

There's all kinds of verses on it. I'm only going to touch on two. The really big one is in James 3. I'm not going to take the time to go there.

But in Matthew 12, 34, Jesus says, You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. So he's bringing a reality out that out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. So what do you speak? Now you may go and speak nice things for a time.

What happens when you get angry? What happens when things get difficult? What happens when you get stressed? What happens when problems start arising? What comes out of your mouth now? Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. That is what is inside of you. The remedy is that when we see the reality of what's inside of us, we have to go the same route of David.

Against you, you only have I sinned, and done what was evil in your sight. What did David do? He couldn't go to God and say, I deserve forgiveness, because David understood that he was guilty of adultery, guilty of murder. There was no forgiveness for him.

The only two things left for David was judgment or mercy. And you know, mercy was all he needed. And so God offered mercy.

David couldn't go to God and make some sacrifice, because there was no sacrifice that would atone, in the Old Testament, for those crimes. But mercy could. And so David obtained mercy, and found forgiveness through mercy.

There is mercy for us. There is forgiveness for us. So what do we do? John brings it out in his epistle, that if any of us sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

When we really sin, there is a place of repentance. So you know what you do? Let me give some very simple marital advice here. All right, you've blown it.

You've done something wrong. Well, we have to use these words that are so important, that we have such difficult times doing, saying, I'm sorry. And do you know how you say, I'm sorry? I'm going to make this very simple.

I'm going to give some simple advice, about asking for forgiveness from your spouse, or children from asking from your parents. What you don't do, is you don't go up to your spouse and say, forgive me for getting angry, but you are such a jerk. Do you know many times how people ask forgiveness? They want to tell the spouse off.

That's all they're doing. They're telling the spouse off. And they're trying to have this little way of doing it, by saying, forgive me.

They're still angry. They're not asking for forgiveness. They're wanting to lunge at the spouse, and inflict pain.

Isn't that weird? How many times have we done it? We're angry. What do we want to do? We want to hurt. That evil thing that's within us, it's deeper than we understand.

So how do we ask forgiveness? Forgive me, I was wrong. That's it. No justification.

There is no justification. You were wrong. Forgive me, I'm wrong.

If you've got more to say, then you're not asking forgiveness. James 1.26 says, if anyone considers himself religious, and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself, and his religion is

worthless. The tongue does speak of the reality of where our hearts are.

So how does your tongue reveal your character? What is your character like? Now let me take you to something that is challenging with this as well. I mean, the whole thing is challenging, but I want to take you to something that is very important. Something that I have come to understand.

And really, it is an issue of such tremendous importance. We need to look at it much more in the Word, and much more in preaching and teaching. And it's the issue of brokenness.

What is brokenness? Brokenness is coming to the end of ourself. It is where we no longer can trust ourselves, no longer want to trust ourselves. All that we have left to trust in is Him.

It is the place of seeing our true neediness. You know, we cannot ever repent of sin until we begin to find that place of brokenness. Now for us to become a Christian, for any person to become a Christian, they've got to find brokenness to some extent in their life.

But we can be broken only to the point of salvation and go no deeper, and so we never mature in Christ. This is where the majority of Christians are. They never go deeper.

They're not a broken individual. So because they're not broken, they don't go any further. They don't grow.

So they can be 5, 10, 20, 30 years a Christian and never be any more mature than what they were when they were first saved or 5, 6 months old in the Lord. That's it. Maybe they have more Bible knowledge, but their character is just what it was.

The problems in their life are just the same. The marriage is in the same condition that it was in because they never found that place of brokenness. What is the place of brokenness? It's where we see how needy we are and we begin to become desperate for God to break into our hearts and change us.

Because until I see how I work in the flesh, guess what? I'll still work in the flesh. Then I will still give that to other people. I'll still impart that to other people because I can only give what I am.

When I see the reality of that, I can go to God. I can't change this by myself. Dear God, I see this ugliness in my character.

I see this anger. I see this lust. I see this pride.

Or whatever name we want to put upon it. And we say, God, I need this changed. The story of Smith Wigglesworth about his anger.

How did he deal with his anger? He went on his face before God sometimes in prayer and fasting for seven or ten days at a time pleading with God saying, change this ugly character of mine. And guess what? There's power to change. Why don't we change? Because we really don't want to.

If we wanted to, we would do something about it. Now I'm not going to tell you that's easy. It may be very, very costly.

But it's worth it. When you die to those things, you will find His life in its place. You will impart life to others then.

You'll become a person that is more trustworthy for God to impart His glory to. Now when God imparts His glory, it's all grace. We never deserve it.

So I don't want to get away from it as if we ever deserved it. But I'll tell you what, He does want to develop in us a character that He can entrust His presence to. That we will be faithful with what He gives us.

Let me take you to a statement of Kipha Simhanji, which was one of the pastors during the reign of Idi Amin that just devastated this nation. God took that horrid situation and brought the church to its knees to a place of brokenness. They had nothing else to look to.

They couldn't look anymore to their plans, their programs, or their situations. They had only the place to look to God. They started going in the jungles.

And the reason why they went in the jungles, because the police and the military would not follow them in there. They'd have their prayer meetings in the jungle. They'd come out of the jungles at night, eaten up by mosquitoes.

They'd go into the water up to their waist so that they could get away from the military. And that's where they'd have their prayer meetings. But they grew desperate.

They saw there was nothing else that could help. They came to a place of true, genuine brokenness. And in that place of brokenness, God started changing them and could use them as agents of change to change a nation then.

Kipha Simhanji made this statement. He says we must be broken even as Jesus was broken for the world. To be broken is to have no pride.

For where there is pride, there is no confession and no forgiveness. The broken one is he who is broken to heal. He is the one willing to give in, who doesn't find his identity in always being right.

The place of brokenness. I know that there's times the Spirit of God is moving in tremendous ways in the hearts of people. And there's people that need to be at altars.

There's times I could go through individuals and point at fingers knowing people are under conviction and see the stubbornness and pride of people that just sit there and say, I'll sit here and I'll talk to God. But God's been speaking to you to come forward. And pride stops it.

How can character ever change if we're too proud to deal with things in an altar? How much more is it going to be in a home? He referred to the issue here that brokenness is the destroying of pride because pride is all about me. It's all about our own ways, our own wants, our own ambitions. It's all about us.

We become the central figure of the situation. And so you know what happens? We find our identity in always being right. So let me ask, how many of you spouses find your identity in being right? And you know one of the proof of always being right? Never able to say I'm sorry.

You find your identity in always having to be right because you're not broken. You're not at the point that what is more important to you is the health of your marriage. This is so strange.

Isn't this weird? This is so weird. We can be more concerned about our own foolish pride than we are about the health of our marriage. Unwilling to apologize to a spouse when we've been wrong because

we're so determined about being right.

That we will let it affect the marriage. My father divorced my mother. And I was told this by my older brothers because I was only 4 or 5 years old when they got divorced.

My older brother ended up mentioning they didn't want the divorce but they were both so proud and stubborn they would never ask each other forgiveness since that was the end of the marriage. Went two separate ways. Didn't want the divorce but yet was not willing to say I'm wrong, I'm sorry.

How crazy pride is. In Matthew 21, 44 Jesus says, Whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken but on whomsoever it shall fall will grind him to powder. The stone.

Who's the stone? What's that speaking of? Speaking of Jesus. He's telling us two things. We have two choices.

That we can either throw ourselves on the stone on Christ and be broken or if we refuse to be broken He will in His love fall on us and grind us to powder. Both are acts of love that He would allow us to throw ourselves on Him and be broken of ourselves but if we will in our pride and stubbornness not be broken of our own self-will He will fall on us and start grinding. Now I have been ground because of my own foolishness of not responding to the conviction of God to the discipline of God and so He falls on me and starts grinding me.

God used the last pastor that I was in and I'm not going to take the time to go in there but it was a nightmare church. It was a nightmare church. They loved to eat rump of pastor after every Sunday morning service.

But on the menu a few times pastor. Pastoring is interesting. And you know He used that church to be that grinding stone.

It was necessary. Most painful thing I ever went through in my life but absolutely necessary because I could not see my neediness and it was in that place that I started to see my neediness. I was at a church earlier this year in Arizona preaching.

I was praying for people at the altar and I went up to a woman and she was the worship leader at this church and I went up to her and I just felt compelled. I do this occasionally for some individuals and I pray something over them that they don't understand how important it is when I'm really praying and I say dear God give this person a gift to see how desperately needy they are. And I prayed that over her and she went home infuriated at me.

She was so angry. She says I've been at this altar three nights. She says I've been repenting of my sin.

Who does he think he is to come and pray and tell me that I'm supposed to see how needy I am. What am I doing up here if I'm not seeing how needy I am? And as she fumed in that the Spirit of God started convicting her in her home and she started breaking down weeping. And the next night she came and she stood in front of the congregation and started repenting before the congregation of her pride of her self-will of this situation.

She confessed it all before the church. Nobody asked her to. She just stood up there confessing it because she started seeing the reality of her self-will of her pride.

Brokenness was finally starting to come into her a little bit and God could begin to do something. It was a pivotal change in the worship of that church. Till that time it was just hard and difficult and everything because guess what? She could only give what she had.

And it was in that place of brokenness that God started being able to do something through her that change could happen. If we fall on the rock which is the wisest thing we'll be broken. But He loves us so much He does not shrink from falling on us and grinding us about it.

He cares enough to do that. Let me share with you another story of Kipha Simpangi. A brother came and reproved Kipha.

He came up to Kipha and he read to him out of Matthew chapter 14 verse 19 that reads Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass and taking five loaves and two fishes he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds. Then this brother turned to Kipha and said Until God breaks your will He will never use you. You will remain only a nice loaf of bread.

Until you are broken you will be too proud to lose your life for sinners too proud to give your life away for imperfect people. You will end up like Judas making only a partial commitment to the body of believers to whom you belong and then finding your identity in rebellion from them. He refers to the issue of that place of brokenness.

Until we're broken we're just a nice loaf of bread can do nothing of great consequences. Only in that place of brokenness can we be multiplied and divided and be able to give life to others. It is a character issue when we begin to see our neediness.

Now let me move on to another issue and this is character and obedience. John 9, 31 The man born blind that Jesus healed makes a statement before the Sanhedrin council and he says We know that God does not listen to sinners He listens to godly men who do His will. The Lord gave the Spirit to Christ without measure because He never grieved the Spirit of God had never ever sinned.

Jesus never sinned never grieved God so He had it in unlimited proportion. Obedience is a character issue. Rebelliousness is a character issue as well.

If I'm rebellious that's who I am. Whether I'm a teenager whether I'm a parent whether I'm a husband or a wife rebelliousness is a character trait. Obedience is a character trait.

We have a very rebellious nation and the rebelliousness of our nation is manifested in music and movies and it glorifies rebellion. Let me give a very silly illustration. Years ago I had for our kids the movie Little Mermaid well eventually I wouldn't keep it anymore because as I sat down and looked at the message what the whole message was was about rewarding rebellion against the parent.

Yet if you rebel against the parent you'll get the boy you'll get married everything will be wonderful if you rebel. I'm going I don't want my children having a message like that that is all the rewarding of rebellion. Our whole society revolves around that but it's a character trait.

We become rebellious because that's who we are. So are you rebellious? Are you rebellious against parents? Are you rebellious against a spouse? Are you rebellious against a boss? It is a character issue. It's a character issue.

Let's look at this in a very interesting way. John 14 Turn with me to John 14 Beginning in the 15th verse Jesus says if you love me you will obey what I command. That's very simple.

So love is demonstrated by obedience. Well let's drop down to the 21st verse. Whoever has my commands and does them he is the one who loves me.

Well now he said this twice. Drop down to the 23rd verse. Jesus says if anyone loves me he will obey my teaching.

Three times now. Do you think Jesus means what he's saying here? How many times have we heard individuals I know I've heard it multiple times where people have said oh I love Jesus but they're living a life like the devil. They don't love Jesus.

If we're not following Jesus living like Him and striving to be in obedience to Him we don't love Him because love is demonstrated by obedience. This is reality. Let's drop down to the next verse.

What does Jesus say? He brings out the negative now. He says in the 24th verse he who does not love me will not obey my teaching. He brings that out again in the next chapter two more times.

Six times in two chapters He brings out the reality if you love me you'll obey me if you don't love me you won't obey me. So are you walking in obedience to Christ? If you're walking in obedience to Christ it's because you love Him. If you're walking rebelliously towards Him it's because you don't.

Are you walking in obedience to those authority over you? Whether it's a parent whether it's a pastor whether it's a boss or whatever whether it's a spouse are you walking in obedience? And this is a disturbing thing I'm going to upset the men for a moment. We're told in Ephesians before it tells the women to submit to men it says first submit one to another. So you want to know what? Men are to know how to rightly submit to their wives.

We don't like that because we are proud self-willed individuals and we think that they have to submit to us but we don't have to submit to them. Well you want to know what He calls us to? He calls the women to love their husbands as the church loves Christ. What does He call the men to? He calls them something greater more noble than that that I am to love my wife as Christ loves the church giving Himself up for her.

I am to love in a sacrificial love that could cost me and should cost me everything in my life. In essence I need to rightly submit to my wife. So men if you're rebellious to your wives it's because that's who you are.

Wives if you're rebellious to your husband that's who you are. That's your character. Now you know what the hope is? When we see the reality of the bad character well we fall on our knees and say God I'm some rebellious snot.

Dear Jesus deliver me from this bad attitude. Deliver me from this rebellious sin. Teach me how to love you.

Let me present you a truth that is so important that what I am in relationship to Christ is all I will be in relationship to others. That is so important. If I am rebellious towards others it's because I'm rebellious towards Him.

If I'm angry towards others it's because I have a breakdown in relationship between Him. The greater my relationship is between me and Him the more correct my relationship will be with everybody else in my life.

I must understand that.

So when relationships break down I have to understand there's a problem between me and Him. I need to deal with this. If this is dealt with it will start changing everything else.

But if this doesn't change it will change nothing else. Not for the good. What I am with Him is all I can be with others.

That's it. So blessings for obedience. Cursings for disobedience.

Deuteronomy 28 is a chapter that people have wrote many books about and the majority of them are very bizarre and distorted and not true. It's about blessings and cursings. That chapter is about blessings and cursings.

And so let me ask a question. Who do the blessings come from? God. Who do the cursings come from? Yes.

So we think the cursings come from the devil. But when you read that chapter the cursings come from God. He blesses, He curses.

Blessings come from obedience. He says, Bless will you be if you obey me. You'll be blessed in the city, you'll be blessed in the country so God can bless the country.

He says, Bless will be the fruit of your womb. What is your fruit of the womb? Your children. If you walk in obedience to Christ, then guess what? He says He will bless your children.

I see this so many times and I want to be careful, there are exceptions to the rule but when children go astray there's a reason for it. There's a reason for it. Six kids, let's say, if you have one or two maybe go astray that's something, but if you have all of them go astray there's something wrong in the home.

God gave us a promise that if I walk in obedience to Him my children will be blessed. Now either His word is true or it's a lie, but what does He also say then? He says, Curse will you be in the country and curse will you be in the city and curse will be the fruit of your womb. And what does He say? He says if you do not fully obey the Lord and carefully follow His commands.

Obedience to God is not a side issue. I am a failure without obedience to Jesus Christ. I'm a failure without obedience to Jesus Christ.

Obedience and rebelliousness is a character issue. So I challenge you, what are you? Are you a rebellious person? Or have you learned obedience? Now I want to close with the final and the most important issue about character. This is the most important.

It is character in my relationship with Christ. What do you have when you have a man that's a drunk and he goes to some program and stops drinking? What do you have then? You have what is called a dry drunk. What does that mean for a dry drunk? It means a man has not really changed on the inside.

He has stopped drinking. So he is still a manipulator, still a controller, still all the things that he had when he was a drunk, now he's just not drinking. Why? Because he's not been changed by Christ.

He's only stopped doing one thing to replace that rebelliousness against God with something else. That's all. He's a dry drunk.

The only way I can change is I must be in his presence. I must be as near him as possible. The nearer I am to him the more I will change.

I can give this to you. Listen to what I'm saying. When you look at Christians that have bad characters, all you got to do is look at their prayer life.

Look at the relationship they have with Christ. You see men that have bad characters, well, they get up in the morning, they go to work, they're interested about money, they're interested about sports, they're interested about playing, they're interested about television, well let's see their prayer life. Now you know why they got bad characters? Because of how they live.

What is important? The relationship with Christ or playing? Or money? What is it? If I'm a prayerless person, I'm going to be a person that will not find the help of God. E.M. Bounds made the statement, he who is too busy to pray is too busy to live a holy life. The only hope of holiness comes through the place of intimacy with Christ.

If I want to be holy, I must be intimate. If I need greater holiness, guess where greater holiness comes from? From greater intimacy. The more I am tied into Him, the closer I am, the more I'm united with Him, the more I will look like Him, act like Him, talk like Him, live like Him.

And the more I live like Him and act like Him, the more it will affect my home and change my home, change the business, change the state of the church. Let me share with you this wonderful verse. Mark the third chapter and the fourteenth verse.

It says, Jesus appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. Let me read that again and let me stop at where I want to make the emphasis. Jesus appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with Him.

What was it that Jesus wanted? He wanted those apostles to be with Him. Why did He want those apostles to be with Him? That was more important. It wasn't about the casting out of devils and the healing of sick.

What He wanted was for them to be with Him because when they were with Him, they would be changed by being with Him. They would look at Him, they would see how He did things, they would see how He loved, how He ministered, how He walked in compassion and mercy, how He responded to Pharisees and so on. They would see Him in action and the more they saw Him, the more they were with Him, the more they copied Him, the more they would become like Him.

He wanted them to be with Him. And how long were they with Him? For an hour a day? All day? Three and a half years they were with Him until He was taken up. We think that we can go and have fifteen minutes a day in prayer.

The majority of pastors pray across this country fifteen minutes a day. Why is the nation in shambles? Because people don't know what prayer is. They don't have relationship with Christ.

Why are Christian marriages falling apart? Because you pray to prayerless people that don't know what it is to go in the presence of God and plead with Him with the reality of their condition and say, God, change this selfish character of mine. Change this selfishness. Change the way that I think, oh God.

Because until I deal with it on my knees, there is no help. There is no help. The only place of help is on my knees before Him, pleading with Him to change me.

In Acts 4, the thirteenth verse, the church is suffering her first bout of persecution. And Peter and John are standing before the Sanhedrin council. And it says in that verse, it says, when the Sanhedrin council saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Why did they know that they had been with Jesus? Because they acted like Him. They talked like Him. John Patton that became a pioneer missionary in the South Seas, he was from Scotland and his house was probably about a 400 year old house.

And what his house was, it was six oak trees that were somehow bent together and came to a point and somehow sided on it. And it had three rooms. One room they lived in.

The other big room was his textile shop, where he made textiles. And in between the two was the closet. Now the closet wasn't a place where they put clothes.

The closet was a place where Father had a little stool, a little table, and a candle. And that's where Dad went every day to be before God. And he'd be in that room that was in between the house, his little shop there, and the children would hear him weeping before God.

And he spoke of situations that when he did something wrong, Dad would go get the boy, go get his boy, go get John Patton, get John and bring him in the house and tell him to sit down. And then he'd go to the prayer closet. And he'd get on his face and he'd start weeping before God over his son.

And his son says that was the worst thing he ever experienced in his life, when his father would cry, weep over him in the prayer closet. He says he would have rather had his father just beat him and beat him and beat him with a stick. But instead his father wept over him, tore his heart up.

Have your children ever heard you weep over them? Have your children ever heard you weep? Do they know what it is for you to go and hide alone and pray? Do they know what it is to see Mom going, because Dad goes and says I'm watching the kids. We had this in our home. When I'd come home from the pastorate, I'd come home and eat dinner with the family.

And then I would let Jesse go up into her prayer closet and pray. And the kids knew you do not talk to Mom. You don't ask for Mom at that time.

She's with God. Never had an issue with it. And they knew when I had my time with God, it was a reality.

Our children knew we were people of prayer. We lived it out before them. When I read that, how I ached, my heart ached, just yearned for a godly father.

I wish I would have had a godly father. I wish I would have had a father that knew what it was to weep over me. That I could have heard his tears.

I would have rather been beaten up with that than anything else that I went through. But I didn't know it. I didn't have it in my home.

Do you weep over your children? Do your children know that you love them in such a way? Or are you a prayerless person? You can only give what you possess to your children. You can only give what you possess. The final verse I'm going to share is in Song of Solomon.

In the third chapter and the first verse. There's a wonderful section of Scripture. This is the song of the Christian towards the beloved, towards Christ.

It says all night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves. I looked for him but did not find him. I will get up now and go about the city through its streets and squares.

I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him. The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city.

Have you seen the one my heart loves? Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go. That is where our characters are changed.

That's where we are changed. Not in the busyness of life. I've heard this time and again people say that well it's in the trials that we are changed.

No we're not. We're not changed in the trials. We're changed on our face before God.

Whether it's in trials or whether it's in prosperity we're changed only in His presence. Only in His presence. It's what we do with the mundane-ness of everyday life.

Whether we're in His presence and we know Him in intimacy or whether we are too busy for God. Too busy. And if you're too busy for God your character will never change.

Never change.

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