

“Character” vs “Characteristics”

How do you choose an excellent car mechanic, pastor, lawyer or doctor? What qualities would you look for if you want a very good friend or spouse? The following looks at what the Bible teaches about how we are to seek and establish close relationships with others.

Some ways the “world” encourages relationships, and what we are taught to value most:

- Physical attractiveness
- Social status
- Occupation
- Wealth / money / stuff
- Race / color
- Accomplishments
- Power and influence
- Gender
- Talents and abilities

Some of the character qualities the Bible teaches that are important in God’s eyes:

(also see Galatians 5:22-23 for many of these):

- Love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)
- Gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11)
- Integrity (Proverbs 10:9)
- Patience (James 5:7-8)
- Self-control (1 Peter 5:8)
- Perseverance (Romans 5:3-5)
- Kindness (Colossians 3:12)
- Gratitude (Colossians 3:16)
- Forgiveness (Luke 11:4)
- Goodness (Luke 6:45)
- Wisdom (1 Cor. 1:27-31)
- Maturity (James 1:2-4)
- Faithfulness (Matthew 25:21)
- Honesty (1 Chronicles 29:17)
- Obedience (1 John 5:2-5)

What the Bible teaches about ways to chose our close relationships:

- Look at the heart, not the outer appearance. (1 Samuel 16:7)
- Seek to understand the motives behind the thoughts, with God’s help. (1 Chronicles 28:9)
- God knows the hearts of all men, so ask God for His guidance. (1 Kings 8:39)
- We are not to value the ways of this world (Romans 12:2; Colossians 2:20-23) but are to value those with noble character, like the wife described in Proverbs 31:10-31 where there is no mention of the qualities listed above that are taught and valued by the world.
- We often try to justify ourselves to others, but God knows our hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight. (Luke 16:15)

A comment on “merit:”

- The word “merit” means conduct (behavior) that deserves reward or honor. It is based on what we choose to do, not on our physical characteristics, what we own, our nationality or position.
- The Bible teaches that our actions and choices will be judged, not our size, shape, color or physical abilities (again, see 1 Samuel 16:7).
- If a man does not work (if capable of course), he shall not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
- Our actions and deeds are a source of rewards (Proverbs 14:14; Jeremiah 32:19; Revelation 22:12). Note however that our “works” are not the means of our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- The most important choice we can make is to give our life to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. God does not save us based on our appearance, what we have, or our talents but on surrendering our lives to Him through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10).

Questions to consider:

- 1) How might you be trying to justify your worth to others, yourself, or even to God, that involves what you are doing, what you own, or your position in life, and not the condition of your heart?
- 2) How is the present culture teaching that “character” and “merit” are less important than our physical characteristics (size, shape, color, abilities and appearance)?
- 3) Out of all the Biblical character qualities above, with which ones might you still struggle?
- 4) Are you willing to follow Christ and let Him transform you into all you were created to be, and to bring Him the glory and honor that He alone deserves?

We are not a body with a spirit, but a spirit with a body!