

INCULCATING POSITIVE CHARACTER INTO CHILDREN

By

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The character of even a child can be known by the way he acts—whether what he does is pure and right. (Prov. 20:11, TLB)

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father. (Gen. 44:34 KJV)

What is character?

Although it is somewhat easy for someone to attempt a definition of the word character, it may not be entirely out of place for us to sound a little bit academic by looking up the word in a dictionary. The Advanced English Dictionary defines character as the inherent complex of attributes that determines a person's moral and ethical actions and reactions. We can choose to say that character is the inward and outward expressions of one's moral beliefs and identity.

However, the fact that what becomes a person's character is not always his or her innate qualities alone, but could also be from one's learned behavior should be noted. Personally, growing up as a child wasn't really pretty easy. Somehow, recently I started having strong feelings too that young folks in this generation are actually having more hard times learning and doing what is right too. For instance, having to grow up in the midst of friends, neighbors, classmates and even siblings who display different kinds of behavior from time to time makes it complicated and largely uneasy picking up and sticking to morally sound conducts.

Just like most parents, my parents tried to model some of the desirable character virtues that I should have learnt as a child, but they weren't perfect after all, so they got some things wrong at some points. Nevertheless, I still cherish the fact that I had to pick up some valuable and acceptable behavioral patterns from their teachings and lifestyles, especially in the areas of diligence, contentment and respect. That's to say that parents have got a demanding assignment of ensuring they raise their children in godly ways because like the second Scripture verse above shows, I don't seem to understand how they can courageously appear before God without their kids coming right with them on the day rapture happens (C.F Gen 44:34). This is because God wasn't mincing words when he stated firmly that what he desires from His people are godly

boys and girls (Mal. 2:15, KJV), just maybe you didn't know that anything short of his standard will not be accepted.

Wait a minute! Did you notice that there are a number of things that are socially acceptable these days that are not morally right? Your innocent children, that's if they still are, get to meet people who do some of these things that break God's heart and they pick up such terrible behaviors which are definitely injurious to their moral wellbeing. I had similar experiences too both as a child and as a young adult, where I failed to live up to expectations, and it really hurts. Hence, thinking out possible ways to set moral boundaries for the children under our care so as to moderate the behavior of our young ones to please our Creator and God becomes urgent. The essence of these boundaries is to raise a generation of godly children who can live to please God even when they are far from us as their parents, guardians, pastors, teachers and neighbors. God's word provides the watchwords for what our character should be both as children and adults in the fourth chapter of Philippians and verse eight thus:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, and whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things .

Some of the good character traits that we must have and show as young ones and adults include but are not limited to the following:

1. Honesty
2. Respect for seniors/elders
3. Diligence
4. Respect for time
5. Cleanliness
6. Decency in dressing
7. Decency of speech
8. Care for others
9. Humility
10. Dependability

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

(Prov. 22:1, KJV)

Some Negative character traits seen in children today include some of the following:

1. Not greeting their seniors/elders.
2. Not being sorry or remorseful for their wrongs.
3. Not being honest (“some can lie for the whole wide world”).
4. Not being trustworthy or dependable.
5. Not dressing like well-trained children, not even like Jesus’s children.
6. Not being appreciative (no thank you on their lips).
7. Not keeping their environment clean
8. Not staying away from fights, immoral behavior, gossips, stealing, cheating etc.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37, KJV)

What are we to .?

The following are some suggestions on the way forward on how to make our children develop good character as early as possible:

1. We must be sure of what we believe in as Christian parents and teachers so that we can instill the same into our children. (Col. 3:16, Acts 3:6).
2. We should show good examples of the morals we teach our kids (Matt. 5:16).
3. We should be our children’s best friends, mentors and confidants (Prov. 4:3-4).
4. We should create time to stay with our children (Eccl. 3:3,5, Prov. 27:23-34).
5. We should apologize to our kids when we are wrong (Gen. 27:37).
6. We should appreciate our children when they do what we like because those could create lasting impressions on them (Prov.27:21, Heb. 10:24).

Conclusion:

That popular verse in Proverbs 22:6 that says **“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it,”** implies that we parents, pastors, teachers, big brothers and sisters have a role to play in the lives of the young ones committed to us with respect to character development. Also, Ephesians 6:4 encourages fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Then the big question is, ‘would you be a disappointment to God on this crucial kingdom assignment?’ May the good Lord give us the grace and wisdom to become better

instruments in His hands in this generation in need.