

University Heights Church
of Christ
445 Columbia Ave.,
Lexington, KY 40508
(859) 255-6257
www.uheightschurch.com

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is
immediately followed by a
short worship period)

First Friday of Each Month

Singing: 7:30 PM

LEADERSHIP

Elders

David Collins
John Thompson
Troy Antle

Evangelist

Adam Litmer

Deacons

Richard Brundige
Matt Thompson
Adam Litmer
Bill Morelan
Jim Parsons
Pat Seabolt
Adam Daniels
Jamie Powell

Adam's Office Hours

Tuesday-Friday (8:30-4:00)

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Larry Billitor, Bill and Roberta Moreland,
Declan Weatherholt, David Seabolt, Jeff
Howerton, Rhonda Boyd, Nicholas
Thompson, Louis Harrod, Paul Atkisson,
Greg and Vicky Litmer, Sheila Lawson, Keia
Burton, Robert Brundige, Susie Burton,
Valerie and Barry Boyd, Janett's mother
and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene
Young, Burnice Richardson, Larry Sells,
Evelyn Damron, Tony Tyree, Jennifer
Dunbar, Jean Gartland, John Blessing,
William Roberts, Kip Pearce, Paul Lyda,
Pete Soro, The Baker family, Randy Cates,
The Smith family

University Heights Messenger

Volume 9--Number 17

April 23, 2017

Peel Away the Layers, and It's Still an Onion

John Thompson

It used to be, or so it seems to me, that people in prominent positions were held to a higher standard and when they failed to live up to those standards they experienced some sort of negative consequence. Now, however, or so it seems to me, malfeasance of duty and public trust, dishonesty, greed and selfishness, and the ability to protest against any and all forms of moral decency is the expected standard that prevails. The outcry against such behavior has diminished to a decibel level barely within the audible range. When the behavior of those in the public eye fails to measure up to whatever minimal standard yet remains, they simply "double-down" and continue right along as if those questioning their actions are in the wrong. If my observations are correct, I would suggest that a major turning point in societal attitudes towards character came when the behavior of a U.S. President caused the nation to collectively ask, "Does character matter?" While many answered that question with a resounding "Yes!" the "No's!" seem to have carried the day. And so, today, it seems to me that the more the spotlight shines upon a person, the less character he or she is expected to have.

Yet, there is One who demands that those who are His be people of character. Character has always mattered to God, and

it still does. Consider Cain who, driven by his own wrath, slew his brother Abel. God was holding Cain to a higher standard when He said, *“Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”* (Genesis 4:6-7) The next verse says that Cain spoke to his brother. What in the world did he say to Abel? The next bit of information states that when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother and killed him. It seems to me that, with his terrible anger fueling his resolve, he lured his brother into the field for the purpose of murder. Cain stands out as a man without character.

Christians are to be people of character. That requirement is stated in every way imaginable in the Bible. Here are a few of them: Jesus said, *“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”* (Matthew 5:37, NKJV) Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome, *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.* (Romans 12:17) Job’s integrity was well known to God. *And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.” ⁴Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” ⁶And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”* (Job 2:3-6) After the sores came, Job’s wife found his integrity difficult to accept. She said, *“Do you still hold fast your*

integrity? Curse God and die.” (Job 2:9) Job still holds fast his integrity. *Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.* (James 5:11)

So, what about the onion? The faith of the Christian is challenged every day. As the outer surface of the Christian’s life is worn away by those challenges, what is revealed underneath? Is one’s godly character only skin deep? Or, are we like the onion? No matter how much of the onion gets peeled away, it is still an onion. In fact, the essence of the onion becomes stronger as the first few layers are removed, and, as subsequent layers fall away, everyone knows it is an onion. Batsell Barrett Baxter was a gospel preacher associated with the institutional churches of Christ in the 1950s and 1960s. A statement about his character is given by Harold Hazelip in the preface to his autobiography that perfectly dovetails with the onion illustration. He wrote, “I never knew him to voice an impure thought. The closer one came to him, the more authentic he was. He was real—all the way through.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

