

The University Heights Messenger

August 22, 2010

Character Tests

One of the dictionary definitions of the word “character” is “*the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.*” When we say that someone, based upon their choices or actions, “showed us what they were made of,” we are talking about the character they demonstrated. Opportunities to demonstrate strength (or weakness) of character are abundant and generally presented to us daily. No better character test exists than the one we face every time we open the Scriptures.

How do we react when a command of God does not necessarily agree with our own desires or opinions? Each of us has faced a time when a command was extraordinarily difficult to obey due to current circumstance or present company. At that moment we faced a command of God that did not coexist peacefully with our desires. What did we do? Did we obey our will or God’s?

Consider the example of Naaman. Naaman was a powerful man who also happened to be a leper. He heard that Elisha could heal him so he had come to see him. Go ahead and read **2 Kings 5:9-11**. Having already made up his mind how things should be done, Naaman was not prepared or inclined to do things that way God wanted them done. Eventually Naaman relented and did things properly. So with us, if there is a command of God that happens to run contrary to our way of thinking, God *is not* the one who needs to change His way of thinking!

The marriage relationship is a modern example of some bucking against the stated will of God. Take a moment to read

Ephesians 5:23 and **1 Corinthians 11:3**. More than once I have heard of Christian women telling the preacher during rehearsal that they simply would not repeat any portion of the vow that indicated they were willing to live in subjection to their man. Their will and God’s will clash. They chose to obey their own will thereby failing that particular test of character.

One of the greatest tests of character is how we react to criticism. We don’t like to be criticized, it’s never a pleasant thing, and how we react to it will demonstrate a great deal about us. We could, as many Christians do upon hearing something even remotely resembling criticism, polish our cannons and send a return volley. We could, as many other Christians, accept the criticism graciously, consider its validity, and truly examine ourselves to see if there is a change that needs to be made. Which option do you suppose shows greater strength of character?

Sometimes the criticism is of an entirely different kind. Sometimes people criticize our work for the Lord. At one time the Jews were hard at work for the Lord when they were the recipients of severe criticism and mockery. Take a moment to read **Nehemiah 4:1-3**. That’s some strong criticism, isn’t it? However if we were to keep reading we would see that, after a prayer, the Jews kept right on working until they were done. The question for us is whether we are big enough, whether our character is strong enough, to handle criticism from the outside in our service to God without slowing down or giving up?

A tremendous test of character is how we react when we don’t get our way. Holy men of God had to deal with this more than once. Read **Acts 16:6-10**. What would we

do here? Paul and Timothy tried on two different occasions to preach to a group of people and both times they hit a wall. They weren't allowed to do what they wanted to do. They didn't quit, though.

How do we react when we don't get our way? I remember a congregation that was planning a new building. They had picked a handful of men who had experience in building and designing to sort of lead the charge. One of the men decided that he did not want conventional windows in a certain part of the building but preferred diamond one's instead. The other's did not agree with him. He insisted but they went ahead and installed conventional windows. That man up and quit. He didn't just quit the congregation, he quit the church! He forfeit his soul because he did not get his way. How sad and how pathetic! Are we strong enough of character to keep on serving the Lord faithfully when we don't get our way or are we so small to see no recourse but quitting? Let us think about that the next time we find ourselves in the midst of a pout for not getting things precisely as we wanted them.

These tests of chracter come about often, don't they? Fotunately we are not reliant solely upon *our* strength to pass them. The Lord expects us to do what we can, but He knows we cannot make it all on our own. Take a moment to read the beautiful words of **Jude 24**.

Brethren, if we think about these tests of character, try our best to measure up to them while clinging fast to the Lord, we will grow to be more and more like the people God wants us to be. AL

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

Glen Davis received word that his benign tumor had not grown at all over the past few months. This is wonderful news! Also, his system has adjusted to his medication and the seizures seem to have stopped. If all goes as planned he will be cleared to drive again September 1. He, and I'm sure Megan, can't wait!

Our members: **Glen Davis, Glenn Kimberlin**

Others:**Robert and Sarah Brundige, Kay Montgomery, Jean Gartland, Dorothy Gregg, Ruel Baker, Wes Kidd, Vera Howerton, Gail Stein, Glenn Goldy, Shannon Gilbert, Chuck McDavitt, the Shamas family.**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

The congregational meeting will be today at 5.

Our meeting is rapidly approaching (September 19-24). Monday through Friday is specifically designed for non Christians so let us all make sure that we invite our non Christians friends and family to attend.

NOTE

The college/young adult class begins upstairs this morning. Class books and syllabus are available.

WELCOME OUR NEW BROTHER!

Cody Bowman obeyed the gospel and joined the household of God two Lord's day evening's ago. Let us welcome and encourage our new brother!

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE FOR 8/22-8/28:

Sunday:2 Chron 10-12, Ps 19:7-14, Matt 24

Monday:2 Chron 13-15, Ps 20, Matt 25

Tuesday:2 Chron 16-18, Ps 21, Matt 26

Wednesday:2 Chron 19-20, Ps 22:1-18, Matt 27-28

Thursday:2 Chron 21-23, Ps 22:19-31, Mark 1

Friday:2 Chron 24-25, Ps 23, Mark 2

Saturday:2 Chron 26-28, Ps 24, Mark 3

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. The Merging Image--2

"Great fear came upon all who heard of it" (Acts 5:1-11)

Sunday PM. Questioning Responsibly (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1)