



Course Name: Character Development (A Study of Psalm 15)

By Dr. Bob Turner

Course description:

This course provides a lesson designed to identify the biblical necessity of godly character. The specifics of this lesson dive into areas that deal with how we develop our character in ways that build credibility, respect, and the type of integrity needed to lead God's people.

Course Objectives: By the end of the class students will have:

- A. Studied three components of character as described in Psalm 15.
- B. Defined the following terms: integrity, righteousness, and truth
- C. Considered two ways each of these terms factor into the Christian life.

Outline of the class:

- A. Divide the class into groups of three or four and ask the class overall to look up Psalm 15. After reading the Psalm, focus everyone on verse 2.
 1. David asks two questions in verse 1. Both questions indicate the same idea, "Who can dwell with or stand before God?"
 2. The answer rests on the three ideas expressed in verse 2.
- B. Ask each group to take the three terms identified in verse 2—integrity, righteousness, and truth—and define each word.
- C. After they complete their definitions, ask each group to list two ways each of these terms factor into the Christian life.
- D. Then, ask each group to share their definitions along with one way these terms factor into the Christian life. After each group shares a word, consider the following information to add to the discussion.
 1. Integrity
 - a. Generally, we all understand this word and its implications. Most often, we talk about how someone conducts themselves when no one else is watching.
 - b. It has also been identified in this way: "Being a Christian is what you are in the dark."
 - c. The idea consists of honesty, truthfulness, accuracy, or someone with strong moral principles and high ethical standards.

- d. The word translated “integrity” in the NASB is a word that is based on soundness and health from a physical perspective, a completeness. The word naturally identifies one with what is ethically sound, or upright, character.
- e. Throughout the Old Testament, this word is translated in several ways: without defect or blemish (as related to sacrifices), blameless, complete, entirety.
- f. In Psalm 15 it is used to speak of the quality of the individual who desires to dwell with God.

2. Righteousness

- a. This word is almost always translated in one of two ways: righteous or righteousness, just or justice.
- b. The definition of this word in the Hebrew language aligns with the word integrity, because it technically connects to an ethical or moral standard.
- c. It is associated with God and His relationship to His people, specifically His actions toward them.
- d. It is also identified with the need for God’s people to demonstrate His justice or righteousness, especially in relationship to the less fortunate, such as described in Micah 6:8, “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”
- e. Think about how Jesus spoke of righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). See the following verses: 5:6, 10, 20, 45; 6:1, 33.
- f. As Christians, above all people in the world today, we should be those who understand the necessity of helping the less fortunate. To work God’s justice or righteousness is not about seeking vengeance, but rather taking care of the poor, orphan, and widow.

3. Truth

- a. Truth is also translated in the Old Testament as faithfulness and what is true.
- b. The heart involves the seat of emotions or the inner part of the brain. Truth is what flows from the heart.
- c. Notice how David says, “He speaks truth *in* his heart.” We tend to think about how we speak, our words need to be true, or maybe to actually speak God’s word (truth). How much difference does it make to consider that we are to speak truth *in* our hearts?
- d. This idea helps connect the direction of what the entire passage is all about for us today. Look at the remainder of Psalm 15 and notice the use of terms that refer to our speaking and how truth factors into that speech.

- E. Up to this point, our focus has been on three key words in this text, but these are not the three most important words.
1. The three most important words in this verse are *walks*, *works*, and *speaks*. These three words in the original language are known as “noun-verb participles.” What that means is they function as both a noun and a verb at the same time.
 2. The implication of this is powerful. What this tells us is that character is not just what someone does, it is who they are on the inside. Think about it.
 - a. People can often display actions that speak to a quality character, but inside there are anything but quality.
 - b. When someone has the type of character David speaks of in this passage, then the actions that flow from them will naturally align with the godliness all spiritual leaders should possess.
- F. The following three points summarize John Maxwell’s thoughts on character.
1. Character is more than words. Action is the indicator of character. It determines who you are, what you see, and what you do.
 2. Talent is a gift, but character is a choice. Character communicates consistency, potential, and respect.
 3. Success is determined by character. We’ve all seen it before and we will see it again, but character is the difference-maker.

Conclusion:

- A. Character is the heart and substance of leadership. Without godly character, God’s people are led by those who do not have their best interest at heart.
- B. David sums up three significant components to the type of character God desires for His people, specifically His leaders. Remember, that character is not just about what we do, it rests upon who we are on the inside. The rest takes care of itself.
- C. Next week, we will build on this discussion and consider the first of several lessons that look at improving our character.

Recommended Reading:

Maxwell, John *21 Indispensable Qualities of Leaders*

Maxwell, John *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*