

What Makes Godly Character?

Who are you really? What's in your heart?

The Greek word for heart is "kardia" which also means core. Character goes beyond what people see on the surface to our heart, all the way to our core.

Andy Stanley, senior pastor of North Point Community Church, offers a solid definition of character that holds up against culture shifts and volatile circumstances. Here it is:

Character is the will to do what is right, as defined by God, regardless of personal cost."

Let's expand that into three statements:

1. Character is a pre-decision to do what is right. When a decision is predetermined it nullifies the variables. Our vision is clear even when circumstances are not. How we will respond has already been decided.

2. What is right is determined by God. True character acknowledges that there is an absolute standard of right and wrong. But most people do not believe in absolute truth. Both Gallup and Barna's Research Group reveal that only about half of those who claim to be Christians believe in absolute truth. Locking in to a standard of truth that is absolute seems too confining or narrow-minded for some. "Truth" is negotiable or circumstantial. But men of character make a pre-decision to do what is right as defined by God.

3. A man of character does what is right because it is right, not because it is convenient. It doesn't matter what it costs us personally. It doesn't matter if others support us or oppose us. We do what we do because it is right, and we know it is right because it is based on a standard that is determined by God—the standard of God's Word.

Joshua succeeded Moses as the leader of the Israelites. His character shined when he was a young man, and it stayed bright throughout his life. He was well acquainted with going against popular opinion and doing what is right as defined by God. In the final season of his life and leadership, the people were wavering in their faith and obedience. Joshua challenges them to make a choice to serve God and God alone. And in his challenge, he made it clear that his personal decision had already been made regardless of what they would choose to do. Look at what he said:

“Now fear the Lord, and serve Him with sincerity and faithfulness. Put away the gods your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord. If it is displeasing to you to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve, if it should be the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites’ land where you are now living. Yet as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:14-15, MEV).

Can you feel the confidence in that statement? Joshua knew what was right. His decision was not dependent on what anyone else was going to do. His mind was already made up. He was not waiting on the results from a poll. He went on record with his decision because he was a man of principle, not public opinion. Joshua was a man of character.

It’s who he was in his heart.

Character flows from our heart. It’s who we really are at our core. {eoa}

Tierce Green is the executive pastor of Small Groups at Woodlands Church in The Woodlands, Texas, where he speaks to over a thousand men each year in a seasonal gathering called The Quest. He is also a teaching pastor in the bullpen for Senior Pastor Kerry Shook. Tierce was a popular speaker and consultant for the 26 years previous, and wrote curriculum for

organizations including LifeWay and Student Life.

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