



Training Character by Training Minds

by Jana Brackbill

*Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants,
and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace.
~ Psalm 144:12*

Philippians 1:9-11

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Character Defined

The stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual's life which determine his response regardless of circumstances (American Dictionary).

Character in reality

True character is what God knows us to be. The test of our character is what we do when no one is watching. Character is really **what we have been becoming by the choices that we make and continue to make.** The reality of our character is shown in our **integrity, convictions and moral courage.**

*Integrity-honesty, reliability, uprightness

*Convictions-persuasion

*Courage-endurance

Christian Character

A Christian is a new creature with a divine nature. Christian character is displayed by the seriousness of a person's relationship with Christ and his desire to live godly (2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Pet. 1:4).

Character is not made in a crisis, it is only exhibited in the time of crisis. Character is reflected in every decision we make and every relationship we establish. There are no shortcuts to true Christian character.

Importance of training character by training the mind

- To please and glorify God out of gratitude in response for what Christ has done in my life (1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 12:1)
- To obey the high calling of assisting our teens as they continue growing in the maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28, 29)
- To help in the acceptance and credibility of our young person's testimony for Christ. *Walk talks and talk walks* (Matt. 5:16)
- To have a part in determining their destiny (Gal. 6:7-8)



*"Sow a thought, reap an attitude;
Sow an attitude, reap an action;
Sow an action, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny."
~Anonymous*

- God's Word commands that we have a vital role in teaching and training the minds and character of our teens (Deut. 6:6-7)
- It helps our family serve the LORD (Josh. 24:15b)
- It protects them from wrong associations (1 Cor. 15:33)
- It helps them not to have a worldly appearance (1 Thess. 5:22)
- It helps them to make pre-decisions regarding circumstances and problems, and helps them determine to do what is right, before the situation to do wrong threatens them (Prov. 2:11)

Considerations concerning the training of mind and character:

- It will be a life-long process, one in which the Lord gives us the high calling to be a co-laborer with Him for a very limited time (Eph. 5:16)
- It will be blessed when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30)
- It will involve self-assessment and repentance concerning sin (Ps. 51)
- It will require mutual responsibility and accountability of parents and their teens in a humble manner (1 Pet. 5:5)
- It will necessitate a kind, loving ministry as we unselfishly and positively try to help in areas we discern need strengthening (Eph. 4:32)
- It will take grace to pass on to our children what God has taught us (Ps. 78:6-7)
- It will involve knowing and being able to speak God's truth in love (Rom. 12:10)
- It will involve dealing with the real enemy in our human nature (Jer. 17:7-10)
- It will necessitate a pilgrim-like attitude (Heb. 11:10)
- It will involve the challenge of thinking God's thoughts after Him (Is. 55:8-9)
- It will involve working with our teens at a very delicate time in their lives (Eccl. 12:1)



Youth is short and lacks much experience, and is able to look only one way, and therefore liable to make mistakes.

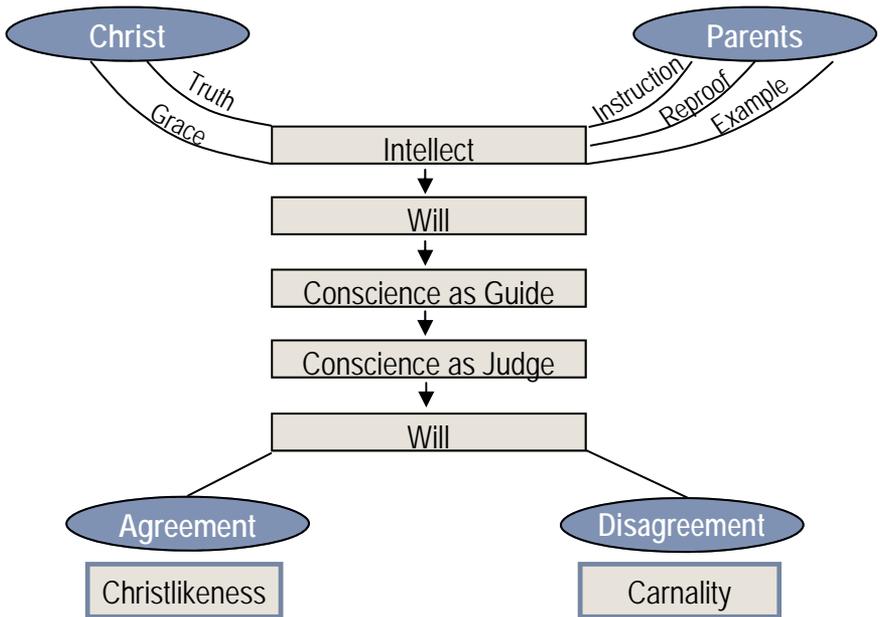
One's ambitions may be running in directions that are practically impossible of accomplishment, or maybe ambitions, if realized, would not be best for the individual.

So it is well that over us a wise Providence guides and directs, suiting to each a path that is ours through life. It is only when ambition dies and we cease to care or try that our lives become useless (*Beautiful Girlhood*, p. 82)

God works providentially training a young person's mind and character through the sanctification process.

Philippians 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.



(Source: Stephen J. Hankins, Teaching Bible Principles Syllabus)

Effective Resources for Character Training

- Prayer: *Life is a vapor, handle it with prayer. Prayers count for eternity.*
- Psalm 119: Walking the Way of the Word
- Book of Proverbs
- Assimilating and sharing the Word of God by reading, memorizing and meditating
- Study the life of Christ: *Behold the Living Word in the Written Word.*
- Study God's attributes in the Old Testament (*mercy, longsuffering, faithfulness, goodness, compassion, moderation*)
- Study Paul the Apostle: our human example
- Bible characters (i.e. Daniel: self-controlled, trustworthy, humble...)
- Parental example of character development
- People and circumstances of today (*God's Word is reality*)
- Books: *Effective leaders are diligent readers of good books and diligent readers of good books are effective leaders.*
 - Christian and missionary biographies and autobiographies
 - Resource books for Christian living and growth
- Hymns (www.cyberhymnal.org)
- Godly leaders
- Godly young people

- Websites that contain helpful studies or information on specific character traits (i.e. www.characterjournal.com)

Evidences of seeing the blessings of Christian character in the process

- When they are truly regenerated, there will be outward responses to an inward possession. *Not modified behavior to meet a standard* (2 Cor. 5:17)
- When they long to be pursuing and relying on God's Word, love and grace daily (Ps. 42:1)
- When they become consistent in prayer time (Jn. 16:24)
- When they are more concerned about God's glory than their own pursuits or even their reputation (Job 13:15)
- When we see them demonstrate humility (Eph. 4:1-3)
- When they display the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)
- When they view their current crisis as a faith builder for the future (Jer. 29:11)
- When they praise God in the natural flow of conversation (Ps. 119:164)

Present neglect to train the minds and character of young people may lead to later risk and/or future regret. Parental dependency on God, commitment, hard work, dedication, attention, diligence and creativity will be needed.



A good character is the best tombstone.
 Those who loved you and were helped by
 you will remember you when forget-me-nots
 have withered. Carve your name on
 hearts, not on marble.
 ~Charles Spurgeon

God's plan for maturing Christian teens is that they be transformed and conformed into the image of His dear Son. (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29)

Training Minds and Character According to Biblical Convictions

1. The Bible is the inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16)
2. True purpose in life is to love God by giving Him my trust and pursuing wisdom to do what is right, even when it is hard (Josh. 22:5; 2 Tim. 2:3-4)
3. Viewing my body as the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17)
4. Attending a church that teaches the foundational truths of the Bible (Matt. 7:15-16)
5. Maintain actions that will not weaken Scriptural convictions of other believers (Rom. 14:13)
6. Viewing marriage as a life-long commitment (Matt. 19:6-7)
7. Money is a trust from God to be used wisely (Lk. 16:11)
8. Words in harmony with God's Word, especially when speaking to others (Gal. 6:1)
9. Affections being set on things above, not on things in the earth (Col. 3:2)
10. God has a plan for each individual. Striving to obey His Will promotes His glory and blesses us. (Jer. 29:11)

Difficult issues need to be addressed and these issues must line up with the Bible convictions established by us as parents. We need to be sensitive to the Lord's leading and the Holy Spirit's promptings. Each person stands accountable to God for the path they pursue. **There will be times of failure, but God knows our heart and the intention of what we pursue in life.**

Each person must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load (Galatians 6:4-5).



The biggest mistake we make is not knowing God's Word and not applying biblical convictions.

(The numbers in parentheses below refer back to the numbered list on page 6).

Training Character and Minds (#1, #2, #9)

- By channeling their personalities
- By channeling their talents

Teaching about time management (#1, #2, #3, #9, #10)

- Educational Opportunities
- Activities
- Talent development
- Employment
- Requirements for girls vs. boys

Teaching about good work ethics (#1, #2, #3, #7, #10)

- At home
- At school
- At job

Teaching about manners (#1, #2, #5, #8)

- At home
- Outside the home
- In later life

Teaching about worldly influences (#1, #2, #3, #4, #9, #10)

- Television
- Internet
- Contemporary evangelical culture

Teaching about outward appearances (#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7)
(Attitude affects appearance and appearance shows allegiance)

- Methods to be used to communicate to heart and head
- Guidelines to be considered
- Outward appearance for girls
- Outward appearance for boys

Teaching about authority conflicts (#1, #2, #5, #8, #10)

- Conflicts with teaching
- Conflicts with methods
- Conflicts with people
- Conflicts between husband and wife

Teaching Gratitude (#1, #2, #10)

- Given first to God
- Through parental example
- Directed to certain individuals



Recommendations for Reading

Daily Light, by Samuel Bagster

The Valley of Vision, Edited by Arthur Bennett

A Young Woman After God's Own Heart, by Elizabeth George
(A Teen's Guide to Friends, Faith, Family and the Future)

A Young Man After God's Own Heart, by Jim George
(Building Your Faith, Choosing Right friends, Getting Along at Home, Making Good Choices About the Future, Fighting the Battle Against Temptation)

Beautiful Girlhood, revised, by Karen Andreola

What is the Father Like? by W. Phillip Keller

E. M. Bounds on Prayer, by E.M. Bounds

The Red Sea Rules, by Robert J. Morgan

Website: www.mountcalvarybaptist.org/internetresources/index.html