

# LeaderLesson 1: Character

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We are calling 2013 a year of focused obedience, deciding to obey God's Word with our eyes and hearts focused on Jesus day by day. Those of us who serve in leadership roles in the churches need to encourage others along the way, helping those we serve see the possibilities of focused obedience.

As we begin this year-long journey to explore biblical leadership week by week, there are two concepts that will be a focal part of the entire process.

- First, the leader's character counts more than any other factor of leadership and that character is best molded and shaped by Jesus' own teachings.
- Second, the only approach to leading that Jesus validates for His followers is Servant Leadership.<sup>1</sup>

The first section of this study is on personal development, becoming the individuals we need to be before we consider skill development and relational development. With each LeaderLesson and in examining each topic, we will consider who God is, who we are, how we think, and what we do.<sup>2</sup> The first topic is character.

The starting place to learn about character is in seeing who God is and the example He is for us to follow. When Moses went back up to Mount Sinai to get the second set of tablets for the commandments, he caught a glimpse of the exquisite character of God. He Himself proclaimed to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."<sup>3</sup> Here God makes it clear that His personal character is the absolute by which all of these qualities are defined. There is no higher standard than this for us. His eternal and uncompromising character is the unchanging standard that gives ultimate meaning to love, graciousness, and faithfulness. This is who God is, and He watches to see how we will respond to His example.

So, what are you like when no one is looking? Our character is who we are, especially when we think no one is watching. Peter gives us an idea of what our character should look like: "For His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. By these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> This text lists eight character qualities: faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

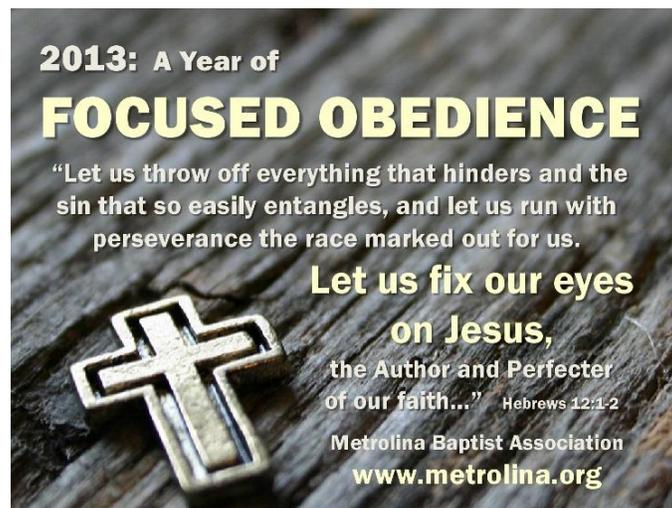
These character qualities are admirable, but they are also overwhelming. Is it possible to have such a character? Not on our own, for sure. But notice what is said in verses 3-4: God's power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, including the privilege of participating "in the divine nature." In Christ, we have a new nature, and we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, whose power makes possible these qualities. So, ask the Lord to make these qualities more and more real in your own life. The

challenge with life is that it is so “daily.” Then, daily, join me in asking God to help us cultivate these qualities of character.

How I think is very crucial to the character I develop by God’s grace. Remember the verses we have considered from 2 Peter. The one who penned those words was the Apostle Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit. This man who communicates so well on character was not always such a man. Our impression of Peter from the Gospels is that he was an impulsive character, which did not serve him well on a number of occasions recorded in Scripture. But, after Jesus’ departure, he became a preeminent leader and spokesman for the early church. He was always thinking with a view toward action. Peter became a leader because he was not afraid to make a decision, and his godly character informed the decisions he made. He grew into the man of character God created Him to be.

God wants to help us develop our character. The question is: what are we going to do about it? Action is required on our part. What we do in preparation for and in response to the situations and circumstances we face is crucial to character development.

This is where obedience comes in – we know who God is, who we are, how we should think, what we should do. We have the necessary information. Will we respond to that knowledge with obedience as we strive to develop Christ-like character? Will we respond with obedience that is focused on the One who is able to empower us to be and do what will bring glory to God and good to those around us? Lord, let it be so in each of us!



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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook to Leadership: Leadership in the Image of God*, Kenneth Boa, Sid Buzzell, Bill Perkins. Trinity House, 2007. p.3. (This yearlong study will use this text as a primary source. I encourage anyone who would like to go deeper on this journey in 2013 to get a copy of this excellent resource. It is also available on Kindle.)

<sup>2</sup> This pattern is used in *Handbook to Leadership*.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 34:6-7a NASB.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Peter 1:5-8 HCSB.