

Life's Little Lessons VIII (On Character)

Running to Bible Class!

Our youngest children are perfect illustrations of what Jesus taught about children when He said of them, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." They are eager to go to Bible class; and, when class is finished, they are eager to talk about what they learned in class. I honestly believe that the Lord smiles at the children's excitement about being in what they understand to be God's house.

The author of Psalm 84, one of the sons of Korah, also had a love for God's house. Some commentators have speculated that for a time he, a temple singer, was unable to go to the temple, either because of sickness or circumstances. So as he wrote this psalm, his soul was especially longing and crying out to be in "the courts of the Lord" (v.2). He believed that one day of worship in God's house gave more satisfaction than a thousand days spent anywhere else (v.10).

There's something special about praising God together with His people, and we should take every opportunity we can to do so. The Lord is pleased and we'll be blessed when our heart's desire is to be with Him and His people. A good indicator of our spiritual temperature is our eagerness to worship God. (A. Cetas)

Living Deceptively

The year 2007 was labeled the "Year of Living Deceptively" for South Korea, because of the country's numerous scandals involving fake academics and corrupt politicians. A survey of 340 professors selected the Chinese phrase "ja-gi-gi-in" (deceiving yourself and others) to sum up the year.

It should not surprise us to hear of deception like that. The apostle Paul wrote in 2Timothy 3:13, "Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." To deceive is to make others believe falsehood as truth and accept wrong as right.

Our defense against deception is to know God's Word, for "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (v.16). Correction is to set right what is wrong, and instruction is to make known what is right. God's Word not only makes us aware of wrongs, it also prompts and teaches us to do what is right. Read and apply God's Word, asking the Lord to make you a person of integrity. The more we meditate on Scripture, the more readily we'll detect error. (A. Lee)

Eaves-Dropping

"He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends" (Prov. 17:9). "...Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters..." (Rom. 1:29-30).

The word 'eaves' is defined as "1. The lower border of a roof that overhangs the wall; 2. A projection edge (as of a hill)" (Webster). The term 'eaves-dropping' means literally, "one standing under the drip from the eaves; i.e., to listen secretly to what is said in private" (Webster). It is easy to picture in our minds an "eaves-dropper" as he stands outside of a house with an open window trying to hear what is being said inside the house. People are truly "full of deceit whisperings, and backbitings" when they listen secretly to what others say so that they can repeat it to someone else. Let us never meddle in other people matters, but seek and promote love at all times.

Teaching Integrity

Samuel DiPiazza, CEO of a major public accounting firm, co-authored a book on building trust in the business world. The book proposes a spirit of transparency, a culture of accountability,

and a people of integrity. But in an interview in Singapore, he noted there is one thing the book cannot teach, integrity. "Either you have it or you don't," he said.

Is he right? In our world of shifting standards, can integrity be acquired by those who don't have it? The answer is found in our unchanging standard, God's Word, the Bible. David the psalmist did not head a multinational corporation. But he did rule over a kingdom, and he was serious about doing what was right. He recognized how easy it is to slide down the slippery path of unethical behavior simply because it seems advantageous. So David asked God, "Teach me Your statutes" (Psalm 119:124). "Give me understanding," he said, "that I may know Your testimonies" (v.125). David hated "every false way," and based his life on the principle that "all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right" (v.128). No one is born with godly character. But by studying God's Word and purposing to live what we see there, we can learn to hate falsehood and love integrity.

Dysfunctional Patriarchs

In Genesis, it seems that almost every person and family mentioned is dysfunctional. The text is filled with accounts of jealousy, anger, violence, and deception that leave a trail of damaged relationships. Even Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lauded as heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, display flawed character and spiritual lapses. But God never leaves them that way.

Jacob defrauded his older twin Esau, who swore to kill him (Gen. 27:41). Then, before the estranged brothers would face each other after 20 years, Jacob wrestled with God. When asked his name, the conniving younger brother finally admitted who he was: Jacob—the deceiver (Gen. 32:24-27). That marked a spiritual turning point.

Carlyle Marney said that because God doesn't give up on us, we should not give up on ourselves. "The last person on earth you will forgive a weakness is yourself," Dr. Marney wrote. "Only in the gospel can men go on loving themselves. Wait on God! See what His strong hands will fashion out of your defection." When we have turned back, God can turn us around. When we have destroyed, God can rebuild. "Christ in the strong hands of God conquering my defection. This is the gospel." (D. McCasland)

Imprint of Occupation

Caerleon is a Welsh village with deep historical roots. It was one of three sites in the United Kingdom where Roman legions were posted during Rome's occupation of Britain. While the military presence ended some 1,500 years ago, the imprint of that occupation can still be seen today. People come from all over the world to visit the military fort, the barracks, and the amphitheatre that are reminders of the days when Rome ruled the world and occupied Wales. It is amazing that 15 centuries later, the evidence of Rome's presence can still so clearly be seen in that small community.

What about another kind of imprint, the imprint of Christ on our lives? Do we allow His presence to be clearly seen by others? Is it possible for people who interact with us to know that Jesus occupies our lives?

Jesus calls us to make known His presence in our lives to the glory of God the Father. He says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Through the light of our words and the impact of our deeds, people should be able to see evidence of the presence of God in our lives. Is it true? Can they see His imprint?