

# character

18  
June

What we need after we believe is Christian character: to go beyond the pragmatism of our day to something more basic and fundamental to our being as Christians. That essential nature is inextricably caught up and reflected in God's image.

## key passages

Matthew 19:16-30

Mark 10:17-22

Luke 18:18-30

Thinking through the biblical text during the week helps turn what God is saying into action steps. Here are some questions to start.

- Character is that part of our personal makeup that runs all the way through us. What are 1 or 2 traits that describe your general character. "Christian character" is a variation on general character. It is developed in partnership with the Holy Spirit. What are 1 or 2 traits that describe your Christian character.
- Character is transformed by three things: 1/ the right goal, 2/ the right steps, 3/ and making those steps habitual. If we recognize that eternal life has already begun and we share in that freedom now, what steps in your life led to your ongoing transformation, and how does this allow you to live in this present age with faith and hope?

Read **Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-30**

- We ask questions like: "What am I here for?" and "What happens after you believe?" At what stage in your life did you find yourself going deeper, going beyond the pat answers handed down to you?
- Moving beyond intellectual assent in matters of faith presents a critical personal challenge. Spiritual growth is linked to Christian character. As you reflect on the formation of your own character, What aspects of that allow you to keep growing in faith?
- "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" As we unpack the implications of this gospel story, we're pointed in the direction of character. Putting God first points us toward our neighbor, and specifically, the well-being of our neighbor. It is a call, not to specific acts of behavior, but to a type of character. From this, how would you define Jesus' understanding of "human" in its fullest sense? How is "character" related and dependent upon following Jesus?
- "How do Christians make moral decisions?" Neither rules nor self-discovery are fully adequate in directing our lives. To what degree is your character, and your decision making, affected and directed by your understanding or Law & Gospel, of religious rules & freedom in Christ? When do you tend to shift between the two?
- Rules: we all grew up with them. We all broke them. My observation is that our tendency is to apply the Law (rules) toward others, while claiming Gospel (mercy and grace) for ourselves. What's wrong with this skewed approach? Rule-keeping only goes so far, which isn't very far at all. What matters is character, moving from "what to do" to "how to do it." The gospel response is that it is done by following Jesus. As a follower of Jesus, how has your character been shaped beyond mere rule-keeping?
- How does the Holy Spirit lead you in discerning certain decisions and actions? How does your participation in worship and in mission allow you to "follow Jesus?" How do these two central responses continue to shape your Christian character?