
BOXCAR CHILDREN

Character Traits

Education is value transmission. To train our children is to impart a definite set of views, values and virtues. Consider our setting. American government education is not only unconcerned to inculcate Biblical values, in our era “public schools” are almost synonymous with images of violence. As I write this, it is in the wake of yet another armed student attack at such a school, resulting in the bloody death of a school administrator and a student suicide. But why is this so unexpected in a value-free, godless, indoctrination center which perpetuates the myth that human beings are sheer accidents from bio-chemical processes? We should see such tragic events as vivid demonstrations of the failure of relativism in contemporary education. It would be better if we could be convinced by sound arguments rather than shocking news reports. Even in the face of these kinds of horrible events, many Christians are still unpersuaded to give their children an education which glorifies their Maker and Redeemer. When our children cannot assert “Jesus is Lord” in their classroom, it is not unlike the dilemma of believers in Rome—except that today most do not say, “Jesus is Lord.”

From this it should be clear that there is no education which evades imparting values. All education is value education. Someone’s values get through, one way or the other. As believers, we are under marching orders from our King to raise our children in the values of Christ. “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Thus, intentional character education is critical. Godly training must shape the soul by the regular means at the disposal of parents. While our intentional educational plans are central, character is to be carved from every episode of life. It does not end at 3:00 p.m.

Moral judgment, on the other hand, is not all that is imparted in education, nor should it be. The classical paradigm emphasizes developing the tools of learning. There are virtues in the skills of learning to learn. The liberal arts education of classical Christian education historically contrasts with slave education for a specific trade, or vocational education. The original sense of “liberal” was “freeing.” Such an education frees the mind from false values and grants the skills to make true and wise judgments. In medieval times sincere monks arduously prepared for a life of celibacy and separateness. Similarly, many Christians today prepare their children to abstain from culture with a sincere desire to make them holy. Our challenge ought to be recapturing the intentional character training, while not reducing education to mere moral development. We must pursue holiness and dominion.

What follows on the next page is a list of specific character traits illustrated and referred to in the Bible. First in the list are several passages which list various characteristics of godly people. These are well known.

Gregg Strawbridge

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Character Traits, Page 2

Galatians 5:22-23: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

Romans 5:1-4: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

2 Peter 1:2-8: *Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue . . . But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Alertness: watchful, ready to take action, especially against danger or attack. Col. 4:2, Josh. 8:4

Availability: capable of being used by those who need me. Est. 4:14, Isa. 6:8

Compassion: feeling or showing pity for the suffering of another. Ex. 2:6, Matt. 9:36

Courage: overcoming fear, bravery. Josh. 1:9, Ps. 27:14

Decisiveness: able to decide quickly and effectively. [Accurately] Josh. 24:15, 1 Kgs. 3:16-28

Determination: being firm in a purpose, doing what is necessary to reach a goal. Dan. 3:16-18, 1 Cor. 15:58

Endurance: the power or habit of reaching the goal. Heb. 12:1, James 5:11

Flexibility: to bend and adapt to the wishes of others without breaking. 1 Pet. 3:7, 1 Cor. 9:19-22

Generous: giving freely at the right time. Mark 12:42-44, Acts 20:35

Hospitality: receiving others with generous entertainment. Heb. 13:2, Gen. 18:2-8

Initiative: being the first to take action with assurance and wisdom. Prov. 6:6-11, 2 Cor. 8:16-17

Joyfulness: showing or causing gladness or pleasure, cheerfulness. Isa. 61:10, 2 Cor. 7:4

Loyalty: being true and faithful to those who I care for or to those who care for me. 1 Kgs. 11:4, Luke 16:13

Orderliness: putting everything in its right place. (Clean, put in order) Titus 1:5, 2:5, Matt. 23:25-26

Patience: waiting without complaining. Eccl. 7:8, 1 Th. 5:14, James 5:7

Resourcefulness: able to use what is available to deal quickly and effectively with problems. Eccl. 9:10, Matt. 25:14-29

Responsibility: doing what is right and best for those who count on me. Gen. 39:4, 22, 41:41, Luke 22:25-28

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Chapter One—“The Four Hungry Children”

Alertness: watchful, ready to take action, especially against danger or attack

1. How does Jessie show alertness in finding a place for them to sleep?

2. How were the children alert in recognizing that it was time to run away?

3. How were the children alert against danger in the way they left the bakery?

4. Where else do you see alertness in this chapter?

