

INTRODUCTION: This small group series is designed to help you grow in your faith and specifically in your Christian character. It is entirely possible to have put our faith in Jesus Christ and yet not see a measurable change in whom you are becoming. Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthian church, called people like this "carnal" Christians. What he means by these words is that there are Christians while having the seed of faith still allow the natural desires of their flesh (the normal state for human beings) to rule over them, rather than being ruled by the Holy Spirit. As you study this series you will have ample opportunity to explore the characteristics of what it means to be a person of faith, a spiritual person, whose character in day to day life is becoming more like the character of Christ.

NOTE: The NIV is the translation used for this study when answering questions directly from scripture. Feel free to use the translation you like best.

If you haven't done so please take a moment to introduce yourselves.

Perhaps you could talk about:

- 1) How long you have been attending All Nations Church (or the church you are attending)
- 2) Why you joined a small group and what you hope to get out of the group.

### 1. Discuss these statements:

1. It's not what I have done that counts in life, but what I have become.  
It's entirely possible to do all the right things without becoming the right person.  
One of the biggest mistakes in life is to confuse "doing" with "being."
2. *The purpose of coming to faith in Christ is to grow to become like Christ.*
  - a. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
  - b. What have you believed about the purpose of coming to faith in Christ?
3. GOD IS NOT IMPRESSED WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE BUT HE DELIGHTS IN YOUR CHARACTER.
  - a. How can knowledge without Christ-like character make a person become self righteous or hypocritical?
4. In John 13:35 we are told "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*" How does this verse support the claim that it is our character that will influence the world not our knowledge?

### 2. READ 2 Peter 1:1

- a. What do you think is the significance of the order in which Peter puts his welcoming words?
- b. To whom is the book written?

### 3. READ: 2 Peter 1:2

As we grow in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ what does this produce in us?

**4.READ:** 2 Peter 1:3

When you think about growing in Christ-like character how is this verse an encouragement?

**5.Discuss this statement:**

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT MERELY A SET OF BELIEFS TO BE ACCEPTED,  
BUT A POWER TO BE EXPERIENCED

**6.READ:** 2 Peter 1:4

- a. What do you think it means to "participate in the divine nature"?
- b. What is the value today for developing Christ-like character?
- c. How can character protect you from the effects of living in a corrupt society?

**7.DISCUSS these comments:**

It seems that almost everyone is into "self improvement". In "self improvement" the goals are to always improve the "self." The primary motivation is to improve "me" and the motivation is the bettering of one's circumstances. The movement teaches that we are basically good and that goodness needs to be enhanced or developed from within.

In biblical character development we are urged to get the "self" out of the way and allow the life of Christ to shine through us. The bible teaches: that we are all flawed and have a fundamental defect in our relationship to God, that we are powerless to help ourselves and that defect creates a crisis in character. The goal of biblical character development is allow the "self" to slowly die as the character of Christ shines through our day to day life. Our life then becomes about Christ and not ourselves.

**The heart of this series is based on the following verses. We will be studying these character traits over the next weeks.**

**8. READ:** 2 Peter 1:5-7

- a. What does Peter tell us to do?
- b. Why do you think he tells us to "make every effort"?
- c. What do you think takes effort in developing Christ-like character?
- d. Review verse 3 to discover who is available to help us in this effort.

**9. READ:** 2 Peter 1:8

- a. What is the significance of the words "increasing measure"?
- b. How can these words be a comfort to us as we grow?
- c. What is the end result of all of this gradual growth?

**10. READ:** 2 Peter 1:9

- a. What does Peter call people who refuse to put the effort into growing?
- b. Why do you think it is so sad for someone to have the seed of faith and yet never grow that faith into mature Christian character?

**11. READ:** 2 Peter 1:10-11

- a. What instruction is Peter giving and what are the benefits of the effort we put in to character formation?

- b. What do you think it means to "receive a rich welcome" into God's Kingdom?
- c. It could be speculated that the only thing we have to take with us when we see Jesus is our character. Do you think it may be possible to see Jesus and be disappointed in our lack of Christ-like character development?

## **WRAP UP:**

Based on your discussion explain the following statement:

WHAT BRINGS YOU PEACE IS *WHO YOU ARE* NOT *WHAT YOU DO*

## **FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:**

We have seen that it is entirely possible to receive the gift of faith and yet never grow that gift into maturity. This lack of character development is at the root of why Christians can be so ineffective in influencing the world around them. This lack of Christ-like character is at the root of fighting and disagreements among believers and damages the Body of Christ.

We have also seen Christ-like character development bring God much joy. Are you prepared to allow the Holy Spirit to help you grow your faith into a mature character that pleases God and helps you make a difference in your world?

Take a few moments this week and ask God to search your heart. Be prepared to ask him for forgiveness for the "hard" parts you find there. Be prepared to experience the power of the Holy Spirit as God grows you in faith and character. Make a commitment to read his word for a few moments every day this week.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS FROM YOUR GROUP**

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

As you pick up your **income tax receipts** over the next few weeks please take a few moments to read the enclosed brochure. We recognise the opportunity presented there is not for everyone. If you feel this is not for you, would you participate by using the handy book mark to remember to pray for the Lord to provide for the finances of our church? Remember he is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides.

**SuperBowl Party Sunday February 4<sup>th</sup> 6 p.m.** Come and watch on our large screen. Bring along ready to eat finger foods to share.