

Character Counts (1)

II Kings 22:1-2; II Kings 23:25

Intro--

Why study character?

There is a great absence of it.

A group of educators and scholars, alarmed at soaring rates of teenage homicides, suicides and out-of-wedlock births, attacked what it called the "timidity" of schools in instilling good character traits in the young. The 27 academics warned that "schools in general are not doing enough to counter the symptoms of serious decline in youth character."

The report, "Developing Character: Transmitting Knowledge," cited government statistics showing that out-of-wedlock births to white females ages 15-19 have increased 800 percent since 1940, and the rate of death by homicide for white males, 15-24 climbed 315 percent.

Add to that: The influence of the media and music, growing lawlessness, divorce, and emotional problems, etc.

It's a wonder that a student survives the teen years at all.

Josiah was a man of:

I. Individual Renown.

In a class of his own/ Spiritually solid/Started Strong/ Finished Strong/ Why?

A) Incredible reputation.

II Kings 23:25 "**Now before him there was no King like him**, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; **nor after him did any arise like him.**"

Josiah was:

1. A man of great conviction.
 - He dared to stand on his convictions.
 - He stood for what was right! Not in the eyes of man, but God.
2. A man of great courage.
 - He dared to look evil in the eye.
 - He dared to change things. Not easy.
3. A man of great character.
 - He dared to be different in a generation that had turned from God when it was unpopular.

Character: Habitually doing the right thing in the right way.

Quote--"If you do right, you'll be right."

Character: Josiah was able to carry out his decisions long after the emotion had gone that first motivated that choice.

Character: a result of your discipline.

"Where spirituality results in inner power to do good, character results in your habits that make you do good. The believer needs both spirituality and character. One can have character without spirituality, but can't have spirituality without habitually doing the right thing in the right way."

B) Innocent reputation.

II Kings 22:2 "And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left."

II Kings 22:19 "because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore

your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, "says the LORD.

Question: How do you want to be remembered?

Question: What do people think of you now?

Story: First time I was around the youth group, they thought I was a cocky jock.

(Key Point) The way you see yourself or think of yourself is seldom the same as what those around you think about you.

Why he had an innocent reputation:

Three characteristics the bible gives us about Josiah:

- A) Righteous.
- B) Tender hearted.
- C) Humble.

These are attributes of Christ and should be attributes of the child of God.

Are you a student of character?

A student with little or no character:

Roll their eyes/ stick their tongue out/ bad mouth their parents/ rebel against authority/ cuss/ crude/ loose morals.

Quote--"This person whines, instead of winning."—John M./ More likely to give in to peer pressure/ more concerned with what feels right.

A student of character:

Makes the right choice/ is other's focused/ self-controlled/ consistent/ respectful/ has godly habits (talk, feel, act.)/ enduring(Quit)/ admits when they are wrong (no excuses)/ problem solver

Quote--"Every time you make a choice, you are slowly turning [yourself] into a heavenly creature or into a hellish one."—C.S. Lewis

A person of character will have long lasting friendships, successful marriages, satisfying vocations, and an inward happiness."

How to be a student of character:

- A) Make a commitment to develop your character.—Psalms 19:7-11
- B) Make a commitment to do what is right.

You must intentionally look for ways to keep your emotions and social pressures from guiding your life.

Josiah was a man who:

II. Initiated Revival.

How?

- A) Introduced reform.

II Kings 23:3 "Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book."

At 8: Appointed king.

At 16: Began seeking the Lord, contrary to his father and grandfather.

At 20: Cleaning up the country.

He removed all the sites, rituals, practices, idols, priests who were offensive to God.

At 26: He restored the temple of God.

While cleaning the temple, the workers discovered a copy of the Book of the Law.

B) Inspired repentance.

Josiah—**tore his clothes** when he first heard the words of the book of the Law.

Why? Things were about as bad as they could get when Josiah became King. His father (Amon) was wicked, his grandfather (Manasseh) was wicked, and spiritually Israel was corrupt/ God's word promised judgment to all who did not heed God's word.

God's word revealed the greatness of their sin.

II Kings 23:3b "And **all** the people took a stand for the covenant."

How do we know that revival took place?

Evidences of revival:

A) The LORD responded.

II Chronicles 34:3 "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.."

Jeremiah 29:13 "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all you heart."

God proclaimed that His wrath would become a reality due to the nations outright rebellion, but not during the time of Josiah's reign, because of Josiah's repentant heart!

B) The Word was recited.

All people gathered..."And He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD."—II Kings 23:2

Similar response: Ezra reading the Book of the Law

Ronald Reagan—No book has so molded the life of a nation as the bible has shaped America. It has been America's hope, its foundation, and its mold of character. The bible has sustained America through its 200-year history and is our only hope of security for the years ahead."

C) The people responded.

II Kings 23:3 "And **all** the people took a stand for the covenant."

The people changed their wicked ways and God recognized their change.

"Repentance is more than feeling remorse over you sin." It is changing and turning from your sin striving to never do it again.

They had a change of heart, and a change of attitude.

When a person's attitude/ values are changed, their actions will change.

"Attitude is more important than the past, than education, than money; than circumstances, than what people do or say. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill."—Charles Swindoll

Closing story: A church member with questionable character once told his Pastor that he was going to travel to the Holy Land. When he got there he was planning on reading the 10 commandments from the top of Mt. Sinai.

The pastor said, "I can think of something even better than that." The man replied, "What's that." The pastor replied, "Instead of traveling thousands of miles to read the Ten Commandments of Mt. Sinai, why not stay right here at home and keep them?"