

Character Helps

To help encourage each other to practice good character monthly so that we, and all those whose lives we touch, may experience its valuable benefits.

April 2002

Thoughts ⇨ Actions ⇨ Habits ⇨ Character ⇨ Destiny

C r e a t i v i t y

A character quality is a usual pattern of thinking, speaking or acting - a habit. Good character qualities, like any habits, can be developed by making decisions and taking actions that reinforce those habits. Practicing the "I Wills" of a character quality help develop it as a habit.

I W I L L . . .

Use my talents for good

Each of us has skills and abilities (talents), all of which we can choose at each moment to use for good or for evil. God exhorts us to use them for good: *"And let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith."* (Galatians 6:9-10). As we use our talents for good we benefit the Lord, ourselves, and others - others who may in turn bless others, who may in turn bless still others, and so on - each good work potentially multiplying itself over again countless times! Ask the Lord to make you alert to opportunities each day, and empower you to do good - and may each of your good turns be multiplied many times over - on down through eternity!

See things from more than one perspective

Each of us are individuals with varying gifts and abilities. And we each view life from the perspective or frame of reference we have developed through our upbringing, training and experi-

ence. As a result we have a limited understanding of things we have not learned, experienced or heard about. For this reason it is wise to seek "counselors" that understand better the matter at hand. *"...in the multitude of counselors there is safety."* (Proverbs 11:14) It is not a sign of weakness to seek counsel, but of strength and wisdom. It is a strong person who can say, "I do not know, but I will find out if I can." *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice."* (Proverbs 12:15) Seek the perspective and counsel of others. Most especially, ask the all-knowing Lord for His wisdom. (James 1:5) The new perspectives can be astonishing and lead to wholly unexpected outcomes!

Use principles to solve problems

In pursuing solutions to problems, the principles we use in getting to a solution are very important. For the Christian, the acceptable principles are those pleasing to the Lord - principles found in Scripture. Adhering to His principles in our daily decisions and actions are essential to maintaining an intimate relationship with Him - the top

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"Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective"

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God [in His sight for you.]

Romans 12:2

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priority of life for the Christian; using unacceptable principles will clog this intimacy and the flow into my life of His love, power, direction and blessings. * "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to thy word." (Psalm 119:9) When we have questions about the appropriate principles or the problem itself, He invites us to ask Him, for He knows about our problem before we even ask: "...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:8b) And for the Christian in this intimate relationship with Him, He promises to respond: "... Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened." (Luke 1:9). "...keep my commandments, and live;" (Proverbs 4:4)

Learn all I can

As Christians we are to apply ourselves to learning, not just for the sake of knowledge (which puffs up and breeds arrogance), but for two Godly reasons. First, knowledge of truth helps us to help ourselves and others to make choices and actions that please the Lord and contribute maximally to blessing others and ourselves - both for this life and the life to come. Second, as a responsible steward of the mind the Lord has given us, we must keep exercising it or, as science tells us, it will waste away or progressively decline. Especially valuable for the Christian is to focus on truth that can be applied to wisdom (seeing all things from God's perspective) and understanding (how to use what you know). Since the Lord is the author of all truth in the universe - all reality (Colossians 1:15-17, John 14:6, Proverbs 30:5), the starting place is always in seeking

Him, his Kingdom and his righteousness, for then all else will be added. (Matthew 6:33) As part of your lifestyle, are you meditating on Scripture each day? "...meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you shall be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:8)

Look for new ways to be a person of character

The Lord, Who knows everything about both this life and the life to come for every human being, exhorts us lovingly but earnestly to "Train yourself in godliness (Christlike character and conduct) ... [which] is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8). Practicing and growing in character is vitally important for the Christian because of its broad and everlasting implications! But growing in a character quality, by repeatedly making decisions and actions that reinforce the "I Wills" or habits of that quality, can sometimes get boring and take time. New ways that can speed up the process or break up the boredom can therefore be very helpful. New ways, for example: to commit to memory the "I Wills", to commit each day to practicing and to ask the Lord to help, to be reminded to look for opportunities during the day to practice "I Wills", to practice the "I Wills", to review progress each day to rejoice in progress and thank the Lord, to share with others as a means of encouragement and giving testimony to the Lord, to encourage yourself to continue persistently tomorrow. "...make every effort to add to your faith goodness..." (2 Peter 1:5)

C r e a t i v i t y i n N a t u r e

It was late at night and the family was in bed. All was quiet until the father was awakened by a sound coming from the roof. He quickly reached for his flashlight and made his way quietly to the window. The something was now right outside the window - just on the other side of the curtain. There was a gentle scraping sound on the glass, then a rustle, and a thud. As the father gripped the flashlight tightly and raised it, he slowly pulled back the curtain. There hanging in a tree was the bandit. The bandit's mask and eyes shown brightly in the darkness. The family later learned that the previous residents would leave dog food on the roof for this bandit. The family became very

familiar with this bandit and named the raccoon Henrietta. Each night they too would throw a handful of dog food out on the roof for Henrietta to snack on during the night.

In the spring, Henrietta had a litter of babies, as she did each spring. The dog food the family left for her didn't seem to satisfy her so she set out to explore other possibilities. As the father was dosing off to sleep he heard the normal pad, pad, pad, as Henrietta walked across the roof; but then there was a squeaking of a door. Curious about this new noise, the father grabbed his trusty flashlight. As he followed the sound to the garage he noticed that the gate had

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been unlatched and was swinging back and forth in the breeze. When he stepped into the storage room he scanned the room to where he normally kept the dog food bag. Something was moving around inside, for there was a bulge first on the right side then on the left side of the bag. Then came the sound of paper tearing. At the bottom of the bag a small hole was forming. A small hand-like paw could be seen diligently working at enlarging the tear. After a few minutes the little thief succeeded and the dog food spilled out all over the floor.

How did Henrietta know to unlatch the gate for it to open, or to tear a hole in the bottom of the bag instead of the top? Henrietta was creative. Henrietta didn't stop at the thought of defeat, but rather looked at it with a new perspective and took the challenge to succeed.

Many times we may be tempted to become discouraged and disheartened when we face opposition to our plans. Instead, let us approach opposition with a new perspective. Let's not let challenges discourage us, but instead, let's let discouragement challenge us.



C r e a t i v i t y i n H i s t o r y

Samuel Budgett (1794-1851) was a man of high principal and philanthropy who was known throughout Great Britain for his successful conduct of an immense mercantile business. He believed that in whatever calling a person finds himself he should do his best, whether nail-straightening or bag mending or other; and Budgett trained his employees to succeed and advance. He could boast of the most efficient and faithful employees in Great Britain.

Budgett strongly disliked idleness, believing it never made one rich physically or morally. He championed personal industry, and believed punctuality was key. Using his creativity, he trained the 600 men and boys in his huge warehouse by his example and methods. Even those living several miles away managed regularly throughout the year to reach the store by 6 a.m.

By the gate hung a blackboard with a hook on it for each employee. On the hook hung a little copper plate. When the employee left he took his plate, exposing his number on the board. As he entered the gate, he placed the plate on his hook, covering his number. The moment the 6 a.m. bell stopped ringing the board was removed, and all whose numbers were not covered were immediately put down as tardy. At the end of the year all that had not been tardy received a reward. In this creative way Budgett trained to promptness large numbers of employees who served him many years. He believed promptness was the secret of success, because following in the train of promptness was industry, economy of time, dispatch and a whole group of other character qualities.

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C r e a t i v i t y i n D a i l y L i f e

At Home

Home is a vitally important place to show creativity. Home is a place of rest and refuge from the business of life. It takes creative ideas and perspective to protect home life from intrusions of unwanted influence such as moral decay, popular opinion, and disharmony. At the same time it is the place where preparation for each day and for life takes place.

In Philippians 2:4 we are directed to: "*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others*". As you lovingly seek out and practice creative ways to do good to those in your home, you create many blessings. Family members are blessed by your actions, by your example, and by the reminder of what God can do in and through a Christian committed to grow in Christlike character. Also, you are blessed by knowing you are growing in Christlike character, pleasing God, and blessing others in your home. And God is blessed by your practicing Christlike character. And in turn, others are blessed as those in your family, in turn, multiply these good deeds. Be an initiator! Be a multiplier!

At Work

Imagine your work environment as one in which everyone is creative - uses all their skills and abilities for good, purposes to see things from multiple perspectives, uses Scriptural principles to solve problems, learns all they can to aid their effectiveness, looks for new ways to be a person of Christlike character, and is committed to not being an underachiever! What a workplace that would be! What a vision! And you can be an initiator by modeling creativity through your personal conduct, heightening awareness of the character quality of creativity through table folders on your desk and more "public" attention-getters like posters if permitted, extending personal invitations to co-workers to join you in practicing and encouraging each other, and by other means. Will you be an initiator? Imagine the impact that even a beginning can make - looking for ways to do good things for people, not using or accepting questionable methods or practices for accomplishing things, seeking better ways to get tasks done

more efficiently, using free time effectively! What a direct blessing you would be to each party affected! What a thought-provoking [and hopefully thirst-creating] witness you would be to everyone! What a do-able example to follow! And what pleasure you would bring to the Lord by committing to practice and encourage His personal character quality of creativity! And what blessing you would receive from the Lord as He encourages and builds you in the process! The benefits are beyond measure! Will you be an initiator? Will you take a first step now!

At Church

The Church has the most significant mission on the face of the earth! A mission of life and death! A mission impacting people both in this life and the life to come! It is our mission to share Christ with every living person and to encourage everyone to enter into a personal, eternal, believing relationship with Him and become His disciple! And for every believer, it is our mission to help each grow more intimate in personal relationship with Jesus, to strive to present each one mature in Christlikeness, and to stir each up to love and good deeds. (Matthew 28:19-20, John 17:3, Ephesians 4:11-13, Hebrews 10:24.) The quality of this life and the next depend on the success of this mission! And yet, in practice it is easy to grow stale in a routine of activity - to do the same things, the same way, every day of every month - and to lose our zest. Let us ask our Creator to help us be more creative - to look at our mission from new perspectives! Let us reach out to the world from a new perspective. For instance, let us follow the example of the Apostle Paul: "*To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*" (1 Corinthians 9:22). For our fellow believers, let us for example, encourage them to join us in practicing the "I Wills" of the character quality each month; in this way we can mutually encourage each other in a matter having eternal consequences. The Church needs creative people to help it get out of its routines and get on with successfully fulfilling its life and death mission! What creative step will you take this week? Ask a friend to join you!

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C r e a t i v i t y

In the Community

Creativity is key to blessing our communities. First, what kind of community do we want? Wouldn't it be wonderful to be a part of a community that practices good character and is working together to make things better? If so, the question is then what steps can we take? The key lies in creativity. Creativity is "approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective." We need to look at the community from God's perspective. From His perspective our priority is to love our neighbors (Mark 12:31). Said Jesus, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in*

heaven." (Matthew 5:16) In serving people, meeting needs, investing time in those around us, witnessing, and other "good works", we communicate God's love to people. The purpose is to bless them, to encourage them to follow our example and practice Christlike character, and to draw them into a personal relationship with Christ. Let us ask ourselves honestly, are we letting our light shine to our communities or are we hiding our light through busy schedules, pre-occupation with self, or other encumbrances? Let's be challenged by God to see our communities from a new perspective, His perspective. What step can you start with now?

C r e a t i v i t y i n t h e H e a r t

Creativity is the ability to produce or bring about new or better thoughts, plans, words or actions for addressing needs, tasks or opportunities. It is the ability: (1) to recognize needs, tasks or opportunities with need or potential for solution or improvement, (2) to develop viewpoints from new perspectives, and (3) to bring about or produce plans, words or actions directed to new, different or better results.

Creativity is a character quality of God and His Son Jesus Christ (Genesis 1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 1:16).

The Importance of Creativity in the Christian Life

The character quality of creativity is related to the quality of stewardship in so far as they both relate to endeavoring to use resources most effectively and efficiently. For the Christian the importance of both stems from the Bible's response to the basic questions of life: Why are we here? What are we to be doing? The Biblical response to these questions was presented in [Character Helps - Resourcefulness](#) (February 2002). Because this response is equally important to the character quality of creativity, it is summarized below (without Bible references, for brevity):

- ♦ God created all things, and created them for His pleasure.
- ♦ In His design, we humans were each intended to bring Him pleasure by enjoying with Him a one-to-one love relationship in

which we know Him relationally, experientially and intimately; and as an outcome of this relationship we would experience abundant life.

- ♦ But God, being Holy, discontinued this intimate, everlasting fellowship with each person because of the person's sin. Wonderfully, however, He invites each of us back into this love relationship if individually we will ask His forgiveness, open the door of our heart and in prayer invite Him in, placing our trust in Him as our Savior from the death penalty and separation from God, and as the Lord who I am willing to obey.
- ♦ In His ardent desire for intimacy in our relationship (to which He is fully committed) He asks me to promote this intimate love relationship as the top priority of my life - to love Him with all my heart, soul, mind and strength - for it is out of this intimate relationship that He experiences pleasures and I experience abundance of life.
- ♦ In this abundant life, He tells me that He has plans for me, plans to prosper and not harm me, plans to give me a future and a hope.
- ♦ In this relationship and my commitment to Him, He promises to supply every need I have.
- ♦ In addition to these remarkably bountiful blessings, there is the momentous blessing of being together! He is always where I am; He says He will never leave me or let me down, either in this life or the life to come in heaven!

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- And not only does He invite me into this personal relationship and to be with Him forever - as awesome as these are - He also overwhelms me with unbelievably great honor and with great meaning and significance of life by inviting me to join Him in His ministry! To be His co-worker and steward to help Him carry out His purposes! To invest my life in things that will count both in this life and the life to come! To love my neighbors and my enemies for Him. To be His ambassador (personal representative) here on earth, recruiting people into His Kingdom and encouraging those in the Kingdom to love, to do good deeds, and to mature in Christlikeness. To carry out the good works He has for me. To develop in Christlike character and conduct as an example and encouragement to others, joy to Him, and blessings to me.
- To meet my needs, bless me, and enable me to carry out my ministry as co-worker, the Lord provides me with gifts of many resources - my body, mind, spiritual gifts and talents, work, time, money, possessions, family, work, relationships, positions and many other wonderful gifts. As rightful owner of all things He expects me (and will hold me accountable as His steward) to care for them, use them wisely and invest them prudently.
- Good stewardship is paramount because each of these resources is limited in amount and capacity, but is precious in its potential for blessing people, the Lord, and myself, and for investing with eternal dividends. Opportunities are limitless! Through effective use of my time, talent and all my other resources, I can bless other people, who in turn can bless others, who in turn can bless others, and so on - resulting in limitless multiplication! And I, and every person impacted in this multiplication, can help in improving the well-being of people in this life and, very significantly, in the life to come. For the quality of the eternal life to come of these people (and myself) can be greatly enhanced by their decisions and activities in this life, e.g. by accepting Christ as Lord and Savior now they will spend eternity with Him in heaven, by growing in Christlike character and conduct they will experience its value in heaven, and by

loving others and doing good works in the name of Jesus they will accumulate a history of good works which the Lord will honor in heaven. (See February article for more extensive presentation.)

- As I faithfully give and invest myself and my resources in co-ministering with the Lord and building His Kingdom, I can enthusiastically expect Him to take what I offer and multiply them - whether it be in terms of the fruit of lives blessed and influenced, by increasing the resources I have for further use and investment, or in other ways. **There is no other way I can invest my resources that pays dividends forever and ever!**
- And as I faithfully give myself to the Lord in our intimate relationship, and as I give and invest myself and my resources in His ministry, I will be blessed richly with abundant life - both in this life and the life to come!

Creativity is an important ingredient in stewardship. Each resource at our disposal has precious potential for blessing and building His Kingdom, but our resources are in very limited supply relative to the great potential for their use. For these reasons, being able to create better ideas and ways for accomplishing our good works more effectively and efficiently with the resources the Lord makes available to us increases our capabilities for blessing the Lord, others and ourselves, and building His eternal Kingdom.

Growing in Creativity

Creativity is, at its core, a matter of the heart. The important starting point for each of us therefore is asking the Lord to search our heart. Are my thoughts, actions and aspirations pleasing to Him? Do I acknowledge that all that I am and all the resources I have to work with are gifts of God? Am I using and investing my resources in accord with His desires? Am I using and investing them creatively to bless others and build His Kingdom? Am I grateful to the Lord for blessing me so richly, and for inviting and enabling me to be a blessing to Him, others and myself? Am I committed to making Him #1 in my life? Or is my heart possibly grieving Him, quenching His Spirit in my life, blocking our intimate relationship, and inhibiting His love and power in my life? (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Isaiah 59:1-3.)

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Creativity

Taking inventory with the Lord, gaining a clear conscience through confession, and becoming filled with the Holy Spirit are the keys to experiencing His love and power, and to receiving His help in growing in character in general, and creativity in particular.* Will you join me now? Ask the Lord to help you take inventory, gain a clear conscience, and be filled with the Holy Spirit!

And now, growing in the practice and habits of creativity are matters of growing in the practice of the major elements of creativity:

1. Recognize needs, tasks or opportunities in need of solution or improvement.
 - ♦ Ask the Lord to help you become more alert to existing and prospective good works whose possibility for success can be increased and/or whose required resources can be reduced or made more effective.
2. Develop viewpoints from new perspectives.
 - ♦ Develop the habit of asking yourself questions, such as: What is the goal or purpose of this need, task or opportunity? What are the minimum steps or functions required? In what better, more effective, more economical ways can each be accomplished?
 - ♦ Ask the Lord for His wisdom and His perspective on the matter.
 - ♦ Ask other people for their perspectives.
3. Bring about or produce plans, words or actions directed to new or better results.
 - ♦ Learn as much as you practically can throughout life so you have a reservoir of principles and knowledge to draw on.
 - ♦ Ask the Lord for His wisdom and His ideas on ways to produce new or better

results.

- ♦ Ask other people for their ideas and knowledge.

The Lord directs us to grow in character because He loves us and knows the many significant benefits which will result to both us and others. (Jeremiah 29:11, 1 Timothy 4:7-8) Furthermore, He offers His power to help us. (Phillipians 4:13, 19). So let us be filled with His Holy Spirit, and as we practice creativity in our day-to-day decisions and actions, the character quality of creativity will develop, and resources will be used more effectively in blessing people and building His eternal Kingdom.**

* For further discussion of the heart and its importance, confession, being filled with the Holy Spirit and "spiritual breathing", see "in the heart" in Character Helps- Enthusiasm (March 2001). Free on website www.charactercincinnati.org/faith.html under icon "49 Character Quality Resources", then enthusiasm".

**For general discussion of the "right thoughts - right actions - right habits - right character - right destiny" process, see "in the heart" in Character Helps - Virtue (May 2001). Free on website www.charactercincinnati.org/faith.html under icon "49 Character Quality Resources", then "Virtue".

C r e a t i v i t y

What Benefits Does a Christian Create When Practicing the Monthly Character Quality?

Benefits To God:

Brings God **honor** by demonstrating to Him our love, trust, and obedience in trying to develop the character qualities of Jesus Christ as He directed us to do.

Brings God **pleasure** as Father in seeing us grow up into the likeness of His Son Jesus (Who was perfect humanity and His design for us) so that we can become and do all He created us to be and do, both in this life and the life to come.

Brings God **love** as we come into a more intimate, personal relationship with Jesus.

Benefits To Others:

Brings **benefits** to others as they personally experience directly the effects of the Christian's practice of good character, e.g. the energy of a smile, wholeheartedness in helping, keeping of promises, respect, truthfulness, etc.

Informs others by demonstrating what the character qualities and benefits look like in real life.

Encourages others by seeing a real person who believes in the importance of practicing good character, and by seeing that a real person can in fact develop and practice good character

Benefits To the Christian:

Brings **joy** in pleasing God, the highest priority of the Christian's life.

Promotes **intimacy** in the Christian's personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Contributes to the Christian's receiving love, strength, wisdom, other blessings from the Lord.

Helps the Christian **grow** in character qualities of Jesus Christ .

Develops **value** for the Christian both for this life and the life to come.

Enhances the Christian's self-acceptance, self-confidence and self-satisfaction.

Increases the Christian's productivity and accomplishments.

Improves the **relationships** of the Christian with other people.

Helps the Christian reach his or her full potential.

Brings **joy** to the Christian in pleasing and receiving affirmation of other people who are important to him or her, e.g. spouse, family, pastor, friends, co-wonders, group members, etc.

Brings **joy** to the Christian in helping to benefit spouse, family, and others.

Brings **joy** to the Christian in helping to build a better community, workplace, and world.

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3805 Edwards Road, Suite 200 Rookwood Tower Cincinnati, OH 45209
Phone: (513)751-6789 Fax: (513)379-2121 www.charactercincinnati.org

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