

Character Counts: The Power of Personal Integrity by Charles Dyer, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, 2010 (29 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. Character Over Reputation.

Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.—John Wooden [page 12]

2. The Habit of Excellence.

Excellence is not a single act, but a habit. You are what you repeatedly do.—Shaquille O’Neal [page 12]

3. The Bible Tells God’s Truth through the Lives of People.

Conduct reveals character, we best understand integrity when we see it lived out in a person’s life. God understands this principle...and that’s why so much of the Bible tells God’s truth through the lives of people. Want to learn how to be wise? Walk with Solomon through the wise—and foolish—steps of his life. Struggling with faith? Travel with Abraham’s caravan and watch his faith take shape and deepen. Concerned that your life is out of balance? Visit the home of Mary and Martha and observe these two women struggle to maintain balance during the stress points of their lives. [pages 15-16]

4. Shocked by Honesty.

It’s discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit.—Noel Coward [page 18]

5. Politicians Among Those Who Are Deceitful.

If you were to ask your friends and colleagues what groups of people they felt were most untrustworthy, you might hear journalists, celebrities, telemarketers, used car salesmen, policemen, and others. But almost everyone would include politicians on such a list, and have done so for a long time. Mark Twain penned, “It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctively native American criminal class except Congress.” Will Rogers wisecracked, “A politician is just like a pickpocket; it’s almost impossible to get one to reform.” Even the French general and

politician Charles de Gualle said, “Since a politician never believes what he says, he is quite surprised to be taken at his word.”[page 21]

6. The Greater the Power, the More Dangerous the Abuse.

Politicians are not any more evil or corrupt than society as a whole. But they are under more scrutiny because the promises they make are public. We entrust our leaders with the authority to do what is right, but they face added temptations that come with being part of the power structure. Edmund Burke wrote, “The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse” ... and that is a danger faced by all politicians. [page 22]

7. Loyalty Love and Compassion.

Loyalty love and compassion fit together. Someone committed to a relationship will demonstrate care and compassion to the other individual. In Lamentations 3 Jeremiah found God’s loyalty love and compassion to be twin pillars of hope. “Because of the Lord’s great love (*hesed*) we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail” (Lamentations 3:22). [page 47]

8. The Difference between Knowledge and Wisdom.

The Hebrews understood the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Their word for wisdom (*hokmah*) carried with it the idea of skill. Wisdom was the ability to live life skillfully and successfully. Knowledge alone doesn’t guarantee that life will be lived skillfully. [page 52-53]

9. Analysis and Pride.

Two dangers face an individual thrust into a position of power and authority. One danger is that the leader will become paralyzed by the enormity of the task. The leader is responsible for others, and a single mistake or miscalculation can cost followers their jobs, their families, or their lives.

Most decisions are not black-and white. The leader must sort through conflicting reports, incomplete data, and divided supporter to decide what is best. A leader can become so afraid of making a mistake that he or she will analyze—and reanalyze—every possible angle and option ... and do nothing

unless one option emerges as the clear choice. Some call this paralysis by analysis.

The second danger is that the leader will become self-centered and prideful. Position brings with it prestige and perks, and a leader can become sidetracked by these trappings of power. Most corrupt politicians do not enter politics with evil motives. They begin with a genuine desire to make a difference. But the constant pressures and demands of those who seek their attention and help gradually desensitize them. A leader can then justify receiving gifts from those seeking access, accepting financial rewards for political favors, or even taking kickbacks from those who receive government contracts. [page 54-55]

10. Recognize Our Limitation and God's Directives.

Wisdom begins when we develop a proper relationship to God ... recognizing our limitations and humbly following His divine directives. “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7). [page 71]

11. Life Requires Discipline and Endurance.

Life is a marathon not a sprint, and it requires discipline and endurance. The author of Hebrews reminds us of this important principle, and his words of challenge and encouragement are a good way to end our focus on self-control. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2a). [page 87]

12. God Purposefully Keeps Us in the Dark about the Future.

God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events and reserved for Himself the knowledge of them, that He may train us up in a dependence upon Himself and a continued readiness for every event.—Matthew Henry [page 90]

13. Can We Trust Anyone?

Politicians. Police. Pastors. Three specific groups of individuals given authority and responsibility. Three groups whom we expected to be trustworthy ... but who have experienced notable failures in recent years. No wonder we are so cynical and untrusting! Can we trust anyone? [page 94]

14. Faith and Trust.

Faith is our ability to follow when God calls and to trust when God promises. [page 101]

15. God Wants Our Availability.

The Lord doesn't ask about your ability, only your availability; and, if you prove your dependability, the Lord will increase your capability.—Unknown [page 108]

16. Dependability.

Dependability sells! Four decades ago Timex sold watches on live television by focusing on dependability. The announcer would do something outrageous like strap the watch to the propeller of an outboard motor and run the engine in a tank of water. He would then stop the engine, remove the watch, and hold it up for the camera. As the audience looked at the second hand sweep around the dial, the announcer delivered the punch line. "Timex! Takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin'!" In those unpredictable days of early television, this stunt spoke volumes about the faith the company had in the watch's dependability. "Buy me," the advertisement screamed. "I won't let you down." [page 110]

17. God's Enablement.

Spiritual leadership is dependent on God's spiritual enablement, not on natural ability. [page 122]

18. Mastering the Ability to Submit to God and Obey.

Joshua may personally have felt inadequate as a leader, but he had to develop the conviction that God called him to replace Moses. God would give him the ability to be an effective leader, but those convictions called for

commitment. To be an effective leader Joshua needed to master the ability to submit to the heavenly King and wholeheartedly obey Him. [page 122]

19. Challenging the Next Generation in Faithfulness to God.

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Joshua planned to end his life the way he had always lived it ... in faithful service to God. And he challenged the next generation to tread the same path. [page 125]

20. Love and Faithfulness on Your Heart.

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.” (Proverbs 3:3-4)[page 127]

21. Aiming At Heaven.

Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.—C.S. Lewis [page 128]

22. Love and Giving.

One can give without loving, but one cannot love without giving.—Amy Carmichael [page 128]

23. Proper Response to Problems.

The testing of faith produces perseverance, and perseverance produces maturity. James reminded his readers that the proper response to problems will develop spiritual maturity. Perseverance is a process that produces depth of character. [page 181]

24. Looking Forward in Hope.

Job looked inward for integrity, he looked upward for stability, and he looked outward for service. All three helped him endure. But Job looked in one additional direction ... and it provided hope. He looked forward to the time when God would make all things right! [page 189]

25. God's Stability and Hope Leads to Joy.

Paul's ability to experience joy was to look beyond his circumstances to the Lord. Problems come and go. Circumstances constantly change. But God is unchangeable and His plan is unalterable. Looking to God can provide stability and hope ... and this leads to joy. [page 199]

26. Self-absorption.

Some of the saddest individuals alive today are people who think only of themselves. Their lives are so self-absorbed they have no understanding of the personal satisfaction they can experience through serving others. [page 201]

27. JOY = Jesus, Others, You.

Paul stresses three specific concerns that consumed Timothy. Timothy took a "genuine interest" in the welfare of the church in Philippi (2:20). Timothy also focused on the interests of Jesus Christ (2:21), and as a dutiful son he willingly served Paul (2:22). The one area Timothy did *not* make a priority was "his own interests" (2:21). Timothy had shown the Philippians how to spell "JOY": Jesus first; others second; Yourself last. [page 203]

28. Lifestyle Patterned after Jesus Christ.

But somethings must never change. Integrity should never go out of style. Christlike character remains God's standard for those who claims His Son as their Savior. Your commitment to a lifestyle patterned after Jesus Christ must never waver. [page 221]

29. A Life of Integrity and Holiness.

William Longstaff, an English businessman, made a decision to live a life of integrity and holiness. He wrote down on a paper a simple poem explaining what living such a life meant to him ... and years later his poem, *Take Time to Be Holy*, was set to music. As William and Randy Petersen discovered, this simple "may have been the only poem he ever wrote ... A businessman at heart, Longstaff wrote no flowery or pious-sounding verses, but these down-to-earth thoughts." [page 212]