

P506

Grace Notes Radio Program

SERIES: Why trials?

SET 06: CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION underway – Part 1

INTRO: Welcome to Grace Notes. On our last program, Barbara Sandbek stated that God disciplines both to train and to chastise us. He does this because we are His children...He loves us...and wants to conform us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. We learned that God often uses consequences to help us 'come clean' from the sin in our lives. Today, we'll take a look at the qualities God wants to mold into our character.

I don't have any trouble understanding the chastisement aspect of God's discipline – I know we deserve it, but I must admit...the only thing that keeps me going through the 'discipline for training sake' is knowing that God's main objective is...CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION.

2 Peter 1:5-7 gives the character qualities that God is looking for in us. It says...

Make every effort to ADD to your FAITH, goodness, and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance(or patience), and to perseverance, Godliness, and to Godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love.

Notice that we can't begin without faith, because everything else is to be added to it. I believe that all the other qualities come into our lives progressively.

JESUS is the Author and Finisher of our faith – that's where it all starts. WE can't conger faith up. Where does it come from? Romans 10:17 says...

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

When I was seven years old, I HEARD that Jesus died and rose again to save me from my sin. I asked Him to be my Savior and He gave me the faith to believe that He is.

I'd like to be able to say that I immediately progressed to the other levels, but that's not the case. My teenage years were spent on an emotional roller-coaster. In my early adulthood, my aggressive, goal-oriented personality drove me to achieve. The more involved I became with my emotions and accomplishments, the more caught up I was with myself. I didn't think I needed Jesus for anything but my eternity - sort of like a life-assurance policy.

My interpretation of the list of qualities back then may have gone something like this...

Add to your faith...

**goodness (no fun),
knowledge (guilt),
self-control (bondage),
patience (inhibiting)
Godliness (narrow mindedness)
brotherly kindness (too time consuming)
love (makes me vulnerable).**

I had (or should I say - made) no time to learn about God, and I really didn't care to. My child-like faith waned from lack of use.

I want to stop here and say, that if this is where you are, you're missing out on so much. Verse 8 in that same passage says...

If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God has given each Believer a job – and that is to glorify Christ. The more we know, and become like Him, the more fulfilled we are.

Make no mistake about it, it is God who does the work in us, but He's the perfect Gentleman, who only gets involved with our permission. Our part in our perfecting process, though is to 'make every effort' to let it happen. We do this by getting ourselves out of the way and letting God work.

We're also commanded in Philippians 2:12, to 'work out' our salvation by responding to God's grace, and in 1 Timothy 4:7 to train ourselves to be Godly.

God does have His ways of reminding us of our higher-calling when we're out of hearing distance. He uses that VOID He created in us - the place that yearns for more of Him. Often we don't even realize what it is, until He orchestrates situations and trials to make us aware of it. And though we may not be praying, God also burdens effective prayer warriors to intercede for us and demonstrate His love in a visible way. Parents and grandparents, don't give up - your prayers do make a difference...

*** LOVE WILL ***

I suppose if we were God and had to figure out how to change a heart, we'd probably deprive our child of things until he cried 'uncle'. But that's not how my loving father worked in me. He showered me with kindness and LET me choose Him.

Here's how God's love found a way in my life.

God allowed me to marry a fine man, have 2 great sons, buy a lovely home, be successful in a career, and attend and even sing in a great church. Though I was outwardly everything people expected, inwardly my heart was not right. My health had been good, but at one point God used an illness to make me aware of some things I needed to change. This illness threatened my voice, something very dear to me. For the first time in my life, my own frailty stared me in the face.

About that same time, I was trying to witness, out of a learned response, to a girl, who was about to leave her husband. I said to her...

"All you really need in your life is Christ - He can make the difference."

Did I really believe that? I hadn't seen a change in me, though the only thing I'd ever asked Christ for was Salvation. I was perfectly capable of handling the rest of my affairs...or was I? I looked at myself and thought, "Have you ever truly been happy?" Immediately, I went back to my childhood days when my family would sing, dad would preach, and I'd see the people coming forward to accept Christ. It was thrilling to know that God used ME to impact the souls of others. I was happy then. Could I be now?

God got my attention. I needed to change, and I wanted to change. I prayed....

"Lord, I've never asked you for anything but Salvation before, but I'm not a happy person. There has got to be more to this Christian life than what I'm experiencing. I can't change without you - I need your help. I'll read the Bible whether I understand it or not, and I'll pray even if it doesn't make sense."

God answered my prayer and opened up a new life for me - there's no turning back.

He helped me to correct the wrong in my life.

He opened up a bounty of treasure in the Scriptures - giving me gold nuggets of promise, gems of knowledge and jewels of wisdom.

He helped me experience prayer as a pleasurable interchange between friends.

He showed me that He was actively involved in my life to guide and direct me – not to take away the fun or hem me in.

God subtracted the things that were unproductive in my life and He added blessings money and fame can't buy. He shouldn't have allowed me to succeed, but He did, so I'd want Him, not for what He could give, but just for Himself.

When I was selecting songs for this program, I chose the next one for the title, but when I thought about the words, I realized that they perfectly describe what I just shared. So, don't miss the message for the beat!

***** I NEED YOU *****

Thanks for joining the program.

If you've been blessed, please write to us at

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P.O. Box 581

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If God leads you, please send along a gift to help us stay on this station.

Don't miss our next program – Barbara will continue with “The Benefits of our suffering?”

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