

Strengthening Training – Building Good Character

Journal:

One thing I would like to change about my character is....and why?

-Changing our bad character is not just a matter of willing ourselves to act better because then we would already be acting better. It's also not just about praying that we would act better because then for sure we would be acting better.

-We should pray and ask God to help us be great moms, but we also have to do our part, which is to learn and practice a new way of living.

A. Character is trained through constant practice. (see Hebrews 5:11-14)

-A key part to building good character is not just asking God to help us overcome and stop acting badly, but we should also ask Him to show us HOW TO ACT IN THE RIGHT WAY when we are in situations when we usually fall.

Three main reasons we keep falling into bad actions and reactions:

1. **Unresolved hurts** – we have experiences and memories that we haven't taken the time or effort to deal with that keep affecting us.
2. **Emotional overwhelm** - pretty much all of our bad character comes from times when we are overwhelmed and parenting is crazy overwhelming!
3. **It's what we've been taught** - it's the effect of our upbringing. What was modeled for us is how we act.

B. How to change and grow good character

Two key ways we can change and grow good character:

1. **Modeling.** Finding those that are where you want to be in your life and faith and imitating them.
2. **Stories.** Stories move us, inspire us, evoke emotion in us and have the power to change the way we respond in various situations.

-Jesus used stories all the time! Mark 4:34a says *"In fact, in his public ministry, he never taught without using parables."*

-Jesus is brilliant! He engaged adults' hearts and connected with their empathy and compassion and conscience.

-So we want to learn to tell stories that will inspire us and help us to change. Character Stories. Stories that teach us how to act better when we are dealing with overwhelming emotions like fear, anger, sadness, hopeless despair, shame and disgust. We are going to use stories to demonstrate how we acted in good or bad ways. And we are going to use stories to show how we could act differently in the future.

What do we mean exactly by acting differently?

John 13:34-35 Jesus says *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

-Our goal as Christian mom's is to respond in love in every circumstance.

When telling a good story there are two main things you need:

1. **Attention** – a good story captures the attention of the listeners. It has to have enough details to keep us engaged, but not so many details that we get lost in the information.
2. **Emotions** – once we have their attention, we want to engage them in the emotions of what we felt as we were going through the experience we are describing in the story.

-Communication is 7-11% the words you say and 90% body language and tone of voice!

Take Home:

1. What kind of stories am I filling my mind with and my kids' minds with? (Videos, movies, books, video games) What kind of stories am I sharing – gossiping, venting, harping stories that only leave me and others with bad action and reaction options? Do I need to change anything or confess anything?
2. Write down a time when your husband built joy with you. Use the worksheet to help you know what to write down. Then share that story with your husband.

Key points for writing Character stories:

1. Briefly share what happened.
2. Share how you felt, including feeling words for emotions and body.
3. Share how you responded to what happened.
 - a. If you had a loving response, just share how you responded in love.
 - b. If your response was not loving. Include how you did respond, followed by how you would have responded if you had responded in love (*work through S.T.A.R.*)

Key points for sharing Character stories:

1. Use feeling words for our emotions.
2. Use feeling words for our bodies.
3. Use eye contact. (it's ok to look away and re-engage)
4. Use tone and speed of voice.
5. Use facial expressions and body language.
6. Keep our stories concise.
7. Stand and face the person or sit on the edge of your seat so you can use your hands and body to speak.

Exercise: Quieting, Gratitude & Connect with Jesus

Psalm 46:10 (ESV) *"Be still and know that I am God."* **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** (ESV) *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

1. Pray and ask Jesus for His peace. Then take a few moments to relax your body and breathe deeply.
2. Write down something/someone that you are thankful for. (*e.g. family, nature, hobbies, something from the past day/week...*) Focus on what you are thankful for and how it makes you feel.
3. Ask Jesus if there is anything He wants you to know right now. Write down what He reveals to you.
4. Thank Jesus for His good gifts and for speaking to you.

Reflection: Character Story

Look back at that character trait you wanted to change in yourself. Think of a time when you demonstrated that character trait. It can be a story where you did well or one where you wished you had done something different.

- Briefly describe what happened. (write only enough to jog your memory)

- Write down how you felt (include feeling words for emotions and body)

- Write down how you responded. (if you didn't respond in love, include how you would have liked to respond had you responded in love S.T.A.R.)
