Strength Training: Overcoming Bad Character

Reflection:

1. Am I a good story teller? Do I keep people's attention or do I use too much detail and talk too long? What kind of stories am I sharing – gossiping? Venting? Harping? Stories that leave me and others with only bad action and reaction options? If so, spend time in confession.

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2. What kind of stories am I filling my mind with and my kids' minds with? (Videos, movies, books, video games) Ask Jesus to show you if there is anything you need to change or get rid of?

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A. Recognizing Overwhelm in Ourselves & Others

Most of our bad character comes from emotional overwhelm. The first step then in overcoming our bad character is growing in _____ so that we recognize when we are getting overwhelmed.

1. **Overwhelm cues in others:**

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2. **Overwhelm cues in ourselves:**

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B. Dealing with Bad Character in the Moment:

S.T.A.R.

1. **Stop – don't try and fix the problem or respond hastily.**
2. **Take a breather and calm down.**
3. **Appreciate & Connect to Jesus.**
4. **Respond in Love.**

C. Dealing with Systemic Bad Character

1. **Identify the _____.**
2. **Identify the _____ at the root of the problem.**
3. **Identify any _____ thoughts resulting from the overwhelming emotions.**
4. **Forgive others for how they made you _____ not just for their actions.**
   i. **Forgiveness means:** *"we will no longer hold the person responsible"*
5. **_____ to Jesus for how you should respond and ask him what he wants you to know about how you feel and the lie based thoughts you've been having.**

6. **Practice using the _____ for the overwhelming emotions identified at the root of the behavior.**

<u>Practicum</u>: (try it and apply it!)

Dealing with Systemic Bad Character: (Bad actions/Reactions)

1. **Connect with Jesus:**
    a. Pray and ask Jesus for His peace. Then take a few moments to relax your body and calm yourself down. (*relax your shoulders, face, neck & breathe deeply*)
    b. Write down a time where you felt close to Jesus. (*devotional time, nature, answered prayer, worship time, etc.*)
        i. Write down how you felt. Include how you felt emotionally and physiologically.

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2. **Identify the problem:**
    a. Prayerfully identify a struggle you have and write it down.
    b. Think of a memory where you experienced this struggle. Briefly write down what was happening.

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3. **Identify the underlying overwhelming emotions:**
    a. Prayerfully consider how you were feeling before and during the event. Write down as many descriptive words as you can think of.

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4. **Identify any lie based thoughts/thinking:**
    a. What are the reoccurring thoughts that go through your mind as you think of the event where you were struggling?

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5. **Reconnect to Jesus:**
    a. Take a moment to quiet and reconnect your heart to Jesus.
6. **Listen to Jesus to know where he was, how he sees the situation and what he wants you to know:**
    a. Prayerfully let Jesus speak into the overwhelming emotions present as well as any lie based thoughts you have been having.

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In small groups, share what you wrote down.

b. Spend time confessing any sinful actions/reactions you have had, as well as holding on to any offense towards those who have hurt you.
c. Spend some time forgiving others involved for how they made you feel and for any bad actions they may have committed against you.
    i. **REMEMBER:** *forgiveness is necessary whether the person actually did anything wrong or not. Forgiveness is about you releasing the person who hurt or offended you, so that you can move on from the hurt. In most cases, you do not need to make the person aware that you are forgiving them. It is between you and God.*
d. Prayerfully ask Jesus if there is anything else he wants you to know in response to your confession and choice to forgive?

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7. In small groups, pray for each other for the filling of the Holy Spirit and for anything else Jesus brings to mind.

Take Home:

1. Get out a piece of paper and leave it somewhere you will see it regularly. On the paper write down signs you see of overwhelm in your kids and in your husband.

2. Fill out the character story sheet dealing with one of the emotions you identified in the practicum today. For example, if the underlying overwhelming emotion was fear then write out a story on fear.