**The Book Of Proverbs – Marks Of A Person Of Character**

Today is communion and I believe our today fits in when we look at passages like **1 Cor. 11** where the Lord’s Supper is discussed. Our study has to do with character, who we are, as has been said, “when no one is looking.” Everyone can put on a good show, we know that, and some people know how to fool others but eventually a person’s true character comes out.

A dictionary definition of character I think says it well. Here is one that I think is good from a world’s point of view:

**\*\* The Encyclopedia Britannica states, “the good qualities of a person that usually include moral or emotional strength, honesty, and fairness. She's a kind and honest person of good *character*.”**

Obviously, the flipside to what we have just noted is that there are people of bad character, who lie, cheat, slander others, who verbally abuse people, who you can’t trust at all. There is always that side of things as well. But we want to focus on what makes someone have good character.

So, let’s now see what Proverbs says about it and the qualities we should strive for in our lives.

**1) A person of character has integrity.** The word “integrity” is thrown around a lot in our culture. But it seems to be a lost character quality. People lie and think nothing of it. They gaslight people and put them down to get their point across. They are unethical in business, overcharging, stealing from their company. We live in a world where integrity does not seem to matter.

Integrity is a choice. Let’s note a few things about this word **“integrity”** **as found in Proverbs**. **Integrity is living what you believe but those beliefs need to be rooted in objective truth that leads to being people of honorable character.**

We also find in Proverbs that there are at times contrasts shown within the verses and the verse we are starting with, **Proverbs 10:9**, is one of those passages.

This verse tells us that a person of integrity **“walks securely.”** In contrast, the individual who makes his ways **“crooked”** will be found out. There is some good truth to grab a hold of in this verse.

The word **“walks” has to do with how we live, our behavior, pattern of conduct.** Solomon tells us that a person whose life, actions, and words, are committed to doing right, will have **“integrity” (completeness, wholeness)**. We are, as one **Bible Dictionary puts it, living ethically sound and having moral well-being**. **We are sincere, we are honest**.

**Point:** We follow what God says, thus we handle business right, treat others fairly, we do not lie. Our lives are directed by a Biblical worldview.

Note that **Pro. 10:9** says that the person who walks in integrity walks **“securely.”** When you and I are living this way, we do not need to worry about being reprimanded by God. We do not have to look over our shoulder because we have nothing to try to hide.

Others may not accept our course of action, but if God sees us living with integrity, we have nothing to fear from Him. And in the long run, because we are secure that we are doing right, even if people do not like our way of life as a Christ follower, we do not allow that to change our course of living. The contrast in this verse is that the individual who does not live with integrity will eventually be discovered. They cannot hide their wicked ways, even if they try. Eventually, things come to light.

**Vital:** Practice integrity. Choose to do what God wants us to. Have our life molded by a Biblical worldview.

**2) A person of character is trustworthy.** How many times have we been told by someone they would get something done and it did not happen? Sometimes unforeseen circumstances stop things from getting things done but we are talking about the person who says something and does not do it or talks out of both sides of their mouth.

Or their character is such that you would not trust them with a project, or with money, or with other things. A person of character is a person of their word and someone who we can trust to do what they say.

Turn with me to **Pro. 21:8**. The moral action and character of the **“guilty” (laden with guilt)**, their course of life, without a moral center, is **“crooked,”** a word meaning **“twisted, devious”** or as seen here, **“crooked.”** They do not follow the path of God.

In contrast to the guilty is the **“conduct” (good action, things done)** of the **“pure” (righteous, clean, innocent, pure of morals)** and that conduct is **“upright” (right, morally straight, pleasing)** to the Lord.

**Point:** If an individual seeks to live and be right in the sight of God, they should be trustworthy. When they give their word, they keep it. You can count on them when they are given a task to do. And the things they do line up with God’s ethics. This is a person you know you can trust when they know things, when they say something. We need to be that type of person.

**3) A person of character is humble.** This may seem obvious but, in our culture, humility seems to have disappeared in many ways. Humility does not mean that we are doormats. It also means we do not compare ourselves to other people. We can always find someone we can line up next to and feel like we are just a little more spiritual, just a little bit better than them.

But true humility is comparing ourselves to God. Proverbs talks about humility as a character trait. **“Pride”** **(insolence, presumptuousness)**, leads to **“disgrace” (dishonor)** according to **Pro. 11:2**.

The **NET** says this about pride as seen in this book, “**This term…means “to boil; to seethe; to act proudly; to act presumptuously.” The idea is that of boiling over the edge of the pot, signifying overstepping the boundaries (e.g.,** [**Gen 25:29**](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNET.Ge25.29)**).”**

Proud, arrogant, self-righteous people are so focused on themselves that they can be rude and disrespectful to others.

**Point:** The humble person is open to wisdom because they see their need of God **(Mt. 5:3)**. The humble person is submissive to God, they are open to doing what God says. Developing humility requires a relationship with God. It begins with us seeing our need for Him in our life. Pride often keeps God from working in our lives.

**Point:** The more we get to know God, and humble ourselves before Him, as **Jam. 4:7-8** tells us too, we are to yield ourselves to Him. God makes Himself known as we humbly seek Him and desire to know His Word. That is where wisdom comes from, the application of God’s Word to everyday life.

**4) A person of character thinks before they speak.** In our world today, we do not see this a lot. People slander others. They gossip, they “speak their mind” even when it would have been better if they had not. Look with me at **Pro. 17:27**.

This verse tells us that whoever **“restrains” (holds in, NLT- uses few)** his words have knowledge. The word **“knowledge”** can mean **“discernment, wisdom, understanding.”** They think before they speak. A person of character measures whether what they think needs to be said. We are not talking general talk here, but words that can be useful or useless.

This person does not run off at the mouth and talk and talk. A person with a **“cool spirit” (even-tempered)** is wise. I think both these statements in **vs. 27** go together. What is in our heart will eventually come out in words. Jesus said this very thing in **Mk. 7:14-23**.

**Point:** Some people tell you that they just simply speak their mind. But guess what? We do not always have to do so. We can use wisdom. Maybe think before we speak. Consider if our words are going to be helpful or not and do they really need to be said. How will the other person take them? And are we listening to what the other person is saying (see **Pro. 18:13**)?

Now I understand that sometimes things must be said, and the chips will fall where they may, and some people will never like what we say. But that does not mean we never speak up.

The **Life Application Bible Notes** gives some good insight here. We read:

**“This proverb highlights several benefits of keeping quiet: (1) It is the best policy if you have nothing worthwhile to say; (2) it allows you the opportunity to listen and learn; (3) it gives you something in common with those who are wiser. Make sure you pause to think and to listen so that when you do speak, you will have something important to say.”**

The bottom line is that a person of character guards what comes out of their mouth. We show our inner being when we just speak without thinking or gossip, or slander others. Our words do matter.

There is a fifth character trait we want to look at this morning.

**5) A person of character is willing to learn.** Some people think they know all they need to know. In some cases, they like to argue about stuff that they really do not know about or even if they do, they act as if they have all the knowledge about a particular area that there is to know.

But a person of character recognizes that there is much to learn, whether it has to do with things of this earth or spiritual things. No one has arrived. No one knows everything about everything.

This may not seem like a character quality, but it is tied to humility. We all know we have things to learn if we are honest with each other and ourselves. We are going to look at two verses - **Pro. 19:20** and **Pro. 21:11**. Both remind us of the positives of being willing to listen and learn.

There are two attitudes to note in **Pro. 19:20** that we need to have so that we can grow and learn, and these are worth noting.

**First**, be willing to listen to advice. The word **“listen”** is a command, an admonition. The writer knows how important it is that we “listen,” a word that means more than simply acknowledging what someone is saying. We obey good advice, we pay attention, we show genuine interest, we take it to heart.

The word **“advice” means “good counsel, wisdom.”** Some people want to give you advice, but it is not always good or worth listening to and in some cases, it makes you scratch your head. But there are those from whom we can learn. When we know our limitations, and do not act like a know it all, we can grow and I can say this - as a Christian, no one knows everything about this Book, the Bible.

**Second**, **Pro. 19:20** tells us to **“accept instruction.”** Some people will listen and then, even though the counsel is helpful, do nothing with it. The word **“accept” means “receive, take”** so it goes beyond just listening.

**What is “instruction”? It has the idea of correction, discipline.”** The word is used at times to refer to, as **Mounce** notes, wisdom and teaching that imply correcting errant behavior.

Sometimes we need to be taught where we can improve in our life. We learn to be wise; we discipline our thoughts and actions. We need those people who we can trust to help us to make course corrections or help us to learn new things that honor God. And consider what they say. I need to do that.

And let us finish with **Pro. 21:11**. Note the contrast in this verse. **First**, Solomon mentions the **“scoffer.”** What or who is a “scoffer.” This type of person may be arrogant and a bragger. They will deride and put others down. They will think they are better than others, and brag and boast about their accomplishments, or who or what they know. And they treat all kinds of things with disdain. They may think that morals, etc., do not apply to them.

When a person like this is punished, and pays a price for their arrogance, even the **“simple,”** a **second** group mentioned in this verse, can learn. Do not take the word **“simple”** as a putdown as if people are dumb. This describes a person who may be naive about things, or open-minded to the point where they can easily be led astray or are open to being taught the truth. They can be easily persuaded or deceived. They learn by watching what happens to the scoffer.

At the end of **vs. 11** the **“wise”** person, the **third** group, is noted. When they are **“instructed,”** they gain **“knowledge.”** They want to learn. They want to be corrected and to grow in their faith. We must give attention to what we are hearing or reading, and we must think about it. That is how we are instructed as God gives us understanding and wisdom.

We gain insights as we learn and when applied to life as we are taught the right things and observe around us how God works and how things go on in the world, we are able to discern, and to have **“knowledge” (of God)** and this helps us develop a Biblical worldview. We also grow in the practical application of God’s Word to everyday life. We learn from being corrected. We learn as we study God’s Word and put it into practice.

People of character are learners, pure and simple. As we reflect on just these five-character qualities of a person of character, how are we doing with each one? What changes may we need to make to be a person of character? That is between us and God.