

Character ~ Good Reputation ~ Discussion Questions

Your character consists of many elements such as integrity, courage, discipline, vision, endurance, and compassion. One important aspect of character is a good reputation. It is often said that your reputation goes before you.

1. Think of some people with a good reputation and some with a poor reputation. Why are their reputations what they are? (Some suggestions: Sam Walton, Ted Turner, Michael Jackson, Bill Gates, Jon Corzine, Jane Fonda, Hillary Clinton.)
2. Do you believe that the world needs men: A) who cannot be bought? B) whose word is their bond? C) who put character above wealth? Do you think that others in the world believe this or do people believe that the end justifies the means?
3. Read Philemon 1-25. In 60 A.D., during his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote this private, personal letter to a friend, Philemon, a wealthy member of the Colossian church. Its purpose was to convince Philemon to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, and to accept him as a brother in the faith.
What was always part of Paul's prayers? (vs 4)
4. When should you tell someone you are praying for them? What is your reaction when someone says they are praying for you? How does it help a person to tell them you are praying for them? What is the very best way to pray for another person?
5. What kind of reputation do you think Onesimus had with Philemon, his employer, when he ran away?
6. Onesimus was not only a runaway slave but probably stole money from Philemon as well (suggested in vs 18). Why do you think that Paul would associate with such a disreputable person? (see Colossians 4:9)
7. How do you think that Onesimus must have changed so that he moved from being "useless" to "useful" (vs 11) to both Paul and Philemon?
8. What role should we play in helping people be reconciled to others with whom they have had conflicts?
9. Why do we, along with Philemon, have a very difficult time changing our minds about the previous poor reputation of someone, a boss, employee, fellow worker, or classmate?
10. We don't know if Philemon rehired Onesimus or not. If you were on Philemon's employee review committee, would you rehire him? Why or why not?
11. Why do you think that this unusual letter was included in the New Testament?

Character ~ Good Reputation ~ Questions for Small Groups

1. What two Godly qualities did Paul desire for the readers of this letter? (vs 3)
2. What did Paul pray that the readers of this letter would do? (vs 6)
3. How can compliments and encouragement influence someone's life? How about criticism and disapproval? What if the criticism is deserved?
4. When you have to ask someone for a favor, how do you go about it?
5. What does it take for you to reestablish trust with someone who has made a major mistake? If you have made a major mistake, how would you go about getting other people to trust you again?
6. How did Paul describe his relationship with Onesimus? (vs 10-11)
7. Why was Paul sending Onesimus back to Philemon when he could have used him as a helper? (vv 12-14)
8. Why do you think it was important to Paul that Onesimus return to his former master?
9. To what level was Paul willing to be involved in the reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus? (vv 18-19) How does that translate into your life?
10. What response from Philemon did Paul anticipate? (vv20-21) Why?
11. In what circumstances should Christians return to people they knew before their conversion to rectify past mistakes?
12. "You don't get a second chance to make a first impression." What does that saying mean to you personally? How should it affect your relationship with people you meet for the first time?
13. Get together in confidence with a close friend and ask him (or in your small group and ask them) to evaluate your reputation as it is seen by others.
14. Think of someone you personally know that has a bad reputation (which may or may not be deserved). Pray for that person.