

Does Character Count?

We have been plagued recently by the report of some rather unscrupulous activities from professional athletes, to “professional” politicians, to Pastors and religious leaders. Tiger Woods, the highest paid professional athlete making over \$100 million a year has allegedly been unfaithful to his marriage vows by committing adultery with numerous women. Politicians who are elected to represent their constituents are found to have sold their votes for political favors. On occasion we hear of Pastors and religious leaders who are found to be living just the opposite of what they profess to believe. One has to ask the question, does character really count?

The Apostle Paul in his charge to Timothy (who was to assume the ministry responsibilities after the death of Paul) tells Timothy in the book of second Timothy chapter two, “This know also in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters...trucebreakers, false accusers,...despisers of those that are good...lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God...Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” The apostle Paul was encouraging Timothy to remain faithful in the ministry and do not become discouraged when you see the culture around you in moral and spiritual decay. The Apostle Paul continues his charge to Timothy in chapter four with the following words, “I charge thee therefore before God...Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...”

These are some of the last words that the apostle Paul gives before his execution at the hands of the Roman Emperor Nero. Paul knew he was about to be killed and wanted to leave these last instructions for his younger brother in the ministry who he charged

with the responsibility to pick up the mantle of faith and carry out the task of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a culture that was mired in sinfulness.

As we enter the post modern era in this country where every moral, ethical, and Judeo Christian value that have under girded our society are being challenged by nearly every institution from the highest offices of the land to the living rooms of our homes, we are confronted with the question, does character really count?

Some years ago professional basketball player Charles Barkley said, “the meek may inherit the earth, but they won’t get the ball from me.” That was a cute way of saying that all of this talk of values and morals and character may make a cute story for the Sunday school children, but the reality of life is that if you really want to get ahead in life you do not attain success by playing by the rules and displaying impeccable character; rather if you want to be successful you have to do what you need to do to be sure you make it happen. Barkley makes the following statement regarding character, “...I realized I have no character.”

The book of proverbs gives us general principles as to how the real world works. “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens...Keep sound wisdom and discretion.” (Prov. 3) God has designed the world to function within the parameters of wisdom and discretion. Creation reflects the very character of God and that is how life is designed to work. There are times that the immoral and unfaithful seem to be getting along in life just fine, but ultimately they will meet their fate because God will ultimately judge those who refuse to walk in His ways. The Bible tells us that the basis for character begins with the fear of the Lord, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1) “Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. The memory of the just is blessed: but the

name of the wicked shall rot.”

Yes, ultimately character does count. Even though those who display a disregard for biblical ethics, morals, values, and character may seem to be successful, ultimately calamity will come their way. The meek do indeed inherit the earth, but what Mr. Barkley and others do not realize is that the meek will also end up with the basketball as well.

Pastor, Randy Mason www.libertybaptistofmarshalltown.com
Liberty Baptist Church of Marshalltown