

# MODULE 1: THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE

## SESSION 5: YOUR INSIDE STORY

### Key Ideas for This Session:

- Character reveals our values, our attitudes, and shapes our behaviour. Therefore, our behaviour over time reveals the nature of our character.
- Good character is something we can develop and grow.
- Key verse: Psalm 139:14:

*I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well*

### Personal Character Is Who We Are:

We often describe people by how they look, what they do, their family, their personality, and sometimes by what we call their character. Our character is at the heart of our story because character represents who we really are, and what we are really like.

In educational research, character is described as a distinctive mark or stamp. Character refers to enduring attributes that distinguish a person or make up a person's identity. Character resembles personality, but character has distinctively moral implications. A person of character is a person who acts in a moral or ethical way.<sup>3</sup>

Because character speaks to the uniqueness of each person, it draws attention to the incredible artistry and love of God, the Creator.

How would you define "character" as in a person's character?

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<sup>3</sup> Source: International Journal of Educational Research, Volume 27 Issue 7, February 1998

Describe five things or traits that you think represent good or desirable character:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

Describe five things or traits that represent bad or undesirable character:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe your character?

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**The Inside Story:**

Character shapes our behaviour. You may have heard that actions speak louder than words, and there is a lot of truth to that. A person may seem to be one thing just by appearances, but they might actually be quite different in reality. Who we really are is often seen more clearly in our behaviour than by the way we dress, our jobs, our education, and our family background.

Read Matthew 15:18-20

***But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. <sup>20</sup>These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.***

What do you think this verse means?

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Why does this verse state that sin comes out of the heart and not the mind?

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Character is kind of the “inside story” about us. Character is like an inner compass that guides our values, attitudes, and actions—and they, in turn, reveal or reflect our character.

Here’s an example of how this works. If honesty is one of my **character** traits, I will have an **attitude** of intolerance against lies. My **action** will be to tell the truth even when it is to my own disadvantage. Thus, my character shapes my attitude and that determines my actions.

Following the example provided, add three more traits to the chart below, showing how character drives attitude which translates into action:

Character Trait	Attitude	Action
E.g., Compassionate, Loving	Caring, Non-Judgmental	Volunteering to help those in need

Our character is revealed in the choices and decisions we make. Our character and choices reflect the kind of person we are. Personal character is put to the test every day in big and little ways. The truth of a person’s character is revealed not necessarily in what a person does when people are watching, but in what a person does when no one is watching. It is also more readily revealed when people are under duress.

Jesus was a person who was of the highest possible character. He was “sinless”—that is to say He was a man who lived a perfect life before God. The Gospel of Luke tells the story of how the character of Jesus was tested when He was at a low point—hungry, and alone in the desert for forty days. No one was looking on—it was just between Jesus and the devil.

Read Luke 4:1-13

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”*

*<sup>5</sup>The devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And he said to Him, “I will give You all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup> If You worship me, it will all be Yours.” <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”*

*<sup>9</sup>The devil led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If You are the Son of God,” he said, “throw Yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup>For it is written: ‘He will command His angels concerning you to guard you carefully; <sup>11</sup>they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” <sup>12</sup> Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>13</sup> When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time.*

What were the three temptations described in these verses?

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Think about what each of these temptations meant. Jesus was very hungry. All He had to do was act on what the devil was suggesting—making bread from stones in order to be satisfied. Jesus knew that there was a hard road ahead of Him and that He would ultimately be betrayed, arrested, tortured, sentenced, and killed. All He had to do to prove Himself to get the approval of all people, was to listen to the devil and do something spectacular that would make Him a hero. Jesus was God’s Son and yet people did not recognize Him as the “king of the universe.” The devil offered Him another way—all He had to do was bow down to the devil instead of God.

In each of these three devilishly well-played temptations, Jesus stayed unwaveringly true to God. His loyalty to God did not waver. He remained unselfish and obedient to God’s will. His character was tested, and He did not falter.

Do you think it would have been easy to stay true to one’s convictions in the face of such temptations? How do you think Jesus was able to resist?

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If Jesus had given into any of these temptations, what would that have meant for humankind?

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Do you think that the choices you make matter to, or affect other people? Yes/No (Explain.)

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What choices have you made in the past that reflect your character positively? ...negatively?

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What are some of the character traits of people you admire and look up to?  
Why are these important to you?

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What character traits would you like to work on for yourself and how will you go about it?

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2 Peter 1:5-8

***For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup> and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. <sup>8</sup> For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Philippians 4:8

***Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.***

How do these verses show it is possible to grow good character?

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Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or think about these topics this week:

- *Review the five traits you listed in this session that represent good character. Consider 10 ways (two for each) that you can turn a trait into an attitude and then into an action. Make a list and then do two of the actions today.*
- *Meditate on Psalm 139. God made you to be unique and you have a special part to play on this earth. You are one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable.*