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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Child of God,

Mission to Children has been passionate about spreading the Gospel and the teachings of Jesus since its incorporation in 1972 in the United States and 1963 in Canada.

Our goal is to equip role models like you to cultivate Christlike character in children—modeling, mentoring, and multiplying a testimony of God’s love.

The Gospel ensures a bright hope for their future, but it also ensures an increasingly better today as they grow by God’s love. That is what integrates this Cultivating Character guide with community and global outreach, evangelism, and discipleship.

Many Christian charities address the practical and spiritual needs of children. What sets Mission to Children apart is our commitment to cultivate Christlike character in the lives of the children we help. Our character program equips them with ten values to aim at—like stepping stones across a creek—to get them ready for potential Christian service and deepen their love for God and their love for others. Cultivating character is a key component in discipleship. After all, love marks the Christian’s testimony.

Jesus gave this definitive statement in John 13:35, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Christ-centered character is a key process and desired outcome for His followers.

As believers, we are becoming in practice who we already are in Christ. This discipleship process must consider and care for the next generation. We must lead by Christlike example. Because there is at least one mark children will leave upon tomorrow’s world. It will be their character. Today is our opportunity to help them grow into their God-given potential by teaching them the importance of cultivating their character.

Children and youth like Prayanka.

Prayanka is one of many of children influenced by this holistic approach. Now 24 years old, her life did not begin with any foreseeable hope until she arrived at the Beulah Home orphanage in India at age 3.

Prayanka’s life was forever changed.

continued on next page
She had multiple exposures to the ministries of Mission to Children from her rescue to her graduation from the orphanage. One of her passions growing up there was learning Scripture and sharing what she learned with the rest of the children.

The orphanage director remembers Prayanka regularly reaching out with love to children stigmatized by abandonment, leprosy, blindness, and HIV/AIDS who come to the Mission to Children Christmas and Easter dinners.

Prayanka still comes back to minister to the children in the orphanage today, and she thanks God for those who moved beyond knowing His love to showing His love.

That is the incredible power of the Gospel. In the big picture, we want to make disciples—messengers of the Gospel whose lives reflect the message of the Gospel.

God bless you!

Byron Garmo, President of Mission to Children

On July 1, 2017, Byron became the fourth President of the Mission to Children in the United States and in Canada. He is a Biola graduate (B.A. Intercultural Studies, ’98), husband to a wonderful wife who homeschools their three young children.
How Do I Use My Bible Teacher's Guide?

These guidelines are ideas, not rules. Each of these weekly Bible studies may be done in one extended block of time or divided into five daily segments.

Week One
Schedule for teaching one character quality each month
• Introduce character quality and its behavioral description.
• Read and discuss the Bible character story.
• Challenge the group to see who is first to find some of the listed verses.
• Discuss the meaning and application of each verse.
• Introduce memory verse and begin memorizing it together.
• Announce that the next time you meet you will be looking for someone who demonstrates the character quality.

Week Two
• Review the character quality and its behavioral description.
• Recite the memory verse as a group.
• Read and discuss “What Jesus Said.”
• Challenge the group to see who is first to find more verses listed.
• Discuss the meaning and application of each verse.
• Give an award to someone who demonstrates the character quality.

Week Three
• Memorize character quality and its behavioral description.
• Read the story of one of the other Biblical examples and discuss how that person demonstrated the character quality.
• Challenge group to see who is first to find more verses listed. Discuss the meaning and application of each verse.
• Work on the “Character Quality in Action” at the bottom of each page.
• Present a character award to a different person.

Week Four
• Review the character quality and its behavioral description.
• Read a story of a Biblical figure who lacked the character quality.
• Open the discussion to share personal experiences, either positive or negative, relating to the character quality.
• Recite the memory verse as a group.
• Present a character award to a different person.
CHARACTER AND REDWOOD TREES

Our Character Solutions logo combines a compass and a redwood tree. The compass represents our individual, internal moral compass, which we need for making good decisions. The compass needle, a giant redwood tree, represents character.

The rings of a redwood tree widen and strengthen its trunk as it grows, making it the widest and tallest tree in the world. Some are wide enough for a car to drive through! Others are taller than the length of a football field. God created the thick redwood bark to be unusually resistant to destructive insects and blazing fires.

Character is the collection of chosen values on which a person’s moral or ethical actions and reactions are based. A person with good character stands tall and stands firm. “Rings of character” strengthen an individual’s personal responsibility and interpersonal respect. Good character helps a person resist destructive influences and burning temptations.

Redwood trees have surprisingly shallow roots. They stabilize themselves by reaching outward as far as 30 meters and interlocking their roots with those of neighboring redwood trees. A person who builds strong and healthy relationships with others of good character will be stable even amid powerful winds of adversity.

Character Solutions International exists to strengthen personal responsibility and interpersonal respect among children and the adults who influence them (www.CharacterSolutions.org).

Character Values

Personal Responsibility – Being accountable for my motives, attitudes, and actions

- Integrity – Showing that I can be trusted to do what is right and say what is true
- Conviction – Holding a value or belief so firmly that it influences my attitudes or actions
- Self-Discipline – Focusing on worthy goals instead of distractions
- Diligence – Willingly completing the tasks I have accepted
- Wisdom – Behaving in ways that show I understand the consequences of my decisions

Interpersonal Respect – Treating others as I want to be treated

- Loyalty – Faithfully obeying my authorities and committing to significant relationships
- Courage – Conquering fear in order to assist others
- Humility – Honoring others by drawing attention to them instead of myself
- Kindness – Selflessly caring about and helping others
- Thankfulness – Sincerely showing others my gratitude for their effect on my life

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God gave us His Word—the Holy Bible—to reveal Himself, to tell us about ourselves, and to guide us through life in a manner that honors Him in ways that He will accept. The Bible is a long and fascinating story of God’s consistent love for us and our inconsistent love for Him. He created and designed us for a specific purpose: to worship Him. Worshiping Him means loving Him, walking beside Him, and serving Him each day. We experience deep joy and true peace only when we become committed worshipers of God the Father and devoted followers of God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Psalm 119:105 is a prayer to God that says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Later in that same prayer (Psalm 119:130) the psalmist writes, “The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” Proverbs 6:23 agrees: “For these commands are a lamp; this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.” II Timothy 3:16 declares, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The following stories and verses from the Scriptures will provide hours of interesting and helpful discussions and activities for adults, youth, and children. For each character quality, ask how that Bible person demonstrated the character quality. Children may want to act out some of the stories. Challenge them to find and explain the Bible verses listed. Most important of all: Be an example and an encouragement to them!

**Personal Responsibility:**
- Wisdom
- Integrity
- Conviction
- Self-Discipline
- Diligence

**Interpersonal Respect:**
- Kindness
- Loyalty
- Courage
- Humility
- Thankfulness

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Wisdom

When Jesus was a child—before people realized He was God in human form—His wisdom sometimes startled those around Him. At age 12, His parents brought Him to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. They traveled from Nazareth in a caravan of family and friends. When the feast was over the group began their long journey home. His parents did not see Jesus, and they assumed He was with others in the caravan. But when they could not find Him they became very alarmed and returned to Jerusalem.

Searching the city frantically, they discovered Jesus sitting in the temple and amazing the scholars with His thoughtful questions and answers. They were awed by the Child’s understanding of God and the Scriptures.

His worried mother scolded Him for not telling her where He would be. But He surprised her by saying He assumed she would know He was at the house of His heavenly Father. Only years later did His parents understand what He meant.

Jesus returned with His parents to Nazareth, honoring and obeying them. Meanwhile, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

Jesus knew even as a child that true wisdom comes from God. Therefore, He chose to be with teachers of the Scriptures rather than spend all His time playing with friends. One result of that decision is that He continued to grow in true wisdom, which pleased His human father and His heavenly Father very much.

What Jesus Said About “Wisdom”
“Anyone who listens to My teaching and obeys Me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse, because it is built on rock. But anyone who hears My teaching and ignores it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will fall with a mighty crash” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Memory Verse: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise” (Psalm 111:10).

Wisdom in Action
Encourage wise decision making through regularly scheduled discussions called, “What will you do?” Possible topics for youth can be drugs, alcohol, cheating, etc. For example: “Your friend suggests a dangerous joke to play that could result in harm to himself or others. He asks you not to tell. You think you should. What will you do?” (Adapt topics for adults or children.)
**Integrity**

Showing that I can be trusted to do what is right and say what is true

**Daniel (Daniel 1 and 6)**

About 25 centuries ago a handsome and intelligent teenager named Daniel was captured in his homeland and taken to a faraway country. The foreign king selected Daniel to be a palace servant, and as time passed he recognized Daniel’s unusual wisdom and integrity. Daniel became an influential advisor to the king and a highly respected governor in the kingdom.

Years later during the reign of another king, a group of government officials discovered that the king intended to put Daniel in charge of his entire kingdom. They envied Daniel and tried relentlessly to discredit him. Yet he was so trustworthy and behaved so responsibly that they could find no fault in him.

Then they remembered that Daniel prayed to God three times each day. With devilish delight, they devised a wicked scheme. First, they persuaded the king to proclaim that everyone should pray only to the king for the next 30 days, or be thrown to the lions. Then they spied on Daniel’s house.

Daniel was dismayed at the decree, but he loved God and resolved to do what was right. He went home and, as usual, opened his windows and prayed to God. His enemies reported this and the distressed king had to throw Daniel into a den of lions.

But God protected Daniel from harm that night, and the next morning he was lifted from the den without a scratch. Then the king threw the corrupt officials to the lions, which destroyed them instantly. Finally, the joyful king proclaimed that all should worship Daniel’s God. Daniel’s integrity brought honor to the Lord.

**What Jesus Said About “Integrity”**

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

**Memory Verse:** “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out” (Proverbs 10:9).

**Integrity in Action**

Darken the room and light one candle. Note how one little light brightens the entire room. Discuss how a person’s integrity (“Doing what is right and saying what is true”) is like a light to family members and friends.

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**Other Biblical Examples**

- Noah (Genesis 6:9)
- Job (Job 1:1 & 2:3)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9)

**Scripture References**

- **Integrity**
  - Psalm 25:21
  - Psalm 51:6
  - Psalm 101:2-3
  - Psalm 119:1
  - Isaiah 33:15-16

**Integrity Inspires:**

- **Honesty**
  - Psalm 145:18
  - Proverbs 12:17, 19

- **Sincerity**
  - Psalm 15:1-5
  - Romans 12:9
  - James 3:17

- **Purity**
  - Psalm 51:10
  - Psalm 119:9
  - Matthew 5:8
  - James 1:27

- **Virtue**
  - Proverbs 31:10

- **Fairness**
  - Micah 6:8

**Lack of Integrity**

- **Deceitfulness**
  - Psalm 119:29-30
  - Proverbs 15:4
  - Proverbs 17:20
  - Jeremiah 17:9
  - Matthew 13:22
  - Hebrews 3:13
  - 1 Peter 3:10
Abraham (Genesis 12, 17, 18, 21, 22:1-18; Romans 4:18-22)

One day thousands of years ago God surprised an elderly man named Abraham. “I will make you the father of many nations,” God promised. Abraham wondered how this could be possible, since he and his wife were very old and had no children of their own. But God performed a miracle. How joyful they were at the birth of Isaac when Sarah was age 90 and Abraham age 100!

Years later God tested Abraham’s belief that God would keep His promise. “Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and sacrifice him as a burnt offering.” Although his heart was breaking, Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. Would God perform another miracle and bring Isaac back to life after the sacrifice? Puzzled but believing, he obeyed God by preparing an altar as God directed him and laying his son on that altar.

Just as Abraham lifted the knife to sacrifice Isaac, the Angel of the LORD shouted from heaven, “Abraham! Lay down the knife! Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from Me.”

Abraham respected and believed God so firmly that he was even willing to obey God’s drastic command to sacrifice his son. In return, God saved Isaac and blessed Abraham with descendants as numerous as the stars.

What Jesus Said About “Conviction”

Several days later Jesus returned to Capernaum, and the news of His arrival spread quickly through the town. Soon the house where He was staying was so packed with visitors that there wasn’t room for one more person, not even outside the door. And He preached the word to them. Four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn’t get to Jesus through the crowd, so they dug through the clay roof above His head. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:1-5).

Memory Verse: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Conviction in Action

Discuss key beliefs from the Bible that you hold as convictions, such as: Who is God? How does God view us? What is our purpose? What did Jesus do for us? How does Christlike character honor God?
Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1-6)

Nehemiah was very sad. Friends from Jerusalem—where his ancestors were buried—reported that the rebuilding of Jerusalem, destroyed long ago, was going poorly. Its walls and gates were still shattered, providing no security or dignity for the city and the temple.

Nehemiah lived far from Jerusalem and had an important job serving King Artaxerxes in Persia. Yet he prayed that God would direct the king to let him restore those walls and gates. It was a worthy goal. When the king saw Nehemiah’s sorrow and heard his request, he sent him to Jerusalem, a horseback ride of more than 600 miles each way.

Many obstacles could have distracted Nehemiah from his goal. The long horseback ride was uncomfortable. The workers in Jerusalem were unorganized. Wealthier Jews in Jerusalem were mistreating poorer Jews. The people were discouraged. Enemies scorned his efforts and threatened to attack.

But Nehemiah focused on the goal instead of the distractions. He prayed for God’s help. He created a good plan. He stopped the rich from abusing the poor. He encouraged his workers. He gave each family a particular section to rebuild. He also implemented a plan to protect them from enemy attack.

The people saw Nehemiah’s self-discipline and trusted his leadership. Because Nehemiah focused on worthy goals instead of distractions, the people did likewise. After neglecting the shattered city walls and gates for many years, they rebuilt them in less than two months. Jerusalem’s safety and dignity were restored.

What Jesus Said About “Self-Discipline”

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”

(Matthew 16:24-27).

Memory Verse: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Self-Discipline in Action

Have each person list personal goals for spiritual growth (such as Bible reading, memorizing Scripture, or cultivating one’s character). Make a 30-day plan to accomplish those goals.
Diligence

Paul (Acts 9; 2 Corinthians 11; Hebrews 12; 2 Timothy 4)

Soon after Jesus Christ arose from the grave and returned to heaven, an angry and strong-willed man named Saul journeyed to Damascus. He wanted to hunt and capture anyone who believed on Jesus as the Messiah.

Suddenly, just before reaching Damascus, a blinding light from heaven drove him to his knees. God spoke to Saul and changed his life: Instead of suppressing the Gospel, Saul would spend the rest of his life proclaiming the Gospel! Love replaced anger, and a new name, Paul, replaced his old name, Saul.

Paul redirected his strong will to accomplishing the task God gave him. It was never easy. He was imprisoned, whipped, stoned, beaten with sticks, and shipwrecked at sea. His life was in constant danger.

But Paul was persistent. He did not quit. His endurance encouraged other Christians to continue by looking to Jesus as their example. Paul wrote, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Near the end of his life, Paul’s diligence enabled him to write, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). Although it involved extreme hardship for many years, Paul willingly completed the task he accepted.

What Jesus Said About “Diligence”

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, and quickly.’ And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?’” (Luke 18:1-8)

Memory Verse: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Diligence in Action

Research three Biblical characters who demonstrated diligence. For each of the three, answer questions about their diligence such as: Who? Where? When? How? Why?
Joseph (Genesis 37 and 39-45)

Many centuries ago a man named Jacob lived by the Mediterranean Sea. He had twelve sons, and his favorite son was Joseph. When the other sons realized this, they became very jealous of Joseph.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers, who were tending their sheep far from home. When they saw Joseph, the angry brothers captured him and sold him to foreigners as a slave. Then they deceived their father into believing that a wild animal killed Joseph.

Joseph lived for years as a slave in Egypt and was even sent to prison as punishment for a crime he did not commit. But God was with Joseph. Eventually Joseph earned the king’s attention and respect. The king freed him from prison and made Joseph his highest-ranking assistant.

Then famine afflicted the land, including Joseph’s family far away in Canaan. Eventually Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt in search of food. When they arrived, they did not recognize Joseph. This was not surprising, since they had sold him thirteen years earlier in rags as a slave, and now he was richly dressed as the second highest official in Egypt.

Instead of returning evil for evil, Joseph was kind. He said to them, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20). Then Joseph brought his entire family to Egypt and provided them with good food and pleasant shelter throughout the famine and for the rest of their lives.

What Jesus Said About “Kindness”

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him” (Luke 10:30-34).

Memory Verse: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Kindness in Action

Identify a person who is elderly, sick, or neglected, and needs encouragement. Show kindness by sending a note, giving a gift, or spending time with that person.

Other Biblical Examples

David (2 Samuel 9)
Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42)

Scripture References

• Kindness (Agapé Love)
Psalms 36:7 & 40:11
Jeremiah 31:3
Mark 12:28-31
John 3:16 & 15:13
1 Corinthians 13:4
Galatians 5:22-23
Ephesians 2:6-7
Titus 3:4-7
2 Peter 1:7

Kindness Inspires:

• Friendliness
1 Samuel 20:42
Ecclesiastes 4:10
James 2:23

• Compassion
Psalm 145:8-9
Mark 6:34
Luke 15:20
Ephesians 4:32

• Gentleness
Proverbs 15:1
1 Peter 3:3-4

• Generosity
2 Corinthians 9:10-11

• Forgiveness
Genesis 50:19-21
Matthew 6:14-15
Colossians 3:12-14

Lack of Kindness

• Selfishness
Philippians 2:3-4
Stomachs were growling in homes throughout Judah. A famine had struck the land. The food crisis was so severe that even children had little to eat.

Naomi and her husband lived in Bethlehem and had two sons. Desperate to find food, they left their friends and relatives and moved to Moab, a nearby country across the Jordan River. Sadly, Naomi’s husband died soon after arriving in Moab. Eventually her sons married women from Moab named Ruth and Orpah. About 10 years after moving to Moab, death visited the family again: Both sons died, leaving Naomi alone except for two Moabite daughters-in-law.

The land of Judah had now recovered from the famine, so Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem and live near her own family again. She told Orpah and Ruth to return to their families and marry new husbands.

Orpah returned home, but Ruth was devoted to God and to Naomi. She said, “I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. I will die where you die and will be buried there” (1:16-17).

So Naomi and Ruth journeyed to Judah. Ruth continued to take care of Naomi in Bethlehem. Soon a compassionate relative of Naomi married Ruth and gave Naomi a grandson. God saw Ruth’s devotion to Him, her husband, and her mother-in-law. He crowned her with the distinction of becoming the great-grandmother of David, King of Israel, and with the honor of being an ancestor to Jesus of Nazareth.

What Jesus Said About “Loyalty”
“Beware that you don’t despise a single one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of My heavenly Father.

“If a shepherd has one hundred sheep, and one wanders away and is lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others and go out into the hills to search for the lost one? And if he finds it, he will surely rejoice over it more than the ninety-nine that didn’t wander away! In the same way, it is not My heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:10-14).

Memory Verse: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” (Ephesians 6:1)

Loyalty in Action
Discuss the similarities and differences between “blind loyalty,” such as sheep that blindly follow their leader, and commendable loyalty, such as Ruth’s. How can someone be too loyal?
Faithfully obeying my authorities and committing to significant relationships  

Conquering fear in order to assist others

**Esther (Esther 3-9)**

When Xerxes was king of Persia, an evil man named Haman became second in command. All royal officials bowed before him—except one named Mordecai. Haman was furious with Mordecai, and since Mordecai was Jewish, hateful Haman plotted to destroy not only Mordecai, but all Jews in Persia on the same day.

The queen of Persia was a beautiful young woman named Esther. No one in the royal court knew she was Jewish—or that Mordecai was her uncle. Queen Esther was terrified by the news of Haman’s wicked plan. What could she do? The king’s law said anyone who approached the king uninvited would be killed unless the king lifted his golden scepter of mercy—and the king had not invited Esther for several weeks.

Mordecai told her to go to the king anyway and plead for the lives of her people. He reminded Esther that her life was already at risk even in the palace, since she was Jewish. Queen Esther was very frightened. But did God perhaps make her the queen especially for this moment of courage?

After begging God for safety, she dressed in royal robes and approached the king. He lifted his golden scepter and listened to her plea. Then King Xerxes agreed with his queen. The Jews were protected, their enemies were punished, and Mordecai became second to King Xerxes. Thousands of families were saved—because Esther conquered her fear and risked her life.

**What Jesus Said About “Courage”**

The disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o’clock in the morning Jesus came to them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw Him, they screamed in terror, thinking He was a ghost. But Jesus spoke to them at once. “It’s all right,” He said. “I am here! Don’t be afraid.” Then Peter called to Him, “Lord, if it’s really You, tell me to come to You by walking on water.” “All right, come,” Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he looked around at the high waves, he was terrified and began to sink. “Save me, Lord!” he shouted. Instantly Jesus reached out His hand and grabbed him. “You don’t have much faith,” Jesus said. “Why did you doubt Me?” (Matthew 14:24-31)

**Memory Verse:** “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

**Courage in Action**

Evangelism requires courage. Outline and memorize the plan of salvation together, including Scripture references. Role-play a presentation of the Gospel to each other.

**Other Biblical Examples**

- Joshua (Joshua 1)
- Elijah (1 Kings 18:20-40)
- Stephen (Acts 7:1, 51-60)

**Scripture References**

- **Courage**
  - Joshua 1:9
  - 2 Samuel 10:12
  - 2 Chronicles 15:8-19
  - Acts 4:13
  - 1 Corinthians 16:13

- **Decisiveness**
  - Romans 14:13
  - 2 Corinthians 9:7

- **Initiative**
  - Ezra 7

- **Boldness**
  - Proverbs 28:1
  - Acts 4:31
  - Acts 14:3
  - Ephesians 3:12
  - Philippians 1:19-21
  - Hebrews 4:16

- **Lack of Courage**
  - Fear
    - Deuteronomy 31:6
    - Isaiah 35:4
    - Matthew 14:25-33
    - Mark 4:35-41
    - Romans 8:15
    - 2 Timothy 1:7
    - 1 John 4:18
Mary, Mother of Jesus (Luke 1)

Mary, mother of Jesus, has been renowned around the world for centuries. There may not be a nation on earth without at least some people who know the revolutionary story of a young teenager who was visited by an angel and told she would give birth to the Son of God.

“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The L ORD is with you. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

Mary could have become a conceited young woman. Why not? Who else was visited by an angel and chosen by God among all of the women on earth for this historic role? Instead, she humbly answered the angel, “I am the LORD’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” After pondering this miraculous visit, Mary again honored her heavenly Father by drawing attention to Him instead of herself, singing, “My soul glorifies the L ORD and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant.”

Throughout her life, following Him even to the cross where He was crucified, Mary remained in the background behind her son, Jesus of Nazareth.

What Jesus Said About “Humility”

“Two men went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a dishonest tax collector. The proud Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank You, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that tax collector over there! For I never cheat, I don’t sin, I don’t commit adultery, I fast twice a week, and I give You a tenth of my income.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘Oh God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored” (Luke 18:10-14).

Memory Verse: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

Humility in Action

List some positive character qualities that you admire in a friend or family member. Explain how this person demonstrates these qualities. Share this with someone in the group.
Thankfulness

The Thankful Samaritan (Luke 17)

One day as Jesus walked to Jerusalem, He came to a village along the way. Nearby, ten men recognized Him. Nine were Jewish and one was a Samaritan. They lived outside the village because they had leprosy. Just before Jesus entered the town, they called out to Him, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

“Go, show yourselves to the priests,” He replied. Jewish law gave priests authority to confirm that a person did or did not have leprosy. If the priest confirmed that they no longer were lepers, the men could return to their families and friends.

As they went to find the priests, a miracle happened: They were healed! But nine were so eager for the priests’ approval that they failed to take even a moment to thank Jesus for His miracle.

When the Samaritan realized that Jesus had healed him, he shouted praises to God. He returned to Jesus, bowed at His feet, and thanked Him for His merciful and miraculous healing.

Jesus welcomed the Samaritan’s thankfulness, but He asked those who were watching, “Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” Then He blessed the man saying, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

How Jesus Demonstrated “Thankfulness”

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and passed them out to the people. Afterward He did the same with the fish. And they all ate until they were full. (John 6:11)

Then He took a cup of wine, and when He had given thanks for it, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves” (Luke 22:17). Then He took a loaf of bread; and when He had thanked God for it, He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is My body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19).

Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank You for hearing Me. You always hear Me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe You sent Me” (John 11:41-42).

Memory Verse: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Thankfulness in Action

(1) Create a “Blessing Book” to remember the ways God has blessed you in the last month or year. (2) Write a psalm thanking God for all those blessings.
Thank you for using this Cultivating Character guide. I hope it’s a blessing to you and the children in your world!

We’d love to hear from you. Let us know what you think of this guide, and any ways we can help you further.

There are so many children in need in our world. Together, we have an opportunity to meet their immediate physical and spiritual needs... PLUS give them a strong foundation on which they can build their lives and a sustainable future. We really can impact the next generation of leaders!

I pray you’ll be encouraged by the following story of one of the lives impacted by our character program. If you are inspired to get involved in Mission to Children’s work in places like India or even your own community as a character trainer, simply visit our website to discover ways you can learn more and take action today.

God bless,

Skip Garmo, PhD

www.missiontochildren.org
Koti’s Story

Before Koti came to one of our Mission to Children’s Dinner Outreaches, he was a troublemaker in his neighborhood in India. He got into fist fights with his friends, let the air out of their bicycle tires, and threw rocks at the windows of his school. Koti’s behavior even got him expelled. For Koti, it was all “just for fun.”

On the day of the Dinner Outreach, Koti noticed many children were gathered under the big tent enjoying a feast and hearing a story. So he sat down and listened too. Our ministry team leaders shared the story of Noah and how he showed self-discipline. He wasn’t like the others in the world who didn’t listen. And when Noah built the ark, he was obeying God.

Koti began to wonder, **Maybe I’m not like Noah. Maybe I’m living like the others in the world. I want to be like Noah and have more self-discipline in my life.**

Today, our ministry team reports that Koti has stopped getting into fights, and he no longer lets the air out of their bicycle tires. Koti also apologized to his principal and has returned to school.

That’s the kind of impact you can have in the life of a child through Mission to Children!

www.missiontochildren.org