Temperament, Character, and Spiritual Gifts
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1. **Introduction:** Temperament and character are the two major elements which interact to form personality. Temperament, which is morally-neutral, determines the way we prefer acquire information, make decisions, and whether we prefer inward thinking and activity or outward expression and activity. Temperament influences **how** we think, speak, and act.

   Temperament is inborn, remaining essentially the same from birth throughout life. Temperament preferences become manifest gradually. It is possible for trained adaptive behavior to override temperament preferences. But because adaptive behavior requires greater attention and energy than the underlying preferred behavior, adaptive behavior will be used only when necessity demands. Probably the greatest motivator for adaptive behavior is love - love for a person, a nation, or a cause.

2. **Character:** The moral component of personality is character. Character is not inborn. It must be acquired by training. Character traits can change and can be lost.

   As a general term, "character" means the **essential essence** which makes anyone or anything what it is. We can talk meaningfully about the character of a person, of a relationship, of a country, of a neighborhood, of a school, of a company, of a book, of a wine, of a river, etc. The character of a person is the "inner reality and quality" from which thoughts, speech, decision, behavior, and relationships flow.

3. **Quotes about Character:** Over 2300 years ago, Aristotle said, *"Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or avoids."* Even earlier, Heraclitus said, *"Character is destiny."* A famous Greek saying was *"the key to good character is to be able to know yourself, control yourself, and give of yourself.* Theodore Roosevelt said, *"Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike."* Mark Twain said, *"A man's character may be learned from the adjectives he habitually uses in conversation."* Dwight L. Moody said, *"If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of me."*

   Clearly, the vital importance of character has been recognized through the ages. In discussing character two moral terms repeatedly appear – "values" and "virtues." What do these terms mean? Values and virtues both refer to beliefs, principles, ideals, qualities, traits, properties, attributes, expectations, or characteristics of individuals or groups which are admired, desired, and considered to be important for the well-being of society. The same word for an attribute can name both a value and a virtue. The underlying meaning of "value" is a goal, that which is desired to be true (not always achieved). "Virtues" are "lived" expressions of values, characteristics of individuals embodying a "value."

   Example of the distinction between value and virtue: **Honesty** as a value means people **should be honest**. Honesty as a virtue means a person **is honest** in practice. Everyone can

consider honesty to be a proper "value" but not all will possess the "virtue" of honesty.

4. **Aristotle's Virtues:** Aristotle considered virtue to always be the golden mean between two opposites. The 12 virtues of good character which he lists in Nicomachean Ethics are:
   - **Courage:** The midpoint between cowardice and recklessness. The courageous person is aware of the danger but continues to do what should be done.
   - **Temperance:** The virtue between overindulgence and insensibility. Neither too much nor too little in eating or drinking or any other activity.
   - **Liberality:** The virtue of charity, this is the golden mean between miserliness and giving more than you can afford.
   - **Magnificence:** The virtue of living extravagantly. It rests between stinginess and vulgarity. Aristotle sees no reason to be ascetic but also warns against being flashy.
   - **Magnanimity:** This virtue related to pride is to hold to the midpoint between not giving yourself enough credit and having delusions of grandeur. You are to exhibit proper ambition and pride.
   - **Patience:** This is the virtue that controls your temper. The patient person must neither get too angry nor fail to get angry when they should.
   - **Truthfulness:** The virtue of honesty. Aristotle places it between the vices of habitual lying and being tactless or boastful.
   - **Wittiness:** At the midpoint between buffoonery and boorishness, this is the virtue of a good sense of humor.
   - **Friendliness:** While being friendly might not seem like a moral virtue, Aristotle claims friendship is a vital part of a life well lived. This virtue lies between not being friendly at all and being too friendly towards too many people.
   - **Shame:** The midpoint between being too shy and being shameless. The person who has the right amount of shame will understand when they have committed a social or moral error but won't be too fearful not to risk them.
   - **Justice:** The virtue of dealing fairly with others. It lies between selfishness and selflessness. This virtue can also be applied in different situations and has a whole chapter dedicated to the various forms it can take.
   - **Modesty:** The midpoint between shyness and shamelessness.

5. **Two Values & Corresponding Virtues:** Consider 2 "values" – integrity, and respect.
   - For the value "integrity," corresponding virtues might be openness/candor, honesty, fair-mindedness, sincerity, forthrightness, incorruptibility, and decency.
   - For the value "respect," corresponding virtues might be patience, tolerance, politeness, unpretentiousness, friendliness, inclusiveness, considerate, and courteous.

6. **Another Common List of Character Virtues:** Chastity**,** Temperance, Charity, Diligence, Patience, Kindness, and Humility. About humility, CS Lewis said in mere Christianity, **"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."**

7. **Stephen Covey on Character:** Consider a very popular author's viewpoint on character. He has written a number of important books including: (1.) **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,** and (2.) **The 8ᵗʰ Habit (From Effectiveness to Greatness).**
    - He assumes/discusses 4 intelligence determining character: (1.) Physical intelligence. (2.) Mental intelligence. (3.) Emotional intelligence. (4.) Spiritual intelligence.

8. **Covey's Comments on How to Develop each of the 4 Intelligences**
    A. Physical Intelligence (a healthy body & mind): (1.) Wise nutrition. (2.) Consistent balanced exercise. (3.) Proper rest, relaxation, stress management, preventive thinking.
    B. Mental Intelligence (properly functioning mind): (1.) Continuous, systematic, disciplined study & education. (2.) Cultivation of self-awareness. (3.) Learning by teaching & doing.
    C. Emotional Intelligence: (1.) Self- awareness (be proactive, responsible, take initiative). (2.) Personal motivation (begin with the end in mind, have vision & virtues). (3.) Self-regulation (put first things first, have integrity and good execution). (4.) Empathy (seek 1ˢᵗ to understand & then to be understood, think win-win, work for mutual understanding). (5.) Social skills (think win-win, synergize, seek 1ˢᵗ to understand, practice renewal).
    D. Spiritual Intelligence: (1.) Integrity (being true to one's highest values and conscience). (2.) Meaning (have a sense of contribution to people and causes). (3.) Voice (aligning work with one's unique calling and gifts).

9. **Think about the comments on character from Aristotle to Stephen Covey. Are their viewpoints consistent with what you think about Christian Character? If not, what do you think is missing? What was included that should not have been?**

10. **Christian Character:** Our general definition for character is **"the essential essence which makes anyone or anything what it is."** So we ask the question, **what is the essential essence of Christian character?** The short answer is that Christian character is "like Christ's," that is, it is consistent with the character of Christ. The comments above about good character mention many worthy things, things consistent with, even necessary, for Christian character. But they are not sufficient. The most essential essence of Christian character is righteousness and holiness before God. That is not mentioned.

    A person's relationship to God is crucial. Fallenness and enmity to God cannot produce Christian character. The "good character" traits described above could all fit with Christian character, but that is insufficient. The missing crucial elements of regeneration, the commitment of belief through saving faith, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit mean that the described "good character" is not Christian character.

    That is why we say that, while un-regenerated people may be kind, benevolent, trustworthy, etc., their actions are good but not Christian because they are not done "from a regenerated heart," "as unto the LORD," "in the admonition and fear of the LORD," "in obedience to the LORD," "for the glory of the LORD," "because of love for the LORD and respect for Him,"

Good behavior by unregenerate people arises from God's gift of "common grace." For His own reasons, God restrains people from being as bad as their fallen nature would allow them to be if there were no restraints. If God were to remove His restraints, "give them over" to their own fallen nature, the results, as Paul dramatically shows in Romans, would be dreadful. Christian character is a gift of God's "saving grace." He bestows saving grace on whom He wills. No one can claim that in their own power they are "good" in a Christian sense. Christian character comes only with God's intervention, changing fallen nature into redeemed nature.

For every person, fallen or redeemed, character arises in the "inner reality and quality" from which thoughts, speech, decision, behavior, and relationships flow. Scripture refers to this reality as "heart." The function of "heart" is vital. Scripture insists the heart only a renewed heart can enable one to think, speak, and act consistent with God's character. Prov. 4:23 (NIV): *"Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do flows from it."* Mt. 12:34-35 (ESV): Jesus said, *"You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. [35] The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.*

Human character is determined by the state and content of the "heart." To possess character consistent with God's character, fallen hearts must be regenerated and made spiritually new. Scripture identifies the "heart" as the "control center" which dictates the "what" toward which temperament-controlled activities are directed. Character determines whether behavior is morally good or bad. The use to which temperament activities are directed is determined by character. This includes choice of values and philosophies, what a gun is used for, etc. A person's thoughts, words, and deeds reflect their character, that is, what they are in their inner being. A nation's constitution states its values, reflecting its fundamental character.

Since character is observable only through the outward signs of speech and actions, it is possible to be deceived about a person's character. People can, and sometimes do, deliberately act and speak to deceive. Character arises in the "heart." Character shapes outward behavior which is made manifest through temperament preferences. When the going is tough, good character will pay whatever price is necessary to act consistent with its undergirding principles. Think of Daniel. His behavior was consistent obedience to God no matter what threats or actual mistreatment he received. Casting him into the lions' den revealed but didn't change his character.