

Bible Chat Notes week starting 14 5 23: Character Matters

Romans 5: 1 - 8

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1. If we could see you as a child in the school playground, would we be able to recognise you from your character? What things have remained the same over the years?
2. If you know the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, what aspects of his character remained the same, regardless of his circumstances?
3. Some may comment unfavourably on the quality of the character of people in public life today. Do you think the quality of character has been getting worse in recent times, or has it always been much the same?
4. David shared that the Greek word used for character in Romans 5 means something of proven value, something that has been tested out. So Paul uses the word to suggest the good parts of a person's nature, which have been refined throughout life. How does he suggest that a person's character is refined?
5. The enneagram is a personality profiling system that suggests that we all develop a strategy to make ourselves significant when we are children. We may be perfectionists, carers, leaders, artists, loyalists, thinkers, jokers, justice-seekers or peace-makers. Is it possible that you developed such a strategy? If so, share what it was and explore how it still serves you today.
6. The enneagram suggests that all strategies need to be redeemed. Any strategy is only of partial value; it is not in fact what makes us precious to others or to God; and if it serves our own ego it may do more harm than good. In view of the reading above, what makes us precious to God?
7. Reflect on how our characters - including our strategies - may be redeemed and refined through suffering and through love. How can we cooperate with this refining process? What prevents us from growing in this way?