



What Is Character?



The Oxford Languages Dictionary defines “character” as: “The mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.”¹ Who is that person? How will she act when no one is looking? What moral—ethical—beliefs do they have? Benjamin Franklin has a famous list of thirteen character traits that he worked on each week, in a rotating pattern. Stephen R. Covey taught the difference between personality traits and character traits and why the second were more important than the first. We also have a list of character traits that the ancient Stoics practiced. There are also many spiritual gifts given throughout the scriptures. Jesus Christ has all of these divine qualities, some of which are being loving, patient, and courageous. His Character shows us a better way to live over and over in the scriptures.

Please look for the links about all of these characteristics on this site. This website incorporates these traits together in a 52-week list, each trait being taught and reinforced by seven stories, one for each day of the week.

Elder Richard G. Scott shows us how our characters is formed:

We *become* what we want to *be* by consistently *being* what we want to *become* each day. Righteous character is a precious manifestation of what you are becoming. Righteous character

is more valuable than any material object you own, any knowledge you have gained through study, or any goals you have attained no matter how well lauded by mankind. In the next life your righteous character will be evaluated to assess how well you used the privilege of mortality.²

Our character will become our most valuable possession as we model Jesus Christ's character. In Primary our children sing, "I'm Trying to be Like Jesus"³ and these character stories will show us how to be like Him. The first verse says:

I'm trying to be like Jesus;
I'm following in his ways.
I'm trying to love as he did, in all that I do and say.
At times I am tempted to make a wrong choice,
But I try to listen as the still small voice whispers,

Then the chorus:

Love one another as Jesus loves you.
Try to show kindness in all that you do.
Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,
For these are the things Jesus taught.

I love the use of the verb "try" and "trying" as we teach our children this song on how to be like Jesus. Some of the Savior's character traits are shown with being loving, kind, gentle, and obedient as the child singing tries to listen to the still small voice. We can teach our children that this is a process, that we keep *trying* to be like Jesus.

Finally, Elder Scott reveals why it is important to work on our characters:

A consistent, righteous life produces an inner power and strength that can be permanently resistant to the eroding influence of sin and transgression. Your faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments will strengthen your character. Your character is a measure of what you are becoming. It is the evidence of how well you are using your time on earth in this period of mortal probation.⁴

Elder Scott's promise of "an inner power and strength" is something I want. Can you imagine being "permanently resistant" to sin, and teaching our children how to as well? Elder Scott has one sentence about how our character is "evidence" of how well we are using our time here on earth. One of the secrets of character is it compounds, and gets stronger and stronger as we choose each day to do what is right. It will become easier and easier to make the right choices and our lives will become less troubled and distressing. I think learning about character will actually "de-stress" us and our families.

Finally, Elder Scott says:

An axiom we all understand is that you get what you pay for. That is true for spiritual matters as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths you learn. What you get is the molding of character, the growth in capacity, and the successful completion of your mortal purpose to be proven and to have joy.⁵

Elder Scott promises us that we get what we pay for. Whatever we sow, we shall reap. I believe in Elder Scott's promise. I have felt this shift in my own life as I have learned more about positive character traits and worked hard to instill them in my life. It *is* a more joyful way of living because I am trying to do the right thing every day.

If we are committed to sharing a little bit of character, or a family story every night as we gather for dinner, we will begin to feel the harvest of our efforts within weeks. I am excited to go on this journey together!

-
1. "Character," Oxford Languages, accessed Nov. 2022, <https://www.google.com/search?q=character+definition>
 2. Richard G. Scott, "[The Transforming Power of Faith and Character](#)," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 43.
 3. "[I'm Trying to Be like Jesus](#)," Children's Songbook, 78.
 4. Richard G. Scott, "[The Transforming Power of Faith and Character](#)," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 44.
 5. *Ibid*, 44–45.