

GROWING – A Strong Character 21st June 2020 Deborah Holman

This Study Guide provides a summarised study with additional discussion questions based on the scriptures mentioned in the sermon.

Connect:

“The character of a person consists of all the mental and moral qualities they have that make them distinct from other people.”

- When you read instructions in scripture, you need to understand God’s ‘end point’. These are the questions to consider: Where is God trying to get you to? And why is He trying to get you to that point?
1. Read Ephesians 4:25-32
 2. What is God’s ‘end point’ in this scripture?
 3. God is moving you into your new nature – righteousness (right standing) and holy (set apart)

STOP	INSTEAD
Telling lies, being dishonest	Tell the truth
Holding on to anger	Deal with it daily
Stealing	Work and give generously
Using foul language	Be encouraging

- **STOP grieving the Holy Spirit by the way you live**
- **Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, slander, evil behaviour, INSTEAD be kind, tender hearted, forgiving just as God has forgiven you.**

Engage:

4. Why do we need to change our behaviours?
- Ephesians 4:25-32 gives 3 reasons:
 - 1) Because we give the devil a foothold
 - 2) Because we grieve the Holy Spirit who lives within us
 - 3) Because there are alternative behaviours that will reflect the life of Christ in us to the world

5. Do you, as a believer, understand how your behaviour gives the devil a foothold? (If you are working through this study guide within your life group, take a moment to discuss this.)

➤ Breaking down the 3 reasons found in Eph 4:25-32:

- 1) The devil = Greek word the 'diabolos'

Made up of two words:

Dia = through, carried the idea of penetration

Ballo = to accuse

The devil's objective is to penetrate your mind and emotions, to separate you with his accusing, slanderous accusations.

"Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil."

Ephesians 4:26

- 2) Foothold, Place = 'topos' = a specific, marked off area (It carries the idea of a territory, province, region or zone.)
The devil is after a region or zone in your life, for e.g. finance, health, marriage, relationships, employment, business or ministry.

"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected?"

Genesis 4:6

6. The words, "crouching at your door" carries the idea of an animal ready and waiting to be let in. When we're angry, sin is crouching, it's just waiting for the door to open so it can jump in with its slander.
7. Anger itself is not a sin, it's a God given emotion. It's what we do with our anger and how we choose to express it, that causes the problem.
8. Are you in control of your anger? Do you allow it to be enflamed?
9. Do you go to bed angry?
10. Do you keep in each day what happens in each day? Or do you take it into another?

➤ There are many areas of our lives which open the door for the sin which is crouching outside, to jump in. We throw open the door when we:

- *Refuse to let go of old hurts and wounds, store up resentment*
- *Refuse to acknowledge what we did wrong*
- *Refuse to forgive others for what they did*
- *Refuse to stop judging others*
- *Refuse to admit we were wrong too*
- *Refuse to apologise when we are wrong*

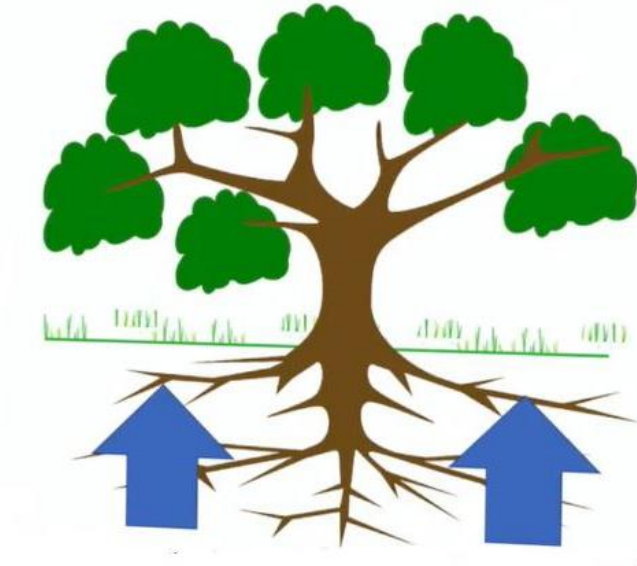
..... These leave "marked off places/zones"

11. All these behaviours and/or attitudes leave "marked off places/zones" in our behaviours that allow the devil to jump in through the door with his accusations. It's up to you to control the door and your behaviours.

Framework:

12. Read Ephesians 4:30 once more
13. Grieve - derives from the Greek word 'lupe', which denotes pain or grief that can only be experienced by two people who deeply love one another.
14. The Holy Spirit loves you deeply, so when you act like the world, talk like the world, behave like the world, respond like the world, He is grieved. Because you are dragging Him into the mire of your situation, instead of allowing Him to take control.
 - The Holy Spirit:
 - At our conversion, convicted us of sin
 - Brought us to Jesus
 - Brings us into truth

(When we ignore this, it is a betrayal and it grieves Him – just as a betrayal would grieve a spouse.)



- All the things that influence your character, begin in the roots.

“You won’t see the result of what is in the root, until you see the fruit.”

Deborah Holman

15. The bible speaks very clearly about good fruit and bad fruit:
 - Read Matthew 7:18
 - Read Matthew 7:20

When you see good and bad fruit in people’s lives, you have to look at what is underlying, what is feeding that attitude (good or bad fruit).

 - God is bringing us out of the old and into the new, so we have to stop making excuses that hold our behaviours in place. Stop blaming your parents, your upbringing, your financial situation, your life experiences; because these attitudes

hold your behaviours in place. You have to start taking responsibility for your behaviours and submit yourself to the transformation of your mind.

16. (Eph 4:32) What do you need to do “instead”?
17. What is growing good behaviours linked to?
18. What does it mean to be kind?
19. What is the word ‘kind’ rooted in?
20. What does it mean to be ‘tender hearted’?
21. How can you become kinder and more tender hearted?
22. Do you struggle with unforgiveness?
 - Forgiveness is a gift - a gracious kindness, especially the divine influence upon the heart.
 - Unforgiveness is like a hook - it keeps us hooked into our behaviours and it prevents us from being restored from past hurts. It does more damage to the one who won’t forgive, than it does to the one who needs forgiving.
23. Read Hebrews 12:15

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for this truth in your Word. I’m asking you now, as David did, to search me, know me and see if there are any wicked ways in me. Are there any behaviours that you want to change in me? Help me to be willing to yield to you, for you to put your spotlight on the things in my life that need to change, so that I can grow in character and gifting - putting off the old and taking in the new. Help me I pray, in Jesus Name Amen.