

## Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit Character: Does it really count?

Video games have become one of the biggest markets for consumer dollars. In an industry that rakes in billions of dollars each year, there is a need to make the graphics more realistic, the games more challenging and the interaction more realistic. The funny thing about video games is that almost immediately after being launched there are tons of places on line that you can find the cheat codes. Cheat codes are basically shortcuts in the system that you can program in. Make yourself invulnerable, unlimited lives, you name it someone has figured out that by making a slight change in the code that most anyone can make, you can win and win big.

We tend to define character as being what you do when no one is watching. So what do you do when no one is around? We call it character when you do something noble or upstanding, but plenty of people do just what they do in public in private. There is a difference between having character and being a character. But the question is what is the difference? What aspects do you define as a person having character?

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### **2 Sam 12:26-28**

*Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city.<sup>27</sup> And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water supply.<sup>28</sup> Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name.*

A person of Character knows to whom glory belongs. Joab is the general of David's army. Unlike armies today, the general was the one in charge. He answered to no one but the king himself. His actions were to fight and win for the name of the king, not his own. Here we find Joab fighting for expansion of Isreal's kingdom while back in Jerusalem David has just experienced the death of his child with Bathsheba. During this time, David should have been with Joab helping him lead the army but instead has been home, having an affair with Urriah's wife, Bathsheba. It would be easy to see that since Joab had done all the work of securing the city, a heavily fortified city, that he could have easily taken the city and claimed it as his own victory. It would have meant that the city would have been named after Joab. All the effort he had put into fighting this campaign now was going to be given to a man that had to this point, not even stepped

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onto the battlefield. That is a sign of a person of Character, they do not claim what is not theirs. And in this case the victory belonged to the king, not to the general. So he was one that gave the glory to whom it belonged.

So how do we become men and woman of Character? How do we control the world we live in to be Christ-like, when the world, the situation and the conditions of our life scream not to?

How do we become men and woman of Character?

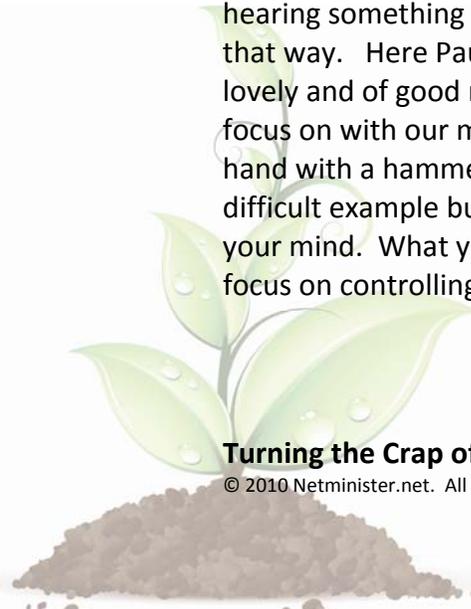
### Controlling our thoughts...

**Phil 4:8-9**

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Image you have a beautiful greenhouse with award winning flowers. Every year you sell your flowers and make a wonderful profit. People from miles around come just to see your flowers. No one really knows your secret, but you know that the best soil is soil that has all the weeds removed. Only pure beautiful flowers grow in your greenhouse. Now knowing this, would you ever allow someone to come in and purposefully plant weeds into your greenhouse? Of course not, then why do we allow people to put evil thoughts and intentions into something far more valuable, our mind?

How many people do you know that get their jollies from other people's pain. From hearing something bad about someone? Maybe you do, If so, you might want to change that way. Here Paul tells us that we should be focusing on what is noble, just, pure, lovely and of good report. Not on things that are mean spirited. Eventually, what we focus on with our minds will come out of our mouth. Not believe so, try hitting your hand with a hammer and see what words flow most easily from your mouth. It is difficult example but one that instantly makes you aware of what has been going into your mind. What you have been thinking of really affects every moment of your day. So focus on controlling where your mind goes and keep it away from where it shouldn't be.



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## Practicing virtue

### **2 Peter 1:5-9**

*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,<sup>6</sup> to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,<sup>7</sup> to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.<sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

So how do you keep your mind clean? You practice only putting the proper things into it. Everyone knows how to lose weight. You eat less and exercise more. The same is true for money, you make more money than you spend. It isn't difficult nor does it require multiple degrees or intensive studying. But when someone you know loses a lot of weight or had a lot of money, the first question you are asked is how did you do, you already know how it is done. The difference is, you have chosen not to do it yourself. Practicing is necessary for an athlete to win. It is necessary to pass a test and necessary to achieve great things, you have to practice.

So you decide that today is the day you change your life. You are going to lose weight and get into great shape. So you decide to go out and run a 20 mile marathon. Doesn't work does it? It takes time to build up. Practice and effort must be combined to create a better way to keep yourself going. You change things up and run more and more. Until eventually you can run that race completely. But it takes time, practice and effort. Such is your heart when you want to be a person of character, you have to practice.

## Guarding our hearts

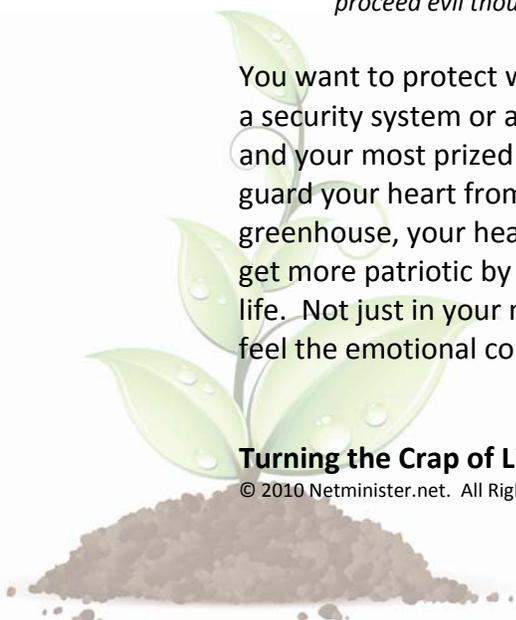
### **Matt 15:16-19**

*16 So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding?<sup>17</sup> Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?<sup>18</sup> But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.<sup>19</sup> For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*

You want to protect what you own, you have to lock your door at night. You might need a security system or a gun. But when you guard your home you are guarding yourself, and your most prized possessions: family and money. So how much more should you guard your heart from allowing things in there that do not belong. Just like the greenhouse, your heart is your emotions. Watch a patriotic movie and tell me you don't get more patriotic by the end. Your emotions lead you to it. Be mindful of that in your life. Not just in your mind where you think about things, but in your heart where you feel the emotional connection.

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## Keeping Good Company

### **1 Cor 15:33-34**

*33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." 34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.*

The purpose of having character is finally to show that we are who we say we are. That even in the worse situations, we can know that our character speaks for us when we cannot.

### **Titus 2:6-8**

6 Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,<sup>7</sup> in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

Ever been made at someone for something he or she did to you? They deserve to be gotten back, but you refuse. That kind of behavior will be noticed. It will be seen by those that are Christians and non-Christians alike. Because the life we live is seen by the world. And even when they do not agree with it, they will have nothing evil to say of us. When we live a life that is one of Christ-like character, we will find that no one will have a cause against us. Our life should be such an example to others through the character we have in Christ that no one can say a bad word of us. No one, not even those that are our enemies can say bad of us without being ashamed.

**Final Analysis:** Character counts in your life as a believer in Christ. To be Christ-like, you have to be willing to tolerate the negative side of character which is you will not be accepted by those of the world. They neither know or understand your behavior, but they will not be able to say anything about you without being ashamed.

