

FOUNDATIONS

The Foundation for Building Christian Character - part 1



Have you been following the national conversation regarding character erosion? For the moment the spotlight is largely on urban violence, dishonesty in the marketplace, and a youth culture steeped in narcissism. Our founding fathers knew that when a society fails to raise citizens of high moral character, its future is in jeopardy. Many observers are now wondering if America can ever recover from the moral depravity in our national character. When the dust settles, the task of fixing America's broken moral compass is likely to land on the doorstep of American education. Stay tuned; the discussion is just getting started.

Christian character describes a Christian's sanctified walk through life. It is a natural extension of our faith and an important byproduct of Christian education. At all levels, WELS education is fully vested in the idea that Christian schools should be involved in forming character in our youth. This view resonates with parents who want a strong moral compass, guiding the lives of their children. Unfortunately, we have not always taken this discussion to the next level to help parents understand *why* Christian character is such a big part of our educational model or *how* a child acquires a healthy set of strong moral virtues.

To the uninformed, an unbeliever's character can look a lot like character in a Christian's life. (A peace-loving unbeliever appears to be quite similar to a peace-loving Christian. An honest unbeliever says and does many of the same things that an honest Christian says and does.) To complicate matters, the list of character attributes identified in Scripture¹ is nearly identical to the character traits that many unbelievers hold in high regard and desire for their children. Given their similarities in appearance, it is difficult to make the case that Christian character is distinctively unique.

Helping parents understand that *Christian character* is truly different is an important part of the *Foundations* program. *Foundations* is committed to helping parents see that godly character begins at home, that it is anchored in the Bible's Ten Commandments and accountability to God, that it is motivated by the gospel's good news, dedicated to glorifying God's name instead of making a name for self, and is always striving for the eternal goal of heaven. *Foundations* will help parents examine the role that God has given them to build healthy, godly virtues in the character of their own children. It will bring parents and Christian educators together around a Bible-based approach to forming strong Christian character in our young people.

¹ The full range is somewhere between 40 and 60 attributes, depending on how one counts the traits that overlap.