



# Discussion Guide

## Character Counts

### “The Culture of FRIENDS” Part 2

*I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.*

Romans 7:18–19 (MSG)

*The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

**Our culture today asks two questions: What does the best version of myself look like? How do I get there?** As we work to develop our character we often feel very close to the apostle Paul as he speaks in Romans 7:18–19. We want to do the right thing but we often do the wrong thing. As we read 1 Corinthians 10:13, we take comfort in knowing that we are not alone; everyone struggles with temptation. The good news is that if we stay close to God, he will show us a way out. If we trust in our own power and efforts to resist temptation, we will eventually give in and succumb to it. But God has a pathway to beat temptation. If we say yes to God, we will be able to say no to temptation. In order for our no to be effective, we must have a strong yes to focus on. In this D Guide we will look at how culture wants to influence our character and how **God can develop our character as we marinate in the culture of Christ.**

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE. PICK AND CHOOSE YOUR POINTS.**

## THE BATTLE FOR YOUR CHARACTER

### 1. CULTURE SAYS CHARACTER IS CONNECTED TO EXTERNAL VALIDATION.

After reading 1 Samuel 16:6–7 list the two ways Samuel was not to judge the next king. What quality does God use to judge a person?

- What are the qualities of the heart God is evaluating?
- What does he mean: “The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them”?

#### WOMEN

1. **APPEARANCE**: What goal do we have in mind when we try to make our outward appearance spotless?
2. **ACTIVITIES**: What satisfaction do we achieve when we’re busy?
3. **ATTACHMENTS**: What are some attachments that we establish with celebrities or name brands? How is that important in our culture?

#### MEN

1. **CONQUER**: What and who do men compete to conquer?
2. **CONFORM**: What happens to a man’s identity, values, and behavior when he conforms to blend in at work, school, or with friends?
3. **COMMAND**: Why do men like to be in control? What types of situations do men find themselves in that they feel a need to control? Why do you think that is true?

COMMON DENOMINATOR: **OUTSIDE-IN PROCESS**

**Discipleship**—It’s easy to get locked into the world’s values of emphasizing the external in order to send a message that we’re large and in charge. By focusing on these things, we miss God’s heart for us: not change from the outside-in, but rather change from the inside-out. Which of the world’s values do you see in yourself that need to be changed?

### 2. GOD SAYS CHARACTER IS CONNECTED TO A DESIRE FOR PERSONAL CHANGE.

According to James 1:22–25, what is God’s gift that sets us free and calls forth God’s blessing on our lives?

- What are some of the risks of listening to God’s Word without doing what it says?
- What are some of the benefits of both listening to God’s Word and doing what it says?

What three steps does a farmer take to obtain a harvest, according to Hosea 10:12?

- How can the three steps of sowing , reaping, and breaking up the ground be compared to seeking the Lord?
- From this verse, do you think that bearing fruit for God may involve hard work?
- How can God use these steps to overcome culture’s impact and help us change?

#### WOMEN

1. **ACCEPT APPROVAL FROM GOD:** God has made us his children—beautiful masterpieces that reflect his image, radiance, and glory. How does knowing that true approval comes from God’s love and acceptance help us rise above culture’s influence?
2. **ACCEPT “ALONE” OPPORTUNITIES:** Read 1 Kings 19:11–12. The Lord calls us out of our chaos and into the quietness of his presence. How can our perspective change once we are alone with God without distractions?
3. **ACCEPT ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHANGE:** Read John 15:1–8. Describe some of the attributes that we will possess when we remain in him and he in us. What does it say about those who do not?

#### MEN

1. **SURRENDER TO GOD:** Read 1 Peter 5:6. What does God promise to do if we humble ourselves before him?
2. **SUBMIT TO TRUTH:** Read Romans 12:1–2. What does God promise to do if we offer ourselves to him in worship?
3. **SHOW INITIATIVE TO CHANGE:** Read 2 Corinthians 5:16–17. What are we once we are in Christ?

#### COMMON DENOMINATOR: **INSIDE-OUT PROCESS**

**Discipleship**—When we have a desire for personal change and invite God into our lives, he transforms our character from the inside-out. How is this different from the culture’s outside-in process of influencing our character? How is this D Guide helping you sense a need to invite God into your life on a deeper level? Take time as a group to reflect with a focus on acknowledging God’s sufficiency to change us from the inside-out. Let him reveal areas where you need to accept his love and power to help you rise above the influence of human culture.

#### **PERSONAL APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT:**

*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.* 1 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV)

*After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: “I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart, he will do everything I want him to do.”* Acts 13:22 (NIV)

#### **HOW DO WE HELP EACH OTHER?**

**How Men Can Help Women**—Men can help women in their quest for character by acknowledging the positive change they see and validating it. Men can help by demonstrating integrity, self-discipline, self-control, and honesty in their relationships with women.

**How Woman Can Help Men**—Women can help men by focusing on the “inner man.” Raise the bar! Look for a man of character. Men will respond to your expectations. Men also respond to praise. As you see the men in your life taking the initiative to change, verbalize your support for that change.

#### **GET HEALTHY!**

At the beginning of this study we looked as the apostle Paul as he lamented his struggles. Now we see him in a much more confident light in 1 Corinthians 13:11. He is reflecting maturity in Christ. How do we get there? We need to have a hope to focus on. In Acts 13:22, we see that King David’s hope was in God. God is calling us to change, freedom, and healing. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer the call.