



**Summer 2025**

**Character Counts**

**Sermon Title:** God Equips the Believer

**To be used with Session 1:** The Importance of Character

**The Point:** God equips us for Christlike character.

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:20-32

**Connection with the study:** To complement the Bible study “The Importance of Character,” this sermon focuses on how God equips the believer to be different. This includes a new character being given through renewal, transformation and obedience. God has made us new and so has issued a command for us to put off the old self and put on the new. Christlike character is cultivated through God’s power, our diligence, and the renewal of our hearts and minds. It is a call to adopt a new lifestyle and set our sights on a higher standard. Because of the believer’s relationship to Christ, everything has changed.

**Introduction:** Picture a man who spends hours every day polishing his car. The paint gleams, the tires shine, and the interior is spotless. From the outside, it looks flawless—like it just rolled off the showroom floor. But under the hood, the engine is neglected: low oil, worn belts, and a ticking noise that keeps getting louder. Eventually, no matter how shiny the car looks, it’s going to break down—not because of its appearance, but because of what was ignored beneath the surface.

That’s how character works.

The world is often obsessed with appearances—how we look, what we accomplish, and what others think of us. But God cares about what’s under the hood—our heart, our integrity, our character. In Ephesians 4:20-32, Paul reminds us that in Christ, we are made new. We are not just called to act differently—we are equipped to *be* different.

God gives us a new identity, renews our minds, and empowers us to walk in righteousness. If we want to live lives that endure, we must focus on the transformation God does beneath the surface.

## **1. God equips us with a new identity. (Eph. 4:20-24)**

The first way God equips us for Christlike character is by giving us a new identity in Christ. Before salvation, we were bound by sin, controlled by selfish desires, and separated from God. But through Jesus, we have been made new.

Paul used the imagery of taking off the old self and putting on the new self. Just as we change out of filthy clothes and put on clean garments, God calls us to discard sinful habits and embrace a new way of living. This transformation is not superficial — it is the result of being created in the likeness of God, reflecting His righteousness and holiness.

Our character must be rooted in who we are in Christ. We no longer belong to sin, and we are no longer defined by our past. Instead, we are new creations (2 Cor. 5:17) and our lives should reflect the truth of the gospel. If we want to grow in Christlike character, we must first embrace the identity God has given us.

## **2. God equips us by renewing our minds. (Eph. 4:25-29)**

Once we embrace our new identity, God continues His work by renewing our minds. Paul points out three areas where transformation should be clearly visible in the believer's life: truthfulness, self-control, and speech.

Christlike character means speaking truth instead of deception. Truthfulness should govern everything we say and do daily. Honesty should define our interactions because we are members of one body in Christ. The Christian character has no room for deception and dishonesty.

Paul also acknowledged that anger is a natural response, but he warned against sinning in our anger. Uncontrolled and unchecked emotions can and will eventually lead to division, bitterness and destruction.

Finally, Paul discussed our speech. Words have power. As believers, our speech should build up, encourage, and reflect grace, rather than tear down or spread malicious gossip.

These changes are not just behavioral modifications; they happen as our minds are renewed (Rom. 12:2). The more we immerse ourselves in God's Word, the more our thinking is transformed, shaping our desires, attitudes, and responses.

Are we allowing God to renew our minds daily? Or are we still holding on to old patterns of deceit, anger, and destructive speech? Growing in Christlike character requires aligning our thoughts with God's truth.

## **3. God equips us to walk in righteousness. (Eph. 4:30-32)**

God not only changes our identity and renews our minds, He also equips us to walk in righteousness. To this end, Paul gave two lists: one of sins to put away and the other of virtues to embrace. The apostle encouraged us to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. He then added that we should embrace kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

One key to developing Christlike character is in not grieving the Holy Spirit. When we harbor bitterness, refuse to forgive, or engage in sin, we effectually resist the Spirit's work in

our lives. However, when we yield to Him, He empowers us to live in a way that pleases God.

Paul masterfully connected our forgiveness of others to God's forgiveness of us. Our ability to show grace is not based on how others treat us, but on the grace we have received in Christ. True Christlike character is demonstrated through love, kindness and a forgiving heart.

Are we walking in righteousness or are we allowing bitterness and sin to remain? God equips us to live differently, but we must choose to walk in obedience.

## **Conclusion**

God equips us for Christlike character by giving us a new identity, renewing our minds, and empowering us to walk in righteousness. The question is: Are we allowing God to transform us?

Do we live in the reality of our new identity in Christ? Are we allowing God's Word to renew our minds and reshape our attitudes? Are we choosing to walk in righteousness, showing kindness, forgiveness and love?

Christlike character is not developed overnight. It is the result of daily surrender to God's work in us. We must commit to growing in godliness, knowing that He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6).

We must reflect the character of Christ, not just in words, but in the way we live, love, and serve.

*Jeff Dabbs is Senior Pastor of Spring Creek Baptist Church in Rome, GA. He lives in Rockmart, Georgia with his wife Kristi. They have two children and two grandchildren.*