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## It's Not Who You Know, or What You Know, It's Who You Are: The Importance of Character



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Based on my conversations with and observations of people, our challenging if not bleak economic forecast only represents one perspective that is embraced by many people. The alternative perspective that I am privileged to hear about in the church, the academy and various civic and cultural institutions is filled with optimism and hope for a better day. Indeed, I know people who are still interested in getting married, enjoying an outstanding career, raising children, opening a new business, moving to a new city or earning an initial or additional degree. In many instances, these optimistic and energetic individuals are using their networks (e.g., people that they know) as well as knowledge and skills that they have attained (e.g., what they know) in order to better themselves professionally or economically. I wholeheartedly applaud them for their efforts and achievements. However, recently I have encountered several individuals who have squandered tremendous opportunities, forfeited ca-

reer advancements, offended influential people and placed a glass ceiling on their own ambitions because of negative and unresolved issues regarding their character. For example, I was privileged to sit with a group of people in order to discuss the names of potential candidates for a position. A mutual colleague brought the candidates unique skill-set to our attention. Since members of the informal, selection committee knew the candidate to be an overbearing, dishonest, arrogant, deceitful, self-absorbed individual, no one felt inclined to ask him for his resume. "Who he knew" got him in the door. "What he knew" caused the informal committee to consider his unique and outstanding abilities. However, "who he was" or more importantly his character, or lack thereof, kept him from getting the job. Even when some people are fortunate to get jobs, often issues relating to their character lead to a speedy and unfortunate termination.

Character can be defined as a person's set of ethical and positive

qualities that lead toward success. For the Christian, the development and display of character is a reflection of our willingness and ability to follow the teaching of Jesus. Jesus' discussion of the truth, promoting peace, being humble, loving our neighbors, loving our enemies and embracing service or servanthood represent the Core Values of the Christian message and promote character among people who love the Lord. No one is perfect, for the bible bears record that all have "sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)." However, Christians should reflect the actions of Christ in all that we say and do. Who we know and what we know may help us to secure job, but it is who are which will ultimately lead to success, joy and a life that is pleasing and acceptable in God's sight.