

## TOTAL REVOLUTION of IDENTITY

### Session #3 - Character Without Compromise

**Session Objective:** “Character crashes” are commonplace amongst public figures. However, the war that rages inside these public figures also rages inside of each of us. This session will:

- Explore reasons for “character crashes”
- Examine Jesus’ response and example in the face of temptation
- Provide biblical and practical responses to live a life of character

#### Extended Preparation Options:

- In the movie, “**The Legend of Bagger Vance**”, young golfer Rannulph Junuh (Matt Damon) has the opportunity of a lifetime – the chance to beat famous golfers for a large prize and fame. Near the end of the golf round (and the movie), with victory in sight, Damon accidentally moves his ball – normally a one-stroke penalty. Since only a young boy notices, Damon is tempted to hide his costly mistake. However, he takes the narrow path of character admits his mistake and takes the penalty. The boy protests and asks why – since no one would know. Damon responds that the boy would know and he would know – the road of character was the only option.
- Provide index cards and red pens to students. Allow time for them to write down a sin/temptation area they want to confess and ask forgiveness. Then, have them use the red pen to put a cross over the sin area and write 1John 1:8-9 – symbolizing forgiveness through Christ. Cards can be crumpled and thrown out (or burned for extra effect). Another option for a close and safe group is for students to put their card into the waste bin with option of saying what it is and asking for prayer/accountability.

### Session Outline

#### Leader Preamble:

*We hear regularly about public figures – political or church leaders, sports or television celebrities, who have ‘character crashes’ and fall into disgrace because of immoral or illegal acts.*

## Small Group Questions:

### **1. What do you think or feel when you hear one of these ‘character crash’ stories?**

*It’s tempting to get intrigued by the details or to get hardened or untrusting of people in prominent places. But, if anything good can come from these situations, it may be from our own personal reflection – looking in the mirror at our own battles, temptation and character.*

### **2. Why do you think ‘character crashes’ are so common? Don’t this people often have ‘everything in life’ or shouldn’t they at least know better?**

Read 1Peter 2:11

### **3. This verse gives a reason behind ‘character crashes’ – that we are in a war. Who is the war between?**

**Leader Note:** *On one side of the battle stands Satan with schemes (2Corinthians 2:11, Ephesians 6:11) tailored made to defeat us. Also, the world provides great influence and unlimited opportunities for sin.*

*On the other side, God stands with the community of believers – calling us to holiness and lives of character.*

### **4. Ironically, we often aren’t sure which side we want to be on. Why?**

*Possibilities: immediate gratification, strength of pull seems overwhelming, slow and subtle temptation grows and we don’t even notice, we lose power to overcome (we are in bondage)*

**Leader Say:** *In making our decision, rather than giving up or giving in, we need to remember to look at the team jersey we wear. This verse says we are aliens and strangers in this world – in other words, we belong to another team and another place.*

Read 1Peter 2:9-10

### **5. According to these verses, who were we and who are we now?**

*We are now a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, called into his wonderful light.*

### **6. Beyond our true identity as aliens and strangers, what motivation is there to win the character battle?**

Options include: the costs of stepping out of God's protection and provision which could be our ultimate demise, our testimony - Read 1Peter 2:12, true fulfillment only comes through following God's path, etc.

**Leader Say:** *The Bible is full of stories of 'character crashes' – every one of us is vulnerable. But, Jesus was different. Read 1Peter 2:21-22. He was tempted but didn't crash – He remained obedient.*

Read Luke 4:1-14.

**7. In this passage Jesus was tempted three times. How did the devil special design these temptations for Jesus? Why did Jesus respond as he did?**

*Temptation #1 – “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” For starters, this temptation played on Jesus' fasting in the desert – he was hungry. The devil tempted him to a short-term fix of food, but Jesus looked to the long-term and responded: “Man does not live on bread alone.” Also, by saying, “If you are the Son of God...”, the devil was challenging Jesus' true identity. Jesus stuck by His true identity – he didn't need to prove his identity or relevance..*

*Temptation #2 – “I will give you all their authority and splendor...” The devil offers Jesus power over the kingdoms of this world in exchange for worship. Jesus again responds with Scripture, “Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” Jesus already had true and ultimate power, so what the devil offered was a counterfeit. We need to remember our true identity too (1Peter 2:9-10, etc.).*

*Temptation #3 – “If you are the Son of God...throw yourself down from here.” In rejecting this temptation to do the spectacular, Jesus again responds with Scripture. He trusted who God is and His power.*

**2. As we think about our own temptations and winning the character battle, what can we learn from Jesus' example? What tools can we use to win the character battle?**

*Options: Jesus looked to the long-term not the short-term. He knew who He was – His true identity, which couldn't be shaken – because He knew His Father so well and knew the Scriptures. Jesus' saw and rejected counterfeits to God's provision and protection.*

**Leader Note:** For specific tools: See Action Steps below

**9. Although all of us can 'character crash' at anytime, character can be strengthened by feeding or developing certain positive habits and by starving other negative habits. What is one habit you want to feed this week? One habit you know you should starve?**

**Prayer Options:** Silent prayer of confession, prayer for temptations common to teens, prayer for specific temptations, character of Christ prevails, armor of God, feeding and starving plans, etc.

### Action Steps

- Find an accountability partner or small group to encourage and pray for you
- Confess your sin(s) to God (1John 1:8-9) – and a trusted accountability partner – Failing doesn't mean we lose our character, we can always respond to our failures by acting with character.
- Depending on and submitting to the Holy Spirit (John 15:5, Ephesians 5:18)
- Wearing the armor of God – Ephesians 6
- For habitual sins – what underlying need is being temporarily satisfied by the actions of sin? Is there a more healthy way to meet that need?

### Comments and Feedback

**Leader Note:** This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

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Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.