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AFTER YOU BELIEVE



Why Christian Character Matters

N. T. WRIGHT

BISHOP OF DURHAM

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CHAPTER 1: WHAT AM I HERE FOR?

1. N. T. Wright opens the book by asking, “But what am I here for *now*? What happens *after you believe*?” (p. 2). How would you answer this question?
2. Two Christians are described in this chapter: Jenny and Philip (pp. 4–7). Do you see yourself in either of them? If so, which one and why?
3. How would you describe the role that virtue should play in the Christian life? What role does virtue play in your own spiritual life?

CHAPTER 2: THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER

1. This chapter compares the moral traditions of Aristotle and Jesus (pp. 33–36). What do these two great traditions have in common? Where do they diverge?
2. How would you answer this question: “What then is the Christian ‘goal’ or ‘end’ at which we aim?” (p. 64). Why does Wright’s answer to it propose a “revolution” (pp. 67–71)?

CHAPTER 3: PRIESTS AND RULERS

1. “Worship and stewardship, generating justice and beauty: these are the primary vocations of God’s re-

deemed people” (p. 83). Why do you think these are the primary vocations for Christians?

2. How did Jesus fulfill “the Human roles, the Israel roles, of king and priest” (p. 100)? What might we learn from him as we consider how best to fulfill these roles here and now?

CHAPTER 4: THE KINGDOM COMING AND THE PEOPLE PREPARED

1. Wright claims that the Sermon on the Mount is “announcing a new state of affairs, a new reality which is in the process of bursting into the world . . . that the life of heaven, which had seemed so distant and unreal, is in the process of coming true on earth” (p. 105). What have you been taught about the Sermon on the Mount, and how does this shed new light?
2. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus invites his hearers into “eschatological authenticity” (p. 107). What does Wright mean by this? How does this kind of authenticity differ from current understandings and/or expressions of authenticity?

CHAPTER 5: TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF THE MIND

1. Do you think differently because of your faith (p. 151)? How do you think Christians are called to think in a different way?

2. “All Christians are called to think things through— indeed, to think through the way in which thinking through things makes a radical difference to the life of the body of Christ” (p. 159). Why does Wright claim that this is an urgent need? What is at stake here?

CHAPTER 6: THREE VIRTUES, NINE VARIETIES OF FRUIT, AND ONE BODY

1. What is the relationship between the “three virtues” and the “ninefold types of fruit”? How do they work together (p. 198)?
2. Why does Wright discuss Christian unity (pp. 207–218) in a book on character and virtue?

CHAPTER 7: VIRTUE IN ACTION: THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

1. What is the “royal priesthood” (p. 219)? Do you see yourself as part of it? Why or why not?
2. Wright describes four Christian virtues that are “strikingly different”: humility, patience, chastity, and charity (pp. 248–255). What makes these different? In which of these virtues are you strong? In which do you need to grow?

CHAPTER 8: THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

1. “How then can virtue be practiced? If it isn’t, after all, a matter of self-help moralism—making oneself better entirely by one’s own efforts—how is it done?” (p. 257). Before reading this book, how would you have answered this question? How would you answer it now?
2. The “virtuous circle” features five elements: scripture, stories, examples, community, and practices (p. 260). Which of these have helped you develop virtues in the past? Which of these might help you in the future?

FINAL QUESTIONS

1. How has reading this book impacted your understanding of Christian character and virtue?
2. After reading this book, what advice would you have for Jenny and Philip (pp. 4–7)?