

## It Is What's Inside That Matters

Occasionally we hear from radio or television or read in the newspaper about someone committing some awful crime. When the person's relatives and neighbors are questioned, a response frequently heard is the person has a good reputation, is a good neighbor or the individual has never bothered anyone. A few people in this world are an "open book" but many of us do not freely reveal ourselves to the point that friends, and even our brothers and sisters in Christ, really know who we are.

Reputation and character can be completely different. Reputation is defined as the word which refers to a position a person occupies or the standing he/she has in the opinion of others, in respect to attainments, integrity and such. Reputation is an estimation in which a person is generally held and this opinion may or may not be correct. Character, on the other hand, is defined as the combination of moral and other traits which makes one the kind of person he/she actually is.

Jesus' life reflects the character traits we should all strive to incorporate into our lives. His compassion for others, patience with Peter and the other disciples, impartiality, and commitment to His Father's cause are well known. One of the character traits many overlook is His willingness to reveal His true self to those with whom He came in contact.

Jesus "exposed" Himself to almost everyone He interacted with by His conversations and involvement in their lives. For many of us, our interactions are superficial and don't reveal our true character. As Robert Rigdon wrote in his book, "Happiness Explained," self-revealing conversation is essential to really knowing one another. James wrote "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16a). But are we willing to reveal ourselves to those outside the church as well as those inside?"

Our willingness to reveal ourselves is essential for us to be able to influence those we come into contact to become Christians. The Word is God's power to save but people rarely make life changing commitments when the Word is taught by virtual strangers. It is true that when we open our lives for others to see, we become vulnerable, just as Jesus was. But this also is a character trait of our Lord we must try to imitate.

-- For the elders (Don Denton)