

Missing: Character Skills.

Last Seen: In some families and churches.

If Found: Praise God!

by Chris M. Coursey

THRIVE skills produce character change. Recently Jen and I were reminded why these brain-based character skills are needed more than ever. Cashiers undercharged us for services while some returned too much money. As we corrected the error, their responses were revealing. Let me paint you a picture from a few notable interactions.

Cashier: “Here is your change, have a nice day.”

Chris: “Excuse me, but you gave me too much change. Here is your money back.”

Cashier: “Oh, thank you! Wow, I don’t see this happen, normally people do not tell me when I accidentally give too much change.”

Another instance occurred when Jen corrected a hotel manager who failed to correctly charge us a considerable sum of money for services rendered. Jen graciously pointed out the slip then the manager responded, “Of all my years in management I have never experienced someone point out when I failed to charge enough money! I can’t believe you did this!” We later discovered she told her staff what happened and the group was stunned by our gesture. Their reactions were telling considering they already knew we were a Christian ministry.

Were our actions heroic? No. Special? No. We were merely acting like ourselves, seeing things as Jesus sees them and practicing satisfaction, a basic child maturity requirement. These skills seem natural to us because we use and practice them on a daily basis. However, considering that corporate security experts estimate that 25 to 40 percent of all employees steal from their employers, and the U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that employee theft of cash, property, and merchandise may cost American businesses as much as \$50 billion on an annual basis, it appears employees can use additional character skill training.¹ Giving rather than taking money is more unique these days than we previously thought.

Authentic responses offer insight into people’s experience. Consider the two individuals mentioned above. Each interacts with people on a daily basis. Each responds with surprise to honesty. Although there are several more examples we could write, we cannot help but wonder if our experience reflects the larger population? Is honesty and maturity becoming extinct like the Dodos of Mauritius or the West African Rhino? You see, Dodos were flightless birds from Mauritius Island that were extinct by 1681 because settlers introduced new species like dogs, rats and pigs that wiped out the bird population. The West African Black Rhino is also believed to be extinct due to poaching. In spite of numerous surveys done to search for the specific rhinos, none can be located.² Considering the lack of character change that seems endemic in our churches, I can’t help but wonder if God is conducting His own character search party?³



One feature I greatly value in the THRIVE and Thriving training is the systematic approach to equip Christians to lead fruitful lives free from fear and “baggage” that hinders the reality of Jesus Christ being known and expressed. We cannot underestimate the power joy has on a marriage, family and community. Nor can we measure the impact recovery skills, maturity and capacity has for believers who encounter distress, overwhelm and pain on a daily basis.

Recorded in Psalm 15, King David points out the kind of character traits that define followers of the Chief Shepherd. “Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? Those who lead blameless lives

1 <http://www.answers.com/topic/employee-theft>

2 <http://dodosgone.blogspot.com/>

3 According to Psalms 14:2, 33, 53, He is.

and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. Those who refuse to slander others or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. Those who despise persistent sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD and keep their promises even when it hurts. Those who do not charge interest on the money they lend, and who refuse to accept bribes to testify against the innocent. Such people will stand firm forever.” NLT Imagine for a moment if our politicians held these traits. What about the leaders of our churches and ministries? David’s song includes a description of someone who lives the way they are designed to live, free from fear and resilient enough to endure under pressure. Living like this involves more than reading a book or hearing an inspiring sermon.

Our churches need 19 skills more than ever. Character skills and maturity is best gained, practiced and nurtured within families and communities. When these skills are present, we naturally do what our parents taught us to do and the results are satisfying. Speaking of results, starting September 28 Dr. Jim Wilder will address how churches have missed the boat in developing character. I hope everyone will attend these timely webinars to understand “How Western Christianity Failed”. Learn how we, the Western Church, fail to produce character change largely due to the influence of Voltairian philosophy and the role of reason. You have most likely never heard this before, don’t miss it!⁴

I often hear pastors question whether they can afford THRIVE or Thriving. A better question may be, can we afford not to invest in THRIVE and Thriving?