

Perfecting Christian Character

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 22, 2012



Dr. Jennings, The words “perfecting character” seems to be a uniquely Adventist phrase. How can I help someone understand this concept from the Bible?

JH

The phrase “perfecting character” may be used more commonly within Adventism than other Christian fellowships, however the concept is decidedly Biblical. It’s just that the Bible will express it in other ways. Here are some Biblical references which describe this same idea.

- “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: **‘Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.**” Le 19:2
- **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** Mt 5:48
- Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that **we may share in his holiness.** Heb 12:10
- But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: **“Be holy, because I am holy.”** 1Pet 1:15,16

- For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Rom 8:29

The above passages state the concept fairly directly. After all what is being perfect like God is perfect, or being conformed to the likeness of Christ, or being holy as God is holy, other than having our characters transformed to be like His?

And the Bible makes clear that God's plan for sinful humanity is just that, restoration, healing, recreation, renewal into Christlikeness. Here are some other places the Bible describes this:

- I will sprinkle clean water on you, and **you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities** and from all your idols. I will give **you a new heart and put a new spirit in you**; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezek 36:25-27
- But **we have the mind of Christ**. 1Cor 2:16
- Circumcision is circumcision of **the heart, by the Spirit**. Rom 2:29
- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. **I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Jer 31:33 & Heb 8:10
- Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become **partakers of the divine nature**. 2Pet 1:4
- I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but **Christ lives in me**. Gal 2:20
- Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Rom 12:2
- You were taught to **put away your former way of life, your old self**, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be **renewed in the spirit of your minds**, and to **clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness**. Eph 4:22-24

So, while the terminology, "perfecting character" may be used more commonly within Adventism, the concept and principle is clearly Biblical, and thankfully God's plan for us!