LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME TWO
COMPANION WORKBOOK



Character

"Character is what determines your value to the world."

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

Companion workbook by Richard Gorham

Leadership-Tools.com

LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME TWO

Character

The Grandest Thing in the World

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Written by

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A companion to the Character ebook, based on
Character: The Grandest Thing in the World (1899) by Orison Swett Marden

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Leadership-Tools.com

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Richard Gorham wrote this companion workbook in 2006 to go with his ebook and audio edition of Orison Swett Marden's *Character: The Grandest Thing in the World* (1899). This 2026 edition has a new design with fill-in spaces you can type into or print, and links to free tools and articles that help with several of the exercises.

The ebook and audio edition are free at Leadership-Tools.com.

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Getting the Most From This Workbook

Read or listen to a chapter of *Character* first, then come back to the matching chapter here. Each one starts with a summary of the key points and ends with questions and exercises. The spaces are there for you to write in, by hand on a printed copy or by typing straight into this file.

Give the questions some time. A few of them are easier to answer after a day or two, and it's worth coming back to them once you've thought them over. Where a free tool or article on Leadership-Tools.com can help with an exercise, you'll find a link to it at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER I

A Grand Character

"If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal souls, if we imbue them with immortal principles, with the fear of God and love of fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten all eternity."

— Daniel Webster on Character

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Love, paired with a fully developed Character, must truly be the Grandest Thing in the World.
- No one can acquire a far-reaching influence without a fair mental balance, without great strengths from many sides.
- The dominant influences in the shaping of character are heredity and environment.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

List below the top 10 qualities and traits that you possess, or wish that you possessed, in order to be of a strong character. What does character mean to you?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Identify the three main people, places or situations that have been a major influence (for good or bad) in developing your personal characteristics. Why was each one so powerful in your life?

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

READ NEXT

Leadership Traits

Compare the qualities you listed with the traits people look for in a leader they trust, with an example of each.

CHAPTER II

The Light Bearers

"There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy...
By being happy we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves."

— Stevenson

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Was there ever an unselfish person, of charitable and generous impulses; one who was sociable, loving, kind, of tender spirit and thoughtful of others, who was not universally beloved by all?
- The kind soul, indeed, can be regarded as "the light-bearer."
- Some people are naturally happy and optimistic. All doors open to these people. They are welcome everywhere.
- The most fascinating person is always the one with the most winning manners
- Inner character eventually outshines the most seductive outward physical beauty.
- We do not need a formal introduction to feel the greatness within a man of true character. If you meet a cheerful man on the street on a cold day you seem to feel the mercury rise several degrees.
- The true gentleman is God's servant, the world's master, and his own man. His determination for good is what makes him — a man.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Identify 1-3 people you know, or you know of, who exhibit an honorable character. These are the people in your life who you admire and wish to associate yourself with because you have such high respect for them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Are the above people generally happy and optimistic? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are the above people generally honest and trustworthy? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Are the above people generally giving and warm hearted? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Do you see a trend in these people and how they get along with others?

What could you begin doing in the next 24 hours that would in some way follow the example of the people you admire?

CHAPTER III

The Great-Hearted

"One act of charity will teach us more about the love of God than a thousand sermons ever will."

— Robertson

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- If a person's word is not sacred, the pillars of heaven may fall on them.
- Unless generosity of spirit prevails among men and women, there can never be an ideal life.
- The best fruit comes too late in a man's life, even in the kindliest soul. Tenderness takes the place of an iron fist, self-restraint is given to the self-indulgent, the cold heart turns warm, and philanthropy becomes a need for the aging soul.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Which non-profit groups or charities do you give your time or money to now?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Explain why you give. Are you pressured to give or is it something that comes from within? Explain your motivation to contribute to the welfare of others.

_____

_____

_____

If you had more time and money, what would you do with it that would benefit others?

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER IV

A North-Star Course

"No man has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race, and that what God gives him, He gives him for all mankind."

— Phillips Brooks

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- An absolute surrender and devotion of self - to all that is better and purer and truer, is the secret of character-building.
- Through personal assessment and by a constant effort to better ourselves we clear our minds of all the indulgences and impurities.
- There is but one pursuit in life, which it is in the power of all to follow and all to attain: this is the pursuit of virtue.
- How closely are these anecdotes related to the divine life in man, and how greatly they enhance the sacredness of life itself?
- It is this character in each of one of us, every man, woman and child, which has the power to set us apart from our peers.
- If a man's beliefs are of the right sort, will it not sharpen his faculties, quicken his energies, heighten his self-respect, give a solid foundation to his character, and enhance both his usefulness and his prospects of success?

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

In the past 6 months, list the steps/activities/programs you've taken (aside from reading this book) to better yourself; to improve your personal development; to become your best self?

Go online and research 1-2 brand new tools, resources or programs that you will invest time in to support your character building goals. (Hint: the free tools at Leadership-Tools.com are a good place to start.)

Choose one or two books or audiobooks on character or leadership that you could begin in your spare moments. (Listen while you are driving, working out or walking.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

READ NEXT

Develop Leadership Qualities in Your Spare Moments

Step 7 of the 10 Steps series recommends six audiobooks for leaders and shows you how to borrow them free through your library.

CHAPTER V

Boldness of Spirit

"When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends."

— Japanese Proverb

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Every man ultimately falls into the company with which he affiliates. And the strongest is the one who draws others to himself, who creates his own company; and this is through having a positive quality — moral courage
- The greatest man is the man who chooses right with the most invincible resolution; who resists the strongest temptations from within and without; who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully; who is calmest in storms and most fearless under confrontation; whose reliance upon truth, and virtue, and faith - is most unfaltering."
- Moral courage always wins out in the end.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

List your 10 closest friends, then rate the character of each one from 1 to 5 (1 Excellent, 2 Above Average, 3 Average, 4 Below Average, 5 Poor).

	Friend	Rating (1 to 5)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Add up all ten scores and divide by 10 to find the average: _____

Consider now whether you would be happy if others rated you the same as that average score.

If you are happy with the score, you are probably surrounding yourself with great people and you are a reflection of their high standards. If you don't like the score, you may need to reconsider how and with whom you are spending your time.

CHAPTER VI

“A Fragment of the Rock of Ages”

"Give us a man or woman, young or old, high or low, on whom we know we can thoroughly depend upon, who will stand firm when others fail; the friend faithful and true, the adviser honest and fearless, the adversary just and chivalrous, — in such a man there is a fragment of the Rock of Ages."

— Dean Stanley on Character

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The truest test of civilization is not the census, nor the size of cities or of the crops; no, it is but the quality of men the country turns out.
- Are not the characters of great men the dowry of a nation?
- Character must stand behind, and back up everything, — the sermon, the poem, the picture, the play. None of them is worth a straw without character."
- We put too much faith in systems, and look too little to men
- The prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenues, nor on the strength of its borders, nor on the beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men and women of education, enlightenment, and moral character.
- Men and woman of high character give confidence from their very presence. There is a 'promise to pay' in their very faces which gives trust, and you prefer it to another man's signature of endorsement.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Identify men and women from history whose strong character has benefited an entire nation. Explain the traits and characteristics that you truly admire of these people.

Consider reading a biography on one or two of the historic figures you listed above. You'll be amazed at how much these people have in common. List the book titles here for future reference.

CHAPTER VII

The Wealth of the Commonwealth

"When wealth is lost, nothing is lost;
When health is lost, something is lost;
When character is lost, all is lost."

— Motto over the walls of a school in Germany

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- It is not within the power of riches to make a man happy. The keys that hold those riches, very often hang heavily in the rich man's pocket.
- Let us be thankful for health and a peaceful conscience. Let us remember to be grateful for the love we have for others, and their love for us.
- Character alone is that which can truly save you.
- The real leaders of mankind are the men and women who can raise their fellow-beings out of the race for money; who make them forget their bank account by interesting them more in the development of their higher selves; who can raise mere money-getters into the intellectual realm where they will cease to measure greatness and happiness by dollars and cents.
- The richest man is he who enriches his country most.
- They who invest time and effort into character building will find their reward, and their reputation will be fairly and honorably won.
- A good name: "without it, gold has no value; birth, no distinction; position, no dignity; beauty, no charm; age, no respect."
- Character is power — power is influence; it makes friends, creates income, draws loyalty and support, and opens a clear way to wealth, honor, and happiness.
- A man cannot live by bread alone. His higher life demands the satisfaction of growth and development.
- Character is perpetual wealth. The millionaire without a solid character seems no better than a simple pauper. Without character, what value are houses and lands, stocks or bonds?
- The wisest of men pity those who possess meanness, through which much of his fortune is obtained.
- The youth who would succeed must not allow himself to be deceived. He or she must learn to place the right emphasis of right and wrong into his or her daily life.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Ask yourself, are you tender, loving, self-denying, and honest? Explain how you exhibit these traits?

Do you attempt to fashion your life after that of great and noble men and women? If so, how? If not, then how could you?

What do we mean when we say that a man or woman 'is made'?

Explain how you perceived someone to be “ruined” prior to reading this book. Also explain how your view has now changed.

CHAPTER VIII

The Apollo Belvedere and the Venus di Milo

"Yet the aim of every man, should be to secure the highest and most harmonious development of his mental and physical powers to the point he is perceived by all as a complete and consistent being."

— Humboldt

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Man, at his finest, is the one truly great thing in all the universe.
- Is not human life itself a fine art, and more difficult than sculpture, painting, music, architecture, or the creations of poetry? Do we not need to learn how to live?
- You must be careful not to absorb into yourself the harmful weaknesses. Allow in only the strengths and the virtues of other, more highly enlightened men and women.
- A man carves out his own moral likeness. Every day he adds something to the final work.
- Success is in the finest details, so it is in building ones character. Investing the time to make it right, says volumes about the man or woman.
- All successful men and women turn the most common events, the homeliest things, into that which is beautiful in his or her life.
- Any discontent you feel with the work you are compelled to do comes from your own choosing to do such work with a sense of drudgery.
- It is the spirit in which we work, not the work itself, which lends dignity to our labor.
- Life is not mean, it is grand; if it appears to be mean, it is the observer who makes it so.
- God would not have painted life with such a broad stroke of grandeur if it was not meant for something.
- Every thought which enters the mind, every word we utter, every deed we perform, makes its impression upon the inner-most fiber of our being, and the result of these impressions is our character.
- It is natural for people to believe in and to follow those with character, for character is power.
- Everyone, however humble his circumstance may be, is daily and hourly altering and molding the character of all with whom he mingles. He exerts a power that will reproduce itself through countless generations.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

How do you approach your daily work? Do you look forward to it, or more often do you dread it? Explain why?

Now that you know that you are in complete control of how you approach your daily life, how could you improve the way you view your job or occupation?

How are you altering or helping to mold and shape the character of others in your life? In the workplace?

What steps can you take immediately to ensure that you are a positive force in the lives of those you love? In the lives of those you work with?

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Performance Coaching Toolkit

If you lead a team, this is a simple way to help one person grow, with a coaching plan and a worked example.

CHAPTER IX

Cultivating the Growth of Man-Timber

"As there is nothing in the world great but man, there is nothing truly great in man but character."

— W. M. Evarts

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- We must succeed in being a people of good character; if we do not succeed in that we can succeed in nothing.
- Character should be to the individual of paramount importance. Possessing a nobleness of character, in any abundance, would go further toward making human life happy.
- This thing known as character-building, every man and woman must work at in order to find true fulfillment in their life.
- Character is formed by the way in which we deal with all circumstances, our own desires and personal choices can do much to shape those circumstances.
- Sooner or later we become like the food of our minds, like the creatures that live in our hearts. Every act of our lives, every word, every association, is written with an iron pen upon the very texture of our being.
- What we are to be really, we are now potentially. As the future oak lies folded in the acorn, so in the present lies our future.
- So, through discipline, education, experience, the sapling child is developed into solid mental, moral, and physical timber. The only real success worthy of the name is that which comes from a consciousness of growing wider, deeper, higher, in mental and moral power, as the years go on.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Your future will be precisely what you make of it. What will your future be? As you write it down, do not allow your old beliefs to limit your possibilities.

Identify the actions you must take in order to experience everlasting joy. What actions will ensure that the faculties of the mind and heart are continually expanding and unfolding — it is in taking these actions daily that you will create a life truly worth living – the life you were intended for.

"When, at the evening of our little day here on earth, He comes to us, or sends His messenger to bid us to come home, it will not be the great things we have done that God will smile at. Rather, it will be the quality of our stewardship and the faithfulness we possessed in doing all the little duties that he has placed upon our hands; this will be what will ultimately win His approval."

1) Visualize your outcome. 2) Focus on your vision. 3) Work to make it real.

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Growth Roadmap Template

Turn the actions you wrote down here into a plan with steps and dates.

NOTES

PUT THIS VOLUME TO WORK

Keep Going

The answers you wrote in this workbook show what you want to stand for. These free resources help you keep those values in front of you and act on them.

- **Leadership Journal** Step 9 of the 10 Steps series, on writing down what you learn as you go.
- **Life Balance Wheel** See where your time and attention go across the parts of your life.
- **Master Action Plan (M.A.P.)** Keep your goals and next actions on one page.

THE LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME ONE	Ambition
VOLUME TWO	**Character**
VOLUME THREE	The Hour of Opportunity
VOLUME FOUR	Diligence: Do It to a Finish
VOLUME FIVE	Persistence: An Iron Will

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