



# In the trials of adversity work on character strength

Bởi:

Joe Tye

*“It is through character that personal leadership and excellence are exercised; it is character that sets the example and the standards by which you behave... The greatest gift you can give yourself is the practice of good character; the greatest gift you can give to others is a model character. Character inspires and is inspiring.” Gary Ryan Blair: Everything Counts: 52 Remarkable Ways to Inspire Excellence and Drive Results*

“Character is destiny” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. It’s true. From Enron to Lance Armstrong, we’ve seen over and over how character flaws can bring down an organization and permanently damage the reputation of an individual.

When your world turns upside down, it really is a test of character. Will you be a victim or a fighter? Will you accept responsibility or point fingers? Will you tell the hard truth or try to pass off the easy lie? Character is tested, defined, and refined by adversity. Helen Keller, a woman who had more than her share of adversity and so spoke from experience, said it best: “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

Confucius thought a great deal about character, often using the contrast between what he called the superior man and the small man to make his point. His sayings were included in *The Analects*, a collection of his teachings compiled by his followers after his death, which I’ve excerpted in the illustration. As you read each line, ask yourself where you fall on the “small-superior” continuum, and what you can do to move yourself in the direction of superior character. Be completely honest with yourself because no one will see it but you. It’s a test of character.

## **Confucius on character**

The superior man works to develop the superior aspects of his character. The small man allows the inferior aspects of his character to flourish.

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The superior man is easy to serve but difficult to please. The small man is difficult to serve but easy to please.

The superior man can see a question from all sides. The small man can see it only from his biased perspective.

The superior man calls attention to the good points in others. The small man calls attention to their defects.

The superior man can influence those who are above him. The small man can influence only those below him.

The demands that the superior man makes are on himself. The demands of the small man are placed upon others.

The superior man is slow in word but prompt in deed. The small man is quick to make promises but slow to keep them.

The superior man is diligent in ascertaining what is right. The small man is diligent in ascertaining what will pay.

The superior man is calm and at ease. The small man is fretful and ill at ease.

When things go wrong, the superior man seeks blame in himself. When things go wrong, The small man seeks blame in others.

The small man thinks he is a superior man. The superior man knows he is a small man.

In the presence of a superior man, think all the time how you might equal him. In the presence of a small man, evaluate your own character to be sure you are not like him.

The superior man has the quality of wind. The small man has the quality of grass. When the wind blows, the grass cannot help but to bend.

“To see what is right and not to do it is cowardice.”

Confucius: *The Analects*