

Character Check

Convicted Watergate conspirator John Ehrlichman wrote of his experience: “When I went to jail, nearly two years after the cover-up trial, I had a big self-esteem problem. I was a felon, shorn and scorned, clumping around in a ragged old army uniform, doing pick and shovel work out on the desert.

“I wondered if anyone thought I was worth anything ... For years I had been able to sweep most of my shortcomings and failures under the rug and not face them, but during the two long criminal trials, I spent my days listening to prosecutors tell juries what a bad fellow I was. I’d go back to a hotel room and sit alone thinking about what was happening to me. During that time, I began to take stock. I was wiped out. I had nothing left that had been of value to me – honor, credibility, virtue, recognition, profession.”

Then he began to see himself, and to care deeply about his own integrity, his capacity to love and be loved, and his essential worth. He concluded about the Nixon years, “In a paradoxical way, I’m grateful for them. Somehow, I had to see all of that and grow to understand it in order to arrive.”

Sadly, the inner character Ehrlichman developed came too late to impact his political career at the top.

His life lesson should not be lost on us. We must keep a daily check on our character. Of all the abilities we may possess, the one to develop a good character is our greatest.

Proverbs 11:5 states: “The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.”

--Beecher Hunter