

## The Need for Integrity!

Proverbs 11:3; 19:1; 20:7

Adapted from Mark N. Posey Pulpit Preview February 15, 2014

### Introduction:

Integrity is often viewed as outdated and no longer applicable in our fast-paced world; however, the need for integrity is perhaps as great as it has ever been.

The word integrity occurs about 25 times in the Bible.

Some translations use it as few as 16 times.

Other translations use it as many as 27 times.

It is one of the most important words in scripture.

So, what are we talking about when we speak of integrity?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines integrity as “firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: incorruptibility.”<sup>1</sup>

Dictionary.com defines integrity as “adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty.”<sup>2</sup>

Some synonyms from the Bible might help with grasping the need for integrity, along with three Proverbs.

Perfection; purity; innocence, blameless, and completeness.

Proverbs 11:3 reads, “The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.”

Proverbs 19:1 says, “Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity Than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool.”

Proverbs 20:7 explains, “A righteous man who walks in his integrity—How blessed are his sons after him.”

I was first introduced to integrity by my father’s living.

At about the age of 6 or 7, my father went to a local store to purchase a garden tractor.

He needed a garden tractor to use a small disc attachment and a set of garden sweeps.

He needed a mower function because it would be used to cut grass.

It was a Saturday morning when we went up to Albright's.

Dad talked about several things with the man from church, as I knew him.

When they finished talking; Dad said, “We are getting a mower!”

On the way home, I asked dad, “how are we getting a mower when you didn’t pay that man?”

Dad said, “A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.”

It was later explained to me, and I asked several times over the years to get it verified; Dad gave Mr. Albright his word.

My father purchased a garden tractor and kept it for almost a week before he paid for it.

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<sup>1</sup> “Integrity.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integrity>. Accessed 29 Jan. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> “Integrity.” Dictionary.com Dictionary, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/integrity>. Accessed 29 Jan. 2023.

Mr. Albright and my father knew each other well, they were both Christians, and both were men of their word.

Both men, as I came to understand them, had integrity.

Integrity and Character are different but alike.

Character is a matter of doing right, over and over, until it becomes a part of your life: make the bed, clean the room, get dressed, read Bible, brush your teeth, do chores, and so on.

Integrity is more than character.

It is something that comes from the heart.

It is character that is resolute; it is something that cannot be changed or polluted.

Throughout the Bible, there are three men identified as men of integrity: Abimelech (Genesis 20:5-6), Job (Job 2:3), and David (1 Kings 9:4).

People of integrity live close to the heart of God and reflect character consistent with godly lives.

### **I. The Integrity of Evil King Abimelech (Genesis 20:5, 6).**

Fearing for his life in Gerar, Abraham lied about Sarah saying she was his sister, so, Abimelech, the King sent and took Sarah.

Genesis 20:3 says, "But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night."

Abimelech was warned by God not to touch Sarah (vv. 3-8).

Abimelech was an evil king.

He convinced the men of Shechem, who were related to him on his mother's side, to make him king over Israel in the time of the judges (Judges 9).

They worked together to kill seventy of Abimelech's half-brothers.

Look further at the incident of Genesis 20:10-18.

Abraham acted without integrity while Abimelech acted with it.

Abraham acted from fear, and Abimelech acted from faith.

On this occasion, evil King Abimelech showed integrity.

### **II. The Integrity of Job (2:3, 9; 27:5; 31:6).**

Job was a man that held to his character which resulted in glowing integrity.

Following along in Job chapter 1:6, we are told about a day when the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan the Accuser came with them.

"The Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil'" (Job 1:8).

Satan scoffs that Job only serves God because God blesses him; Then Satan told God, "put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face" (v. 11).

God permitted Satan to do anything to what Job had, but he could not touch him physically.

Job's oxen and donkeys were stolen.

His farmhands were killed.

Fire fell from heaven and burned up his sheep and his shepherds.

His camels were taken off and his servants were killed.

A wind blew down the house where his sons and daughters were, killing them, yet Job held on to his integrity.

Satan was unsuccessful in his attack on Job through his possessions, so when he came before the LORD again, in chapter 2, he wanted to attack Job's health.

Follow along, beginning in 2:3.

This reference to integrity indicates a strengthening of the grip Job already had on his resolve to serve God faithfully.

Satan responds, "put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face" (v. 5).

God permitted Satan to attack through his health, but he could not take his life.

So, Satan smote Job with boils from head to toe as we say.

"Then his wife said to him," Job 2:9, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die"

Job's wife had abandoned her integrity.

What Satan had been able to do regarding Mrs. Job, he was not successful in when it came to Job.

In affirming his righteousness, Job vowed to speak no evil and to maintain his innocence until his death (Locate Job 27:5).

In Job's last response to his friends, he said, "Let Him (that is God) weigh me with accurate scales, And let God know my integrity" (Job 31:6).

Job refused to be a party to evil actions and gladly offered up his life for examination to reveal his sterling and wholesome integrity.

### **III. The Integrity of King David (1 Kings 9:4—Words of God to Solomon).**

David was a man "after God's own heart."

Despite his human failings, David loved the Lord with his whole heart.

Consider the openness of David's heart.

In Psalm 26:1-2 David wrote, "Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart."

In Psalm 139:23-24 David penned, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

Consider the brokenness of David's heart.

Following his sin with Bathsheba, David wrote a prayer of repentance.

Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

Contrition leads to cleansing and forgiveness.

Consider the truthfulness of David's heart.

Psalm 15:1-2 "O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart."

God will not tolerate a lying heart in His presence but desires "truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6).

Consider the holiness of David's heart.

He declared, “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:3-4).

No wonder he cried out under the burden of sin, “create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

David was a man of integrity because he loved God with his whole heart.

### **Application:**

Christian integrity involves the whole of the inner person: the heart, the mind [“eye”], and the will.

Matthew 6:19-21: Where is your treasure? “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Matthew 6:22-23: Is it light or darkness that is in you? “If your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.”

Matthew 6:24: Do you serve God or wealth consisting of possessions or good health? “For either [you] will hate the one and love the other, or [you] will be devoted to one and despise the other.”

It has been said that “integrity is to personal or corporate character what health is to the body or 20/20 vision is to the eyes. People with integrity have nothing to hide and nothing to fear.”

### **Conclusion:**

A person of integrity draws near to God by his/her choices, can be protected by God, and repents when he/she has sinned against God, thus nothing to hide and nothing to fear.

People of integrity aim to be pure and innocent toward their fellowman, blameless and upright before God, and set their heart to serve God with all their heart, mind, and will.

There is a great need for people of integrity in our world today.

Are you a person of integrity?

One who is not swayed by evil or peer pressure, or held captive by sin?

One who wants to do God’s will, is not afraid to stand alone, and takes care of sin?

God will wash away your sins when you: by faith in His Son (Acts 16:30-31), turn from your sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Christ before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (immersed) in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38).

If you have not been a person of integrity in your walk with Christ, do what Jesus instructed the Christians in Laodicea when he said, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).