

Real Men Are Godly Men

Looking For Men of Integrity

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Do you know what the only man-made structure that can be observed from the space shuttle is? The wall that took the ancient Chinese years and years to build to hold off an invasion from the barbaric hordes from the North. It covers hundreds and hundreds of miles. They built it so thick that you couldn't break through it; so long you couldn't go around it, so high that you couldn't get over it. But did you know that within the first hundred years after it was finished, China was invaded three times by the barbarians to the north. They didn't go over the wall. They didn't go around it, they didn't go under it, and they didn't go through it. Do you know how they got in? All three times they bribed the gatekeeper and they walked in.

So often we put so much emphasis in money on how to govern and defend ourselves, but so little attention to the character of the people who must lead that defense. Whatever a man may build, whether it's a business or a nation or an empire, if he doesn't build his own character, he has failed in life. A lack of integrity has always existed in the world and today is no exception.

If God has fashioned men to lead their families, to lead the church, to lead their communities, he obviously expects them to take the lead in modeling integrity.

1. What is integrity? "The quality or state of being complete," (Webster's Dictionary) and then gives "wholeness" as a synonym. That's a good definition because that's exactly what the Bible says integrity is. In the Old Testament, the word translated "integrity" in Hebrew is, "*thom*," and it means, whole---complete.

Integrity by its very nature implies consistency. It means being sound, faithful, truthful, through and through, top to bottom. Integrity in one's life means that truth characterizes their whole life.

Do you remember your high math class you learned that an integer was a whole number, like 1 or 2 or 23. It's never a fraction - $1\frac{5}{8}$ is not an integer. An integer is whole and complete, and it comes from the same root word. A man of integrity doesn't live a fractured life. It's not splintered by double-mindedness.

Most men are honest in some things however a few have difficulty telling the truth. But a man of integrity is honest about all things.

Chuck Swindoll, some time ago, told a story, true story. It happened in the southern California area about a man who went through a drive-thru at a chicken restaurant. The man and the woman went through and they ordered chicken, like a fourpiece dinner, and it was handed to them and they drove off. Come to find out, the man who was filling their order had taken a box where they had emptied the proceeds from one of the cash registers. There was over \$800 in cash in that. And that was the box handed to the man who went through the drive-thru. The manager was beside himself. He said, "We'll never see that money again."

When the couple stopped for their picnic and opened it up, he realized there had been a mistake. So the man closed the box, drove back to the chicken place, and said, "There's been a mistake, we got a box full of money." The manager was so impressed. He said, "That's fantastic! I never thought I'd see it again." He said, "Let me call the newspaper. I want your picture made, a picture of the most honest man in town." The man said, "No, I can't do that. I can't do that." The manager insisted "No, no, we really need a picture of the most honest man in town." Finally, the fellow took the manager over to the side and said, "You don't understand. The woman I'm with is not my wife. I don't want my picture made."

Integrity means truth characterizes your whole life. It is to let every area of your life be governed by God's truth. Now Jesus is our perfect example in every regard, isn't he? "They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are ...'" (Mark

12:14) Jesus didn't let men decide what was going to be true today. Jesus let God decide what was going to be true every day.

That same Lord taught "The one who is faithful in little, is the one who is going to be faithful in much." (Luke 16) That is the completeness of integrity, and men like that are rare. But the difference they make in this world is awesome.

2. How does one become a man of integrity? Integrity starts in the heart. That's where you go. Jesus taught "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45) Whatever is on the inside is just going to come to the outside.

Solomon said "As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man." (Proverbs 27:19) When we fail spiritually or morally, all we want to do is talk about the external. How do we develop the willpower to fix that? How can I stop from doing that next time? But it can only be fixed from the inside. I found that we violate the integrity of the heart, long before we ever violate the command. The heart by itself is easily lured into deceit and sin. Jeremiah said, "A man can't trust his own heart." That's true. But the Christian has living in his heart the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God takes up residence in a Christian for the purpose of making them more Christ like and to bear the fruit we read about in Galatians 5 of love, joy, peace, faithfulness, and self control. Integrity begins in the heart and God equips the Christian to have a heart that can have it. Therefore, we need to guard our hearts. Before guarding what we let in, we must guard what we keep out. Integrity begins in the heart.

Once the heart is quickened [Gk. *zontes* signifies the *living* as opposed to the *dead*; to make alive New Unger's Bible Dictionary] by the spirit, then integrity is born out in our lifestyle. The classic example is Daniel. Remember Daniel, the captive prince? Daniel was a captive prince first under the Babylonians and then under the Persians. "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so." It goes on to say, "They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'" (Daniel 6:3)

Now that's integrity. Daniel was genuine, he was honest, he was righteous through and through. He was consistent in his personal life and in his professional life. These men even hired spies to watch him for days on end to see if they could catch him in any breach of his integrity. By the way, I don't know if Daniel knew that he was being spied upon, but I do know that Daniel was not unaccustomed to being watched. For Daniel lived his life knowing that every day that God was there with me looking at him 24 hours a day whether anybody else was there or not. The spies reported, "there's nothing there and the only way you're ever going to trap this man is if you can find some way to trap him on the basis of his faith." So they set up a trap. They went to Darius the king and they tickled his ears [flattered him]. They said, "Darius, we want to make you 'a god for a month.'" Darius liked that idea. He had an ego. Therefore for the next 30 days, the only way anybody can pray, was to pray to him.

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, **just as he had done before.**" (Daniel 6:10) It didn't stop a thing.

You know the rest of the story. He was caught in the trap and they threw Daniel into the lion's den. "That is a great story," because it was the story of a man who kept his integrity. Integrity begins in the heart and is borne out in life.

Fruits of integrity

1. Men of integrity keep their promises. Sadly, we live in an age where a man's word doesn't mean much anymore.

Today if it isn't in writing with 500 lawyers behind it, it doesn't mean anything anymore. People that's sad. Because a real man should be the kind of man who brings certainty to the world by the power of his word. In fact, a major facet of that colossal statement in Genesis 1:27 "we are made in the image of God," is a fact that we can make and keep promises, and we alone in all creation can do that. God does that. One thing that God hates, he hates broken promises. "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity." (Proverbs 11:3) There are seven things listed in Proverbs 6:16-19 that God hates, and one is a lying tongue. The reason God hates duplicity, and the reason he hates lying is because it's so contrary to his nature for above all else, our father is truthful and faithful. You go through the Bible and when God says, "I will do this," you don't find him turning around and saying; "Hey, I don't know what I was thinking; times have changed, and I just don't feel the way I used to feel." God is looking for a few good men who will keep promises, who will be faithful to their wives and faithful to their children, faithful to their bosses, and faithful to Him.

2. Men of integrity maintain their values. They don't let the latest poll or the latest headline determine their values. Job is the great example that I think of from the Old Testament. "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.'" (Job 2:3) Remember he lost his wealth, his prestige, and his family. God allowed Satan to take those from him. A man of integrity does not allow a changing environment to change his standards.

Nobody takes your character from you. They may take your money, job, your reputation, your fame, and even take your life, but they cannot take your character. You're the only one who can throw that away. I believe God's man would rather die with conviction than live with compromise. I'll tell you something about real men of God.

They don't own the world, but they sure won't sell out to the world.

3. Men of integrity are protected by God. I know as I'm discussing integrity, some of you are thinking, "you don't understand, you must live in some kind of ivory tower. You don't understand how it is when you're out there when it's dog-eat-dog. You just don't understand. You don't know what it's like. You've got to get down and get dirty and get muddy." I don't want to go into this, but I guarantee you that in any profession you can be called upon and tempted to compromise your integrity.

God has made promises through his word that if you will stand tall, and you will stand firm that he will bless you. "The man of integrity walks securely." (Proverbs 10:9) "Righteousness guards the man of integrity." (Proverbs 13:6) "In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever." (Psalm 41:12) That's not to say there won't be bumps in the road; or somebody won't give you a hard time or that you won't be fired. But "You have never been thrown into a fiery furnace or a lion's den." Be a person of integrity. God says, "I see, I protect, and I reward." What the Bible is saying is, you protect your integrity, and your integrity will protect you.

David prayed in Psalm 7:8 "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High." Can you pray that prayer? Can you say, "Judge me O Lord according to my integrity, according to my holiness, my consistency?" That's the prayer we all want to be able to pray. Amazing Grace #1209 - - Steve Flatt - May 21, 1995

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