

Integrity

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[0 : 00] The Integrity of the Upright!

Integrity is the topic tonight. It's something God's really pleased with. He values it. He commands it to us. Integrity. Integrity is something that our world likewise values in lots of ways. What does integrity mean?

Integrity means being true, being undivided. It means you do what you say you're going to do. It means you keep your word. It means you practice what you preach.

Integrity means holding fast to moral values, a code of moral values. Even the world speaks of integrity. But for a Christian, integrity means living out your faith day by day.

[1 : 21] Living out your faith. A survey was taken across the globe of thousands of people. People were asked what they most desired in a leader. Two psychologists interpreted the results.

In virtually every study, honesty and integrity were mentioned more than every other trait. They valued honesty and integrity.

People in the world value that. If people are wanting to follow a leader, they want someone who can be trusted. They want someone who will keep his promises. Someone who will follow through with his commitments.

And such people are in short supply. People with integrity. Employers want integrity. They want people they can trust in their workforce.

People that they can depend upon. Husbands expect their wives to have integrity. Wives expect their husbands to have integrity.

[2 : 23] It's something that's valuable. It's something that's precious. And in the world we live, in society today, we've lost our moral compass. We've lost that sight of moral absolutes.

It's all gone a bit fuzzy, a bit unclear to the world. Because there is no standard for the world. That the world thinks anything goes, pretty much. Integrity means living out the values that we profess to have.

So we have to ask ourselves, what's my values? How do I set the values that I count important? How do I decide what way to go?

What to choose? What is the source of my values? Where do I get them from? And we can get our values from all kinds of places. It could be for you, you might choose to get your values from a TV talk show.

Some people do. Some people get their values from such things as that. It's been said that the average American, and this is some years ago, spent 1,000 hours per year watching television.

[3 : 31] So that works out by the time that he is 65 years old, he'll have spent 15 years, 12 hours a day, 365 days a year, just watching the tube.

15 years of his life down the tube, really, isn't it? Contrast this with a person who goes to church every Sunday of their life for 65 years.

And that's not saying going to church makes you a Christian, but just a comparison here, that they all have spent a total of 8 months receiving spiritual teaching. 8 months compared to 15 years.

It's a big difference, isn't it? And it's a big difference, especially if we're setting our values by that which we're using our time for. It's a big difference.

So our values are being shaped all the time, and especially in a world where there's no absolute truth, anything goes, it's no wonder that as a nation, our morality is affected, our integrity is affected, our decency is affected, because we're being moulded as a nation by such things as that.

[4 : 42] Especially if our values are being redefined all the time, and young people especially, have got to take heed of this by what we watch on television. But it's not just young people, it's all of us.

We've all got to be very guarded. The just man walketh in his integrity. It says in Proverbs 20, verse 7. The just man walks in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him.

The question is, what path will you take? What path will you choose? Will you choose the walking in integrity? I trust that you can. I trust that you will. And our children are blessed after us, it says, if we do so.

So choose the path that you take carefully, because your children are watching too. It's been said, Abraham Lincoln said, that for a man to train up a child in the way he or she should go, he must walk that way himself.

Train up a child in the way they should go, but walk that way yourself. Demonstrate that integrity by the life you live. Integrity is the pathway of blessing. His children are blessed after him.

[5 : 53] Integrity impacts us, and it impacts our families. Our faith should be lived out in every dimension of life. For example, the use of money, how we gain our money, how we regard money, how we give our money.

Integrity should dictate that. We live in a time where integrity means nothing today. The world in which we live. Look at what the world honours. Look at what the world celebrates.

I was hearing some politicians speak lately, and the things that they counted as values. And friends, it's utterly godless what some of our politicians in our own nation, let alone the world, esteems and celebrates.

These things that the world would honour. Sometimes it's immoral things, and they say these are the values of our nation. And the TV sets the tune that way too.

But where are the real heroes? Where are the people with godly character who will show biblical integrity? In God's Word, we see such folk that we can learn from, that we can follow in their steps.

[7 : 08] Those folk whose character is tested, and they shine true and strong. Their lives show truth and integrity and godly character.

There's three, for example, you could mention as three Jewish men who attained a position in a foreign country as senior public servants, if you like.

They were three men of godly character who demonstrated how they lived out uncompromising faith and integrity. We see, for example, Nehemiah. Nehemiah, he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. Daniel, he served four different kings in three different empires. We talked about him this morning. And thirdly, we see Joseph. He was the first son of Jacob and Rachel.

Nehemiah, Daniel and Joseph. Three godly men. We can learn from their integrity that they live. Let's look at Joseph for a moment.

[8 : 05] He was favoured as the son, made the others jealous, and his brother sold Joseph into slavery. He ended up working for Potiphar.

He showed his abilities in Potiphar's house, in his administration, in his honesty, so much so that Potiphar put him in charge of all his house. Joseph had a godly character that shone through the circumstances of his life.

He found favour with this man, Potiphar. In Genesis 39, we read from verse 4, Joseph found grace in the sight of this man, as he served him, and Potiphar made him overseer of his house, and all that he had, he put into Joseph's hand.

Joseph was a man who could be trusted, a man with character, a man with integrity. And then what happened, verse 10, Potiphar's wife sought to tempt him.

And it wasn't just a one-off, it was day by day, as if she could wear him down. But what did Joseph do? We see that he maintained his integrity, even in that testing time.

[9 : 17] He would rather go to prison than to betray his master and his integrity. Integrity has the courage to say no when you're faced with sin.

Joseph saw that his sin would be against God as well as his earthly master. Joseph would not give in to temptation, rather he ran from sin.

And friends, I urge you to take the pathway of integrity. Be like Joseph. When temptations come your way, don't compromise, don't give in, don't give ground.

Joseph never lost his integrity. He stood strong and true in his faith, even while then he was cast into prison. He trusted God through those difficult times.

Integrity does what is right, even when everyone else is doing wrong. Integrity does the right thing because it is right. It doesn't matter what the world says, what the world's values are, it matters what God says.

[10 : 22] Amen. That's what counts. That's what we set our values by. And then later, Joseph was raised up to be the second in command of all of Egypt. And a famine struck the land.

Jacob then sent his sons to buy food and grain, and Joseph recognised his brothers as they came to get some food from the store. He was able to forgive. Integrity is seen again in the life of Joseph. He did not bear any grudge against his very brothers who had sold him into slavery, who had wronged him so badly. To forgive is one of the highest virtues of the Christian life it takes. Integrity. And then Joseph looking back at all that had happened to him, all of the trials and tribulations and testings. He saw that even then, through everything that had happened, all the calamities and difficulties, that God was working a plan to perfection. God was working out his plan. Even through all the wrongs that were done to Joseph, all of the false accusations, God's will was being worked out in his life as Joseph stood strong and showed integrity.

[11 : 35] Integrity does what is right. No matter when, no matter where, it is always right to do right. It says in Proverbs 19 verse 1, Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity than he that is perverse in his lips and is a fool.

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity. Don't sell your soul. Don't sell that birthright for a mess of pottage. Don't relinquish that stand of faith, even though it will cost you. Make a stand for what is right. Joseph's family was blessed because of his integrity. He chose to follow, to trust, to obey, to remain faithful.

No matter what, the consequences, no matter what, the circumstances. Friends, we too can determine, determine to do right. Choose the right.

Joseph's calamities were really an intensive course in management for that which God was preparing him for. Through Potiphar's house, through the time in prison, where he was eventually responsible for all the prisoners, 13 years later, he was put in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

[12 : 49] God's plan for Joseph meant going through that testing time. And Joseph passed each test with flying colours. He learnt from experience. He learnt to trust God more.

He was ready for this challenge. He was prepared for that great responsibility as he worked with patience. He wasn't lifted up with pride. He learnt how to forgive. He learnt to be faithful.

And we can learn that too. To learn that integrity means a consistency in what we do. As someone has put it, wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it.

Right is right even when no one is doing it. Don't follow the crowd. They're going the wrong way.

Hypocrisy is the opposite of integrity. We want to have consistency, not such that we're playing a part, pretending something we're not, putting on a mask, but to be a man, a woman of integrity that we can stand strong and true.

and when people scratch beneath the surface, it's still true underneath. we want to have that integrity that does what is right. It's the opposite of hypocrisy.

[14 : 00] You know, there's a story of a man who was a prisoner in North Korea, a prisoner of the communists, general dean, a US general. and there was a time when he was told that he was about to face the firing squad.

He was about to be executed and he was asked to, he was offered an opportunity to write a letter to his wife and so he took that opportunity to write a letter to his wife and he included some instructions for their son.

And under these most severe circumstances, he wrote this powerful statement, tell Bill, the word is integrity. Tell Bill the word is integrity.

No doubt he thought deeply about what he was going to tell his son. Integrity was the word that he wanted his son to know. He actually survived that time and was freed.

But that word integrity counted for him. Integrity, it means character, it means honesty. Now of course we know there's many good and honest people who are lost and going to hell.

[15 : 09] They may have integrity as the world counts it. We're talking about biblical integrity. We're talking about living out your faith true and strong. True men and women of God.

Men and women of integrity. Are you one of them? Can you be trusted? Can you be counted on? Are you a man, a woman of integrity? It means that you're going to keep your promises, you're going to be faithful no matter what to that mate.

you'll stay with that person for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. So be careful, be careful who you marry.

You're going to be faithful to them. You're going to show integrity. If you promise the Lord that you'll give him the glory, you're going to keep on doing that. No matter what, even if you're reduced to

nothing, even though you go through great suffering and trial, you will stick with it.

You will persevere. If you promised a friend that you're going to return something you borrowed, you will return it. You'll honour your integrity. As a parent, if you promised your child to give them something, to do such and such, integrity means that you'll keep that appointment.

[16:18] A promise is a holy thing. Someone has said, whether mate to a chairman of the board or to a child. We want to be people of integrity in every aspect of our lives.

People of integrity. People who can be counted on. We see another man, Job. The man Job. In the book of Job, 1 verse 1, it says, There was a man in the land of us whose name was Job.

And that man was perfect and upright, one who feared God and eschewed evil or he shunned evil. He was perfect, he was upright. The word perfect means he was entire, he was complete, he was not lacking in any respect.

The word upright means he was straight up and down, not deviating from any of God's standards. He was a man blameless. Job had an absolute integrity.

How many of our politicians today could say, could we say, are men and women of integrity? We see, even in the media, we see various things being uncovered that would question the integrity of those who would lead us.

[17:26] how many of our politicians can we say have integrity? How many preachers? When a person has integrity, you will notice. We see that in Job 1, verse 8, it says, the Lord said unto Satan, has thou considered my servant Job?

There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one who fears God and eschews evil. Job's integrity was evident. What about you?

Do those that you work with on a daily basis see your integrity? Does your family see your integrity? Are you a person of integrity?

Do the people in your church see it? Job was such a man, a man who could be counted on, a man who was perfect and upright in all his ways. That was quite an example for us to live up to, isn't it? But it doesn't take much to destroy integrity. Mrs. Job, you could call her, in Job 2 verse 9 he says, she says to Job, dost thou still retain thine integrity?

[18:33] Curse God and die. Job's wife wonders when all these things go wrong through Job's life, he lost his sons, his daughters, his business, his sheep and she wonders how can her husband still maintain his integrity?

For Job, integrity meant taking a stand. it meant making a decision, a determination. When wave after wave of violent destruction hit this man and left him in ruins, Job hung on to his integrity.

Let that be true for you, brother, sister, when things might not be as you would like. In Job 1 verse 22 it says, of Job, he sinned not nor charged God fearlessly.

And he said in Job 2 verse 10, what? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? He accepted that sometimes our lot in life is not such that we would like.

Sometimes we will receive evil at the hand of God. God is allowing our integrity to be tested. And it says that Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly.

[19:48] Sometimes the best way when you're facing a test like Job did is to maintain your integrity is to keep silent. It's to keep silent. He held his tongue.

He didn't lash out at God in the midst of his distress. We need to say along with Job and the psalmist Psalm 26 11 but as for me I will walk in my integrity.

Make that decision like Job did. He made a decision of his will of his tongue of his walk. Make a decision determined as Job did no matter what.

We're not going to lose our integrity. We will praise him we will trust him in the midst of the storm. The character of Job reveals that importance of integrity as he guarded it in his daily walk as he trusted as he prayed as he studied the word.

Integrity is something missing. It's sadly an ingredient really missing in society today. I read this about a test that was taken a survey that was taken where people were asked this question what are you willing to do for 10 million dollars?

[21:04] What are you willing to do for 10 million dollars? Two thirds of those polled said they would do at least one of the following. I've admitted some things because they were so gross but for example would you abandon your entire family?

25% of people said they would for 10 million dollars. Maybe your family is not that precious to you. 25% said they would abandon their church.

16% said they would leave their spouse. 7% said they would kill a stranger for 10 million dollars. And parents 3% said they would give up their children for adoption for 10 million dollars. I mean I don't think our children are so cheap are they? But yet some people think they are. Their integrity was tested and found wanting. Many people would have that kind of attitude. They can be bought. You know they can crumble for something that was attractive enough. [22 : 13] Some sin some wrong that was attractive enough. It's been said that under pressure is where your integrity really shows.

Under pressure that's where we see it. Where we saw it in Job's life where we saw it in Joseph's life. Under pressure is where your integrity really shows. Friends, a Christian ought to have integrity through all of life. Whatever you do, in every aspect, whatever you do, you're going to have that eye to the glory of God. Job sets for us that standard of integrity. Here is a man, picture him, a man covered, head to toe, in sores, in blisters, and we been festering sores. He'd lost all of his livestock, everything that he'd worked so hard to build up. He'd lost all of his servants, all of his livelihood, all of his children. And then his so-called friends turn their back on him and mock and deride him.

[23 : 18] And then when he looks for comfort to his soulmate, his wife, he finds that his wife has turned on him as well. And she asks him, are you still trusting in God?

Are you still holding on to your integrity? Why don't you curse God and die? Where is your integrity? Where would your integrity be if you were in Job's shoes?

Are you willing to go through such calamity and still serve him, and still trust him, still follow him, even when you may not feel like it?

Where there's work still to do, we should have integrity. Job did not waver, he held fast. And friends, just to close, integrity, this is some concept I'm talking about, I'm hoping through, considering the example of Joseph and Job, that you can get that graphic picture in that human reference point of these men that were tested and tried and yet shone, and their integrity did not crumble.

And yet, think for yourself, what about you now? What about each one here, now, today, this moment, you, and you, and you? What about you?

[24 : 35] Will you have that integrity? Firstly, do you know him? Are you saved? Have you got faith? Are you his? You can be well meaning, honest, and have as much as the world's kind of integrity as you like, and be lost for eternity.

We're not talking about earning a salvation through living a good life. We're talking about soul-saving faith that shows, it shines, it's evident still.

It comes as you're trusting, in that moment of time, you're transformed from death into life. You've passed over from death into life. There's a transformation, you've made a new creature, the old has passed away, the new has come.

You're brand new, you've got eternal life. As a Christian now, faith is evident in the integrity that you live in your life.

And it's made out of lots of little things. Just to close, consider this, this is what an old-time saint said, a fellow with a funny name, Horatius Bonar.

[25 : 51] He said this, he said little things, it's little things that can either make or break the Christian. He said this, a holy life is made up of a multitude of small things.

It's the little things of the hour and not the great things of the age that fill up a life, like that of the apostles, Paul, or John, or David Brainerd, or Henry Martin.

Little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons, little deeds, not miracles, battles, or one great heroic effort, or martyrdom, make up the true Christian life.

It's the little constant sunbeam, not the lightning, the waters of Siloam that go softly in their mission of refreshment, not the waters of the great rivers and many rushing down in torrent, noise, force, that are the true symbols of a holy life.

Friends, we're talking about where the rubber hits the road, we're talking about tomorrow morning, we're talking about tonight, this moment, we're talking about integrity, and it's in the little things, it's in the little moments of life, it's in those decisions, moment by moment, that you make, that a life is lived, and friends, I urge you to consider, to choose integrity, choose integrity in the little things of your life, because the little things of your life, the seconds of your life, make up the years of your life,

make it matter, make it count, make it such that you won't have regret, that you'll live as Joseph did, in preparation for something bigger, in following God's plan, even though it seemed like it was disaster, from disaster to disaster, in Job's life, when everything seemed like it was totally lost, and he just as well snuffed it, that his life seemed like it was totally in rags and tatters, that God honoured his integrity still, and God blessed him further than he had ever been blessed, friends, integrity will see you through the race of life, and it's as you trust him, as his life is lived out in you, that holy life is lived out in those holy moments, moment by moment by moment, in those little things of your life, make your life count, young people, choose Christ, choose him, as he chooses you, as he races out, and drags you out of the bramble bush, out of the steep cliff, as it were, as a little lamb, about to fall to its ruin, that you will trust him, that good shepherd who seeks you, and finds you, and holds you dear to himself, and lays you upon his shoulder, come unto the good shepherd, come into his arms as he embraces you, and takes you out of where we as sheep have gone astray, going all about our own way, friends, turn to him tonight, and make your life count with integrity, let us pray.

[28 : 58] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.