

Integrity

The word integrity is interesting. It means:

- 1) The quality of having strong moral principles
- 2) The state of being whole
- 3) The condition of being unified or sound in construction.
- 4) Internal consistency or lack of corruption (Also used in terms of electronic data)

The origin of the word integrity is from the Latin “integer” which means whole, intact, entire.

It is composed of two Latin words “in” which expresses negation and “tangere” the Latin verb “to touch”.

In our own Barbadian dialect, when meat is “touched” it means that it is tainted – it has lost its integrity, its soundness.

In our modern world, integrity appears to be all but obsolete. A close examination of the business world will reveal this to be true in the majority of cases. People have adopted the modern belief system that there are no absolutes. There has been an infiltration of moral relativism and situational ethics that has poisoned and continues to infect society.

As a result, we have experienced a downward slide in business and personal ethics. Over the years, the lines of right and wrong have diminished from black and white into grey. This has convinced the unregenerate human mind that everything and anything is acceptable.

This flawed belief system has been so influential that, for many, even in some Christian circles, there is no longer any absolute right or wrong. Values no longer have any meaningful definition. They are often regarded as a disadvantage.

When we enter the offices of most business places today, we see a set of company values on display. Management believes that by doing so, their employees will display what that company stands for. All success begins with establishing deep-seated values. One of the most noticeable characteristics among truly successful leaders (both in their personal lives as well as business achievements) is that they know who they are, what they believe, and what they stand for. As we check their backgrounds, we will usually find some measure of Christian influence.

Some individuals measure success only by financial gains, but do not examine the aspect of integrity. To operate in integrity is a decision. We must make a commitment not to negotiate integrity for anything or anyone. We must always prize integrity above profit, relationships, or short-term success. Never allow short-term benefits to compromise your values.

What makes you the person you are? From childhood we are taught what, in our parents' estimation, is right and wrong. As we grow, our image of who we are is formed by a sum total of our experiences. If there is no counteracting input into our minds, negative images will produce negative characteristics in us. This is why it is vital that every individual has a solid grounding in God's perspective of the individual.

This is where the Church for the most part has failed miserably.

The Church has allocated to the individual the image of being “worms, mere dust, only human, here but for a season, live the best way we can then die and go to heaven”. Many mainstream denominations have not even stressed the importance of accepting Jesus’ lordship in order to make it to heaven. Such teachings produce a sense of hopelessness. The individual looks to their denomination and not to Father God and Jesus. Hence many live like the devil during the week then make confession on Sunday and go back to living like the devil again on Monday.

Such a lifestyle does not reflect integrity – it is a demonstration of total hypocrisy. When we are people of integrity, our lifestyles are consistent in public as well as in private. Your values are what make you the person you are. The reason for this is simple; values guide each and every decision, which then shapes our destiny. Clear and established values on which you base every decision, determine your success or failure and determine your longevity.

So what values govern your life? What values govern your decisions, work ethics, and relationships? Do you believe in the values of integrity, hard work, honesty, dependability, creativity, initiative, and teamwork? Does your lifestyle reflect your values?

The lack of integrity is the reason many individuals fail. Integrity is the foundation of all success and wholeness. In today’s business world, it has been touted that being a person or company that prizes integrity puts you at a disadvantage. Is this really the case? What happens in the long run to those firms and individuals who operate callously and without integrity? In the short-term they flourish and die but those who operate in integrity flourish long-term.

Psalm 37 is a wonderful account of the fragility of evil doers vs the longevity of the righteous.

The story is told of a man who was nominated for the post of Chief Executive of a large corporation. He was elected by the Board of Directors and the appointment was a sure thing. The current Chief Executive was behind this man in the line in the Company cafeteria one day and, unknown to the nominee saw him take a pat of butter that costed about 10 cents and hide it under a slice of bread.

The Chief Executive went back to the Board of Directors and told them that they had the wrong man. He told them that he lacked integrity. For 10 cents, that man lost a great promotion.

What is the level of your integrity in the small things? When the times get tough, can you be counted on?

We can take examples from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who, despite the threat of death would not compromise God’s requirements. Joseph paid the price of imprisonment for a crime he did not commit. He simply refused to tarnish God’s name through his conduct. How many of us would be willing to go that far? Yet daily we see Christians betraying the cause of Christ through their lack of integrity.

There is a serious lack of genuine integrity and faithfulness, even in the Church. Our word means very little today – whether it is in the form of a marriage commitment or a business contract. Even international treaties are broken.

After urging the Corinthian Church in 2 Corinthians Chapter 6 to “come out from among

them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing”, in Chapter 7, Paul gives testimony of the Apostles’ own integrity :

“Do open your hearts to us again [enlarge them to take us in]. We have wronged no one, we have betrayed or corrupted no one, we have cheated or taken advantage of no one.”
2 Corinthians 7:2 (Amplified)

Many ministers fail because they do not ensure that their character grown alongside their gifting. The greater the call of God on your life, the more you must dedicate time to developing your character.

1 O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?

Who may dwell on Your holy hill?

*2 He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart.*

*3 He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,*

Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

*4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honors those who fear the LORD;
He swears to his own hurt and does not change;*

*5 He does not put out his money at interest,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent
He who does these things will never be shaken.*

(Psalm 15:1-5 NASB)

Do you walk in integrity?