

A Call to Integrity in a Culture of Compromise

With the current crisis in the Ukraine, people are wondering which world leader to believe. Opponents of Putin say he lies, led the KGB and can't be trusted to tell the truth. Opponents of Obama say he repeatedly spoke falsehoods about Obamacare promises, so he can't be trusted either.

Credibility and security come as we demonstrate we are committed to integrity. "The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out" (Prov. 10:9, NIV). Bible teacher Charles Simpson once stated, "Faithfulness is a daily deposit in the bank of trust."

The prophet Isaiah surveyed the scene in his day and declared that "truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found" (Is. 59:14-15).

In America, are we rapidly approaching this kind of scenario? The further we drift from our Judeo-Christian foundations, the faster we tailspin into an era where there is an ever-increasing lack of integrity in our society.

Yet as the darkness increases, what a glorious opportunity it is for Christians and the church to shine as the "city set on a hill" that our Lord intended and our forefathers envisioned in establishing America.

The dark is getting darker, but the light is getting lighter, and the difference between the two is becoming more and more evident. As a diamond glistens on a crimson pillow or lightning flashes brilliantly against a pitch-black sky, this can be our finest hour to "become blameless and pure, 'children of God, without fault in a crooked and depraved generation,' in which you shine like stars in the universe" (Phil. 2:15).

Are you a candidate for this company of people? Can we invite the Holy Spirit to do a little bit of spring cleaning so our witness both individually and corporately is authentic?

Keep in mind how central truthfulness is to the One who described Himself as “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Even His bitter enemies had to acknowledge, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity” (Mark 12:14).

Paul the apostle said, “In your teaching, show integrity” (Titus 2:7), and said regarding financial matters, “We are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

A passion for integrity burned in King David’s heart. He prayed, “May integrity and uprightness protect me” (Ps. 25:21). Even when he sinned, he repented, availing himself of the unfathomable mercy of God and recommitting himself to walk in integrity. He knew that God requires “truth in the inner parts” (Ps. 51:6).

Billy Graham, a sterling example of this character quality, challenges us: “In a society which too often places a great premium on cleverness, materialism and greed, our greatest need is moral integrity.”

A 6-Point Quiz on Integrity

1. Keeping my word. When I’ve said I’ll be there at 6 p.m., do I regularly arrive at 6:30–Eastern Charismatic Time?

If something “comes up,” do I often try to slip out of a costly promise? “Sure, I’ll be happy to help you move.” “Oops, the big game is on today—they won’t notice my absence.”

2. Fulfilling my duties. Do I volunteer to serve but not show up? “Put me down for children’s ministry this month.” “Anyone know where Kathy has been this past month?”

Do I put off paying bills until they’re overdue? Is it time to

file another extension for income tax because of procrastination?

3. Refusing to steal. Do I take pens, paper and other supplies from the office? "They get them in bulk. They don't miss them."

Do I make personal calls, play computer games or March Madness, or gamble on company time?

Do I ignore "no parking" signs or pull into handicap spaces?

Would I simply pocket an overlooked purchase or incorrect change? One fellow returned extra change to a bus driver. When he got off the bus, the driver remarked, "I did that on purpose. Someone told me you're a pastor, and I wanted to see if you practice what you preach."

Recently, I wrote an article where I failed to give proper credit to a friend. When somebody pointed this out, I repented and rectified the situation, feeling the pang. I even called my friend long-distance (who was gracious and releasing) as God used the situation to remind me of the importance of integrity in writing and speaking.

4. Telling the truth. Do I consider "white lies" insignificant? "I've got three more days of sick leave—I'll just say I wasn't feeling well."

"I'll never meet my deadline due to poor planning, but if I say things got backed up unexpectedly, I can get out of this one."

Do I frequently exaggerate? "Dozens came to the Lord!" But upon further reflection, it really was two or three.

If someone offends me and later asks me how I'm doing, do I hide my anger and speak untruthfully? "Oh no, there's nothing wrong!"

5. Assuming responsibility for my mistakes. Do I criticize the way someone adjusts me and usually discredit the person instead of responding to the correction?

Do I try to pin the blame on others? Consider Aaron's classic attempt to sidestep his sin of idolatry: "Then they gave me the gold and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" (Ex. 32:24).

6. Fleeing evil. Do I flirt with others or search the Internet even though I know the wrongness of the seductive snare?

Do I watch clearly objectionable programming in my home or expose myself to pornography? "I'm married—I can handle this. It enhances our romance. It helps my sex drive."

As a man: Do I pick up the latest *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue or Victoria's Secret catalog, rationalizing that I'm just checking out the latest fashions?

As a woman: Do I read "porno-romance" novels like *50 Shades of Grey*, with its 100 million copies sold as a salacious book celebrating sexual deviancy, sadomasochism and bondage as sexual play? Note: Barna Research states, "There is no difference between the percentage of Christians who have read this series and the percentage of all Americans who've read the books."

And we wonder, Where is the power of God in our midst?

Pastor and author Jack Hayford says, "The single most critical issue we must address in life is absolute integrity of heart before God." As we pray and work to see a spiritual awakening in America, may we all step up to the plate in these climactic hours of history.

Let's "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and ... run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb. 12:1). May this turn out to be the church's

finest hour!

Participating in the memorial service for my friend Steve Hill, with whom I served in the Brownsville Revival, I was freshly inspired by this general in the faith and man of integrity.

When the daughter of Eric Liddell, Olympic champion and missionary whose story inspired the Academy Award-winning movie *Chariots of Fire*, was asked what one word would most accurately described her father, she unhesitatingly answered, "Integrity."

What do others think when they think about you?

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