

Integrity for the Race



God wants to develop His character in us so we can persevere for the long haul. Yet how he does it is often anything but easy.

We are not born with integrity. Integrity is something that is developed in our lives through the choices we make every day.

Integrity
is an internal standard and conviction. It is having a sensitive
conscience before God. The more sensitive your conscience is,
the more
in tune with the Holy Spirit you will be. As you follow your
conscience,
you will develop integrity in your life. True character and
integrity
are revealed in the choices you make when no one else is
around.

Integrity
is very similar to the process a horse goes through to harness
its
tremendous strength and power. Integrity involves a process of
brokenness. But when we yield to this process, God's power
within us is
able to reach its fullest and highest potential.

Just
as it is vital that a rider builds a bond of trust between him
and his
horse to make the horse easier to train, so our trust for God
enables
Him to train us by His Spirit in the most productive and life-

giving

way. When we submit to God's dealings in our lives, He gently breaks the areas of our stubborn wills that need to come under submission, and He empowers us to reach our maximum potential. As areas of self are broken, God's power within us becomes harnessed to produce the greatest results through our lives.

The

key is having a heart that can endure the test of extreme pressure and time. Many people are born with God-given strengths and abilities. They are graced and gifted by God with certain capabilities. They start out strong; they are sprinters who appear to be the ones who will finish first.

But when the test

of time sets in and the pressure builds up from a long-distance race, their hearts burst. Their triumph ends in tragedy, taking many other people out in the process. The well-known healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman observed this and noted, "Whether life grinds a man down or polishes him depends on what he's made of."

Power for the Long Haul

God

doesn't want us just to start strong. He doesn't just want us to be champions at short races. He wants to create in us the ability

to run
fast and hard for the long haul. He wants to undergird His
power in our
lives so that it will carry us all the way through to the end.
Integrity
is what will keep your heart strong and enduring. Integrity is
what
will ultimately qualify you to be a thoroughbred champion.
It's what
will empower you to run your race and win.

We
have been created to be vessels of God's power. Developing a
life of
integrity is crucial to harnessing, maintaining and increasing
God's
power in our lives. When we only focus on the gifts God gives
us and
neglect the process of cultivating a life of integrity, we can
become
disqualified in the process. Integrity will be our keeping
grace!
Integrity will enable us to carry God's power for the long
haul in our
lives. Integrity is produced through brokenness.

Smith
Wigglesworth, a man powerfully used by God in the healing
ministry,
testified, "Before God could bring me to this place, He has
broken me a
thousand times."

Brokenness Brings Victory

Let's
look at how power is released through brokenness in a strategy
the Lord
gave to Gideon in Judges 7:16-22. In this portion of

Scripture, Gideon
divided 300 men into three companies. He put into their hands
trumpets
and empty pitchers with torches of fire inside them..

When
they got to the edge of the enemy's camp, they blew the
trumpets and
shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" (v. 18). When
they blew
the trumpets they also broke the pitchers in their hands,
releasing the
fire that was hidden inside.

In
their left hand they held the fire; in their right hand they
held the
trumpets. When the sound of the Lord was released through
their shout,
the Midianite army turned on itself and fled before Gideon and
his men!
The battle and victory were won.

It's
interesting that both hands were occupied with a torch and
trumpet.
Neither hand was free to hold a sword. Why? Because the sword
was in
God's hand..

The
principle here is simple. When the vessel is broken, the fire
is
released. Combined with the sound of the trumpet, the enemy is
sent into
confusion and defeated. When we are broken and release a sound
of
praise to God, our enemy is defeated. God's power is released

on our
behalf through this divine strategy.

True
brokenness releases the power of God in our lives. It enables
God to
fight our battles for us, so the enemy is completely defeated.
True
heart integrity comes as a result of godly brokenness.

Leading With Integrity

Two
men in the Bible clearly demonstrate the power of brokenness
and
integrity. Saul and David were both imperfect. Both made
mistakes. Both
sinned. One had his power taken from him. The other was able
to maintain
it in his life. One had integrity. The other did not. What was
the
difference?

Saul made a
lot of mistakes as king. He fell into insecurity, jealousy,
anger,
hatred, pride, rebellion, fear of man and witchcraft. He was
an
imperfect vessel. Yet when he was first called by God, he was
humble and
lowly in his own eyes. But pride soon took over his heart.

When
the prophet Samuel confronted his sin, Saul freely admitted it
(1 Sam.
15:30). But in his next breath he asks to be honored before
the people.
Saul was not truly broken or repentant before God. He had a
worldly

sorrow. He was sorry that he got caught. He was sorry for the consequences he now had to face.

But

he still cared more about his own reputation than he did about hurting

God's heart. His heart was not pure. It was not truly broken or

repentant. He was still seeking honor before men.

A

fellow minister whose ministry has substantially grown and who now

reaches the masses told me about how his first pastor publicly shared

from the pulpit that he was sorry for how he had been in the past. He

wanted people to know that he had changed and was not the same person

any more. Under his years of ministry there was a wake of wounded and

hurt people left on the sidelines, including my friend.

For

years his pastor had used control, fear and anger to manipulate the

people he was called to serve. After losing a lot of people from his

church he came to a place of brokenness. He wanted people publicly to

know he had changed.

Then

my friend received a private email from the pastor. In the letter he

wanted to know why he hadn't received more public recognition and honor

from my friend. This email came at the same time he was

publicly sharing
his supposed brokenness from the pulpit.

Like
Saul, this leader had a type of brokenness but still wanted
public
honor and recognition. It was not godly brokenness. We must be
careful
we don't deceive ourselves about the sorrow we feel.

Let's
look at David's brokenness. Like Saul, he made some bad
mistakes when
he was king. He committed murder and adultery. Yet God called
David a
man after His own heart. How can this be? How can a man who
commits such
horrible things be after God's heart? When David was
confronted for his
sin, we see his response in Psalm 51.

David
was not concerned about his reputation. He was concerned about
grieving
God's heart and losing God's presence in his life. His
relationship
with God was the most important thing to him. It was because
of his
godly brokenness that he did not lose the kingdom; nor did he
lose God's
power in his life.

He
sinned, but he received forgiveness through godly repentance.
Even
though he still faced consequences for his bad choices and
actions, he
didn't lose his relationship with God or his authority and

power. Godly
brokenness brought restoration in his life..

The
integrity produced in David's heart through his
testings—including both
the ones he passed and failed—caused God's power to be
harnessed,
maintained and sustained in his life, maintaining his
kingship.

David's
response meant everything to God. Even though he failed at
times, he
won in the end because he really had a heart after God. He
allowed God
to work integrity into his life.

Cultivating
a repentant heart is the essential key to living a life of
integrity. A
broken and contrite heart will fully turn to God in weakness
and
receive God's strength to change..

Integrity is an internal conviction that no one else can give
you. It has to come from within your own heart..

My
own personal goal in life is to be as transparent as possible
so that
the person I am in front of people is the same person I am in
private. I
can keep no secrets. My life is an open book..

If
I ever feel I have grieved God's heart in some way, I have to
get
before God and pray until I feel my heart is clean. This

constant sense
of repentance and brokenness before God keeps me in His
presence. It's
how I cultivate His presence and power in my life..

As
we cultivate a life of integrity through godly repentance and
brokenness, we will harness God's power in our lives for the
long haul,
enabling us to finish our race strong all the way to the
finish line.

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