

What Happens When Megachurch Pastors, Priests Betray Public Trust With Sexual Escapades

Dr. Alveda King, beloved niece of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., pulls no punches in speaking the truth in love. Finishing breakfast in our home a while ago, my wife and I were privileged to receive prophetic encouragement from her. Recently she wrote a stinging but necessary commentary confronting Omarosa Newman, the disgruntled and disloyal former aide to President Trump.

Alveda is an inspiration and rare jewel in an age when people are increasingly disloyal, dishonest and disrespectful. Hardly a day goes by when we're not reading of another case of what I call AIDS—Acquired Integrity Deficiency Syndrome.

Megachurch pastors and priests betray public trust with sexual escapades. Politicians are regularly exposed for involvement in securities fraud and unethical conduct. High-level military officials are exposed in deceitful and dishonorable conduct as scores of Americans engage in widespread cheating in every realm including taxes (costing the government over \$100 billion each year).

Surveying the epidemic proportions of deceitfulness permeating our society, a Gallup Poll concluded that the “United States is facing a moral and ethical crisis of the first dimension.”

The Greek philosopher Diogenes was supposed to have carried a lantern through the streets in mid-day, searching for an honest man. God must identify with his search. His eyes “move about on all the earth to strengthen the heart that is completely toward Him” (2).

Though our nation is increasingly short on integrity, God is issuing a clarion call for His people to live differently. He seeks those who are “blameless and harmless, sons of God, without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

Are you a candidate?

What is integrity?

Christian character is Jesus Christ on display in the life of the believer. Because others see who we are before hearing what we say, there must be authenticity in our lives. Integrity means that we are the same on the inside as on the outside; no discrepancy between our walk and our talk.

Bible teacher Charles Swindoll tells the story of a man who left his girlfriend in the car, went into a restaurant, and came out with a fried chicken box—containing all the restaurant’s earnings for the day. The owner had hidden the money in the box and inadvertently given it to the customer instead of giving him his chicken!

The man later returned with the box full of cash. An elated manager pleaded with him to stay until the local newspaper sent out a reporter to photograph and interview, in his words, “a man deserving of the title, ‘Mr. Integrity’.”

The fellow quickly declined.

“Why?” asked the puzzled manager.

Taking him aside, the “hero” confided in the manager, “Return the favor, ok? I’m married and the woman I’m with is not my wife.”

Why Is Integrity Important?

Jesus Christ told us that prior to His return, “many will ...

betray one another” and “because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matt. 24:10,12). In the last days, integrity and loyalty will be at a premium. Remember Jesus reproved people who did not practice what they preach (see).

Ancient Greeks used the word *hypokrites* to describe an actor in a play who wore a mask. When Jesus observed supposed followers saying one thing but doing another, He nailed them with the same title: “Hypocrites!”

This is critical because Christian lives are often the only Bible that unbelievers read. Paul reminded Titus of this when he said, “In doctrine [show] integrity ... so that the one who opposes you may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say about you” (Titus 2:7-8).

With regard to financial matters, which oftentimes bring reproach on Christianity, Paul and his apostolic team didn’t have an Evangelical Council on Financial Accountability, but they had a simple and effective policy: “providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

Job’s wife mocked him for his faithfulness under adversity, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Yet Job’s legendary patience stemmed from knowing that his lifestyle was blameless, “Until I die I will not put away my integrity from me” (Job 27:5).

Senior leader and author Jack Hayford says, “The single most critical issue we must address in life is absolutely integrity of heart before God.”

It’s Time to Respond

God promised that “only those things that cannot be shaken will remain” (b). We are living in the days where this predictive warning is being carried out. God promised He would

send His Son back for a Bride, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27b).

It would do us well to reflect prayerfully on three areas during this pivotal moment of church history.

- **Personal Integrity:**

Acknowledging complete dependence on the grace of God, we need to make sure we’re living authentically as Christians. Let’s be ruthless in rejecting all deceitfulness and anything that discredits the name of our Lord Jesus.

- **Marital Integrity:**

As America reels from skyrocketing divorce and cohabitation statistics, unswerving commitment to covenantal marriage has never been more critical. While Scripture makes allowance for cases of legitimate divorce and remarriage, God intends for marriages to last a lifetime, marked by complete faithfulness. Conflict is inevitable, but we are commanded to draw upon God’s grace and pastoral counsel to weather every storm.

- **Parental Integrity:**

Running counter to the disintegration of the family in society is the restoration of the family in the church. Building our families according to biblical principles; rejecting secular values regarding marriage and home and being committed in a genuine New Testament community with like-minded parents may bring society’s ridicule, but we’ll shine increasing brighter in this dark and confused world. God will use our families to provoke onlookers to consider what’s behind happy, respectful and obedient children in the context of stable family life.

Here’s the deal: The dark is getting darker, the light is getting brighter, and the difference between the two is

becoming more evident in America today. May we be a people of integrity in these days of decline so we shine as a “city on a hill” the way Jesus intended.