

WHAT IS INTEGRITY?

This is a topic that came up during one of my teaching sessions with a student, who would at times go off tangent from studies to discuss about the thoughts that linger in her mind from her interactions with her school-mates. To my student, integrity means being honest, keeping your word, your promise that was made to someone. While I applaud her sticking to her values instead of being swayed by the people around her, I wonder if this word ‘integrity’ even exists to the people around me. Many times, I encounter people who backed away from their word, citing difficulties when it is time to deliver or simply, dropping out of the radar, reappearing only when the matter had blown over or forgotten over time. Integrity does not seem to mean the same thing to everyone in an age where a man's word does not mean much. In fact, if a man's word is not in writing with 100 lawyers backing it, it does not mean anything anymore.

What does the bible say?

There are many positive examples of bible character living with integrity but let us take a look at a few.

Daniel was the captive prince who was first under the pagans Babylonians and then under the Persians. I am sure that his circumstances then were not any better than what we are facing now but *“Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. The administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally, these men said, ‘We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’”* (Daniel 6:3) Daniel was genuine, he was honest, he was righteous and he was consistent in his personal life and in his professional life.



Daniel prayed to God three times a day after being told not to worship god

David is another classic example. David's path to the throne was paved by his own integrity. His vibrant relationship with God fueled a humble right-

eousness that refused to endeavor to ascend to the throne before God's time. Instead, David waited on God, all along restraining his own men from making attempts on King Saul's life (See 1 Samuel 24, 26). David's integrity was rewarded by God, who cleared David's path to the throne.

Then we have **Job**, in 1:1, as blameless and upright, God-fearing and standing clear of evil. Because of his integrity, he becomes the subject of a trial (1:13). The entire book deals with a test of Job's integrity. In 1:8 God launches His challenge to Satan. The challenge issues in the test of Job's character. Not until 42:10 does the test end did God restored his fortunes.

What are the similarities we can draw from all the examples we can see in the bible?

- He transcends history.
- He utterly fulfills his calling. In other words, he lives in the absolute center of God's will. His only desire is that God's will be fulfilled.
- He has a right attitude.
- He will be envied and he will be hated by the world around him but he will never be embittered by it.
- He is condemned but if he is condemned, he is condemned for his righteousness for there's no other flaw.
- He is known for his virtue and integrity even by his enemies.
- He is a faithful citizen. He is subject to human laws until they would cause him to violate the laws of God.
- He is willing to face any consequence within the framework of God's will and leave the outcome to God.
- He will serve faithfully no matter what it costs him personally.
- He is delivered from all harm and he is preserved for every purpose within the will of God.
- He is a vehicle for God's glory.
- He will be avenged by God. His enemies will be dealt with by God, he doesn't have to deal with them himself.
- He is exalted by those around him as well as by the One above him.

Has the latest poll or news headline shaken your values? Remember Job, David or Daniel. A person of integrity does not allow a changing environment to change his standards. When God says, "I will do this," you would not find Him turning around and saying; *"Hey, I don't know what I was*

thinking...times have changed... I just don't feel the way I used to feel." Know that hypocrisy, dishonesty, duplicity, and corruption are the opposites of God's call. When we carry out these evil traits or do not keep our word, we are misrepresenting Christ's good name and defiling Him with our feeble excuses. Hypocrisy gives people a false impression of God and His people. Insincerity gives people a false impression of who we are called to be; it nullifies integrity.

Let us lead lives that are worthy. Our call is to do as we teach, to do as we say and to act as we teach others to act. The reason the Pharisees are equated with hypocrisy is that they were worshipping not the God of the Jews but a made-up god that suited their own thoughts, schemes and pride. They also covered truth and integrity with their hidden agendas and deceit (Psalm 103:1-14; Matt. 23; 1 Tim. 3:2-7; 1 Pet. 5:10)

Personal reflections

Thinking back, my standard of living as a woman with integrity is founded on my father, who based his values on the Word. Reticent as he may be, he would never be one to go back on his word or compromise on his values. Hence, in my growing years, I was fortunate to have him as a role



My beloved father drinking the ceremonial tea at my wedding

model to emulate. I do not claim that the walk is easy but having the fear of God in me, knowing that everything I do, I have to be accounted for, keeps me in line for most parts of my life.

Alicia Wong