

Integrity (*Part 1*)

Don't you find that you appreciate connecting and interacting with people who are sincere, trustworthy, honest, authentic, and who do what they say they will?—People who keep their commitments, who when you tell them something personal, keep it confidential? I do. I like befriending or working or doing business with such people because I know I can trust them. Of course, no one's perfect, and even trustworthy people slip up from time to time, but I am at peace when I'm around people who have good character, who have integrity, who live their lives based on principles that they hold to even when it's difficult.

Some time back, someone who was hoping to get hired for a repair job I needed told me that the work could be done one way, resulting in a finished product which would be safe, or another way that would look good but could eventually cause harm to someone. He said that if I wanted the finished product to be safe, he'd be happy to do the job. If not, I would need to find someone else. Business was slow, and he needed the work, but he wanted to make it clear that he had standards that he wouldn't compromise. I hired him on the spot. His integrity was more important to him than the job or the money. His integrity was not for sale.

Integrity means having a fixed moral foundation which is the touchstone for your actions. For believers, that touchstone is God's Word. When we know God's Word, we know what He has revealed about Himself, His attributes and nature, so we know what He has told us is important to Him, and we try to live our lives in a manner which reflects what He says is important. We believe in His values and we adopt them as our own inner values, and then we work to consistently sync our inner values with our outward words and actions.

We know from His Word that God values integrity: honesty, uprightness, keeping our word once we've given it, and trustworthiness. *O LORD, who shall sojourn in Your tent? Who shall dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. When our God-centered integrity becomes our touchstone, it guides our actions. The integrity of the upright will guide them...*¹

The Hebrew words in the Old Testament which are translated as *integrity* are also sometimes translated as *complete, upright, perfect, without blemish, blameless, whole, sincere*. We are all flawed humans, and no one is perfect, but as believers, we want to do our best to live in accordance with God's values, which results in living our lives with integrity. Of course, it's much easier said than done. We are all tempted to cut moral corners, to be less than honest, to base some of our decisions on what we think

is best for us instead of what's right. That's human nature, the result of our fallen state. As believers trying to live our faith, we're challenged to rise above our sinful nature, by God's grace.

We are called to live the godly values that we have taken on both privately and publicly. We should make the same decision or take the same action when no one is present as we would if people were observing us. Integrity is choosing to do right, not because someone is looking, but because we are committed to doing the right thing. It's an internal commitment rather than based on external circumstances. Right is right no matter who is looking, and wrong is wrong even if no one is watching.

Choosing integrity always pays off in the long run, and secret wrongdoing often has a way of catching up with us sooner or later in some way—whether in visible consequences or in taking a toll on our soul, connection with God, and relationships.

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roof.¹