

# Integrity

By

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Integrity is a word that signifies very little today. Many people do not even know what the word means, and others have never heard of the word. Some who know what it means do not think it is very significant one way or the other.

We expect public officials to lie, and we are not even surprised when they are charged with sexual misconduct. Also, we "look the other way" when our favorite entertainer engages in homosexuality or has children outside of marriage. We have come to "appreciate their work" while not condoning their lifestyle. We buy tickets to their movies, and then justify this by saying - "I don't approve of what he does but I love his acting." We are indicating we have placed no value on integrity.

Sadly, without realizing it, many Christians have in reality consigned integrity to the good old days of "yesteryear." We have made icons out of the ungodly and the unscrupulous. We are concluding, "Everyone has feet of clay." Which, is to say, "Everyone sins, so lighten up!" Consequently, we overlook in our lives, or in the lives of our loved ones, what should be denounced and abandoned. Soon we begin to believe that so long as we occasionally make an expression of religious conviction, by performing a few activities. Then what we otherwise do is unimportant. Also, so long as we "perform correctly," integrity is not all that important. Nothing could be further from the truth of God. God, of his people, demands integrity.

Many years ago David petitioned God to pass judgment on him. But David did not simply request that God judge only his accomplishments. He did not ask God to judge him as to how well he performed certain

religious deeds. David did not ask God just to judge him as to how correct he was in his belief system. Instead, he writes: "The LORD shall judge the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me." (Psa. 7:8). I read this and I feel a sense of fear. Whenever this passage is considered, it should make every Christian shudder. This verse strips away and hypocritical façade we might have erected, because this verse makes us realize that God looks deep inside our psyche and judges us based on our integrity.

Is God interested in what we do? He certainly is. The New Testament informs us: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Cor 5:10). Must we believe the right doctrine? Absolutely! "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (Jn 8:24). But we must never be lulled into some lethargic, mindless religion. A religion that is nothing more than "pushing the right buttons."

While we are to believe exactly what God said in the way he said it, and while we are to do what God says in the precise way God said it. We also must be men and women of integrity. This means that we must be moral - honest - and sincere in the life we profess to live.

When God judges our integrity, he will be considering our character. Integrity involves wholehearted sincerity and morality. To have integrity is to be wholehearted before God. It means that we are to have a "perfect" heart before God. It means we are to be like righteous Job. Of him, God said: "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8). Job was a man of the highest integrity wherever he was. He was an honest and upright man whether he was

worshiping God, or tending his flocks. This is what matters greatly to God.

Our integrity isn't measured by what others think of us. This is true regardless of who is doing the "thinking." That is, one may have integrity before God while his fellow man considers him to be of dubious character. Peter reminds us that it is possible to suffer as a Christian (1 Pet. 4:16). That is, if one is pure in the eyes of God he may be considered evil by the world, and mistreated.

Conversely, we may appear righteous before men, and be considered, by God, to be immoral and ungodly. The "real" us is not what we project only while worshiping God. While "at church" we might appear to be extremely pious. But are we wholehearted everywhere? How are we at play? How are we when we are alone? What do we watch on TV when no one else is around? How do we dress when we aren't with folks we attend church with? Do we study our bible even when we aren't teaching a class? Do we thank God in prayer for our daily bread when we don't have company? Do we have a filthy and controversial habit that we hide from people?

These questions go to the heart of the matter of integrity. These questions help define who we really are. If you want to know if you are a man or woman of integrity before God, then spend some time taking inventory of what you do when you are alone.

The next time you have a crisis of character, remember God will judge you "according to my integrity within me."