

Integrity

What is integrity? Integrity is defined as "consistency and sincerity, with no deception or pretense." There is no difference between what a person of integrity appears to be on the outside and what he is on the inside. Integrity means we live according to what we say we believe, according to the Bible. People of integrity keep their word, even when it hurts, are honest in all their dealings, personal and business, and practice morality in their sexual life, both in mind and body. They are not perfect because they sin and make mistakes, but they admit them; they do not cover them up, and they change their lives for the better. The Bible teaches us many wonderful benefits of being a person of integrity.

1. People of integrity are blessed by God.

The person who practices integrity experiences the favor of God--and His blessings. The psalmist writes of this person, *Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. Good will come to him who . . . conducts his affairs with justice. God's favor and blessings extend to this person's family as well. "A righteous man who walks in his integrity--how blessed are his sons after him"* (Psalm 112 & Proverbs 20 NASB).

Daniel, the Jewish captive who became a high government official in Babylon, embodied integrity. Try as they might, his enemies could find no "grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs. The only way these scheming men could undermine Daniel's influence with King Darius was to prey upon Daniel's devotion to God. They convinced Darius to issue an edict forbidding prayer to anyone but the king himself. Daniel's integrity would not let him worship anyone but the God of Israel. With regret, Darius ordered Daniel to be thrown to the lions. The next morning, when Darius discovered that God had

delivered Daniel, he worshiped the living God--and ordered all in his kingdom to do the same! Daniel's integrity brought him the blessing of the king's high regard. It lifted him to a position of honor and influence even as an exile in a foreign culture.

How to Grow in Integrity

1. Deal with the past. If you have been impressed by the Holy Spirit about an area of integrity, confess it to God and ask His forgiveness
2. Discover what the Bible says about integrity (justice or honesty).
3. Examine your daily walk with God. Are you reading the Bible and praying daily? Are you quick to repent, confess sin, and seek God's enabling grace to change direction?
4. Listen to your conscience. Often the Holy Spirit will speak to you in this way, making you uncomfortable about an action or an attitude. If you are unsure what your conscience is telling you, go back to Scripture to see what it says about the issue.
5. Seek godly counsel from someone who understands your circumstances and lives by God's values.
6. Obey what you know. Respond to, don't ignore, what God asks you to do through His Word.

2. People of integrity have the peace of a clear conscience.

When we practice integrity, we will experience a deep inner peace, knowing that we have not violated our conscience or hurt someone else's. We can be confident that when someone examines us, we will be proven innocent of wrongdoing. In contrast, when our lives lack moral wholeness, we live in constant peril of being "found out" as frauds. In Proverbs 10 we receive both a promise and a warning: *"He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out"* (NASB).

3. People of integrity gain the respect of others.

Men and women of integrity can be depended upon. People look to them with trust and respect. And by biblical standards, few things are more valuable than a good reputation. *A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold* (Proverbs 22).

4. People of integrity set a good example for the children and youth of our society and build for a bright future.

One of the greatest benefits of a life of integrity is the pattern it sets

for our children. We may think they do not know when we cheat on taxes, take advantage of a customer, lie to the boss, or misuse sick leave. But they see more than we realize. Our misdeeds, whenever they are discovered, will cause our children to lose respect for us, or worse, to pattern their own actions after ours.

Integrity is built over time as we diligently apply God's teachings to the choices we must make in life. The results, however, are worth the effort - a good conscience and a vibrant witness to the world around us.