

“A Great Leader Must Live A Life Of Integrity”

Scripture: Psalm 26:1-12

Introduction

In John Maxwell's book, "Becoming A Person Of Influence," pages 15-33, the author says many things about integrity. Let me mention several of these things as a means of introduction to our Bible study in this chapter. He says, "The need for integrity today is perhaps as great as it has ever been. And it is absolutely essential for anyone who desires to become a person of influence." Later in this chapter, Maxwell says that integrity is not determined by circumstances, integrity is not based upon credentials, and integrity is not to be confused with reputation. In giving a stronger difference between integrity and reputation, Maxwell quotes William Hersey Davis when he says:

"The circumstances amid which you live determine your reputation.....
the truth you believe determines your character...
Reputation is what you are supposed to be;
character is what you are....
Reputation is the photograph....
character is the face....
Reputation comes over one from without;
character grows up from within....
Reputation is what you have when you come to a new community....
character is what you have when you go away.
Your reputation is made in a moment;
your character is built in a lifetime...
Your reputation is learned in an hour....
your character does not come to light for a year....
Reputation grows like a mushroom;
character lasts like eternity....
Reputation makes you rich or makes you poor;
character makes you happy or makes you miserable...
Reputation is what men say about you on your tombstone;
character is what the angels say about you before the throne of God.

Folks, this is a profound paragraph about character! It should cause each of us to stop and take inventory of our character and integrity at this very moment. Maxwell included in this first chapter of his book some questions that we need to ponder if we are going to genuinely measure our integrity. Let me give you these questions and see where you and I measure up in our integrity.

1. How well do I treat people from whom I can gain nothing?
2. Am I transparent with others?
3. Do I role-play based on the person or persons' I'm with?
4. Am I the same person when I'm in the spotlight as I am when I'm alone?
5. Do I quickly admit wrongdoing without being pressed to do so?
6. Do I put other people ahead of my personal agenda?
 7. Do I have the unchanging standard for moral decisions, or do circumstances determine my choice?
 8. Do I make difficult decisions, even when they have a personal cost attached to them?
 9. When I have something to say about people, do I talk to them or about them?

10. Am I accountable to at least one other person for what I think, say, and do?

Before moving on to the scripture study for this lesson, I want to mention just a few more things from John Maxwell's book. On page 28 of his book, he says, "If you want to become someone who can positively influence other people, you need to develop the following qualities of integrity and live them out every day:

1. You must model consistency of character.
2. You must employ honest communication.
3. You must value transparency.
4. You must exemplify humility.
5. You must fulfill your promises.
6. You must embrace an attitude of service.
7. You must encourage two-way participation with the people you influence.

Now that we have taken a look at some very helpful words from John Maxwell's book, let us quickly turn to the Word of God to get the greatest truths and principles we can acquire about integrity. Our study for the remainder of this first session has to do with David and his determination to be a man of integrity in every area of his life. Let's study each individual verse and see what God is trying to show us about our own lives and personal integrity.

I. DAVID STATED THAT HIS LIFE WAS OPEN FOR INSPECTION. vs. 1-2

A. David asked for God to inspect his sincerity. v. 1a

David began a prayer to God by asking God to judge him completely because he was not ashamed or embarrassed at the way he had been living in integrity. In other words, David was a genuine man, and at that moment in his life, he had nothing to hide but felt with all of his heart that he was not a hypocrite, but was real.

This should speak to our hearts as well. Are we real, or are we phonies? Are we wearing a mask, or have we taken the facade off of our lives? Men and women of integrity have nothing to hide and welcome the inspection of God Almighty!

B. David asked for God to inspect his surety. v. 1b

In the latter part of verse one, David asked God to go ahead and inspect his confidence in God Himself. This reveals David's transparency about his heart feelings for God. There was no doubt or lack of surety in David's life at this moment. Why? Because David had proven the faithfulness of God over and over, and now, he knew that once again as long as his heart was clean before God, he could maintain a great confidence in God and His ability to work on David's heart. In other words, David had great faith in the promises of God, and he had no doubt that God would continue to be faithful to him regardless of what he had to face in his life.

Now, I have a question for you? "Are you such a man of integrity that you have the full assurance in your heart that regardless of what comes your way, you are sure that you will handle things well because you believe you can sincerely count on God being there to help you through your time of difficulty? I trust that you can indeed trust God because He has proven His faithfulness to you in the past, and He will be there in the present!

C. David also asked for God to inspect his smell. v. 2a

This sounds rather amusing in one way, but the word reins in this verse refers to the abdominal organs such as the kidneys. The Jews of the first century felt strongly that the seat of emotions or feelings was in the abdominal organs. So, what David was saying was, "Lord, I believe that I am so clean with you and that I walk in my integrity so much that I even smell like a genuine Christian and I welcome you to inspect my smell. Beloved, do you have the fragrance of a real Christian with integrity? I trust that you do, but if today, you can't say yes to this question, right now would be the time to get things right with God so that you can sincerely glean what God has for you during this lesson from God's Word.

D. David further asked God to inspect His sensitivity. v. 2b

In the last part of this verse, David asked God to inspect carefully to see if his heart was right. In other words, David felt so good about his personal integrity and the compassion of his heart for others, that he was truly unafraid for God to search deeply into his heart to see if he had the right feelings for others. This was really saying a lot about David's authenticity when you stop to realize how many things via for the attention of a man's heart and desires. David was truly a transparent man because he was a man of honesty and real integrity. Will you join me in opening up your heart and life for our wonderful all-knowing God to search us and to see if we are genuine! If we have nothing to hide, we will gladly ask Him to turn on His radiant search light. But, if we have phoniness and hypocrisy in our lives, we will not offer ourselves gladly for His inspection. Yet, we must never forget that He is omniscient and knows everything about us any way. Brother or sister, do you have heart trouble? God knows!

**II. SECONDLY, DAVID STATED THAT HIS LIFE WAS OPERATED WITH INTEGRITY.
vs. 3-6**

Our second point in this Bible study is that since David had a life that was open for God's inspection at any moment, he also had a life that was operated day by day upon the principles of his integrity. Now, let's take a look at two of these principles that were demonstrated in David's life and learn from them so that we too can live by the same two principles.

A. A life operated with integrity will have the proper vision. v. 3a

This is a great point! David says in the first part of verse three that because of his life of integrity, he has the assurance that God only desires good for David whatever he may face. David's integrity had produced such an assurance in his life, that he was living a life magnifying the love and goodness of God. David was saying that as long as his life was one of integrity, he could be filled with with positive thoughts which centered his attention on the blessings of God's goodness throughout each day. David knew that the guilt produced by an unclean life would result in an unclear conscience which would draw his attention to negative thoughts and negative actions. So often when we don't have a clear conscience before God, we end up focusing our thinking upon all of the negative things going on around us, and we are inclined to blame others, blame God, and make excuses for our bad thoughts and actions.

Now I stop to ask you, "What kind of vision do you have"? Are you prone to see the good blessings of God, or are you inclined to see the negative things and miss the blessings of a good and righteous God? I must confess that often times, I am very guilty of the latter!

B. A life operated with integrity will have the proper values. vs. 3b-6

Over the past few years, I have spent much of my time speaking in scores of churches trying to present the work and ministry of GIMI. During these speaking engagements, I have spent hours talking about having the proper and correct value system. I have done this because I believe that the greatest evidence of really being saved is that we will have a good and proper value system which comes to us at the moment of salvation.

Do you remember what happened to the first converts just after the day of Pentecost and shortly thereafter? The Bible tells us in the Book of Acts that just as soon as they got genuinely saved, they sold everything they had and distributed it to those who were poor and in deep need. Now bear in mind that God did not tell them to sell everything and give the money away, but just as soon as they got saved, their lives were transformed and instead of looking inward to what they could keep or hoard, they immediately began looking outward to see whom they could help. This outward vision was the result of heart transformation on the inside where their value system became just like Jesus'. Why was this true? Because Jesus' Holy Spirit came to indwell everyone of the newly saved people. His indwelling presence gave them the same standards and desires that Jesus had. So, the question is, "What kind of value system do you have?" Let's take a look at these next few verses to see if we have the same value system that David had which was the result of his life of integrity.

1. First, David had the right standard for living. v. 3b

In this part of verse three, David said that he walked and conducted his life according to the truth of God. Friends, this is a great standard to live by! Do you live by this standard? You see, a person of integrity will always stand for God's truth and will not change or vary his stand regardless of how impressive it would be to others, or what benefits changing his standards might bring to him. In other words, political correctness will never be up for consideration when a man sticks by the right standard, the truth of God's Word!

2. Secondly, David had the right posture or position. v. 4a

In the first part of verse four, we discover that David took a firm stand upon where he would be found sitting. David said that he absolutely would not be found sitting or resting in the company of vain persons. These are the people who are always chasing the winds of the world. David had made a clear commitment to making sure that he would never hang out with the unrighteous people who would tear him down. At this time in David's life, he was not waiting for the unexpected moment of temptation to catch him off guard, but because of his determination to live a life of integrity, he had made up his mind what his response would be long before the moment of temptation came. Yet, later on in his life, David let down his guard and fell morally because he lost his resolution to remain a man of integrity and holiness. This is just a reminder for us that we must never let down our guard because times of weakness will come our way.

3. Thirdly, David had decided that his steps must be right. v. 4b

In the second half of verse four, David stated that he would not walk with those who were hypocritical and phony. He knew that his integrity demanded that he walk in the right direction and not in the direction of the vain wind chasers. He knew what the prophet Amos stated in **Amos chapter three, verse three**, when he said, "**Can two walk together except they be agreed?**" David realized that if you are going to walk with someone, you have to be going in their direction hand in hand. And, there is just no way that a man of integrity can walk in the same way of the foolish hypocrite. The question is, "Which way are you walking?" Are you trying to live a life of integrity while walking with the wrong people. A real leader will only walk in the steps of the Son of God! If you are going in the wrong direction today, please, please, turn around and walk the path of personal integrity.

4. Fourthly, because of his integrity, David lived a life of separation. v. 5

When I say separation, I am not talking about isolation. It is impossible to live in a world of sinners without having contact with them. But Jesus said, "...in the world, but not of the world." The bottom line was that David was so sold out to God that he did not feel comfortable hanging out with the wicked. Actually, he developed a disdain and hatred for their lifestyles. And, so it is with every genuine person of integrity. Therefore, if you are starting down the pathway of the wicked, stop! Because if you go too far, the next step is to stop and enjoy their company. Men and women of integrity don't isolate themselves from sinners, but they do separate themselves from the wicked so that they can retain their lives of integrity and their testimonies of righteousness.

I think this would be a good place for me to say emphatically that there are some today who preach and try to practice secondary separation in all of their connections with others. I personally believe that this is the epitome of arrogance, and it is the pinnacle of Phariseism. More people are turned off to the Gospel message by Pharisees probably than any other thing. I hope you are not a Pharisee! Remember, "...in the world, but not of the world." Separation and not isolation!

5. Lastly, because of his integrity, David made sure that his sacrificial worship was correct. v. 6

The reference that David makes in this verse pertains to a person going up to the tabernacle to worship and before they proceed to go inside, they had to wash their hands outside so that they could be clean. Of course, this was a spiritually symbolic practice, but it reminds us that we dare not approach the altar of God for worship unless we are men and women of integrity with clean hearts and clear consciences. In other words, our integrity affects every area of lives ; our conduct, our attitudes,

our daily walk, and even our worship before God. So, lives operated with

integrity are lives that are genuine and sincere in every area. Now, I have a very strong question for each of you, "Is your worship negatively affected by your lack of sincerity or hypocrisy?" If so, you need to do something about this today!

III. THIRDLY, DAVID STATED THAT HIS LIFE OF INTEGRITY WAS OCCUPIED WITH WITH INSPIRATION. vs. 7-8

We have already discussed earlier in this chapter that leadership is in fact influence over other people and their lives. In verses seven and eight of this chapter, David revealed to us that he had discovered the means whereby he could have a positive influence upon other people and the way they live. This way was to live a life of complete integrity and transparency which inspired

others to follow his example. Let us take a look at these two short verses and find how David

affected other lives in such a positive way.

A. Others are inspired by our voices of thanksgiving. v. 7a

In the first part of verse seven, David said that he wanted to live every day of his life with a positive declaration of thanksgiving for the goodness of God. Because of his integrity, he could do this because he had a clean heart and a clear conscience. Therefore, David went about praising and thanking God for His goodness. Thus, others were influenced to

follow his example and to praise the Lord as well. If David would not have walked in a life of integrity, he could not have had a positive attitude, and he would not have demonstrated a life of thanksgiving. His negativity would have reproduced negative behavior in others.

B. Others are also inspired by our voices of testimony about God. v. 7b

Have you ever tried to give a positive testimony about the goodness of God when you were discouraged and feeling down? Well, I have, and it is absolutely impossible. What David learned is what we need to learn today. He learned that if he did not live his life with integrity, he would have no positive testimony for others to imitate. But, because his heart was clean and his conscience clear, he could give verbal testimony to the goodness of God to him and his people. Therefore, David maintained a good testimony and others were inspired by his example.

Let me ask you right now to look introspectively into your present life and see if you have a positive testimony for others to imitate. Are you exemplifying a life of integrity which is producing positive fruit, or are you demonstrating a life of negativity which is discouraging others around you. Believe me when I say that it is much easier to have an effective and inspirational testimony if your heart is clean and your conscience clear. Of course, these are the roots of a life of integrity!

C. Others are also inspired by our value of the tabernacle of God. v. 8a

Let me ask you a question, "How much does your church mean to you and your family?" Obviously, the tabernacle meant much to David and he was ready to tell God and others that he loved the house of God. When I stop to ponder just how much the house of God meant to David, I can't help but think that going to the house of God would not be a pleasure if one's life is filled with sin. Why? Because every time that a sinner walks into the presence of a Holy God, he is smitten with conviction and misery over his sin. Therefore, I am very much inclined to believe that David's love for God's house reveals the sincerity of his desire to walk in integrity and righteousness. And, we too like David, should have a tremendous love for God's house if we are walking and living in integrity. No person will have to admonish us to attend the house of God if we are living a sincere and righteous life. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit will direct us to the house where God meets with His people, and the life of integrity will automatically draw one to the fellowship of the saints. So, leaders with integrity will love the house of God and the fellowship with other believers.

D. Others are inspired by our vitality about the treasure of God. v. 8b

Let me again ask you another question! "What is the greatest thing you treasure in your relationship with God?" According to this verse, David treasured the presence of God in his life and in God's house more precious than any other thing. This should be our desire as well. We, too, should treasure God's presence and His anointing more than anything else in the world. For it is when we experience His Divine presence that we feel the most at home and the most comfortable. Why? Because like a child that longs to be in the lap of it's mother, so does the child of God enjoy being close to his heavenly Father. And, He will never seem closer than when He reveals His revealed glory to us when we gather to worship Him. Men and women of integrity are people that position themselves to experience the sweet presence of Jesus Christ in their lives and in their churches. And, without integrity, the person who desires to be a leader will never have the presence, the power, and the wisdom of a Holy God. And, these are an absolute must to a great leader!

**IV. LASTLY, DAVID STATED THAT HIS LIFE WAS OBJECTIFIED WITH INSULATION.
vs. 9-12**

As we now come to the last point in our study of this passage of scripture, we discover that David somewhat repeats himself but with a greater passion than before. David desires to walk resolutely

in integrity, and he passionately begs God to keep him away from evil and those who commit evil. Once again, we need to reiterate that David was not desiring to be isolated from sinners, but he was asking God to keep him insulated from the evil ones and their effectiveness toward him. Let's take a look at these last verses in this passage and learn some valuable lessons to help us move on with our quest to walk in integrity.

A. David stated that our lives should be insulated from evil associations. v. 9

In this verse, David picks up the theme he has already mentioned and he asked God to keep him away from the influence of wicked sinners and those who would lead him to even shed blood. Later of course, we discover that David forsook his own counsel and he ended up committing adultery and even murder. If only, David would have followed his own advice, his story would have ended differently. Yet, what a lesson we have from David's prayer and desire. When will we ever learn that in order to keep lives of integrity, we must stay away from those who are evil and those who have no scruples about hurting and even killing others to get their own ways. So, let's make our object and goal to stay away from those who will have an evil influence upon us.

B. David stated that our lives should be insulated from evil manipulation. v. 10

It is obvious that the world is filled with evil men and women who desire to use us in a bad way; some that even try to manipulate us and bribe us with money. This is so very true in Africa where there is so much corruption among leaders. David said that in order for him to retain his integrity, he must stay away from those who would use mischief and bribes to influence him to do wrong. This is a tremendous lesson for us here in Africa! Could I please ask you, **“What is your price?” “How much would it take for you to sell out to evil people?”** In a third world country where money is so scarce, it is always a serious temptation to those who have so little to sell their virtue and integrity to those who only want position, power, and influence, for the price of a little money. **Just remember that Judas Iscariot's price was thirty pieces of silver! What is your price to sell out the Savior? What will it take to get you to lie, deceive, exaggerate the truth, embellish a story, or do some other sin for the price of a bribe?** If you can be bought, you are not a person of integrity and you are certainly not going to be a great leader! This is true here in Africa, and it is true anywhere in the world! And, even if you can keep your deception covered for a while, God will one day expose it for what it really is!

C. David next stated that our lives should be insulated from evil imitation. v. 11

This verse is a very difficult verse to interpret. Yet, I believe that what David is saying is that in a wicked world of evil all around him, he desires to walk even in a more righteous way so that he will not imitate the evil ones that he comes in contact with. He pleads with God to help him by showing him mercy to stay pure and free from evil influence. And, I personally believe this should be our prayer as well. In a world filled with wickedness, we must have the mercy and strength of God to keep our selves insulated from this terrible world. So, David is acknowledging his weakness, and so should we. We are truly nothing apart from God's grace and mercy, but yet there is hope for us if we will depend upon Him!

D. David stated finally that our lives should be insulated from evil habitation. v. 12

We now come to the last verse in this great Psalm. David makes a firm commitment that he was going to stand in the right place with steadfastness. And, he knew that if he did this, others would be looking at him from all around. Therefore, he was determined that he would keep a testimony of integrity for others to witness. With all of his resolve, he wanted to be upright in his conduct and behavior so that he could be a good leader and influence others with a positive example. This should be our goal as well. We must make

sure that in our house, in our church, and in our community that we retain and maintain a life of integrity if we are going to be great leaders. There is no room for hypocrisy and cover up in the life of a great Christian leader!

Conclusion

We now come to the end of this first session of our study. I trust that God has really dealt with your hearts about becoming people of integrity if you are going to be great leaders. There are several other principles that we are going to cover in our future lessons, but unless we make a firm commitment to integrity, there is not much reason for moving ahead with the other areas of our lives. Why? Because without integrity, we can't conscientiously apply the other principles we will learn about in this study. Therefore, I really admonish you to stop and check out your integrity! Are you honest, genuine, and transparent? If not, why don't you stop and work on that right now. It starts with confession and moves on to personal prayer begging God for help like David prayed! May God help us all to be leaders of integrity!