

The Bulwark

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October 30, 2022

LESSONS LEARNED: INTEGRITY

For those who grew up in the 1950's, 1960's and the early part of the 1970's there was the joy of gathering together for neighborhood games. Un-supervised, spontaneous games of basketball, baseball and such like. These were opportunities to not only exercise and interact, but also times of subtle learning. Inasmuch as there were no umpires, referees or adults present, it was up to each one to be honest and call "safe", "out" or in basketball admit when a "foul" was made. There was an "unwritten law" of being honest. In short integrity was being learned and practiced each and every day. Fast forward to 2022, it is rare when children are seen playing in such a fashion. So many opportunities that life lessons are being lost along with the sheer enjoyment of simply being a kid.



Integrity is defined as being, "firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values." In a broader sense incorruptibility. Solomon notes in Proverbs chapter ten and verse nine, *"He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out."* Throughout the Scriptures the virtue of integrity is extolled.

David, wrote in Psalms twenty-six and verse eleven the following. *"But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me."* A firm decision verbalized, that no matter what, the right thing will be done. In the twenty-fifth psalm David asserted, *"Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for Thee."* (v.21) Integrity demands that it comes from deep within the individual. It is more than character. People use character and integrity interchangeably. While they are closely related they do differ. Notice the following explanation of the difference between the two. "Integrity is character that truly comes from the heart. It is character that is resolute. It is character that cannot be changed or polluted. Integrity is more likely to produce character than character is to produce integrity." As children of God we want to embrace exactly what it is that David brought forth. A firm resolve to do the right thing.

Solomon built on what his father David had written as seen in Proverbs. *"He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out."* (10:9) *"The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the falseness of the treacherous will destroy them."* (11:3) *"Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man? A righteous man who walks in his integrity-how blessed are his sons after him."* (20:6-7)

Daniel was a man of the utmost of integrity, which was demonstrated when he was a young man, *"he made up his mind"* and something in which he did not waver throughout his lifetime (take some time and read over Daniel chapters one and two, as well as the sixth). Integrity, a firm resolve to do the right thing, even if no one sees. Consider the victory that Daniel found when his integrity was put to the test and led to him being cast into the lion's den against the backdrop of Psalms forty-one and verses eleven and twelve. *"By this I know that Thou are pleased with me, because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me. As for me, Thou dost uphold my integrity, and Thou dost set me on Thy presence forever."*

Paul in his second letter to the brethren in Corinth noted in chapter eight and verse twenty-one, *"for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."* This seems to tie back to what he had written to them in his first epistle, when he was appealing to them to resolve issues among themselves without going to law against one another. *"Why not rather be wronged? What not rather be defrauded?"* (6:7) There may be times when integrity calls upon such on the part of the individual.

Jesus in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount sums it all up in what is referred to as "The Golden Rule". *"Therefore however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."* (Matthew 7:12) *"Finally, brethren whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise let your mind dwell on these things."* (Galatians 4:8) (wbe)