Living A Life of Integrity
Proverbs 10:9

The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time in America a man’s word was his bond. It was a time when things such as integrity, honor, decency and trustworthiness were held in the highest regard.

Whatever happened to integrity in America?

Just last year (2009) we were rocked with one scandal after another.

-Illinois Governor, Rod Blagojevich was indicted on a host of corruption charges including attempting to sell the Illinois State Senate seat vacated by President Obama.

-North Carolina Senator, John Edward’s aspirations to become President of the United States came crashing down when it was revealed he had an adulterous relationship with one of his campaign staff workers. And later it was discovered he had even fathered a child by this woman. And all this was happening while his wife was battling cancer.

-South Carolina Governor, Mark Sanford, vanished for five days in June to visit his Argentinean mistress.
- Threatened by an extortion scheme by a CBS Producer, later night talk show host, David Letterman admitted on nation wide TV he had had several affairs with staff workers on his show.

- Financier Bernie Madoff, scammed billions of dollars from investors in an elaborate Ponzi scheme and was sentenced to 150 years in the Butner Federal Correctional Center just outside Raleigh, NC.

- World famous golfer, Tiger Woods, has seen his whole life crumble before his very eyes after it was revealed he has had at least fourteen extra-marital affairs since he was married just five years ago.

_The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out!

In their book, *The Day America Told The Truth*, James Peterson and Peter Kim, reveal the shocking truth about just how low the moral integrity of Americans has digressed in recent years.

One of the questions Peterson and Kim asked in a survey for their book was: "What would you be willing to do for $10 Million?"

.......25% of those polled said they would be willing to abandon their family.

.......25% said they would be willing to forsake their religious faith.

.......23% said they would be willing to become a prostitute for one week.

.......7% said they would be willing to kill a stranger.

.......And 3% said they would be willing to put their own children up for adoption.
These shocking revelations just underscore what the apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:10....... 

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

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A Definition of Integrity

If you were to look up the word “integrity” in the dictionary you would find definitions like:

“moral soundness” “honesty” “uprightness” “without deceit or corruption.”

But for those of us who are Christians, integrity means much more:

For the Christian, integrity means, “To live my life by godly standards, godly principles and godly values, no matter where I am, who I am with or what my circumstances may be.”

The Bible Has A Great Deal to Say About Integrity

The Bible has a great deal to say about integrity. Let’s look at some of those verses together shall we?

Psalm 1:1-6

Psalm 25:21 May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in You.
Proverbs 10:9  (the scripture I read at the outset of the message)  The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.

Proverbs 11:3  The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.  (duplicity means to be “dishonest, deceptive or misleading)

Proverbs 13:6  Righteousness guards a man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Proverbs 21:3  To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.  (that means God is not nearly as interested in our religious rituals as He is in the reality and authenticity of our character.)

As we move over into the New Testament we are going to see that JESUS was recognized as a man of great integrity even by his worst enemies.

Matthew 22:15,16  Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Him in His words.  They sent their disciples to Him along with the Herodians.  “Teacher,” they said, “we know you are a man of integrity and that You teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.”

And let’s look at one more scripture over in the Book of Titus.

Titus 2:7,8  In everything set them an example by doing what is good.  In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.
All of these scriptures are reminding you and me of a very important truth and that is: OUTWARD APPEARANCES and OUTWARD IMPRESSIONS don’t mean anything to GOD, but inward INTEGRITY, CHARACTER and AUTHENTICITY do!

Can I be trusted when no one else is looking?

Can I be trusted to not steal from my employer?

Can I be trusted to honor my marriage vows when I’m out of town on a business trip?

Can I be trusted when a family member or friend shares confidential information with me?

Can I be trusted to surf past the sexual immorality on the internet when no one else is around?

Can I be trusted to stay away from the immoral movie channels on my cable or satellite TV?

Can I be trusted to honor Christ no matter where I am .......no matter who I am with......and no matter what my circumstances may be?

Am I a man or woman of godly integrity?

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This is the question I wish to address in a series of messages I have entitled: “Living A Life of Integrity.”

In this series of messages we are going to look at the life of one of the most honorable men in the Bible and that is JOSEPH.

In this series we are going to look at FIVE DIFFERENT WAYS Joseph’s integrity was tested:

The PRIDE Test

The PURITY Test

The PRISON Test

The PROSPERITY Test

And the PARDON Test

In each one of these tests JOSEPH modeled for you and me the kind of godly integrity God desires in all of us.

In this series we will discover that these tests of integrity were not just exclusive to the life of Joseph but that you and I have our integrity tested in these same areas, not once, but many times over the course of our lifetime.

God has a wonderful plan for you and me. And how you and I respond to these five tests of our integrity will determine whether we succeed or fail.

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To lay the foundation for the rest of this series, I would like to spend just a few minutes of our remaining time this morning refreshing your memory about this honorable man named Joseph.

A Brief History on The Life of Joseph

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of Genesis.

Read: Genesis 30:22-24

Who was JOSEPH?

Joseph was the 11th of twelve sons of JACOB. Remember Jacob is the man who wound up with two sisters as wives, one was Leah the other was Rachel.

While Jacob favored Rachel over Leah, Rachel was unable to have any children for a long period of time. And so Leah bore Jacob’s first ten sons. But then God mercifully opened Rachel’s barren womb and she bore a son. JOSEPH was that son.

It is also important to note that JOSEPH was the grandson of ISAAC and the great-grandson of ABRAHAM.

While the Bible gives us very little information about the early years of Joseph’s life, thirteen chapters of Genesis are devoted to Joseph’s life from age 17 until the time of his death.

There are two men in the Old Testament about which nothing negative is said. One of those is JOSEPH; the other is DANIEL.
This doesn’t mean JOSEPH and DANIEL were perfect or without sin, but that GOD wanted to show all of us how a person can live an honorable life regardless of heredity, environment or circumstances. In the lives of both of these men we learn that it is possible to live a godly life in the midst of terrible ungodliness.

Throughout his whole life JOSEPH faced many hardships and was often the victim of unfairness.

- He was misunderstood by his family......and yet Joseph kept his integrity.

- He was sold into slavery by his own brothers.....and yet he kept his integrity.

- He was exiled in a foreign country far from the comforts of his own home......and yet he kept his integrity.

- He was wrongly accused by Potiphar’s wife......and yet he kept his integrity.

- He was thrown into prison.......and yet he kept his integrity.

Joseph and Jesus

In many ways we can see a parallel between the life of JOSEPH and the life of JESUS.

The story of Joseph begins in Genesis 37 with Joseph faithfully tending his father’s sheep...........likewise JESUS is referred to as the GOOD SHEPHERD in the Gospel of John.
In Genesis 37:3 we learn that Joseph was the favored son of Jacob. Likewise Jesus is God’s only begotten Son in whom He was well-pleased.

In Joseph’s dream he saw the sun, the moon and the stars bowing before him. Likewise Jesus humbled Himself and became a man and the scriptures tell us that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10,11 NIV)

As the story of Joseph’s life progresses he is sold by his ten brothers for 20 pieces of silver. Jesus was also betrayed by one of his twelve brothers, his disciples, for 30 pieces of silver.

The Midianites then took Joseph to Egypt. Matthew chapter two tells us Jesus was taken to Egypt by his parents when Herod ordered the slaughter of all the Israelite males two years old and under living in Bethlehem and the surrounding vicinity.

In Joseph we see a Christ-likeness that serves as a model for all of us to follow in our own lives.

Over the next five Lord’s days, Lord willing, we will follow Joseph through these various tests and learn how he kept his godly integrity in tact through it all.

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CONCLUSION

At 2:20 in the morning on April 15, 1912, the TITANIC sank in the Atlantic Ocean miles from the coast of Newfoundland.

For many decades it was believed the TITANIC sank because of a huge gaping hole ripped in the hull after striking an iceberg.

It was not until the 1980’s that underwater archeologists discovered the truth. Much to their surprise there was not a huge gaping whole in the TITANIC’S hull. Instead they found six relatively narrow slits in SIX of the SIXTEEN watertight compartments that kept the Titanic afloat.

When you look at the tragic stories of people such as TIGER WOODS, BERNIE MADOFF, SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS and GOVERNOR MIKE SANFORD, we must realize they sank their lives and their careers because of a series of small decisions they made over a long period of time.

-A compromise here, a compromise there.
-A bad choice here, a bad choice there.

And little by little their lives “took on water” and they eventually sank!

It has been said, “It takes a lifetime to build character.
It takes only five minutes to destroy it.”

I want to encourage you to be here for each and every message in this series as we learn the importance of LIVING A LIFE OF INTEGRITY!