

Integrity

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What is Integrity?

When I begin preparation for a class, I always go to my good friend Webster. He defines integrity as “behavior in accordance with a strict code of morals and values; honesty, entirety, the quality of wholeness; something without mark or stain; soundness.” I then looked up the word “whole.” It means “not broken, damaged, defective; intact, containing all the elements or parts; complete; not divided up; a complete organization of parts; unity, entirety.”

After reading Webster, I realized why my class had been changed from the very first one to the last one. Integrity includes all of the things my sisters were going to share about and a lot more. God certainly does good work.

Want Integrity?—go to the Source

A person of integrity daily lives the life that God calls all of us to live. Obviously, none of us can do this on our own. The Holy Spirit working within us is the only way this can be accomplished. When the Holy Spirit is working with you, it comforts, strengthens, enlightens, guides, and directs you. It reveals the mysteries of the Kingdom to you and bears witness to you of the living Christ. It compels you action, warns you away from danger and temptation. It also helps you to develop all the fruits of the Spirit in your life. It can lift your prayer life to a higher level and enable you to pray in accordance with the will of God. In times of fear it calms you. The Holy Spirit is what brings joy to your heart and peace to your soul. Wow, what a deal! All these things God wants to do for you if you daily ask Him into your life.

Living a life of integrity is a choice—it’s a lifestyle. Having to make choices that aren’t always popular with society as we know it, is getting harder the closer we get to the reality of God’s Kingdom here on earth. The fact is that Satan is making a more pronounced statement here on the earth than ever before in history. We see this in our daily lives from our daily drive to work where road rage becomes a daily factor to the food that we eat, whether it has been laden with harmful chemicals. We are told to bless our food, no matter where we are. A while back I took my 5 year old granddaughter to McDonald’s to play. Before she played we ate lunch. Gabrielle always likes to say the blessing; so we held hands, bowed our heads and she blessed the food. As we were eating, an elderly couple came up to us and thanked us for praying over our food. They found it very refreshing to see a child automatically bless the food. We never know how we are going to touch someone’s life, do we?

I Corinthians 2:12 says “*Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*” In this day and age it is even more important that we daily look for God’s hand in our lives. We can see God’s love all around us in the beauty of His nature. I saw a deer

in my yard the other day and automatically thanked God for placing him there. It's the little things in life that add up to wonderful life experiences.

We need to openly live our lives as God desires us to. At camps I share with the kids that everyone can be a witness, all you have to do is smile at people. Another good way to witness is to wear Christian theme shirts. You need to always be watchful, though, that you are living the kind of life your shirt is expressing.

God has given us a promise in Deuteronomy 5:29 ***“Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!”*** God does not want us to be fearful, whether for ourselves or our families. Being fearful is a lack of faith—people of integrity live a life of living faith. I know for me it hasn't always been easy to give my children to God for His protection. When our youngest daughter was a rebellious teenager, I spent many nights up crying out to Him for His protection over her. One night as I was pleading with Him, He spoke to my heart and told me to give her back to Him—that she was His before He gave her to me and that He loved her more than I could ever comprehend loving her. He had to tell me this three times before I was able to place her in His loving arms. It was amazing, though, because from that point on, slowly but surely, her life started turning around. Oh, it wasn't without more heartache on her part as well as mine, but she finally turned back to God.

Have you ever noticed there are some days when it's harder to be faithful than others? September 11th was one of those days for me. As I sat in horror watching the people jump from those towers, I became overwhelmed. I got up and went into the dining room and cried out to the Lord to give me peace. I went over to my hutch and started turning my daily calendars over to the 11th. I was hoping God would give me a message in one of them as He had done before. When I flipped over the last one, it had the scripture from Deuteronomy 31:6 on it. I went to my Inspired Version and looked it up. This was the message God gave me on that horrible day, ***“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”*** How plainer could He have made it for me? God is always in control, and we need to constantly remember that.

Wanted: a peculiar people

The scriptures give us different examples of people of integrity. The other day I was sitting out on my sun porch feeling kind of down and overwhelmed all at the same time. I flipped open my scriptures to the story of Job. That was definitely the right time to read that story. After I read all he went through, I was praising my God for the concerns upon my heart. I think I need to do a lot of growing spiritually before I could be tested the way he was and remain true to my Heavenly Father.

God calls us to be a light unto the world. Just like Job, our light should never go out even in times of discouragement, disappointment, or in the darkest trials. Philippians 4:13 says, ***“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*** Sisters, we

cannot do this on our own. Take my word for it, for I've tried to. When we look at all our trials as opportunities for our faith to grow, then we truly can lift up our heads and truthfully praise Him. If we look at them as if they happen to punish us, we will never grow. It's like the glass half full or half empty. When I shared this analogy with my husband, Jerry, he said we shouldn't want either one, that we should desire for our cup to run over as then our joy will splash onto those around us. God wants us to be joyful, and it's not likely to happen if we are always thinking negative thoughts. We need to concentrate on the good characteristics our children and husbands have, not on the negative. Think about how blessed we are to live in the home of the free, we could live in China. We need to thank God that we've got a job as there are many that don't. We need to quit carrying grudges and stop being overly sensitive. Right the wrongs done to you or you've done to someone else and go on. I'm an avid believer that people who carry their feelings on their sleeves are going to have a hard time being part of the Kingdom. Let's learn to live and forgive.

I'm a person for how to's. II Nephi 14:4 tells us explicitly how to accomplish being a person of integrity. "***Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.***" Imagine that—a how-to book. How often do we pick it up to find out what God has to tell us? I have a hard time disciplining myself to achieve good study habits. I've come to the conclusion that the only way that I'm going to accomplish this is if I have other people that I have to be accountable to. For instance, a study group. For a while we had a study group going at my house every week. It was great while it lasted, but one by one they dropped out. This group wasn't just helpful for encouraging me to study, but it was a good source of fellowship. Also, many of the prayers that we offered on behalf of each other were answered.

All of us have a desire to see Zion become a reality. Once I asked my cabin of junior high girls at a retreat what they thought of when they thought about Zion. One little girl said she looked forward to Jesus performing her marriage ceremony. I was overwhelmed at the simplicity of her statement but it made me realize even more that Jesus Christ, Himself, will be among us preaching and teaching and performing the holy ordinances. Wow, I don't know about you, but I truly desire to be here when that happens. But, how can any of us be part of Zion? David asked a similar question in Psalm 15:1 "***Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill of Zion?***" God answered "***He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness*** [in other words, people of integrity], ***and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord; sweareth not falsely to hurt any man, and changeth not.***" (verses 2-4)

A person of integrity will be known in the gates (in a positive way). Proverbs 22:1 says "***A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches...***" A good example of this was my grandmother, Grace Smith. She and her husband, Joseph, and their 8 children gathered to Missouri from Texas in the 30's. They had purchased a farm in southern

Missouri that had been advertised in the Herald. Upon arriving there, they found the ground to be nothing but rocks and the house was so shabby you could put your hands through the siding. She contacted President Fred M. Smith and told him of the situation. Grandma was known to President Smith because she had written articles for the Saint's Herald. He immediately told her to bring her family to Independence, and he would personally make sure they had a place to live and jobs. President Smith made Grandma his housekeeper. Grandma never had an unkind word to say about anyone. She lived a very hard life with many trials placed in her way, but she never lost faith in her Heavenly Father. Grandma Smith was truly known at the gates as a true "Saint."

We are called to be a "peculiar people." I Peter 2:9 says "***But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.***" Again, I remind you to let YOUR light shine. Surround yourself with the kind of input that uplifts you, expands your mind and settles your spirit. Do not read, watch or listen to things that bring you down. This doesn't mean you are to become a hermit, but try to keep the negative input to a minimum. Don't be around people who drain you—negative, whiny individuals. If there is a need that you can fulfill for them, do it, but 24/7 negative is unhealthy, and it will drain you emotionally as well as physically. A very dear friend of mine is struggling with her 3rd bout of cancer, and the chemotherapy is making her very ill; but every time I see her, she has a smile on her face and cracks a joke. Even in the harshest of times, she keeps a positive attitude. Should we do less?

I read something the other day that I really liked. "SMILE! Life is too short to go around carrying the burdens of the world upon your shoulders. Give them to God—he's up all night anyway." Amen! We all need to learn to do this.

In summing up, I just want to point out that God knows all of our shortcomings, sometimes better than we do. If you feel like you fall short of being a person of integrity, then start with just one thing in your life that you need to change. Change that one thing and then go on to the next one, etc. Remember, though, you can't do it without God. Every morning place His armor upon you; look for His hand at work in your life; and remember to constantly praise Him.

I know we can all accomplish this. Remember, we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. Let's begin today and make this the first day of the rest of our lives and dedicate it to the Lord!