

## Integrity – the most influential attribute

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language-Fourth Edition defines Integrity as “Steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code.” Integrity is an essential ingredient of every area of our life. Our integrity decides who we are and what other’s perception of us is. It reveals others we are really true or phony. Our integrity affects our relationship with God and influences people who are in touch with us. The life that is not built on strong ethical and moral principles is not stable. The reputations and esteems gained in the society are shattered when the principles of integrity are violated. God is more interested in integrity than anything else in us.

Integrity is an integral part of every aspect of life. Whether it is business or politics, industry or institution, religion or society, integrity is the most influential attribute. Look at the words of Alan K. Simpson, a Senator from Wyoming, “If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters.” The importance of integrity is more evident and more tangible when it is absent. Newspapers are full of stories of people who failed to demonstrate integrity in their dealings with others, and how they damage others' wellbeing and livelihoods. Apart from individuals, there are also industries that are perceived to lack integrity. Names of industries and companies that people could trust no more are listed and made available to public when the customers or consumers had been given low priority compared to the high priority of making a profit. If integrity is so critical for an individual who represents organizations, how much more it is important for those who represent heavenly kingdom in this earth. A good Christian leader is also a good servant. Servant leadership requires setting aside personal gain, making sacrifices, and putting the needs of others first. Another characteristic of Christian leadership is humility. A leader with integrity can be described as a leader who is honest, consistent, faithful, and trustworthy.

Every human being in this world plays different roles at different stages of lifecycle. At some point of time we may realize that we are no more playing a single role, we are in multiple roles. For example, a child of God who is holding a secular job is an employee of the company. At home he is expected to be a husband and father for his children. He may be a student in the university as he does his degree part time. He may be a minister of God in the local church. There are times he is expected to play all these roles together. So much is expected out of an individual who is willing to take challenges. He could have easily messed up unless he is well aware of the responsibilities of each of his role, the moral and ethical codes, and standards within which he has to operate. [1] In each of these roles, the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of humanness and the interrelation between them should have been understood and handled accordingly as they together make the whole personhood: body, mind, feelings and relationships

At every lifecycle stage, a new relationship with the world is made, but the real focus is on us. We define and redefine ourselves over again and again in this world. The normal tendency of a human is to resist change. We get accommodated to what we are and what we have been doing. When a change is expected in us as we traverse through the lifecycle, we attempt to change the world around us rather than changing ourselves. But

the reality is that we need change in our body, mind, feelings and relationships in order to address the pressing need of life. For example, an instructor at school after returning home expects his children to behave as students in the class room. This resistance and delay to change and switch between roles create chaos at times. Integrity is much beyond the ability to switch roles and our willingness to change. Integrity is how best one can perform consistently within the ethical and moral boundaries to meet the expectations of the surroundings we are dealing with.

Bible is a source of integrity. What does it mean to be a person of integrity? *Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways (who distorts right and wrong), though he be rich.* Proverbs 28:6. David realized the importance of walking in integrity and he pleaded the Lord in Psalm 25:21 *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.* Bible teaches us integrity in our daily walk. Bible gives examples of great leaders who walked in integrity. The objective of this article is to present the Biblical expectations of integrity in various roles associated with different life cycle stages. The scope of this article is limited to the key roles at home and in ministry as the life at home is a true representation of the life in ministry.

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## Integrity of a parent

Parents play a major role in the lives of their children. It is the integrity of parents to observe Biblical norms decides who they are going to be. Following these standards and applying them in their lives as well as in the lives of their children in an appropriate time will yield much benefit. More than that, God makes parents accountable for their faithfulness in developing a Christ centered lives in their children. I heard many parents telling that I failed to discipline my child when he was young, now it is too late for me to correct him. I also heard many cursing their parents for not counseling them for their immature decisions. In whatever way we look at it, majority of the responsibility lies with parents for providing a Christ centered future for children. It is worthwhile to take a look at few parents from Bible and analyze how they stood in integrity to be proved as faithful before the Lord on their call to be a parent.

### Absolute obedience:

*Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.*

Abraham obeyed the Lord by doing according to what was said. When parents obey the Lord, they are in a position to teach obedience to their children. Children observe their parents quietly the way they interact with their grandparents and reflect the same. Children learn to respect elders the way their parents treat elders.

- Do we live in obedience to the Lord?
- Do our children obey us?
- Are we able to discipline our children?

### Parents of vision:

*Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

By faith, Moses' parents saw the child as special and found proper for the time in which they lived. It may not appear so if we look with our human eyes. If we look at our children through our eyes of faith, we will see what God has already planned for them.

- Are we able to see the future of our children in the hands of God irrespective of what it is now?
- Do we provide all that is required for the vision to come true?

### Rod of correction:

*Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*

*Proverbs 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.*

*Proverbs 23:14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*

*Proverbs 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*

These are few important scriptures where Bible teaches us on how to correct the child when he is young. The modern age believes that using a rod for correction is a kind of harassment. Even a harsh word spoken to correct someone is considered as harassment. But Bible says that the rod of correction drives away foolishness from the heart of child. God expects us to discipline our children. It is better to encourage children to make self corrections, but if they fail to do so, a rebuke, word of correction or even pounding with a rod helps not to repeat the same mistake again. Parents should be cautious to do so in the appropriate age, if not later correction may be impossible.

A note of caution to fathers is in Ephesians 6:4 and in Colossians 3:21 *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger,... but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Father has to use his judgmental skills to know when, for what reasons and how to implement correction. Any correction, if done properly, will prevent them turning into rebellious children.

- Are we able to correct our children?
- When word of correction doesn't work, do we have the authority or freedom to correct them with a rod of correction?

**A mother of faith:**

*2 Timothy 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

When Paul writes to Timothy, he testifies the unfeigned faith that he could see in Timothy imparted from his mother Eunice, originally dwelt in Lois his grandmother. As a parent of young Timothy, his mother could impart such a great faith in him. This is a challenge for young parents. It is easy to remain in faith when we are old like Lois. But Eunice was not that old. Still could have enjoyed the pleasures of the world neglecting faith. But she knew that it is the right time to impart faith in young Timothy. That made her to walk in truth and live by faith.

- Are you a father or mother of faith?
- Are you able to impart the faith into your children?
- What do we do for the spiritual nourishment of our children?

## Integrity of a young child

**Keeping your ways clean:**

*Psalms 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

We live in a world where clean and holy have no value. People are accustomed to the sins of the world so much that they don't see them as sins any more. The practices once considered as sins are no more considered as sins. They all hide behind the blanket called "culture". The definition of sin is diluted. Every good thing that comes out of the world is already polluted with a mix of sin. Young people struggle to identify what is right and what is wrong. Word of God is a true measure that never got changed. Keeping the Word of God in our heart certainly helps us to identify the good and bad, and live a holy life that pleases God.

- Is your life clean before God and man?
- Are your desires clean before God?
- What is in your heart, the Word or the world?

### Respect elders and honor your parents:

*1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

There are two different cultures in this world. One respects the elders (senior citizens), such as grandmothers and grandfathers. It changes the entire way of addressing to an elder. It consists of a more formalized language that's indicative of respect. People give up their seats in the subway when an elder is present. Children bow and never call them out by saying "hey!" They definitely don't curse or utter rude words in front of them. They don't talk over them or talk to them as if they are in beneath. The other culture seems to have no respect. They are sometimes viewed as a nuisance because they are slow drivers on the road. It seems they are forgotten and turned away by society. Children yell, scream, and curse in front of their grandparents. King Solomon prophetically spoke about this generation in *Proverbs 30:11 There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.*

But Bible clearly says that submit yourselves unto the elder. God commanded through Moses, "*Honor thy father and thy mother*" *Exodus 20:12*. Solomon reiterates that saying, *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother, Proverbs 1:8*. Throughout the history, Bible displays blessings passed on to the younger generation through the older generation.

- Do you respect elders?
- What is your attitude towards elders and those who are in need?
- Do you really honor your father and mother?

### Remember your creator:

*Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;*

There is a lot going on in the mind of a youth. Seldom have they got time concentrate in any specific aspect of life. The writer of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon urges youth to remember their creator when they are young. He also gives a warning saying that the days are going to come when you will become so frail that you will not be able to accomplish anything for God.

[2] Charles Spurgeon illustrated the value of remembering the Creator in youth. Without a word he took two candles, one short and one longer, then he lighted them both and watched them burn down. Both gave off the same light as they burned, but it was not long before the shorter candle burned out. The longer one continued to give light on and on. He explained that it was that way when youth coming to God. Both old and young can radiate light, but youth can do so much longer, if for no other reason than the number of years that they will normally live.

- Do you remember your creator?

- Do you take pleasure in God or in the world?

### Give the days of your youth for God:

*Ezekiel 16:60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.*

Our God is a covenant keeping God. He says that He will remember His covenant in the days of your youth and establish an everlasting covenant. Youth is a beautiful span of life. God expects you to give it off for Him. It is a privilege to serve the Lord when you are young. You could see integrity building up in your life if you preserve your youth for the work of God.

- Have you been sold out for God?
- Whom do you belong to?

### Integrity of a spouse

Bible clearly teaches us on how to conduct ourselves when we are united through the covenant of marriage. Bible does not recognize any relationship between opposite sex that is not bound by the covenant of marriage.

#### For husbands:

##### Rule over the wife/Being a head of the wife:

*Genesis 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

*Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

In both Old and New Testament, husband is expected to rule over the wife and to be the head of wife. It doesn't talk about the authority; rather it talks about the responsibility of husband in the family.

##### Love your wife:

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

*Ephesians 5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*

*Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them*

It simply means that wife expects to be loved by her husband and husband expects wife to recognize his role as a head of the family.

##### Honor your wife:

*1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

As wife expects to be loved and husband expects to be recognized of the responsibility, God brings in a balancing factor that says, "Honor your wife". Husband should not take advantage of her nature of being loved; instead, honor her as she is weak. It simply says

that wife is not just a pet to be loved and ruled over; she has to be honored by considering her opinion, advice, etc.

### Rejoice with the wife of thy youth:

*Proverbs 5:18 Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.*

The author of the book of Proverbs talks about maintaining the integrity of marriage. It is not just loving her and honoring her; it is the privilege of rejoicing with her within the boundaries, not turning the attention to another woman such that the marriage bed is kept undefiled, Hebrews 13:4.

### For wives:

#### Submit to your own husband:

*Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord*  
*1 Peter 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;*  
 Wives surrender completely to the desires of your husband. By doing so, you win him not by your words but by your conduct and attitude. This is an important aspect of Christian marriage. Many families are separated as the wives are not open to this truth.

#### Respect your husband:

*Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

As the wife expects love and affection from her husband, husband expects to be respected. Women are considered to be equal in status in the society with men. But the truth is that equality cannot be applied to marriage. Marriage has to be governed by the laws of scripture. This is another potential cause of broken families in the current age.

#### Have no dominion over man:

*1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*

*1 Corinthians 14:34-35: 34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church*

This is in line with what is said above. The crux of the matter is that at any point of time woman is not allowed to take control over man either in marriage or in church or in ministry except when her authority demands so. If this is violated, it will result in destruction of the marriage or the ministry.

#### Older women teach the younger women:

*Titus 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,*

An older woman teaching younger women is Biblical. But the caution to be applied is that the teaching has to be constructive. It cannot result in destruction and separation of families and the body of Christ.

### Integrity in five fold ministry

Why ministries fail and ministers fall are the common questions asked among Christians today. A fall of a minister leads to the failure of the ministry. The simple answer is that the ministers fail to stay in the level of integrity according to the Biblical standards. The immediate question is that, who can escape from this fall? The answer is those who know the ethical and moral boundaries of a minister as defined in the Bible and strive to live accordingly. It is important that ministers and ministries stay in integrity. [3]As Billy Graham poignantly noted some years ago, in reference to the moral problems of certain American televangelists, thousands of aircraft land safely at the world's airports every day - but the only time the media will take an interest is when one crashes. It is true in the case of fall of a minister. God expects us not to fall, but to stand as an example for integrity. When Paul writes to Titus in *Titus 2:7,8 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*

[4] In the Old Testament, men and women of God proved themselves blameless in the sight of God. Below is a list of such great ministers who were recognized as blameless

1. Noah was a person of integrity in a world with no integrity.

*Genesis 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations and Noah walked with God.*

2. For Abraham to walk with God, he must be a person of integrity.

*Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

3. For the priests to minister before God, they must be a people of integrity.

*Deuteronomy 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.*

4. When David praised God, he spoke of the importance of integrity to God.

*2 Samuel 22:24 I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.*

5. The book of Job verifies the importance of integrity to God.

*Job 1:1, 1:8, 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

In the New Testament, there are five different types of ministries according to *Ephesians 4:11 and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* Any kind of minister or ministry we see today can be classified under any one or many of these five offices. Each one of these ministries has its own requirements, eligibilities and responsibilities for the ministers to effectively function as designed by God. Bible clearly states that unless any man is called of God into this ministry, he cannot take this honor unto himself. *Hebrews 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* But in these last days there are many false ministers who call themselves as ministers of God and attach



themselves with any of these five ministries God has established. Bible calls them as false prophets, false teachers and false apostles. Many of them started their ministry with a great call of God and over a period of time they slipped away from that call as they couldn't guard their integrity.

### Integrity of a Pastor:

The ministry of a pastor is similar to the one of shepherd who feeds his flocks in the pasture. It can also be compared to the husbandman who takes care of his vineyard. God used Jeremiah to warn pastors who were not ministering according to the heart of God.

*Jeremiah 12:10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.*

*Jeremiah 23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.* God expects pastors to minister according to the heart of God with compassion. They need to wait upon the Lord to receive from Him and to feed the church. *Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

**The integrity of a pastor is very important as the moment he fails to guard his integrity, people are scattered and the church is destroyed.**

### Integrity of a Prophet:

Prophecy is one of the greatest gifts of God. 1 Corinthians 14:1 considers prophecy superior to love and spiritual gifts. God warns through Jeremiah the prophets who prophecy on their own. *Jeremiah 6:14, Jeremiah 8:11 They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.*

God calls them as liars as they were neither sent by God nor instructed by God. *Jeremiah 14:14: Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.*

God has given a warning to the New Testament church saying that many false prophets have gone into the world they may even deny the Lord and still prophesy thus taking the world towards destruction. *2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

**The integrity of a prophet is very important as it tells whether he is genuine or fake. The moment he fails to guard his integrity, he fails to listen from God and starts prophesying on his own depending on the circumstances to please man.**

### Integrity of an Evangelist:

Evangelists are in general more popular through media such as television, radio and internet. They travel to countries and unknown places, then face challenges and afflictions. That's why when Paul writes to Timothy in *2 Timothy 4:5* *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.* God expects evangelists to accomplish what they were commissioned with as their success is related to the second coming of the Lord, *Matthew 24:14* *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

**The integrity of an evangelist is important as he leads many souls into the saving knowledge of Christ. The moment he fails to guard his integrity, the souls led by him get disappointed and they may backslide.**

### Integrity of a Teacher:

Bible teachers are great scholars who study the Bible with historical background and in comparison with the documented evidence of other religions. The major trap to the Bible teachers is that people are looking for teaching that pleases their ears. Not many would listen to the doctrines and instructions of the Bible. Bible teachers fall from their integrity once they start teaching according to man's desire in order to gain popularity and money. *2 Timothy 4:3-4: For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

**The integrity of a teacher is very important as the moment he fails to guard his integrity, his teachings deviate from the truth and those who still teach the truth will display himself as not a doer of what was said. People will no longer listen to such false teachers.**

### Integrity of an Apostle:

Apostolic ministry is highly regarded ministry as compared to other ministries. It involves experience, maturity, deep rooting in faith and acceptance by other ministers. Apostles spend most of their time with God to know His heart for the ministry, country and people and come out with new projects and initiatives. Jesus' disciples, who were called as apostles said, *we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, Acts 6:4.*

As in any other ministry, people try to convert themselves as apostles. *2 Corinthians 11:13* *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.* It is important to stay in integrity otherwise they are called none other than false apostles.

**The integrity of an apostle is very important as an apostle is the one who raises and ordains ministers, pioneers ministries and counsels ministers at the national and international level. Failure to guard his integrity is disgrace to God's kingdom and will lead to major destruction and fall of ministers and ministries.**

## Integrity of a minister - Timothy

Before we get to know what Paul wrote to Timothy regarding integrity, it will be better to know the association between them. [5] St. Timothy was Paul's companion in many of his journeying. His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, are mentioned as eminent for their piety (II Timothy 1:5). We know nothing of his father but that he was a Greek (Acts 16:1). He is first brought into notice at the time of Paul's second visit to Lystra (Acts 16:2), where he probably resided, and where it seems he was converted during Paul's first visit to that place (I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 3:11). The apostle having formed a high opinion of his "own son in the faith," arranged that he should become his companion (Acts 16:3), and took and circumcised him, so that he might conciliate the Jews. He was designated to the office of an evangelist (1 Tim. 4:14), and went with Paul in his journey through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia; also to Troas and Philippi and Berea (Acts 17:14). Thence he followed Paul to Athens, and was sent by him with Silas on a mission to Thessaloniki (Acts 17:15; I Thessalonians 3:2). We next find him at Corinth (I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:1) with Paul. He passes now out of sight for a few years, and is again noticed as being with Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:22), whence he is sent on a mission into Macedonia. He accompanied Paul afterwards into Asia (Acts 20:4), where he was with him for some time. When the apostle was a prisoner at Rome, Timothy joined him (Philemon 1:1), where it appears he also suffered imprisonment (Hebrews 13:23). During Paul's second imprisonment he wrote to Timothy, asking him to rejoin him as soon as possible, and to bring with him certain things which he had left at Troas, his cloak and parchments (II Timothy 4:13).

According to tradition, Paul ordained Timothy Bishop of Ephesus in AD 65, where he served for 15 years. In 80, Timothy tried to halt a pagan procession of idols, ceremonies, and songs. In response to his preaching of the Gospel, the angry pagans beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death. In the 4th century, his relics were transferred to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. The Church also numbers Timothy among the 70 apostles sent out by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel.

Paul instructs Timothy in the first and second Epistles on how to conduct himself as a minister of God. Here are the five major areas where a minister God should maintain integrity. The reason for most of the distressing news we hear about the fall of ministers will be any one of these five areas where one would have failed to guard integrity.

### Integrity in faith:

*I Timothy 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

There are forces around the world acting upon the believers and ministers with a tremendous potential to drag them away from the faith. These may include false doctrines, cults and doctrine of devil, etc. An excellent minister avoids the influence of unholy teaching. If it is nothing to do with faith, refuse them strongly, excuse yourself from the environment, decline, avoid and shun away from the teaching that is profane and radically separate from what is holy. This is very critical as listening to these false

teaching will not only influence your faith but even others while ministering to them. Be sure not to allow any of these reaching the people you minister to. Even if someone heeds to these doctrines, be sure to correct him and bring him back to faith.

- Are you able to identify false doctrines?
- Do you listen to false teachings?
- Do you allow them to mix up while you are teaching?

### Integrity in family life:

*1 Timothy 3:1-5* <sup>1</sup>This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. <sup>2</sup>A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; <sup>3</sup>Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; <sup>4</sup>One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; <sup>5</sup>For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?

World is not reading their Bibles, they are reading us. People often observe our life behind the scene than when we are in the podium. Our spiritual level is seen not in what we preach, but in how we behave ourselves at our home. Unless we witness the Lord at home, it is ineffective to witness Him at the street. The true measure of our integrity is how we conduct ourselves when no one else is watching us. Paul writes to Timothy saying that anyone who would like to be a leader in the church should have the above attributes. Failing to meet these will result in poor integrity.

- Do we fail any of these attributes listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-5?
- Are we able to run our family within these boundaries?

### Integrity in dealing with money:

*1 Timothy 6:10* For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

This verse is not only applicable to the worldly people who live in wealth; it is very much applicable to those who are in ministry. We need money for the ministry. As the ministry grows, the money flow increases. Many divert their attention to the increasing finance and lose focus in the ministry. This is considered as love of money. Other areas such as mixing of the ministry money with the personal money and not maintaining proper account, using church credit card for personal use need immediate attention. Not to receive money directly from individuals, but encourage them to deal with proper person who handles finances. [6] According to Danny Akin, Go the extra mile to be blameless. Furthermore, realize people who love you will want to be a blessing to you. Develop an attitude of gratitude, but never one of entitlement. Ministers do not deserve nor should they expect special treatment. The Lord Jesus will properly reward them when they stand before him (1 Peter 5:1-4). If that reward is not sufficient, I would suggest you get out of the ministry and do so quickly.

These are some of the areas we need to exercise caution as we deal with money in order to maintain our integrity in ministry.

- Do you use ministry money for personal use?

- Do you have proper bookkeeping?
- Does the increase in money flow ever divert your attention from ministry?

### Integrity in fleeing away from youthful lust:

*II Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

Youthful lust is another potential tool the enemy uses effectively to ensnare the ministers of God. Knowing this, Paul advises young Timothy not to stay there but to flee from that place. Lust doesn't discriminate young or old, tall or short, black or white. All that it looks for is opportunity. As a minister of God you should be aware of the danger and take immediate measure to maintain your integrity.

Following suggestions give an outline of how to handle the situation while dealing with opposite sex.

1. Never try to counsel opposite sex. Even if you, do it with your spouse.
  2. Never dig deep into personal matters
  3. Never try to impress upon
  4. Never leave any note for follow-up. Even if it is prayer or counsel, leave it to the local people or elders of the same sex and you move on.
  5. Neither try to create sympathy within you, nor allow sympathy to be seen in you.
  6. Always remember you are doing it for the Glory of God, not to entice anyone.
  7. More than everything it is not just you, your ministry and your integrity – God is more particular about that.
- What is your confidence level with respect to the above aspects?
  - What need to be done to maintain or improve your integrity?

### Integrity in dealing with others:

*II Timothy 2:24-25 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*

Most of the ministers of God fail in this area as it does not appear to have enough potential. But the truth is that very casually ministers slip into this and fail miserably. A servant spirit with a passion to serve others will chase out this enemy of integrity. [6] God calls you to be shepherds of his sheep. You are not called to be CEOs or drill sergeants. You are not called to be ranchers or dictators. You are certainly not called to be spiritual superstars or celebrities.

A word of caution is in order at this point. The greater your natural gifts and abilities, the more susceptible you are to entrapment by these seducing sirens of the world. Men, and women, with charismatic personalities and a commanding presence can operate too easily in the power of the flesh and not the Spirit. They can be deceived into believing their own press and the accolades showered on them by adoring followers. If they are not careful, they can begin to believe they have the right to operate by a different standard. This is the way of foolishness. This is the way that leads to the damage, and potential destruction, of a ministry.

There is no place in the church for spiritual superstars who love to have the preeminence. Preeminence is rightfully reserved for only one and his name is Jesus. Do not lose sight of the fact that you are sinners saved by grace. Do not lose sight of who really matters, it is Jesus. Do not lose sight of how you serve; it is with integrity as you imitate Christ in every sphere of your lives.

- What kind of approach we have towards people?
- What spirit do we operate with - servant spirit or a dictator spirit?
- Do we realize the fact that but by the blood of Jesus we are still sinners?

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