



Sermon Series: Character Counts

To be used with Session 6: Integrity

Sermon Title Possibilities: “Keep the Same Energy!”

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:8-17

Connection To Unit Theme: This sermon is designed to complement the Bible study “The Integrity.” This has been quite an exhilarating journey through the idea of character and God’s expectations for our conduct as believers. As we bring this series of messages to a close, there is no more fitting a topic to engage than Integrity. In many ways, integrity and character are one in the same. One cannot have one without the other. Invite your congregation to consider what they believe integrity to be and why it is so important. Moreover, challenge yourselves to evaluate how you’ve stewarded your integrity and what areas can be improved. As we will discover today, God expects us to always be mindful of our integrity. The public eye is not the only location in which integrity matters.

Introduction: The world is full of talented individuals. Whether they are musicians, athletes, actors, or even ministers, talent shows up in a variety of ways. One common misconception that people have is that talent automatically equals integrity. An even more dangerous belief is that lacking integrity is okay as long as there’s talent. As life has a way of teaching us, talent is never a substitute for integrity. Talent ought to accompany integrity, not replace it. As we engage this portion of the apostle Peter’s letter to believers, we will discover arguably one of the most thorough cases for Godly integrity in the entire Bible. The gist of this is we should put just as much effort and intentionality in to living with integrity as we do everything else.

1 Peter 3:8-12 –Choose Integrity!

One thing that all of us eventually learn is that our conduct is a choice. Despite the circumstances around us, we ultimately control our actions and reactions and are therefore responsible for them. Unless there’s an unfortunate situation in which one is not in control of their faculties, we always have a choice in how we show up. Some choose to be friendly, while others choose to be nasty. Some choose to be honest, while others choose to be dishonest. Some choose to be welcoming, while others choose to be unwelcoming. The point is that we make choices every day when it comes to ours. behavior and just as people choose to be mean, we can also choose to be kind.

God speaks through Peter in this text to encourage his listeners to choose integrity. And to not just choose it publicly, but privately. Verses 8-12 contain both wise instruction from Peter, as

well as the words of Jesus. Several admirable qualities such as, humility, compassion, sympathy, and foreignness. Part of us choosing integrity is embodying those traits. I'm a strong believer in the phrase, "No one is required to be nice." However, I remind us that no one is required to be mean either. We always have a choice to do things the right way. As Bishop Dale C. Bronner once warned, "You're born looking like your mom and your daddy, but when you die, you look just like your decisions. Live well."

1 Peter 3:13-15 –It Won't Always Be Easy but Keep Going!

The Old Testament story of Job has been heralded for centuries as the finest example of faithfulness to God in the midst of undeserved suffering. While he was not without sin, Job was a man of perfect integrity, meaning he was mature and made a continual effort to do the right thing. Despite being such an upright man, God allowed Satan attack Job's life and inflict difficulties that many of us couldn't even imagine. While it was not easy for him to handle, Job remained faithful to God and refused to give up. While he easily could have, he never abandoned his devotion to God, because he knew that this difficult season would not last forever. Peter takes this same idea in this text and warns his audience that suffering is a reality of life. Problems are going to come, and sometimes they stay for a while. Peter isn't shy about that reality either, because many people live under the illusion that life will never get hard for them. However, none of us are exempt from the struggle of life. They will eventually find our address. Yet as Peter asserts "But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed..." (v.14). In other words, despite the difficulties that will come, God is still with us, and those difficulties don't erase the fact that we are immensely blessed. Suffering comes and goes, but God never leaves. And as I've said before, we are better off in bad times with God than in good times without Him.

1 Peter 3:16-17 –Be Good, Whether They Like It or Not!

One thing I was told early in my ministry was, "Live your life in such a way that if anyone ever spoke ill of you, nobody would believe it." In other words, be so kind that nobody would believe it if you were accused of being mean. Be so humble that nobody would believe it if anyone ever accused you of arrogance. This is crucial because there are some people that look for anything to criticize, and they have no hope of helping us improve. All they want is to tear us down. For some, this is especially true when we are trying to do the right thing.

Peter is intentional with his advice as well, as he tells his audience in verse, "...when you are accused, those who denounce your Christian life will be put to shame" (v.16). Notice how he says, "when you are accused," as opposed to, "if." Living our lives with Godly character will earn us a lot of opposition. As the saying goes, if they hung Jesus on a cross and He never did anything to anyone, what makes us imperfect human beings think that we won't encounter our own opposition? God is challenging us to not base our integrity on how people treat us, but

rather live for God regardless of how what folks think. In short, we need to be good whether they like it or not!

Conclusion: “Charisma may get you in the door, but character and integrity will keep you there.” I heard this from a pastoral colleague several years ago and it has stuck with me ever since. While he was speaking to a room full of preachers, the principle applies to all of us. No matter how attractive or addictive our personalities may be, it ultimately matters more who we are rather than how we portray ourselves. Charisma doesn’t always denote quality character and integrity. Sometimes it merely masks the ugliness underneath. God is challenging us as believers to be consistent in our day to day lives. If we put effort into our careers, then we need to put effort into our integrity. If we can display kindness publicly, then we ought to do the same privately. If character counts to us when people are watching, then it must count just as much, if not more, when nobody is watching. It matters – Character Counts.

Author Bio

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