



HELD TOGETHER IN CHRIST VISION AND COMMITMENT A year to focus on integration



He **i**s before all **t**hings, and **i**n **H**im all **t**hings hold together.

Colossians 1:17 (NIV)

BIBLE STUDY

STUDY PASSAGES: 1 Kings 9:1-9; Job 27:3-6

‘It does what is says on the tin’ - so says the advertising slogan for Ronseal wood staining products. It is an encouragement to trust the product and use it. In this year the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland will be focusing on the mission imperative of integration. A closely related word is integrity which a dictionary defines as ‘moral excellence, honesty, wholeness and soundness’.

Questions

- Who do you know as a person of integrity?
- Would you consider yourself a person of integrity? If so, how do others recognise your integrity?

Integrity should be the concern of God’s people. It is a stated value of The Salvation Army, and the writer of Proverbs reminds us of its importance by stating that ‘Whoever walks in integrity walks securely’ (10:9 all quotations from *NIV*) and ‘the integrity of the upright guides them’ (11:3).

As with all good proverbs, both verses also remind us of the consequences and disappointments of not following the way of integrity: ‘Whoever takes crooked paths will be found out’ (10:9) and ‘The unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity’ (11:3).

Question

- Can you give examples from the Old Testament of people who acted without integrity and the consequences that followed?

The Old Testament message presents the great challenge that integrity must affect every area of our lives. We are reminded in 1 Kings 9 that integrity is a call on God’s people. After Solomon completed the building of the Temple and his palace, the Lord makes the promise to bless them with his presence. God then calls upon Solomon to live with integrity: ‘As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever’ (1 Kings 9:4-5). Solomon’s obedience to live out the calling would result in God’s blessing of a secure succession (v5). However, the Lord also warns Solomon that disobedience will lead to the withdrawal of his blessing, the destruction of the buildings (vv6-8) and subsequent disaster for the nation (v9). Eventually, Solomon denied God’s call as he compromised with the circumstances that surrounded him.

Questions

- Are there circumstances in life that challenge your call to be a person of integrity?
- How have you responded to those challenges?

Integrity should be a characteristic of God's people. Job is an example of a man who God testified as being 'blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without reason' (Job 2:3).

The rest of the book of Job outlines Job's response to life and faith as he lives with extreme adversity, false accusations and much more. Job knows and understands that the value of integrity is a characteristic to cherish and hold fast. Bildad, his friend and one of his supposed comforters, challenges: 'How then can a mortal be righteous before God?' (Job 25:4).

In his final word to his supposed comforters, Job says: 'As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not say anything wicked, and my tongue will not utter lies. I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my innocence and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live' (Job 27:3-6).

Questions

- In light of Job's declaration, what value would you put on integrity?
- How will you maintain your integrity?

There is an important use of the word 'integrity' in the New Testament and it is to Titus when he is charged to show integrity in his leadership and teaching of God's people, both men and women, young and old: 'In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us' (Titus 2:7-8). The apostle Paul calls Titus to be a man who 'does what it says on the tin' and sets an example.

Integrity, wholeness and soundness of life is essential for God's people who are called to be 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world' (Matthew 5:13 and 14).

As those around us observe our actions and attitudes, do we 'do what it says on the tin'? In this coming year, may we, in every area of our lives, be people of wholeness, soundness and integrity.

Questions

- Can you name people in the New Testament who acted with integrity and the effect this had on others?
- From the New Testament can you give some examples of people who failed to show integrity and the resulting outcomes?

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