

WISDOM LITERATURE # 6

'LIVING WITH INTEGRITY'

Reading: Proverbs 2:6-11 & 10:9 & 11:3 & 12:1

Let's first establish what is the actual meaning of the word 'integrity'. My Oxford dictionary supplies 'moral excellence, honesty, wholeness, soundness', but I'm not sure this really captures what we are considering, namely 'living with integrity'. **How does this fit in with 'Wisdom' that is the overall theme of this study series?**

We are, of course, considering this subject both from a Christian perspective and living as Christians. **What difference does this make? What, if anything, does it add to the dictionary definitions above?**

Integrity is not just about being honest in your words and actions and making sure your words and actions match, but also fulfilling responsibilities that you have been entrusted with by Christ. 'Living with integrity as a Christian requires taking personal and responsible accountability for our actions guided by faith in Jesus Christ who taught us through his ministry which values we must uphold.' (Christian Educators Academy) It involves aligning your words and actions with your beliefs and morals. Look at the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-25. 'Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching' (C S Lewis). **What other work and actions has Jesus entrusted to his followers?**

Let's look at some Biblical examples of those who lead lives of integrity. I'm thinking obviously of Jesus, but also Daniel and Joseph from the Old Testament. Jesus' whole earthly life was one of integrity, a determination to follow his Father's will despite endless pressure and challenges, a sinless life, finally accepting the planned final act of unjustified execution. Although I'm sure you can recall these accounts in the Old Testament, **if you have time, I suggest reading about Daniel and companions (Daniel 3:8-29 & 6:10-23) and Joseph (Genesis 39)**. Despite the most severe faith examining challenges, they did not waiver; their integrity to God remained true and unbroken.

To have integrity as a Christian means living a life that glorifies God. It is challenging, especially in today's world where values are constantly changing, and moral standards are often compromised for personal gain or social acceptance. Cultivating a Christ centred integrity takes time and effort, but is exactly what Jesus entrusted us to do! By committing ourselves fully to Jesus and allowing his Spirit to work through us, we can live truthful lives, displaying our faith authentically and make an impact on the world around us.

Jesus said, 'The truth will set you free' (John 8:31-32). In the context of integrity, what do you think Jesus means?

Prayer: *You came, Lord Jesus Christ, to teach us the way of life which God requires; make us receptive to your word, and help us to obey, whatever it may cost, that our lives may bear much fruit; to the glory of your name. Amen* (Collects from the New Lectionary)