

3 Lessons from Daniel about Living a Life of Integrity

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Have you ever played the game called *Scruples*? It's a popular board game from the 1980s that asked the players questions regarding everyday ethical and moral dilemmas. For example:

- Your boss gives you expensive front row tickets to a hit play. You forgot to mark the date on your calendar and missed the performance. The next day your boss asks, "How was the play?"

Do you admit you missed it?

- You buy a cocktail dress for a special occasion. You wear it once and realize that you have little further use for it.

Do you return the dress as unworn and ask for a refund?

- A troublesome employee applies for a position in another department. You're relieved. *When asked, do you give a glowing reference so the transfer can go through?*

Testing Our Integrity

We are all confronted with situations and difficult decisions which test our integrity. But unlike the board game, the choices we make in reality have consequences which affect our daily lives: our character, our careers, our self-image, and our relationship with God.

We are tested on a daily basis with situations much like the game:

Do you lie about being able to meet a delivery deadline in order to win a business contract?

Do you steer a customer to purchase a product that is not the best fit for their needs, but will help you achieve a quota or receive a larger commission?

Do you scroll through your social media or make personal calls during work hours, in order to stay connected?

Is it okay simply because everybody else does it?



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What Is Integrity?

Integrity can be a slippery word to pin down. In fact, it reminds me of an old joke:

You invite a philosopher into the room and ask, *What is integrity?* He says, *Integrity is what you're like when nobody's around.*

Next, you invite a businessman and ask him, *What is integrity?* And he says, *Integrity is giving your word and keeping it.*

Finally, you invite a lawyer into the room and ask, *What is integrity?* He quickly goes to the windows, pulls down the shades, and shuts the door. Then he comes over and whispers, *What do you want it to be?*

In actuality, integrity is derived from the root word “integer.” In math, an integer is a whole number (1, 2, 3, 4) as opposed to a fraction. So the idea of integrity concerns wholeness, completeness or entirety.

It's also related to another word – *integrated*. Therefore, integrity is when all aspects of our lives are integrated and working together as a whole. A person who says one thing but does another is fragmented. That's called hypocrisy. A person who does one thing today but does a contrary thing tomorrow is also fragmented. That's called duplicity. But

a person who speaks and acts with integrity has consistency, and has all aspects of life working together as a whole.

As Christ followers, we should naturally be people of high integrity, but many struggle with living out what they believe. Instead of being examples of faithfulness and consistency, people often wind up being examples of hypocrisy and duplicity.

We've all heard of Christian leaders who have preached holiness from the pulpit, only to come crashing down because of scandal. It is beyond disappointing, to be sure. But integrity is something we often demand from others, but don't necessarily demand from ourselves. We talk the talk, but fail in the walk.

On Sunday, we say it's better to serve than be served, yet on Monday we are self-promoting and demanding managers over our employees.

On Sunday, we affirm righteousness living, but on Monday, we cut corners, fudge expense accounts, use the company copy machine for personal jobs and break traffic laws.

Why do our actions so often contradict what we say we believe? I believe the answer is because there are just some things we don't know.

Lessons from the Life of Daniel

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, [Nebuchadnezzar](#) king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it ... Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king ... But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" ([Daniel 1:1](#), 3-5, 8).



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1. When Life Takes an Unexpected Turn, Trust in God's Plan

Daniel was one of the young men taken back to Babylon to be trained as a civil servant. He was from a family of high social status, strikingly handsome and intelligent. In Judah, his life would have been quite predictable. He would go to a great school and then on to glittering success in whatever field he chose. He would have a great [marriage](#), live in an enviable home, raise a wonderful family, occupy a prominent place in the temple and do great things for God.

But Daniel's life took an unexpected turn. In a minute, Daniel lost his culture, his family and his friends. He would have to speak a foreign language and live and die in a foreign land as a slave to a tyrant.

Have you ever found yourself in Babylon before? Babylon is that place you end up when life does not turn out the way you planned. Maybe it happens when your marriage ends abruptly, or your big break fizzles out. Maybe it happens when an intimate friend wounds you deeply. Maybe it happens when you look around and it doesn't appear like God is moving on your behalf the way you prayed.

We all find ourselves in Babylon at times, cut off from the life we planned for, prepared for and expected. It is at these times that we face the most difficult tests of our integrity. Will we toss character aside, take matters into our own hands, and respond in an un-Christlike manner? Or remain faithful and trust for God's provision and protection?

Daniel did not throw in the towel on integrity; he didn't get entangled in duplicity or hypocrisy. He chose consistency and he chose to live out loud what he believed. Daniel the prisoner, the foreigner, the teenager determined that he was going to live with integrity and do what was right in the eyes of God. And he refrained from eating the king's food because the meat was from animals that had been sacrificed to false gods. He put his trust in God's plan for his life!

When life takes an unexpected turn and you find yourself living in Babylon, and you are tempted to compromise your integrity, you need remember that God still has a plan for your life.

“[For I know the plans I have for you](#),’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)).

...even when it doesn’t look that way.

God’s plan for us is better than our own plans for us. If you read the whole book of Daniel, you will find out that God’s plan for him was to impact and change Babylon, the most powerful kingdom on the earth at that time. Daniel trusted in the plan of God for his life, and he knew that God shows himself strong through people of integrity.



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2. Understand There Can Be a Purpose for Pain

Researchers say that one of the greatest factors that causes people to give up is not when their suffering get more intense, it’s when they believe that their suffering has no meaning or purpose.

When people suffer what they perceive to be meaningless pain, they reach a point when they say things like, “there’s no point in going on.” There’s no reason for me to keep honoring God, or to hold fast to my integrity.

On the other hand, if they know that there is a purpose behind their pain, they will endure whatever comes their way with the mindset that the Apostle Paul speaks of:

“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” ([2 Timothy 2:3](#)).

In Daniel's situation, the pain he suffered didn't get any easier with the years. He's a captive teenager, he faced death if he couldn't tell the king what his dream was, and its interpretation, and finally his life and [faith](#) was tested in the den of hungry lions. But with every situation Daniel choose to live out what he believed, no matter the personal pain.

God was reaching out through Daniel's pain and integrity to the most unlikely and undeserving person on the face of the earth at that time – King Nebuchadnezzar!

Every time Daniel acted with integrity despite his pain, God touched the heart of the king.

After Daniel refused to eat the king's defiled food:

“In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom” ([Daniel 1:20](#)).

After Daniel identified and interpreted the king's dream:

“The king said to Daniel, ‘Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery’” ([Daniel 2:27](#)).

And finally look at what the king said right before he died:

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of [heaven](#), because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” ([Daniel 4:37](#)).

God loved the most unlikely and undeserving person on the face of the earth – King Nebuchadnezzar. He used Daniel's integrity, lived out against the backdrop of personal pain, to capture the king's heart.

Evil circumstances are not sent from God, but God can use your situation to speak to the heart of someone who needs to know Christ before they head into eternity without Him.



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3. Believe That God Is Able

In life, you and I will face impossible situations – situations that seem like there is no way out and have no apparent solution. At these times we're tempted to do whatever it takes to solve the situation, even if it means doing what we know is not right in the eyes of God.

When pressed to the extreme, the concern is not *how do I honor God*, it's...*how do I get out of this?!*

Many times, Daniel was faced with situations that would result in his death if God did not intervene on his behalf. But Daniel remained steadfast in his integrity because he believed that our God is able to rescue those who put their trust in Him.

Daniel's life demonstrates that God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can think or ask, and that what is impossible with man is possible with God! He didn't need to take matters into his own hands or compromise his character, but rather Daniel boldly and unashamedly lived out his [faith](#) for all to see. If we follow his example and live our lives with integrity, we too will allow God to show Himself strong to those around us, even as He works out amazing answers to our impossible situations!

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