

## Indicators of Integrity

### Psalm 101

#### Introduction:

1) Integrity is foundational and essential for leadership. People will follow you only if they trust you. They will stand with you and for you only if they believe in you. God affirms the importance of integrity. The Bible addresses on a number of occasions and from various viewpoints the issue.

- Proverbs 10:9, “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out” (*NIV*).
- Proverbs 11:3, “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (*NIV*).
- Proverbs 13:6, “Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner” (*NIV*).
- Proverbs 28:6, “Better a poor man who lives with integrity than a rich man who distorts right and wrong” (*HCSB*).

2) Interestingly, there is a particular psalm, Psalm 101 penned by King David, that speaks directly to the issue of leadership and integrity. Here we see David at his best. The wonderful expositor Warren Wiersbe calls it “Leadership 101” (*BEC*, 273). I refer to it as “Indicators of Integrity.” Willem VanGemeren tags it as a “Commitment to Excellence” (640). The great reformer Martin Luther wrote an 80 page exposition of this psalm. A royal psalm of the king, the qualities extolled here find an echo in Isaiah 11:1-5 which are a prophetic portrait of Messiah Jesus. Indeed only our Savior could perfectly fulfill the awesome expectations of the leader described in these verses.

3) Quickly scanning the 8 verses where the man of God pledges to live a life of integrity, I want to highlight 10 indicators necessary for what we do to match what we say!

**I. The man of integrity will honor the Lord. 101:1**

- Nine times in Psalm 101 we find the declaration or promise “I will.” The personal life of the man of integrity will of necessity enter the public arena as well.
- Mercy (“*hesed*”; *ESV* “steadfast love”) and justice are twin towers of godly leadership. Both find their source and truest expression in the character of God. One without the other is incomplete and inadequate. Mercy says I will act graciously and faithfully. Justice says I will act righteously and fairly. Of these marvelous and essential traits we are to sing praises to our Lord (“I will sing” 2X). We are to celebrate them in our God and in our leaders. This is how God rules and we honor Him as we rule in a like manner.
- Honoring the Lord as a leader will of necessity require the ministry of the Spirit. As we minister and serve in His power, His fruit will abundantly appear in our lives fresh and attractive. Applied to leadership, what might the fruit of the Spirit, as found in Galatians 5:22-23 look like as we seek to honor Him?

**Leadership Inventory**

1. LOVE a willingness to love people regardless of status or actions.
2. JOY a commitment to the task, independent of circumstances or people.
3. PEACE a commitment to an inner calling that is unshakable and undeniable.
4. PATIENCE a willingness to see beyond the horizon of trouble and obstruction;  
a gentle spirit that is kind to those who oppose your leadership.
5. KINDNESS a Christ type spirit that children see and are drawn to in an adult.
6. GOODNESS a lifestyle of integrity.

7. FAITHFULNESS becoming a person of absolute dependability and consistency.
8. GENTLENESS the ability to be strong at the right time and transparent at all times.
9. SELF-CONTROL the ability to be angry at the right time and in the right way, and to be exceedingly patient and longsuffering at all times.

## **II. The man of integrity will live wisely. 101:2**

- *NIV*, “I will be careful to lead a blameless life” (cf. v. 2, 3, 6). The pledge is to live and act wisely, and to give ear to the lessons of wisdom. The brief but explosive prayer, “oh, when will you come to me?” is an acknowledgement of need for God’s presence and power to live this kind of life. On our own, we will most certainly play the fool.
- The blameless man is a man with a blameless heart and singleness of mind. He lives life without dishonesty and duplicity. There is no moral compromise or ethical escapism in his life. Further, his public life and his private life match up and are in sync. When only God is watching, he is the same as if 10,000 were watching.

**Illustration:** The integrity and honesty I challenge my students to live up to when taking test or recording their attendance.

- He operates from the dictum: “All that ultimately matters in life is that I please God.”

## **III. The man of integrity will care for his home. 101:2**

- The man of integrity will order his private world. His life of integrity will be the most evident to those closest to him! He will maintain fidelity and faithfulness to his mate with whom he entered a divine and sacred covenant before God. He will love and care for his children, “bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Eph. 6:4).

- He will avoid like a deadly and infectious virus the flirtatious and home destroying woman of Proverbs 5. He will heed the wise words of Randy Alcorn who writes,

“Whenever I feel particularly vulnerable to sexual temptation, I find it helpful to review what effects my action could have: grieving the Lord who redeemed me; dragging His sacred name through the mud; one day having to look at Jesus, the righteous judge in the face, and give an account of my actions; following the footsteps of people whose immorality forfeited their ministries and caused me to shudder; losing my wife’s respect and trust; hurting my daughters; destroying my example and creditability with my children; causing shame to my family; losing self respect; forming memories and flashbacks that could plague future intimacy with my wife; wasting years of ministry training; undermining the faithful example and hard work of other Christians in our community; and on and on.” (*SBC Life*, Aug. 2005).

- In a *Leadership* magazine survey (Winter 1988, 12-13), 77% of ministers admitted doing something sexually inappropriate with women other than their wives at sometime in their lives, and 12% acknowledged sexual relations with someone other than their wives while in ministry.
- Wise and godly men will care for their homes. They will not ignore them, nor will they take them for granted.

**IV. The man of integrity will monitor his eyes. 101:3**

- Nothing speaks of the absolute nature of this promise. Wicked is lit. “a thing of Belial” and means worthless, vile, evil. Verse 3 stands in stark contrast to the noble aspirations of vs. 1-2. David has moved from addressing the heart of the leaders to the heart of sinners.
- The man of integrity will monitor his physical eyes. Job 31:1 says, “I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.”
- The man of integrity will monitor ambitious eyes. He will not set and pursue worthless goals and evil means to achieve those goals. His eyes will pursue God’s goals for God’s glory. He will not let the glitter of the world’s measures for success impair his vision.

**V. The man of integrity will hate what is false. 101:3**

- Eyes are the front gate to the heart! They are the highway to the soul.
- A man of God will pursue purity of mind, heart and associates. Some things he will 1) have nothing to do with, 2) hate, 3) not allow to cling to him, 4) send away and 5) not know.
- Having nothing evil before his eyes he will hate the work of those who fall away and walk away from the truth. He will recall and embrace the wisdom of Proverbs 6:16-19, “There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.” (NIV).
- James Eubanks is right. In an article entitled “Pastors At Risk” (*LeaderLife*; Sp. 2006, 38-41), he notes 7 dangers of “ministry confusion” the man of God is susceptible to:

1. He confuses loving God with loving his ministry.
2. He confuses intimacy with God, with sermon preparation and Bible study.
3. He confuses setting a godly example with projecting a pastoral image.
4. He confuses marital oneness with a wife willing to promote a ministerial image.
5. He confuses authentic relationships with other men with knowing lots of people.
6. He confuses being a strong leader with a need to be in control.
7. He confuses being a biblical peacemaker with fear of conflict.

**VI. The man of integrity will attend to his heart. 101:4**

- A wise leader must know and embrace a biblical theology of the heart.
  - Jeremiah 17:9-10, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”
  - Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”
  - Proverbs 15:28, “The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.
  - Proverbs 16:23, “A wise man’s heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.”
  - Proverbs 22:11, “He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.”
  - Proverbs 23:7, “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”
  - Proverbs 27:19, “As water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man.”

- Matthew 12:34, “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”
- Matthew 22:37, “Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all you mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”
- I will not know wickedness means I will not have a perverse heart. I will not know wickedness means I will seek to know only goodness.

## **VII. The man of integrity will guard his soul. 101:5**

- Vs. 5-7 reveal the kind of men a wise leader will surround himself in both negative and positive categories. The man of integrity also must be this kind of person, and he will wisely seek others of like mindedness.
- Note the 3-fold criteria set in negative categories in v. 5: a slanderer, a haughty look and a proud heart. Note the reverse connection. A proud heart will lead to a haughty look (an arrogant swagger) which will give way to a lying tongue! The godly leader will not tolerate this in himself or others. With strong poetic power, David says 1) “Him I will destroy” and 2) “Him I will not endure.” He will silence them and set them aside to negate their cancerous influence in the community of God’s people.
- The man of integrity will recognize the potent power of the tongue. He will see:
  - Slander & gossip as twin spiritual plagues flirting with destruction.
  - Mocking & deception as madmen playing with fire.
  - Obscenity & vulgarity as ungodly speech that degrades both the speaker and the listener.
  - Profanity as trivializing the sacred and an evidence of a lazy and impure mind.

- Luther said, “Everything is a vain sham if God is not in it!” (Boice, vol. 2, 821).  
Augustine: “that which is not done for the glory of God is sin.”

#### VIII. The man of integrity will seek out the faithful.      101:6

- V. 6 stands in contrast to v. 5 and picks up the theme of the eyes in v. 3: Nothing worthless for my eyes in v. 3, only the faithful for my eyes in v. 6.
- The wise leader will surround himself with men who are 1) faithful, 2) blameless and who have 3) a servant’s heart. Only in this way can he advance the work of the Lord.
- Psalm 1:1 is a healthy reminder at this point, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”
- Mark 10:45 shows us the true heart of a servant as revealed in the ultimate servant King Jesus who said, “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and give His life for many.”
- A servant’s heart? That is the heart of Jesus.

#### IX. The man of integrity will deal with the deceitful.      101:7

- Those who are dishonest and destructive, deceitful and dishonest are not allowed a seat at the table of leadership, they are not granted access into the inner circle (note “within my house”; cf. v. 2). The disloyal, dishonest, unfaithful, hypocritical, liars, gossipers and divisive are not welcomed nor should they be. Once again the man of integrity will take inventory of his own life, “considering himself lest he also be tempted” (Gal. 6:2).
- What might such an inventory look like? Chuck Swindoll has a 7 Question test he suggests for a weekly check-up and spiritual examination:
  1. Have you been with a woman anywhere this past week that might be seen as compromising?



2. Have any of your financial dealings lacked integrity?
3. Have you exposed yourself to any sexually explicit material?
4. Have you spent adequate time in Bible study and prayer?
5. Have you given priority time to your family?
6. Have you fulfilled the mandates of your calling?
7. Have you just lied to me?

*(The Heart of a Great Pastor, 228-29).*

**X. The man of integrity will understand the Lord's standards.      101:8**

- “Early” is rendered by most translations as either “every morning” (*NASV*) or “Morning by morning.” With each new day the man of God will confront the wicked and seek their defeat. He will not grow weary in the fight. He will not surrender to those who do evil in the land.
- He will oppose racism, greed, selfishness, all forms of sexual immorality and pornography; help the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, and the helpless; contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Exodus 20:3-17; Deut. 27:18-26; Psalm 139:13-16; Micah 6:8; Matt. 5:13-16; Rom. 12-14, 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 7:21-24; Eph. 4:25-5:12; 1 Thess. 4:1-8.

**Conclusion:** In his classic work *The Reformed Pastors*, the wonderful Puritan pastor Richard Baxter enumerates 8 essential ingredients of integrity that will keep the man of God safe and sound for the ministry to which God has called him. 1) “Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of the saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of the gospel which you preach.” 2) “Take heed to yourselves lest you live in those actual sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of that which you daily

condemn.” 3) “Take heed to yourselves that you may not be unfit for the great assignment you have undertaken.” 4) “Take heed to yourselves lest your example contradict your doctrine.” 5) “Take heed to yourselves, for you have a depraved nature and sinful inclinations.” 6) “Take heed to yourselves, because so great a work as ours puts men on greater exercise and trial of their graces, since they are exposed to greater temptations than most men.” 7) “Take heed to yourselves because the tempter will make his first and sharpest attack on you.” 8) Take heed to yourselves because there are many eyes upon you.” (p. 1-9). People are indeed watching. Let them see a man of integrity. Let them see Jesus in you!