

Wanted – Leaders with Integrity
“Talent is a gift, but character is a choice.” J. Maxwell

What is the number one quality needed today in leadership? Let me suggest “Integrity of Character.” Frequently, we hear about some scandal in politics, entertainment, sport or even religion where someone tried to deceive and misrepresent the truth. Pollster James Peterson reports that 90% of the people surveyed admitted lying routinely and 36% said they told big lies that hurt other people. “Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.”

Is it not true that when you're looking for a friend or a leader you can support, above all, you want someone you can trust. If you can't trust a friend, their friendship is not worth much. If you can't trust a leader, they are not worth following.

Today, there is a tremendous need for men and women of character. Notice I said character, not reputation. There is a big difference. Reputation is what you are supposed to be – character is who you really are. Reputation can be disclosed in a moment – character is built over a lifetime. You need reputation to find a job- you need character to keep that job. Integrity of character cannot be bought or inherited, it must be earned.

Integrity may be defined as being a complete or whole person. I have a desk in my study that has no integrity. Why? Because it gives the appearance of something it is not. It's supposed to be a solid oak desk and it has a nice oak veneer on the outside; but on the inside there is only sawdust and glue. If a person has genuine integrity they are the same on the inside as they appear on the outside. They do not resort to cover up. Their walk is the same as their talk. They practice what they preach. Integrity is who you are and what you do when no one is watching.

April is perhaps the hardest time of the year to be honest, because of income tax reports. One man wrote: “I've been cheating on my income tax and I can't sleep at night. I enclose a check for \$500.” PS, “If I still can't sleep I'll send you the rest.” Trouble sleeping? A clear conscience makes a soft pillow.

I heard of a tribe where a man's hand would be cut off if he was caught stealing. But that misses the heart of the problem. Dishonesty does not start in the hand; it's an internal disease and reveals a serious character flaw. To be a person of integrity, you don't need to lose your hand. Rather, God can give each one of us a fresh start in life and a change of heart, the place where character is formed.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the source of all life”(Proverbs 4:23).