



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Integrity

Date: November 16, 2016

# INTEGRITY'S CHIEF ENEMIES

*Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out. Proverbs 10:9*

"I'll be home by 9 o'clock." But nine comes and he doesn't show. The same thing is true of ten, and eleven. You finally hear the door at 11:50. "I thought you said you'd be home by 9 o'clock." "Yeah, but something happened."

Then what about the line, "The check's in the mail." So you wait three more days, then four more days, and finally a week. And still no check. You call and say, "I understood you to say that your check was in the mail." "Well, I thought it was," is the reply you get, followed by a pretty incredulous line about the envelope getting lost in the mail. Sure.

Taking inventory for a minute, would you say that people are less prone to keep their word, less apt to show up when they say they will be there, and generally have less integrity, than a few years ago?

When national figures disappoint you and what they say is often questioned, when even ministers seem to lead two lives—one personal and the other public, when educators say that moral values can be taught without religion, is it any wonder that talk about integrity today sounds as relevant as a discussion of the fourth vertebrae of an extinct dinosaur?

"OK," you say, "I'm with you. But what can we do to stop the erosion of character today?" More than you might think. First, let's define our terms. Integrity is what you are—it's the moral fiber within you that determines what you are. Character is like the flip side of the coin. It relates more to your actions—what you do.

The foundation of integrity is an old-fashioned moral belief that there is a God in heaven who cares about what happens on planet Earth. It is based on the fact that He calls some things right and other things wrong. The Ten Commandments were not given as "Ten Suggestions" or "Ten Ideas about Morality." They were both negative and positive as God said, "This is wrong and these things are right."

Other foundation stones of integrity are responsibility and accountability, which, like two oars of a little rowboat, keep your life on an even keel. Shortly before his death, author James Michener talked about the changes which he had seen in his generation. He said that the old days were not really so great but that a generation ago men and women considered some things right and others wrong. They didn't always do right, but they knew the difference. But today, he contended, individuals who don't know the difference are dangerous and a threat to society.

John Souter, in an article entitled, "That Missing Word: Integrity," says that there are four enemies of integrity. He describes them as deception, shallowness, artificiality, and expediency.

**Deception** was what Abraham used when he didn't want to admit that Sarah was his wife. "She is my sister," he said—which was a half-truth.

**Shallowness**, the second enemy of integrity, is the belief that it doesn't really matter. "Everybody's doing it," people used to say, excusing their behavior. Shallowness is the refusal to take an unpopular stand, saying, "It's not my fight." Character is the result of convictions, which are the foundation of integrity.

**Artificiality** is the curse of our day. "How are you doing?" someone asks, and you respond, "Oh, just fine." You are not, but neither do you want the emotional involvement of giving an honest answer.

**Expedience**, the fourth enemy of integrity, is the path of least resistance, the short-cut. It is the presumption that if your wife will never know, it's OK to do it. It is sacrificing the permanent on the altar of the expedient, and it is the curse of our day. No matter what the cost, integrity is worth it.

Resource reading: Genesis 20.