

Integrity in relationships

A Michigan judge had a policy of forbidding cellphones in his courtroom. Anyone whose phone rang had their phone confiscated and received a \$25 fine. Over the years, attorneys, police officers, witnesses, and spectators have broken the rule and received the punishment. During closing arguments at the trial, someone's smartphone started talking. It was the judge's new phone! "I'm guessing I bumped it. It started talking really loud. That's an excuse, but I don't take those excuses from anyone else. I set the bar high, because cell phones are a distraction and there is very serious business going on," he said. During the next break in the trial, the Judge held himself in contempt, and paid the standard \$25 fine that he issues anyone who disturbs a trial. "Judges are human," he said. "They're not above the rules. I broke the rule, and I have to live by it."

1 John 1: 5 – 2: 2

1) The integrity of God is the basis of our relationships of integrity.

- The Cambridge dictionary describes integrity as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change.
- Psalm 55: 19 God, who is enthroned from of old, who does not change...
- God is always the same. He is unchanging in character. If He was a God of integrity at the beginning of time then He is still a God of integrity now, will still be a God of integrity at the end of time and beyond.
- God is light and there is not darkness in him. What you see is what you get in absoluteness. There is nothing that God needs to hide from us.
 - This transparency is the basis of all good and wholesome relationships.
 - There is nothing to hide.
- The word "fellowship" is mentioned twice and both talking about walking in the light.
 - The first talks about fellowship with God
 - The second talks about fellowship with one another.
- This is also brought across clearly by Jesus
 - John 8: 12 I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.
 - Matthew 5: 14 You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.
- There are a number of other ways that our relationship with others is based on our relationship with God.
 - Love as I have loved you. John 13: 34
 - Forgive as I have forgiven you. Ephesians 4: 32
 - Be holy as I am holy. Leviticus 11: 45
 - If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another. 1 John 1: 7
- There are two ways that God is the foundation of our relationships:
 - We are partakers of the divine nature.– the work of God in our lives.
 - 2 Peter 1: 4 ...he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature..
 - We are imitators of Christ – our responsibility to do what is right in accordance to the character of God.
 - Ephesians 5: 1 – 2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

2) Qualities of a relationship of integrity

- Honesty
 - Proverbs 12: 22 The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.
 - An honest person can be trusted because they always tell the truth, directly or indirectly.
 - I heard a story of a man who went to a hotel room with his mistress and ordered pizza. The pizza was delivered but they delivered two instead of one, and he only paid for one. So he returned the other. The hotel manager was impressed and wanted to make an announcement about his honesty. However, the man didn't want that because his wife would find out about the mistress.
 - True integrity means honesty in every area of our lives, not merely financial, or some other convenient area, whilst being dishonest in another area of our lives.

- Transparency
 - Light means that something is seen, whilst darkness means that something remains unseen.
 - Transparency is the same as honesty in some ways, but it's more than honesty. It's the willingness to be seen for who you really are.
 - Obviously we aren't going to disclose every aspect of our life to everyone. The closer we get to someone the more we'll disclose – make known – to them.
 - It would be foolish to be completely transparent with someone who we have just met and tell them the deepest secrets of our lives.
 - However, as our relationship matures the more transparent we can, and ought to, become.
 - The skeletons of our closets – the hidden secrets of our lives – can be revealed to those we trust.
 - Hence, relationships need a two way integrity to function properly.
- Seeing ourselves in the true light of God
 - How often we see ourselves as better than we really are.
 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
 - Self-righteousness is probably one of the biggest problems in relationships. It was definitely a problem with the self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus' time.
 - If we consider ourselves blameless in everything we will shift the blame onto the other person making them out to be the problem. However, if we recognise our own wrongdoing in our lives we'll make a lot more progress in dealing with the issues in our relationships.
- Determined to live right with God and people
 - Integrity means that we will get rid of everything that shouldn't be in our lives, especially things that would drive a wedge between us and God or us and other people.
 - Confession isn't just an acknowledgment of wrongdoing, but also a promise to do what is right.
- Received mercy and grace, give mercy and grace
 - If we repent – acknowledge our wrongdoing in a relationship – we will be forgiven.
 - In the same way that we are forgiven we out to forgive others.
 - God doesn't show us mercy so that we can be self-righteous and judge others. He shows us mercy so that we can show the same mercy to those who wrong us.

3) What if we mess up?

- Let's face the fact that we all mess up in a relationship at one time or another.
 - We say the wrong thing to someone, we do things that anger our spouse, friend, or colleague.
- Often we want to make the relationship right but don't know how to go about it.
- Concerning our relationship with God, He sent Jesus to be a mediator between God and man to heal our relationship with himself.
- Jesus is referred to as our advocate before the Father
 - 1 John 2: 2 But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.
 - An advocate is someone who speaks to a higher authority on someone's behalf.
 - He not only spoke to God on our behalf, but took the punishment for our sins on himself to reconcile us to God. This was what an atoning sacrifice means. He gave a clean slate so that we have a completely new relationship with God.
- Jesus is the mediator between man and God
 - 1 Timothy 2; 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
 - A mediator is someone who comes in between two parties who are at conflict with each other and tries to bring about peace and reconciliation between them.
- So when we mess up in our relationships
 - Acknowledge if we need outside help – a mediator – to help us restore our broken relationship.
 - Confess what you've done wrong regardless of what the other person has done wrong.
 - Make a commitment to do what is right.
 - Show mercy by forgiving the other person.
 - Commit yourselves to walk the road to a completely restored relationship.