

Proverbs 11

The Wise Man, a Person of Integrity

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INTRODUCTION:

Prov. 11:3---*The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*

[Key words: (1) integrity---*tummah*==to be blameless, innocent; (2) upright---straight, as opposed to crooked, as in sitting up straight; (3) guide---*nachah*==to govern, to transport or carry them. A person of straight and righteous dealings is innocent or blameless in their ethics and actions. Note that the opposite of integrity in this verse is the “unfaithful.” *celeph* means to twist, to subvert. The idea is that a person with integrity can be trusted to do what they say they will do. A person without integrity will twist, subvert and cannot be trusted. They are not faithful. They do not keep their word and follow through on their commitments.]

Prov. 11:2---*When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*

[Preceding Prov. 11:3 on integrity is a verse that describes the heart attitude that must be in place for wisdom to be gained---humility. The humble man is teachable. He is a learner. He listens to instruction. The reason this verse precedes verse 3 on integrity, is that it takes wisdom to see the value of having integrity. It takes wisdom to see the importance of being a trustworthy person, a person of your word. Integrity flows out of wisdom. And wisdom does not come unless one is humble and willing to be taught.---The implication is this: no one is born with integrity. Integrity is a character quality that is developed and learned. It is the fruit of a teachable heart that seeks wisdom. Humble people develop wisdom. Proud people, on the other hand, cannot be taught or told anything. This keeps them from developing wisdom and integrity. They end up disgracing themselves.]

Prov. 10:9---*The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.*

[The man of integrity has no skeletons in his closet. He does not live in fear of what other people may find out about him. His dealings have been righteous and just. He is secure in his life being an open book. The person who lacks integrity, on the other hand, builds a life and track record that is a “house of cards.” It is just a matter of time before something happens that will cause his untrustworthy dealings to be exposed.]

Prov. 13:6---*Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.*

[The man of integrity is righteous in his dealings. This righteousness guards his life. The wicked, on the other hand, will face all kinds of trouble from the consequences of their sin. Example: If you don't make your car payments as you committed to do, your car will be repossessed. If you don't do your job, show up on time, etc., like you promised when you were hired, you will be fired. This verse repeats a contrast that has been given previously in Prov. 2:21-22).]

1. Thus we are told of those who lack integrity---

Prov. 13:15---...*the way of the unfaithful is hard.*

I. KEY LIFE AREAS DISCUSSED IN PROVERBS IN WHICH THE WISE MAN SHOWS INTEGRITY.

A. In his business dealings.

Prov. 11:1---*The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*

[People of integrity are honest. They do not cheat others in their business dealings. The Lord hates such dishonesty. People in this day would use hollowed out weights in order to pay a lesser price to people selling their goods in the market place or alter the scales to give buyers less for their money. The same kinds of things happen today. An example would be selling a car to someone that you know has problems in a particular area and not telling the buyer about it.]

Prov. 11:4---*Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*

[This is a follow up to 11:1. The man of integrity realizes that this life is temporary and he will one day stand before God and give an account of his dealings. The dishonest man is focused on this life and building as much wealth to secure himself as he can, any way that he can. Material wealth, however, can do nothing to deliver him on the day of Judgement. The man of integrity wants to be able to give an account to God for righteous dealings on Judgement Day.]

B. In his ethics.

Prov. 11:5---*The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.*

[Integrity causes a person to function ethically in his dealings with others. Righteous ethics will enable him to accomplish good goals.]

The deceptive dealings of the wicked, however, will catch up with them. Look at all of the political leaders who have gotten to the top through unethical dealings. Eventually their wickedness is exposed and discredits them and brings them down.]

Prov. 11:11---*Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.*

[A person who is ethical in his dealings and honest in his ways brings honor to any venture he is involved in. An honest, ethical employee enhances the reputation of his company. An honest, ethical governmental leader enhances the reputation of his city, state, or country. By the same token, unethical, dishonest people will destroy the reputation of any venture they are involved in. An example for a country would be Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal and Bill Clinton and the Lewinsky affair. A ministry example would be Jim and Tammy Bakker and the PTL scandal. A positive example would be the ethical reputation of someone such as Colin Powell, who brings instant credibility to anything he is involved with.]

C. In how he controls his tongue.

Prov. 11:13---*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.*

[Remember, when we speak of integrity we are speaking of one who is faithful and trustworthy. Such a person can be trusted with confidential information. The repeating of confidential information to someone else is a mark of a lack of integrity.]

Prov. 11:12---*A man who lacks judgement derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue.*

[This is one who gossips, slanders and destroys with words (see also Prov. 11:9). The man of integrity is not impulsive and does not vent his feelings. Rather he is able to keep his silence even in difficult situations, rather than retaliate or attack others.]

D. In being others-centered, kind and generous.

Prov. 11:25--- *A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

[A man of integrity can be trusted with material possessions. He can be trusted not to selfishly hoard, but to be generous and use it to help benefit others.]

Prov. 11:26---*People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell.*

[The man of integrity realizes that God has blessed him so that he can

be a blessing to others. His reward is a good reputation and the promise of God's continued blessing upon him.]

E. In realizing that a good name is far more valuable than material wealth.

Prov. 11:16---*A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth.*

[A person of integrity understands that he is far better off to be poor and known for honesty, kindness and generosity than to be rich and known for double-dealing and ruthlessness.]

Prov. 11:27---*He who seeks good will find goodwill, but evil comes to him who searches for it.*

[The man of integrity will tend to find goodwill from others with integrity. The wicked man will reap what he sows.]

Prov. 11:22---*Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.*

[What good is it to be physically beautiful if your reputation stinks? Are righteous people drawn to a Playboy Playmate? Which would you rather be like if you were a female? Sharon Stone or Elizabeth Elliott? Who would a man of integrity be more impressed by? Tom Cruise or John MacArthur? People of integrity realize that a good name is far more desirable than physical beauty, fame or riches.]

CONCLUSION:

A. Integrity is a heart issue, a spiritual issue.

Prov. 11:20---*The Lord detests men of perverse heart, but He delights in those whose ways are blameless.*

[A person either has a "straight" heart or a "crooked" one. You can tell the kind of heart a person has by watching the life pattern of what they say and do. Integrity, or the lack of it, is revealed in whether or not a person's "ways" are blameless, trustworthy, and above reproach. The person's ways are the fruit. The heart is the root. Thus, integrity is developed through cultivation of a godly heart.]

B. Integrity protects us from sin.

Prov. 11:6---*The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.*

[A person of integrity, which results in righteous ways, is governed by biblical truth and principles. This keeps them from being entrapped by deceitful desires, passions and emotions. A person who lacks spiritual integrity, however, is driven by their fleshly desires and taken captive

and trapped by them. A heart of integrity is sensitive to sin and exercises judgement, discretion and discipline. A heart lacking integrity is impulsive and lives in the gratification of the fleshly moment, not counting the terrible cost of sin.]

C. A man of integrity, a spiritual man, places his hope in the things above, his confidence in things eternal.

Prov. 11:7---*When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.*

[The man who lacks integrity places all of his hope and security in the things of this life. On his deathbed, he tragically realizes that they cannot save him. The Egyptian kings buried their wealth with them, but none of them were able to spend one dime in the grave. As Chuck Swindoll has stated: "You will never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer."]

Prov. 11:30---*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.*

[The person of integrity realizes that one day he will stand before God. He knows that when he looks back on his life at the end of it, only one thing will matter to him. Not how much money did I make, but how much of an impact did I make in building the Kingdom of Christ.]