

Father's Day Message June 2021
Choose Integrity for a Blessed Legacy
Proverbs 20:7

Happy Father's Day! Thank you, fathers, for all you do for your family. You are an extremely important component to the well-being of your family. My father passed away in 1995 and there are many moments that I would love to go do an activity with him or just hear his voice again. You may have similar sentiments. In fact, with little effort I can remember what some of his expressions were as he sought to influence my life. You might have heard some that are similar.

- "Rise and shine! The early bird gets the worm." or "On deck!" Failure to get out of bed was sometimes met with water poured on my head. I tended to wake up pretty quickly after that.
- "Don't forget to check the oil." Please remember that I grew up on a farm and there were many tractors, trucks, cars, mowers, and other small engines so I heard that phrase a lot.
- "Two wrongs don't make a right." This was usually said right before a more severe form of punishment was coming.
- "Don't make me stop this car!" I knew if he did stop the car, something else would just get started that wouldn't feel good. As I remember, it was always my brothers and sister that made him say that (just kidding).
- "Go ask your mother." After which I often heard: "Go ask your father!"
- "Were you born in a barn?" This was his favorite saying when I left a door open that should be closed. The urban version of this is: "I'm not paying to heat the whole neighborhood."

You may be here today and Father's Day brings conflicting thoughts and emotions. Not all family circumstances are attached to good memories. Sometimes parents let us down. But I think most dads are just reflecting many things they learned from their dads and most are trying to do a job that is challenging and at times unappreciated.

There is no father that is perfect except the Heavenly father. But if you hold your father (or any person for that matter) in high esteem there are most likely many good reasons. I asked a few people why they thought highly of their father. Here are some of the answers that were given:

1. He was responsible man and a hard worker. He met the needs of our family.
2. He shows love and I feel he shows me respect.
3. He started a Christian legacy in our family since he was the first to accept Christ. Without him, I might not be where I am today.
4. He is always trustworthy, loyal, honest, and a hard worker.
5. He was authentic – what you saw was what you got.
6. He is faithful to take care of family and is generous when seeing a need.
7. He was the same at home as he was at church.

No matter what answer was given, I noticed a truth: each of the answers had a connection to integrity. No one admired his or her father because they were a bad person. Each characteristic given could in some way be traced back to an attempt to live a life of integrity as a parent.

Our Scripture today, found in Proverbs 20:7, is a simple verse packed with powerful associations that affect the very fabric of family life - and it centers on the father. Here is what the verse says: The

righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him! (Read and then have congregation read).

I want you to tuck this short phrase into your soul today and hopefully act upon it: Choose integrity for a blessed legacy.

Put another way: Today's decisions and behaviors create tomorrow's reputation and outcomes – especially when it comes to family matters.

Billy Graham is perhaps the most well-known Evangelist and spiritual leader of our time. It is reported that he was asked what were the three greatest things that the church needed to work on. His answer was extremely telling and composed of the following words: Integrity, integrity, and integrity."

I would like to study this verse with you today regarding the topic of integrity through a series of questions. It is my hope that no matter what activities you do, you want your reputation to be one of integrity.

The first question is: What are the key words to understand in this verse?

One of the greatest ways to understand God's Word is to study the meaning of words and then look for how the words influence each other.

1. Righteous: This means doing what is right, just, or lawful. A righteous person, from God's viewpoint, uses godly standards for life and behavior. The designation of being righteous is given when the thoughts and deeds are approved by the person who makes the standards. It is God who has the right to make the standards since he is the Creator. Have you accepted this truth?
As a church we are in the process of learning about the standards God gave us called the 10 Commandments. If you have missed the current series, please go to edgewoodbaptist.net or download the Edgewood app and listen to each of the messages on this present series on the 10 Commandments. The messages are excellent and you will learn a great deal.
2. Walks: These are the actions and behaviors of life. This word is used to denote the everyday activities of a person knowing that every step in life takes you somewhere.
3. Integrity: This word denotes sincerity, completeness, and truthfulness. It is used to describe someone whose decisions and actions are in alignment with God's standards or their stated beliefs. In other words, there is unity between what you say and what you do. What you see is what you get. This Hebrew word is used 30 times in the Old Testament.
4. Blessed: This signifies inner satisfaction and happiness. This same word is used in Psalm 32:1-2 when King David was describing the wonderful gift of forgiveness. Here is what he said:

"Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."

A blessed person is someone who feels extremely fortunate.

So let's refresh ourselves with our theme: Choose integrity for a blessed legacy.

So what does integrity mean in this verse?

A father who has integrity has thoughts and actions that match the standard of what is right, just and lawful. When a father has integrity, it greatly affects how happy his children are. Being a person of integrity is a worthy goal in life that comes with blessings for the family. A father with integrity will positively influence his children's lives in so many ways. When a man or woman lacks integrity, their influence is diminished or is often ignored.

The opposite message of this verses causes me to wonder if many adult children have decided to ignore or reject Christianity and follow their own path because they have come to the conclusion that their parent's Christian integrity is flawed and hypocritical. If that is a reality, regrettably they have tossed the baby out with the bath water. If that is you today, I hope you will take your eyes off of your earthly parent and focus on the Heavenly Father who has your eternity's happiness in view. He reached out to you through His Son Jesus and offers the blessings of forgiveness and acceptance.

What does integrity look like for a Christian father or parent?

Someone said it is easier to understand what integrity is by giving lifestyle examples. So let's list a few.

- He teaches God's standards and then seeks to live by them. Having integrity assumes a code of conduct that is under evaluation.
- He admits when he is wrong and seeks to make things right. He recognizes to be human is to be imperfect but does not let that be an excuse. Being a person of integrity does not mean that you are perfect. No one would be able to completely fulfill that standard. The Bible says there is none righteous, no not one. King David was said to have integrity in 1 Kings 9:4-5 but he certainly wasn't perfect. He did, however, seek to learn from his mistakes and allow them to make him closer to God.
- He keeps promises even if it takes extra effort.
- He often puts others' needs above his own.
- He gives others the benefit of the doubt.
- He remains faithful to his spouse.
- He treats others the way he would like to be treated.
- He shows respect for others, especially those who are in subservient positions.
- He doesn't broadcast the mistakes of others.
- He doesn't take advantage of the mistakes of others.
- He knows that the way something is accomplished is as important, or sometimes more important, than the end product.
- He does what is right even when no one is watching.
- He shows humility, especially in the face of accomplishment and compliments.
- He does not live by the saying, "Do as I say and not as I do."

Wouldn't you want a father who had all those qualities and more? Would that contribute to your happiness to have him as your father?

Choose integrity for a blessed legacy.

I was blessed to have a father who showed integrity. Let me give you two examples. I remember going camping with the family and often as a member of a Boy Scout troop of which my father was the Scout

Master. When it was time to break camp he would say: "Let's leave this campsite better than we found it. My experience was that most people did not have that philosophy.

Another time he and I were doing a concrete project at the church he was attending. I remember him saying that this is God's house and I want to do this job at least as good as I would do it at my own home or better. That meant putting in more time to take care of details. I knew we were most likely the last to leave to make sure things were cleaned up and finished. I didn't appreciate that when I was young, but now it screams of integrity and I am proud that he showed that example to me. Integrity isn't always popular but it is always needed.

Why are his children blessed? There are too many reasons to give today but let me give some that affected my life. You will have your own list. Use it to say thank you to your Father if he is available.

1. They live in the realm of respect rather than contempt. Duplicity breeds inconsistencies, anger and contempt. Children of a father with integrity have less stumbling blocks and frustrations from hypocritical parenting. Many families have a lot of anger due to hypocrisy. Anger is often the seedbed for all kinds of wounds and ultimately can fuel relational walls of contempt.
2. Love is felt and needs are met. Parental responsibilities to nurture relationships are taken seriously and performed daily. There is great satisfaction in knowing that someone significant loves you, accepts you and is willing to sacrifice for you. Incidentally, that is how the heavenly Father is to His children.
3. They have a godly moral code that presents a clear path of right and wrong. They have helpful criteria in their moral decision making process. They have been taught and have established relational support to help process ethical issues.
4. Conflicts are resolved due to making things right. Relationships have peace and harmony because tensions are resolved and forgiveness is granted.
5. They experience security that comes from a life of integrity, reliability, and consistency. They feel secure and protected because they are not in fear of being found out regarding secret sins.
6. The value of selflessness is shown and the destruction of selfishness is taught. There is great joy in doing for others and not expecting anything in return.

There are many more reasons that could be given. To have a father who has integrity is a great blessing that will multiply into many times of happiness and inner satisfaction. I know it has in my life.

So we have been learning an important truth today: Choose integrity for a blessed legacy.

A good question to ask now would be:

What are some things that assault a man's integrity? Does integrity have enemies? Yes! Let's look at some of them.

- An unwillingness to be a growing disciple of Christ. What is a Christian disciple? It is a believer who lovingly follows Christ and intentionally helps others follow Him. God's intention for Christ is that He would be our earthly example to follow. He is someone who experienced life and knows our temptations to go astray. Yet He was victorious and wants to help us be as well.
- An unbelieving culture that elevates self and demotes God. We are assaulted daily with messages that take us down unhealthy, sinful paths. Temptations abound to neglect godly pursuit and live like the crowd.
- Temptations of thought that say your choices don't matter. The truth is choices always matter when integrity is at stake. Remember, every step we take moves us in a direction. But is it the right direction?

- Temptations of thought that say no one will know or find out. God always knows and others will in time.
- An unwillingness to deal with spiritual and relational challenges and problems. All of us has the capacity to choose. And with God's help we can choose profitably.
- Taking the easy way that indulges the flesh and makes excuses for issues that should be changed. What's easy is not always what's best.
- Believing the end justifies the means. It never does because someday this gift that God gives us called "life" will be called into accountability. What then? Please remember this: Integrity is forged by our reactions to temptation and designated through the eyes of evaluation. And in a family there are many eyes.

Choose integrity for a blessed legacy.

Fathers, to a large extent, the happiness of your children is greatly affected by your ability to live a life of integrity.

Henry Bosch told the following story a number of years ago in a copy of Our Daily Bread (Source: Our Daily Bread, Henry G. Bosch, April, 15, 1998).

Here is what he said in his own words.

As a schoolboy, I worked with my father during the summer months. Each morning we stopped to pick up the early edition of the newspaper at a small grocery store.

One morning when we got to work, my father found that by mistake he had taken two newspapers instead of one. He first thought of paying the man the extra price the next morning, but then after a moment's consideration he said, "I had better go back with this paper. I don't want the man at the store to think I'm dishonest." He got in his car, drove back to the store, and returned the paper.

About a week later, someone stole money from the grocery store. When police pinpointed the time it occurred, the grocer remembered only two people being in the store at the time—and one was my father. The grocer immediately dismissed my father as a suspect, saying, "That man is really honest. He came all the way back here just to return a newspaper he took by mistake." The police then focused their investigation on the other man, who soon made a full confession. My father's honesty made a big impression on that non-Christian storeowner, and on me.

Such is the reputation of a person with integrity.

To be a person of integrity means to be someone who is completely honest, trustworthy, reliable and dependable, whether others are watching or not.

What do I do if my integrity has been damaged?

1. Confess your wrongs to God and others. The apostle Paul said he sought to live his life so that he would have a clear conscience before God and man (Acts 24:16). To be human is to make mistakes and do wrong things. It is when we are not willing to own them that we lose respect from others and show others that we do not have integrity. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is say to your wife or child that you messed up when you got angry and yelled at them. When you confess your wrongs humility is seen. Confession is evidence that you have a deep

understanding of the harm you have done. This is hard to do, but it is also characteristic of someone with integrity.

2. Know that it will take determination and effort to create integrity. You will need to work on specific weaknesses in order to have specific change. Being diligent to make changes shows that you care about what God cares about and how your actions affect others. It is easy to not be a person of integrity – just do what feels good all the time. That is exactly what our carnal nature urges us to do.
3. Know that it will take time to create an integrity reputation – but it will be worth it. Take it one circumstance, one day at a time. Even if someone important to you never admits your attempts to be a person of integrity, God sees it and He will ultimately bless you for your righteous behavior.

What if you look back on your relationship with your father and there was a lack of integrity? May I give you few suggestions?

1. Don't live in the past and blame your parent. There may be a lot that you do not know. Allow God to assess a person's life and give just outcomes. That is what a person of integrity would do.
2. You can learn from that type of example and determine to rise above that experience. Let it motivate you to be someone who is known for behavior that translates into a reputation of integrity. You get to make your own choices about the type of person you are going to be. And with God's help, no matter who you are, you can develop a reputation of a person who lives with integrity.
3. Look for father figures whom God has put into your life to fill in the gaps. This could be a neighbor, a teacher, a pastor and youth worker, another family member, a friend or just anyone who has exhibited integrity and it rubbed off on you. God places these people into our lives and we should thank God for them. It would also be appropriate to let that person know how they have positively influenced your life.

Choose integrity for a blessed legacy.

The story is told of an ancient Roman army tradition. When an officer would inspect each of his men, the soldier would acknowledge his superior by striking the breastplate of his armor with his right fist and then shout "Integritas," or Latin for integrity. The officer would listen to the tone of the breastplate metal that was produced by this action. Since the breastplate protected the heart, it was vital that the armor was strong and gave a certain sound signifying metal strength or integrity. The lesson was obvious, if you want to be the safest you can in battle, it is the integrity of your armor that will protect your heart. This principle is reflected spiritually by a verse in the Bible that every Christian should know. It is found in Proverbs 4:23 - it says: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." And by spiritual extension, your heart and integrity has a connection that is undeniable.

Action Steps

1. Decide today to be person of integrity. Fathers and Grandfathers – be engaged and grow in God's standards of righteousness, stay the course if you are living by integrity. Father's to be – take seriously who you are becoming. Right now you are laying the groundwork for being a great father or a lousy father. And you can leave a legacy of blessing to those God has entrusted to your influence.
2. Submit to growing as an intentional disciple of Jesus Christ. This starts by accepting Christ as your Savior and responding to Gods call to look at your soul's need of forgiveness. Nothing will

make you happier than to know that you are right with God and destined to be in His family forever. It is strengthened by daily Bible study, participating in groups and church attendance. Maybe it is time to commit to be discipled by a mature believer through our Intentional Discipleship ministry. Submit to growing as an intentional disciple of Jesus Christ and be intentional in integrity growth.

3. Make things right with God and people. If sin has damaged your integrity, humbly confess your sins and shortcomings to God and the people you have failed. Accept forgiveness and repair your reputation by making things right and growing in God's grace. It will set you above the crowd as God exalts you because of your humility.
4. Follow the Golden Rule in your relationships. Jesus said to do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Luke 6:31). This will create integrity and help your reputation to be godly.
5. Give thanks to God and others who have shown and taught you integrity. This could be a father, a husband, a wife, a friend, a spiritual leader and maybe even one of your own children. There will come a day on this earth where you will not have the opportunity to tell someone how they have positively influenced your life.

So, I hope today, you will choose integrity for a blessed legacy.