

# Integrity



LEADERS & STAFF



# Integrity

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## INTEGRITY

## Leader's Guide

How to use “Integrity” by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

Welcome to *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training*. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of *Leadership Resources at Christianity Today*, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* is not just another program. Each theme contains materials on the topic you choose—no tedious program to follow. The materials work when you want, where you want and the way you want them to. It's completely flexible and easy to use.

You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with board members or with other committees or groups of leaders. *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* at the beginning of a board meeting or committee meeting:

**1. Select a learning tool.** In this theme of “Integrity,” you'll find multiple types of handouts from which to choose:

- ◆ Bible study
- ◆ case study
- ◆ activities
- ◆ interview
- ◆ devotionals
- ◆ resources
- ◆ assessment tools
- ◆ how-to articles
- ◆ retreat plan

**2. Select a handout.** Suppose, for example, you want your board or church to assess character and leadership. You could select one of three assessments in this theme: “True Traits of Leadership” (p. 6), “3 Marks of Greatness in God's Kingdom,” (p. 7), or “Facing a Tough Decision with Integrity” (p. 8). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

**3. Photocopy the handout.** Let's say you selected “True Traits of Leadership.” Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

**4. Prepare for the discussion.** We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

**5. Lead the discussion.** Most handouts can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes (except the Bible study, which may take longer). Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at [www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com).

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## INTEGRITY

**Lead Yourself First***The public impact of your private life.*

1 Timothy 3–4; 1 Samuel 2

**Read** 1 Timothy 3–4; 1 Samuel 2**Reflect**

At the beginning of his first letter to Timothy, Paul urges the young leader to “fight the good fight, keeping the faith and a good conscience” (1 Tim. 1:18, 19). It was important to Paul that Timothy’s personal life of faith and practice be consistent with his public life as a leader. Failure to exercise self-leadership could result in serious failure as a leader.

“A potential leader must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control” (3:4). In essence, Paul is saying that if a leader cannot effectively lead his own life and household, what business does he have offering leadership to the church? It is a principle that seems almost ridiculous in its simplicity. And yet today we are told that the way a person conducts his or her personal life has little or nothing to do with the ability to provide leadership on a broader scale.

*Question: Name some examples of leaders in business or politics whose personal life does not measure up to biblical leadership principles. How does our tolerance for their behavior affect our attitude toward church leaders?*

Paul goes on to instruct Timothy that he should discipline himself for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7–8). Paul is not suggesting that Timothy can become godly through the sheer exercise of personal discipline, for that is the work of the Holy Spirit. However it is through personal discipline that we are positioned to allow the Holy Spirit to do his sanctifying work more effectively and consistently in us.

Paul encourages Timothy to live his life in such a way that no one can look down on him and question his leadership (4:12). He says, “Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all.” Finally he says, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things” (4:15), thereby addressing both the need for faithful, effective self-leadership as well as faithful public leadership and teaching.

*Question: How can we be so absorbed in living well that our progress is evident to all? Name some examples.*

In 1 Samuel 2 we read the disturbing story of a spiritual leader who failed to exercise self-leadership and suffered severe loss as a result. In spite of stern warnings, the aging Eli was only too willing to ignore areas of personal behavior that he felt didn’t directly impact his leadership as priest. However, God places more value on the life of the leader than on his practice of leadership. Ultimately, because of Eli’s sloppy personal life, God removed him from leadership and brought discipline on his entire family (vv. 31–33).

The Bible repeatedly teaches that the behavior of leaders who fail to exercise leadership over their emotions and actions almost always affects the organizations and people they lead. Moses’ failure to control his emotions when he impetuously struck the rock rather than speaking to it as God instructed had serious repercussions. So did Solomon’s lavish lifestyle. His violation of the commands in Deuteronomy 17 and his selfish taxing of the people of Israel had a negative impact on his son and eventually led to a divided kingdom. At the same time, we have the examples of Esther, Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, Paul, and many others whose lives bore the fruit of effective self-leadership.

—SAMUEL D. RIMA. Adapted from *Leading from the Inside Out*. Used by permission of Baker Books, a division of Baker Book House Company, copyright © 2000. All rights to this material are reserved. Materials are not to be distributed to other web locations for retrieval, published in other media, or mirrored at other sites without written permission from Baker Book House Company. <http://www.bakerbooks.com>.

**Discuss**

1. No one’s family life is perfect. When do difficulties mean that a person is not prepared to lead at church?
2. What other kinds of issues could disqualify a person for church leadership?
3. We are to forgive a person’s sin 70 times 7, yet also hold standards for leaders. How can we do both? If we wrote a policy for reinstating a fallen leader, what would that include?

## INTEGRITY

## Who Is Right for the Team?

*What to look for in a church leader.*

1 Timothy 3; Titus 1

*When it's time to nominate or select church leaders, what should you look for? Here are the inner qualifications necessary to function as a church leader, according to Samuel D. Rima, author of *Leading from the Inside Out: The Art of Self-Leadership* (Baker, 2000) and pastor of Central Baptist Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.*

### What qualifications are necessary for serving as a board member or elder?

If you look closely at what Paul says in 1 Timothy 3, the qualifications for being a church leader are almost exclusively character traits. The only leadership skill is the ability to teach; everything else has to do with management of one's inner life. So the primary requirement for being a church leader has got to be personal character development.

### What attributes do you look for in a potential church leader?

1. *A vibrant spiritual relationship with Christ.* It's very difficult serving with someone who is supposedly giving spiritual leadership yet is personally out of touch with the Lord.
2. *Desire to serve.* Too often we have to cajole someone to serve as a church leader. Instead, we should look for someone who has a genuine desire to serve, even if he isn't sure he's up to doing the job.
3. *Self-control.* If you can't manage your relationship with your wife or children, how can you begin to manage relationships as complex as those in the church? You must lead your own life well before you begin to lead others.
4. *A good reputation.* A church leader has to live a life that's above reproach. Others should speak well of him and what he has done.
5. *Hospitality.* A leader should be warm and welcoming to others.
6. *Gentleness.* A good board member isn't cantankerous or demanding always to be right. He's willing to listen and learn from others.



**SAMUEL D. RIMA**

*You must lead your own life well before you begin to lead others.*

### What personality characteristics are liabilities for a board member?

Someone who talks about himself a lot is difficult to work with on a board. So is someone who can't make commitments, or who makes them and can't meet them. Finally, a person who is inflexible—someone who is so convinced of a position that, in effect, he says, "If you don't agree with me, you don't agree with the Bible"—makes discussion difficult on a board.

### Have you ever chosen a board member who seemed qualified but who didn't work out?

Oh, yes. The pressures of ministry in a local church can bring out the worst in a person, especially if he has unresolved inner issues. Some problems that can emerge:

- ◆ *Back-alley ambushing.* Even if everyone on the board doesn't agree with a decision, once it's made, all should publicly support the decision. Some board members so need to be liked, however, that they tell people in the congregation, "Well, you know, I voted against that. I thought it was a bad decision." That creates significant problems for the rest of the board.
- ◆ *Scene stealing.* Some board members can be agreeable until you get to an area that's really important to them. Then they become obnoxious. For example, they may say, "If you guys go ahead with this, then I quit—and I'm going to tell everyone in the church why." Creating such a scene is manipulative; it may make others pull back from making a decision just to ease the tension. ➤

## Who Is Right for the Team? *continued*

- ◆ *Constitutional defending.* Some board members seem more ready to follow the church constitution than the Bible. For example, if the constitution says all full-time ministry staff must be voted on by the congregation, and you ask the board to approve a person to work three-quarters time, a person may say, “We can’t do that because the constitution says. . .” People like this fall back on procedural tactics rather than just coming out and saying they don’t agree with the decision.

### **Have you ever had to ask a board member to resign? What is the best way to do that?**

We had to ask an elder to resign because of long-standing, severe pornography addiction. His wife came to me and said she was cleaning the garage and found a huge batch of pornographic videos. She asked that her husband be taken off the board. Another elder and I confronted the man and asked him to step down. To help him save face, we said he could say he was resigning because of personal, family reasons. A few weeks later, the wife began telling other board wives that I had never liked her husband and had forced him off the board. I then had to go to the board and the congregation explaining what had happened.

Thinking back, we should have gone from the start to the board and the congregation and explained the entire situation. You’ve got to communicate honestly, not with cover-ups and euphemisms.

You should also have a procedure in place for restoring fallen leaders. When people see the proper approach being taken, it builds trust. Then, when a person is asked to step back into leadership, people have the confidence that the church has dealt straight with them, and when the church says the leader is fit to return, he is.

### **How do values shape us as leaders?**

My grandfather’s behavior puzzled me as a child. I always wondered as we sat in his small house on the Spokane Indian Reservation, which was overcrowded with secondhand, cobbled-together furniture, why Grandpa always seemed to be fixing something old. When I asked my Dad, “Why is Grandpa like that?” he’d say, “That’s just how Grandpa is.”

Today I realize that Grandpa’s odd behaviors were driven by deeply held personal values that were forged in the crucible of the Great Depression. The same is true for church leaders. The values we hold have been shaped by our past experiences, so it is essential that we be able to clearly identify and articulate our unique values. This minimizes the potential for chaos, disruption, and possible demise of an organization that can result when there is a conflict between our values and the organization we lead.

### **What do you value most in a board member?**

One of the first things I did when I came to this church was tell the staff and board that what I valued most in them was loyalty and honesty. If I find out that people are gossiping and talking behind one another’s backs in an inappropriate, unbiblical way, it’s grounds for immediate dismissal. There’s no way to conduct business and honor God as leaders if someone is disloyal or dishonest. It just bleeds into everything. You must be able to trust one another.

### **Discuss**

1. How did you come to serve in your ministry role? What caused you to take on this responsibility?
2. What are some core values you have regarding family, work, finances, personal health, and the sharing of information? How do those values affect your ministry?
3. When you think about possible board members, what qualities are important to look for?

**INTEGRITY**

# True Traits of Leadership

*10 characteristics of a growing leader.*

Matthew 25:14–30; Titus 1:7–9

	Very true of Me	Usually true	Somewhat true	Not true of me
<b>1. Comfortable with themselves.</b> They have accepted their uniqueness and are not trying to portray an image. You'd be impressed by their confidence and humility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2. Humble.</b> They don't talk humbly, they are humble. They have no hint of false humility. Their confidence is in their calling. When God calls leaders, he equips them with gifts and opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3. Intellectually curious and wise.</b> They have an intellectual curiosity that keeps them current, yet possess wisdom born of scriptural principles that keeps them wise. They use their intelligence to serve others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4. Mindful of accountability to God.</b> They have a keen sense of personal relationship with God, both in doing his will and ultimately in being judged by him. Their goal is to hear, "Well done, good and profitable servant." Like other servants in the parable, they expect God to ask them about their profitability to him, not their personal enjoyment or celebrity status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5. Anonymous.</b> These leaders seem to delight in anonymity. They don't seek honors or take time to do activities just for recognition. They quickly give any honor or recognition to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6. Build vision carefully and with others.</b> Their vision is grown over time, not impetuously arrived at by some special "3 a.m. revelation" from God. They understand the power of genuine consensus in a shared vision that people recognize as having come from God. They never mandate vision on their organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7. Run a tight ship.</b> Their organization is exceptionally lean. These spiritual leaders select associates according to gifts and passion, knowing that work delegated to such people needs little supervision, only coordination to move the vision forward. They are anxious for others to get the credit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>8. Expect concrete results.</b> Leaders very specifically define the intended accomplishments. These leaders are not interested in maintaining a program. If there's no wheat coming out of the thresher, they shut it off.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>9. Creative thinkers.</b> Their minds range outside of the box. Knowing what they are trying to accomplish, they are able to see opportunities as well as problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>10. Continually renewed.</b> They have an unmistakable freshness to their lives, as if the Spirit is continually pouring power into them. They seem to have a deep spring of joy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—FRED SMITH SR. Adapted from *Leading with Integrity* (Bethany, 1999). Used with permission.

**Discuss**

1. Which of these traits are my strengths? What areas need strengthening for me? For our team? What can we strategically implement to improve in this area?
2. How do these traits compare with those in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:7–9)?

## INTEGRITY

## 3 Marks of Greatness in God's Kingdom

*Note what Jesus measures.*

Matthew 5:19; 18:1–4

**1. Obedience.** In Matthew 5:19, Jesus addresses greatness in his kingdom by saying, “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” We can’t quantify this measurement in the annual church report or list it on our resumes, yet Jesus commands us to anchor our ministries in personal obedience. So ask yourselves:

♦ *How do I strive for personal obedience?*

Obedience to God is not just nice; it is critical. I now experience great satisfaction when, for example, I handle a difficult person in a biblically obedient manner. A significant work is resisting an inroad of moral compromise known only to me.

♦ *In what ways can I perpetuate obedient behavior?*

Jesus says the way to do this is “teaching these commands.” How can I help train genuine disciples who obey Scripture’s demands in their personal lives, their homes, and their service for God?

**2. Humility.** In the church we feel the tension between the demands of confident leadership and the need for a humble spirit. Can we truly lead and yet cultivate humility? We know the answer is yes, but the challenge is how. Some questions to answer:

♦ *In what ways do I let self-pity masquerade as humility?*

Obviously, humility does not mean abdicating our leadership abilities or belittling our unique gifts. When humble Moses pleads with God to be excused from leadership, God rebukes his thinly veiled self-pity as unbelief. The larger hurdle for us is usually not humility without leadership, but leadership without humility.

♦ *In what ways do I fail to give appropriate credit to others?*

Usually, my humility is most threatened by how I handle affirmation. Do I offer it as praise to God?

♦ *How do I handle failure?*

Peter Marshall said, “Lord, when we are wrong, make us willing to change, and when we are right, make us easy to live with.” This reality humbles me, makes me listen better, and encourages me to be gentle with others who fail.

**3. Servanthood.** If obedience is our motive and humility our attitude, then serving must be our action. We are tempted to view others as existing to benefit and serve us. Ask yourself how you can be a true servant. Some suggestions:

- ♦ Come to help on a church workday.
- ♦ Tidy a beleaguered Sunday school teacher’s classroom.
- ♦ Run the sound system for the soloist rehearsing for worship.
- ♦ Do something for the Lord that is unseen and uncredited.

—TIM BOWMAN

### Discuss

1. Read Matthew 5:19 and 18:1–4. What does Jesus teach about obedience, humility, and servanthood?
2. Describe some ways that leaders you know have exhibited true servanthood. What makes those actions truly significant in the eyes of Jesus?
3. In which of these areas would you most like to grow?



## INTEGRITY

## Facing a Tough Decision with Integrity

*When facing a difficult choice, ask yourself 4 questions.*

James 1:5; 3:13–18

*At times, every church leader must make a difficult decision that will affect others—and the life of the church. Will it be a decision of integrity? Unclear motives could cloud one's ability to make the right choice. It may be helpful to pass potential decisions through an ethical screen that asks the following questions:*

- 1. Is this for the glory of God, or does it simply enhance my self-interest?** The first commandment to have no other gods besides God is probably the toughest of the ten. We like to worship the one wearing our wingtips. Truthfully answering this question often means wading through a pool of our own rationalizations, but it's worth it.
- 2. Is this the best for others, and will it render no harm?** In Ephesians 5:21, Paul offers a summary of how Christians ought to treat one another: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." That principle, which is the basis for love in marriage and the church, is difficult because in both arenas we run against conflicting wills. Yet as we look at Christ, we notice that every decision he made was based on this principle: What is best for them?
- 3. Does my best response reflect the highest moral and ethical standards?** In Charles Sheldon's classic, *In His Steps*, people decide to make their choices by what Jesus would do in the situation, and the results are radical. Measured against what Jesus would do, our rationalizations and petty decisions look little and petty, as well they should. We can do worse than to ask, "Is God receiving the best of me?"
- 4. Does this decision hold up to public scrutiny?** Is it something I'd be proud to let anyone know? This "bright-light principle" wards off shady dealings much like a night-light keeps monsters out of the nursery. How eager are we to autograph our decisions? Couples who live together before marriage know the awkwardness of divulging their living arrangements while couples who are married return to the same address and bed with the full endorsement of everyone. Any moral decision that can't be publicly proclaimed is probably worth a second thought.

Ethics—no one can do this for us. Only we, with the power of the Holy Spirit, can chart our own ethical course and hold ourselves on it. The experiences and observations of others tell us where not to go, but the tiller is in each of our hands. How we steer makes the difference between shipwreck and delivering the goods at the final destination.

—JAMES D. BERKLEY

### Discuss

1. Recall a situation in which you had to make a hard decision. What were the circumstances, and how did you handle it?
2. What do the passages from James tell us about making good decisions?
3. As a group, what decision are we facing that these questions could help solve?

## The Cost of Bending the Board Your Way

*His case won in the board but lost in church—now what?*

Proverbs 15:22

**The Case** While looking over the worship-attendance numbers of church, a board member noted that the service would soon be more than 80 percent full. According to church growth statistics, that was a mandate for a third service. Liking the idea, he presented a case to the rest of the board, recommending Sunday morning services be increased to two. He twisted a few arms and finally managed to convince the board.

Within a couple of months of trying the new schedule, the strain of three services became apparent. It was difficult to find people to pull off each service—ushers, greeters, lay readers, and so on. It was especially hard on the choir.

Feeling responsible, the board member confided to a friend, “Bob, I made a mistake.”

Bob responded almost too quickly, “You really did!”

How should this board member—and the full board respond?

- What Would You Do?**
- ◆ Is it best to keep quiet and let things work out in their own time, or should the board member who prompted the second worship service raise the issue once more with the board?
  - ◆ Should he admit that he may have been wrong to the board as well as the congregation?

**What Happened** The board member reviewed his case and realized he hadn’t done enough homework. His growth projections were a couple of years premature. He went to the board and admitted he had made a mistake. It was his blunder, not theirs.

Some say we shouldn’t talk about our failures unless they are moral ones, and even then only discreetly. They argue that people who really need to know we failed probably already do. The best move is to make steps to correct the problem.

This leader disagrees. If we’re going to announce our success, we should be willing to admit when we’ve made a big mistake. Nothing can hurt our credibility more as a leader than an inability to admit we are wrong. It’s nice to always be right, but it’s not reality.

Depending on one’s personality and the nature of the church we serve, the tension between living out a leadership role and being genuine will be played out differently. The decision hinges on the answer to this question: “Which will better enhance the ministry of Christ in the church?” When we seek to answer that question, our reservations about playing the role diminish, our enthusiasm for authenticity pales, and the glory of Christ better shines.

— BEN PATTERSON. Adapted from *Deepening Your Ministry Through Prayer and Personal Growth* (Moorings, 1996). Used with permission.

- Discuss**
1. Many people in a congregation wouldn’t directly challenge a board about a decision it made concerning a new service. But they might “vote with their feet.” What are some ways they’d do this?
  2. What can protect a board from being unduly influenced by one or two highly persuasive individuals?

## Free to Be Human

*God's power is made perfect in our weakness.*

1 Kings 19:1–19; Jonah 1:1–3

**Read** *“The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.’ But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord” (Jonah 1:1–3).*

**Comprehend** Christians have always struggled with grace. It’s far easier for us to accept the reality that a holy God hates our sin than it is for us to believe that he can use flawed instruments to fulfill his perfect design. For some reason, we’re reluctant to believe he loves us, forgives us, and truly wants what’s best for us, even when we sin.

I’m amazed at how often I meet Christians who, once I get to know them, seem to believe that God isn’t really on their side and that he’s actually against them. They doubt that God really has good things in mind for them. Practically speaking, they believe they still have to earn his favor.

The Bible goes to great lengths to teach a different truth. I think of Elijah, “a man of like passions as we are,” who ran from his enemy Jezebel. Yet when Elijah admitted his fears, God listened and used him powerfully. I think of Jonah, whom God had to put through drastic situations just to get him in the right ministerial vicinity. Yet God used bitter, reluctant Jonah to save an entire nation. I think of Paul’s self-seeking contemporaries mentioned in Philippians 1. They were preaching the gospel out of unworthy motives and were causing Paul distress; yet he acknowledged they were being used by God to spread the Good News.

Whether from the experience of individuals like Charles Spurgeon or the examples of biblical characters, we’re all confronted with tension between the pursuit of holiness and our humanity. We struggle, and often we fall. But we’re not alone. Nothing we say or think or do surprises God, nor does it alter his love for or commitment to us. Rather than precluding our ability to be used by God, our flaws seem almost to be requirements for great service.

“My power is made perfect in weakness,” the Lord told Paul (2 Cor. 12:9), who responded, as we should, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me...for when I am weak, then I am strong.” Except for Jesus Christ, God has always used flawed instruments. Always.

This is not an excuse to sin, of course. God calls us to holiness and expects us to mature in it, but he recognizes the stuff of which we’re made—he did the making, after all. He gives us the freedom to be human, and he usually chooses to display his power through our weakness, not our strength.

—JAY KESLER. Adapted from *Being Holy, Being Human* (Word, 1988). Used with permission.

- Discuss**
1. What do we learn about God’s character in his interaction with Jonah?
  2. How have you seen God use you in your weakness?
  3. Do you agree that often Christians seem to believe God isn’t really on their side? How can we break free of that kind of thinking?

## A Prayer for Integrity

*Go to the source of your purity and hope.*

Psalm 25:21; Psalm 41:12

**Read** *“May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you” (Psalm 25:21).*

**Comprehend** You made me, and you know me better than I know myself. Make certain that my personal character is always consistent with the leadership role I must fill. I want my leadership role to make me a better person. Only you can do this in me.

You know how I want people to agree with me and believe in me. It is so easy for me to say what others want to hear instead of what I honestly feel or believe. It is so natural for me to commit before I am positive I can deliver because someone needs something and I want to give it. Oh, God, set your Spirit at the door of my mouth, and guard what I say. Keep me honest and realistic.

Lord, in our markets, image is everything. My own image as a leader is a highly visible part of our organizational image. So often I am what people know about our organization, and they read the fine print of what they see in me. If I do not seem genuine to them, they will assume the organization is not genuine either. Protect me from even the slightest fault of acting out of character.

Lord, I am not a leader every moment, but I am myself every moment. Those I lead depend on my integrity. Do not let me ever embarrass them, not as their leader and not as the real me inside the leader role. Make them safe in their dependence on me.

Don't let the fame and visibility that go with this leadership role fool me into forgetting the difference between myself and my role. Don't let me make the blunder of needing to be a celebrity. But by your grace, God, I would really love to be a genuine hero. I long to make a great difference in people's lives. I want to walk away someday and know that together we did something special and that we all became better people in the process. You can give the celebrity to someone else who needs it, God. Show me what I have to do to be an invisible hero, and empower me to do it.

God, you are absolutely who you claim to be. Keep me true to myself.

From: *Leadership Prayers*

By: Richard Kriegbaum © 1998

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- Discuss**
1. Which part of this prayer was especially meaningful to you?
  2. What is the relationship between hope and a pure life, according to Psalm 25:21 and 41:12?
  3. Describe some ways we can help each other live with integrity.

**Pray** After a few moments of reflection, pray this prayer, perhaps having different people pray each paragraph. Then pray for one another.

## Channel Markers for Integrity

*Questions that keep us from shipwreck.*

Matthew 5:14–16; 1 Peter 1:3–11

### 1. Does my motive have integrity?

Integrity starts with motive. I can't be totally honest, for I am sinful, but I can avoid being dishonest. Dishonesty is a decision. Rationalization does more to pollute our integrity of motive than any other thing. Rationalization attempts to excuse our lack of integrity.

### 2. Am I ego-driven or responsibility-motivated?

When the chairman of planning for a church asked the pastor if there were any limitations to the planning, the man said, "The church cannot be moved during my lifetime." His ego superseded the good of the organization. A leader must ask, "Is this decision based on my ego or my sense of responsibility?"

### 3. Do I want the truth?

Truth demands that I know and love it for its own sake. That requires that I have an ever-expanding understanding of truth and an open mind to discern truth with intellectual integrity, yet hold to the sure proposition that all human truth is flawed. The only perfect truth is the revealed truth.

### 4. Am I the pump or the pipe?

In Jim May's book, *In His Place*, he asks the question, "Are you working for God or is he working through you?" We are not to be volunteers, selecting our service for God, but dedicating, letting God select our service.

### 5. Does my will control my feelings?

One time my mother was so sick she had to put chairs around the kitchen so she could fall from one to the other while she prepared meals for her family. Leadership demands a strong will to do what needs doing.

### 6. Is grace real for me?

The very Scripture that makes me know my guilt lets me know God's grace. By refusing grace, we play God and punish ourselves. God's grace brings freedom.

### 7. What is my source of joy?

Joy is a result of seeing God's power work. Often this joy comes during times of great temptation or sorrow. Joy is more than pleasure; it is complete adequacy.

### 8. Is my love of God growing?

Two friends and I were holding forth on our knowledge of religion. One woman was half-heartedly listening when she interrupted, "I don't understand a thing you are talking about. All I know is I love Jesus." At that moment, I would have swapped everything I knew for what I recognized as her deep love for the Lord.

### 9. Is my passion focused?

Dr. Ramesh Richard said, "First in your life, decide on your passion. What is your first love? If you have multiple passions, you'll be ripped to pieces internally, resulting in a fragmented, random life. If anything other than the Lord Jesus Christ is your first love, you will fall into idolatry." Christ is the focus of passion, insuring integrity of leadership.

—FRED SMITH SR. Adapted from *Leading with Integrity* (Bethany, 1999). Used with permission.

## Discuss

1. Which questions hit you most? Why?
2. How do we grow in love for Christ? What characteristics (2 Pet. 1:3–11) do you most want to develop?
3. As we seek to grow in character, what hope do we derive from this passage?

## INTEGRITY

## What to Do When You've Blown It

*How to make the best of a bad decision.*

1 Peter 5: 8–10; 1 John 1:5–10

### 1. Recognize the Failure

In *Where Is God When It Hurts?* Philip Yancey wrote about a peculiar handicap of lepers who feel no pain in the afflicted parts of their body. They can burn a leprous hand in the fire or have a toe gnawed off by a rat and never feel a thing. A cut becomes abscessed or an injury critical because a leper has no sensation of pain. Much of the disfigurement of leprosy comes not from the disease but from the tragic side effect of painlessness. Pain, then, is a blessing.

Likewise, minor errors, when unattended, soon become gross infractions. Thus, the dawning pain of failure is, for those sensitive enough to experience it, a blessed protection. We should be happy to feel bad when we fail. It's a vital safeguard for the healthy. What we do with that signal is another matter.

### 2. Claim the Failure

Harold Englund of Garden Grove Community Church quips, "When I lay an egg, I autograph it and hold it up for all to see." That's not bad advice, for it accomplishes two objectives in one stroke.

First, it keeps us from waffling. How much more constructive to say, "I've blown it!" than to hem and haw and cover one's tracks. Admitting failure begins the healing process, a process that cannot commence during mental gymnastics to avoid the blame.

Second, holding the mistake up for all to see is a masterful strategy. I don't think I am alone in my greatest fear of mistakes: I don't want them discovered. The apprehension of being caught and getting stuck with the rap is sometimes worse than the actual experience. We disarm the opponent when we expose our folly. One of the secrets of judo is to use the momentum of the attacker. You don't block the punch; you go with it. It works with confession as well. Now that I've uncovered myself, I'm clean.

Interestingly, I've found this process is usually safer. The shepherd types in the congregation often keep the vultures away. If I expose my own folly, it's hard for detractors to pounce on me. It's not only a beneficial practice, it's right. When I'm at fault, I'm on better moral footing to accept the blame rather than dodge it. People respect an honest admission of error, and if I ever get some heat, I can get on with repairing the damage.

### 3. Confess the Failure

What steps should be taken when our mistakes are sinful? No one can move beyond a sin that remains habitual. One church leader, when finally faced with the depth of his sin, gritted his teeth and left the homosexual practice cold turkey. He's celibate now, at a tremendous personal cost. When he lost everything and was alone with only his faith and resolve to sustain him, he realized he had to do what was right, not what was easy. He quit, and that quitting started him on the road to peace of mind.

The bottom line: I am accountable. Until I realize and state my accountability, I add to my mistake. But when I recognize, admit, and confess my error, I make it possible to learn and grow from it.

—JAMES D. BERKLEY

### Discuss

1. How can we resist the tendency to cover up mistakes, sins, or failures?
2. Why is it important for leaders to be willing to confess their sins to one another (1 Pet. 5:8–10)? What happens when we don't?
3. How can we encourage honesty among ourselves?

## INTEGRITY

**Tongue in Check**

*Telling the truth means keeping the story straight.*

James 3:5–7

*“Gossip is the most deadly microbe. It has neither legs nor wings,” says Morris Mandel in The Jewish Press. “It is composed entirely of tales, and most of them have stings.”*

*James certainly understood the sting of gossip when he described the tongue. People are only too willing to defame others and in our eagerness to hear the story, we sometimes fail to get the truth.*

*The following activity will help your group realize the importance of “getting the truth,” particularly in the context of board meetings. Be sure not to tell them the moral the game wishes to illustrate, as that will emerge from the game itself.*

**The Game**

Divide your group into multiple teams, with at least two people in each. Then tell one “truth” to each team, making sure the other teams cannot hear you. The “truth” should be sufficiently specific enough to spark interest but vague enough to leave room for distortion. Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ Our youth director Larry told us yesterday he is stepping down from his position. Our board suspects it may have something to do with sexual harassment.
- ◆ Our independent auditor informed our board on Tuesday that he found some problems with our accounting system.
- ◆ We’ve been asked to pray for deacon Bill’s wife because we understand she’s been seeing a therapist. She hasn’t been seen in church for weeks.
- ◆ We understand someone on the building committee threatened to quit last week.
- ◆ One of our deacons told his Sunday school class that he and his family were leaving the church. We think his kids were unhappy with the youth group.

**Play**

For about five minutes, have each team discuss the “truth” and prepare an action plan or recommended course of action for the board. Then have each team appoint a person to pass the “truth” on to the next group. Repeat the process as many times as you have teams so that each “truth” gets rotated through all the teams. Here’s how that works:

*Round 1:* All teams discuss their “truths.” Team A gets Larry “truth”; Team B auditor “truth”; Team C therapy “truth,” and so on.

*Round 2:* Person from Team A passes Larry “truth” to Team B, which discusses it, then selects a person to pass it on to the next group. In the meantime, a person from Team B passes the auditor “truth” to Team C, which discusses it and chooses a person to pass it on to Team D, and so on.

Repeat rounds until each “truth” has passed through each group.

Now gather everyone together. Have one person from each team that last discussed each “truth” present theirs to the group. Then compare each “truth” with the “truth” given at the beginning of the game.

— STEVEN GERTZ

**Discuss**

1. Was the message distorted, and if so, how? Where did it get distorted?
2. Does sketchy information like this help or hurt a board in its decision making? What really needs to be done before a board can act on such information?
3. What lessons can we draw from James about rightly handling the truth?

## INTEGRITY

## Further Exploration

*10 resources on leadership integrity.*

**LEADERSHIP JOURNAL: *Fit to Minister*.** An entire issue of this practical journal for church leaders focuses on internal qualifications of ministry. Includes outstanding articles by James MacDonald, Richard Doebler, and others. Read it online for free: [www.leadershipjournal.net](http://www.leadershipjournal.net), click on “Archives,” scroll down and click on the Summer 1999 issue.

**Being Holy, Being Human** by *Jay Kesler*. How can church leaders admit doubts, temptations, and sin without harming their ministries? This book shows how to live with the tension of living with God's call while expressing and fully enjoying one's humanity (Word Books, 1988; ISBN 091746317X).

**Leading with Integrity** by *Fred Smith Sr.* “The greatest defense of the gospel we can give is to personify it, not to argue it” is just one gem from this treasure of experienced wisdom on how to minister authentically (Bethany House, 1999; ISBN 1556619715).

**Making the Most of Mistakes** by *James D. Berkley*. From bungling a building plan to living in sinful deceit, church leaders share the facts and feelings of making those mistakes, as well as how God uses our stumbling to bring recovery and build character (Word, 1987; ISBN 0917463153).

**Leadership Jazz** by *Max DePree*. Like a jazz musician, a church leader—in voice and touch—expresses personal values and beliefs. A creative approach to who a leader must be in order to lead others (Currency Doubleday, 1992; ISBN 0385420188).

**Leading from the Inside Out** by *Samuel D. Rima*. A compelling case for the need to master the emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual aspects of your personal life before attempting to lead others (Baker, 2000; ISBN 0801091047).

**The Ascent of a Leader** by *Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath*. Performance-based skills aren't enough; true leadership also requires character. The process for integrating values like integrity, honesty, and selfless service into the fabric of our lives, organizations, and cultures (Jossey-Bass, 1999; ISBN 0787947660).

**The Heart of an Executive** by *Richard D. Phillips*. Clear, biblical lessons on leadership from the life of King David that will challenge and equip men and women to raise their aspirations and heighten the impact of their ministry (Doubleday, 1999; ISBN 0385492332).

**The Power of Character** by *Michael S. Josephson and Wes Hanson*. Perspectives on character and its influence on life, family, work, and society from a distinguished and diverse group of Americans, including Charles Colson, Dan Rather, Stephen Covey, and Dr. Laura Schlessinger (Jossey-Bass, 1998; ISBN 0787941727).

**Transforming Christian Leadership: 10 Exemplary Church Leaders** by *Jerry C. Wofford*. Drawing from extensive knowledge in the field of management and research with clergy, Wofford argues that a transformational style of leadership modeled after Christ and rooted in strong values is central to the success of Christian ministry (Baker, 1999; ISBN 0801090938).



## INTEGRITY

## Retreat Plan

*How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of “Integrity”*

*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS expands easily into a retreat format. Here is a sample retreat schedule you may follow for the “Integrity” theme. The purpose of this retreat is to learn how to nurture godly traits in ourselves so we can lead others.*

### Friday Evening

◆ 8-8:45 P.M. **Opening Session:** Hand out copies of “Who Is Right for the Team?” the interview with Samuel D. Rima on pages 4-5, and allow time for each person to read it. Then form groups of three or four. Have each group discuss the questions at the bottom of the page. Reconvene for the last 20 minutes and have the groups share their comments and consider what that may mean for our church.

◆ 9-9:45 P.M. **Bible Study:** Begin the weekend with “Lead Yourself First,” the Bible study on page 2. Photocopy and pass out the study, or use the handout as your notes.

### Saturday Morning

◆ 9-9:45 A.M. **Devotional:** Set the tone for the day by handing out (or presenting) the devotional “Free to Be Human” (p. 10). Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page, and consider how God chooses to use our weakness to do his work in the world.

◆ 10-11:00 A.M. **Activity:** Use the activity “Tongue in Check” on page 15 to help members of the group identify some of the ways we handle (or mishandle) information.

◆ 11:15–NOON. **Assessment:** Hand out “True Traits of Leadership,” the assessment on page 6, to each participant. After everyone has read and completed the assessment, consider how many traits we can, by grace, claim as our own, and which need further work.

◆ NOON. **Lunch.**

### Saturday Afternoon

◆ 1-2 P.M. **Final Group Session:** Close the retreat with the how-to article “What to Do When You’ve Blown It” on page 13. Have each person spend some time alone to quietly read and respond to the questions on the handout. Have the group come together to share what God has taught them about how pain can be a blessing in our walk with God. Then pray together, asking God for guidance and wisdom as you take new steps together.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.