

INTEGRITY: Living a Blameless Life

Introduction

This study focuses on a specific Old Testament word group that refers to being blameless or upright, having integrity, etc. Because of the large number of instances in which these Hebrew words are found, only part of them are included here - mainly those passages in which the specific word "integrity" is found in at least some of the English translations that are commonly available. (More information about these Hebrew words is given after the outline.)

Some comments about the outline

- 1) Instead of using a specific translation, a summary or paraphrase of the verses is given. Feel free to compare what is said with the translation of your choice.
- 2) Any time the concept of "integrity" is mentioned, it will be shown in *underlined italics*. If some translations use a different word or phrase, these may also be included.
- 3) A diagonal slash ("/") will be used when a single concept is stated in two or three ways. Some examples are: "*integrity / blameless*" or "live/walk."

How to benefit from this Old Testament study

Though many of the passages in this outline are statements or commands that are directly related to specific Old Testament individuals or groups, the very presence of these passages teaches us much about the concept of integrity. A good principle that would help us to get the most benefit from the outline is this:

"Taken within context, the facts in Scripture are to influence our *thinking*, and the commands in Scripture are to influence our *actions*."

There may also be some overlap between these two types of responses, because it is impossible to totally separate what one *thinks* from what one *does*.

PART 1: The Need for Integrity

The righteous will either have integrity, or will be developing it in increasing measure.

A. The command / obligation to have integrity

We need integrity. It is always described as an obligation.

1. Abraham

Genesis 17:1 - The LORD to Abraham: Walk/live in my presence, have integrity / be blameless.

2. Solomon

1 Kings 9:4(+) - God tells Solomon to follow David's example: If you walk/live before me with integrity of heart and uprightness (as David your father did), obeying me and my word, I will establish your kingdom. (If not, the kingdom will be destroyed.)

3. People (as a group)

Joshua 24:14 - Joshua, to the people: Fear the LORD. Serve him with complete sincerity / integrity, and with faithfulness to what is true. (Get rid of the false gods your forefathers worshiped ... and serve the LORD.) [This passage refers to the nation of Israel. The New Testament expresses this obligation with different words, and applies it to *all* people.]

B. The desire / commitment to have integrity

The righteous will want to have integrity. It is their desire.

1. It is the desire of those who love the Word

Psalms 119:80 - May my heart be blameless / filled with integrity toward your decrees, so that I will not be put to shame. [NOTE: The entire Psalm expresses the attitude of the person who loves God's Word.]

2. It is the desire of the righteous person

Proverbs 20:7 - A righteous man lives/walks with integrity / a blameless life; his children are blessed.

3. Example: David

a. He wanted to have integrity

Psalms 101:2(+) - I will be careful to live a blameless life / a life of integrity -- when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with integrity / a blameless heart; I will allow nothing wicked to be placed before me.

b. He wanted to be associated with others who had integrity

Psalms 101:6 - My eyes will be watching the faithful in the land, so that they may dwell with me. The person whose life/walk is blameless / characterized by integrity will serve me.

4. Example: Job was determined to keep his integrity even if it meant enduring severe trials

Job 2:9 - His wife said to him, "Why do you insist on keeping your integrity? Curse God and die!" [He refused to do this.]

C. Examples: The presence or absence of integrity in people's lives

The examples in Sections C/D show that integrity is obtainable (though many are unwilling to do so).

1. [Job - See section "D"]

2. Noah - integrity as a lifestyle (even when no one else has it)

Genesis 6:9 - Noah was a righteous man, a man of integrity / blameless among the people who lived at that time. And he walked with God.

3. David - integrity as a leader; integrity before God

a. Integrity as a leader

Psalm 78:72 - David led them like a shepherd, with integrity of heart and with skillful hands.

b. Integrity before God (an example for Solomon to follow)

1 Kings 9:4 - ... the way David your father lived - in integrity of heart and uprightness, ...
[See also: Psalm 7:8; Psalm 26:1 - both are below, in Part II, Section C1.]

4. Abimelech (a Philistine king) - integrity in a specific area of life

a. A description of his integrity

Genesis 20:5-6 - After he almost marries Sarah (Abraham's wife), and is prevented from doing so, by God: "Didn't he (Abraham) say to me, 'She is my sister'? Didn't she (Sarah) also say, 'He is my brother'? I did this with integrity of heart / a clear conscience and clean/innocent hands." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with integrity of heart / a clear conscience. So I have kept you from sinning against me, by not letting you touch her."

b. Comment about his integrity

The passage mentions integrity in one specific area of his life. This example teaches us that even the unrighteous can have integrity in some areas of life. However, this does not mean that integrity will be a characteristic of *all* areas in their lives - especially in their relationship with God.

c. Comment about his acknowledgment of God

Abimelech's acknowledgment of God does *not* indicate that he was a follower of the God of the Bible. At that time, people believed that *many* gods existed. Abimelech would have considered the "LORD" to be Abraham's God, whereas he, a Philistine, would have had his own set of gods.

5. The people of Shechem - without integrity

a. What happened before this (background to this passage)

This "Abimelech" was a son of Gideon. He had just murdered his 70 half-brothers - all except for Jotham, who escaped. Also, he was made king by the people of Shechem.

b. A warning, because of their lack of integrity (implied)

Judges 9:16 - Jotham (the one Abimelech didn't kill) said to the people of Shechem: "If you have acted in good faith/truth and with integrity / honor, when you made Abimelech king, and if you have treated Jerub-Baal (Gideon) and his family fairly and the way he deserves..."

Judges 9:19 - "... if you have acted in good faith/truth and with integrity / honor, toward Jerub-Baal and his family, then may Abimelech be your joy, and may you be his!" (And if not, may the final outcome be the destruction of you both - Abimelech, as well as the people of Shechem.)

c. What happened after this

This was a prophetic curse of judgment. In the end, God destroyed them both (see Judges 9:56-57).

D. An in-depth look at Job's example

1. God said that Job had integrity

Job 1:1 - The introductory statement in the book: ... Job was blameless / a man of integrity. He was upright; he feared God and stayed away from evil.

Job 1:8 - The LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one else on earth like him: he is blameless / a man of integrity. He is upright; he fears God and stays away from evil."

Job 2:3 - The LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one else on earth like him: he is blameless / a man of integrity. He is upright; he fears God and stays away from evil. He still maintains his integrity, even though you provoked me to turn against him and to ruin him for no reason."

2. Job said that he had integrity

a. *In spite of what others thought*

Job 12:4 - "My friends treat me like a big joke - I, the person who used to call upon God and could expect to be answered. I am treated like a big joke - though upright and blameless / having integrity!

b. *An integrity that even God could recognize*

Job 31:6 - Let God weigh me on honest scales ("scales of justice"). He will know that I have integrity / am blameless!

3. He refused to give-up his integrity

a. *He refused to accept his wife's view, that integrity was not worth keeping, if it meant suffering*

Job 2:9 - His wife said to him, "Why do you insist on keeping your integrity? Curse God and die!" [He refused to do this - v. 10.]

b. *He was determined to never sacrifice his integrity, no matter what the cost*

Job 27:5 - I will never acknowledge you as being in the right. To my dying day, I will refuse to sacrifice my integrity. [This is a good example for us to follow!]

4. Job's "friends" claimed that Job had integrity in the past (though apparently not at the present)

a. *Background*

Job's "friends" claimed that Job was being disciplined for sin, and needed to repent. According to them, this repentance would be an expression of integrity (and the prerequisite for being healed by God).

b. *Verses*

Job 4:6 - Shouldn't your piety/fear (of God) be the basis for having confidence (before God)? Shouldn't your blameless ways / life of integrity be the basis for having hope? [They were referring to his former life of integrity, which they claimed he had abandoned.]

Job 8:20 - "Surely God does not reject a person who has integrity / leads a blameless life. Nor does he encourage the practices of the wicked." [They claimed that God's "rejection" (and punishment) of Job proved that Job belonged to the second group, the wicked.]

c. *Note*

Job would have had to *sacrifice* his integrity - to claim that he *had* sinned in ways that he hadn't - before his "friends" would have been willing to give him their approval. He would have had to *lose* his integrity in order for them to claim that he had *gained* integrity!

5. Observations about our integrity, compared to God's greatness

a. *Even the best of our ways do not provide a "benefit" to God*

Job 22:3 - Does it give the Almighty "feelings of happiness," if you are righteous? [= Does it satisfy a hidden need in God?] Does he somehow prosper, if you live a blameless life / a life of integrity? [It is true that our actions do not influence God (as though they were a bribe, or fulfilled some type of "need" in him). But this principle was being misused by Eliphaz, to "prove" that God was simply giving Job the punishment he deserved.]

b. *If we could see God, his greatness and perfection would be so overwhelming, that even a person of integrity would declare himself unfit to stand before him; the person would condemn himself!*

Job 9:20-22 - [The issue Job is contemplating: "How could I prove my innocence before God?"] Even if I was innocent/righteous, my own mouth would condemn me! If I was blameless / lived with integrity, my mouth would pronounce me guilty! I am blameless / have integrity, but why should I care? I hate my life, for the same thing happens to all. Just as I say, "God destroys both the blameless / person with integrity and the wicked (without distinction)." [Job was claiming that there is no justice - that both the innocent and the wicked are destroyed by God.]

c. *Note*

Elihu would later declare to Job that God *is* righteous and just in whatever he does. God *does* bring about justice, but not always at the time *we* want it to occur. (In Job's case, it was delayed.) He also says that God uses judgment and misfortune to expose hidden sin - something which even Job had, without knowing it. (In the end, Job was still holding on to his integrity. But at the same time, he came to see the hidden sin that was in his heart; and when he realized it, he repented.)

PART 2: Our Integrity and God

Our integrity (or lack thereof) will affect our relationship with God.

A. The need for us to have integrity

1. General statement: integrity is a requirement by God

Deut. 18:13 - You must have integrity / be blameless in your relationship with the LORD your God. (See also section "C2," below.)

2. The need for integrity when approaching the tabernacle/temple (= the place of God's special presence, at that time in history)

Psalms 15:2 - (Verse 1: Who may stay in your "tent"? Who may live on your holy mountain/hill?) He who walks with integrity / blamelessly and who does what is righteous, ... etc. (See the rest of the Psalm for more qualifications.)

3. Integrity was a requirement for *all* the people

Joshua 24:14 - Joshua to the people: Fear the LORD. Serve him with complete sincerity / integrity, and with faithfulness to what is true. (Get rid of the false gods your forefathers worshiped ... and serve the LORD.)

B. Our integrity (or lack of it) will influence the way we understand God

2 Samuel 22:26 - You reveal yourself as faithful, to those who are faithful; you reveal yourself blameless / as having integrity, to those who are blameless / have integrity...

Psalm 18:25 - You reveal yourself as faithful, to those who are faithful; you reveal yourself blameless / as having integrity, to those who are blameless / have integrity...

C. Our integrity will influence the way we will be judged by God (illustrated in statements made by David)

1. Those with integrity are willing to be judged; they have no fear of judgment (condemnation)

Psalm 7:8b - Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity.

Psalm 26:1 - Vindicate me (give me justice), O LORD, for I have lived a blameless life / life of integrity; I have trusted in the LORD, I have not wavered.

2. Those with integrity can expect to be: 1) upheld/defended by God, and 2) able to be in God's presence

Psalm 41:12 - Because of my integrity / innocence you defend me. You set me in your presence forever.

PART 3: General Statements about Integrity (Or Lack of Integrity)

As will be seen below, certain concepts tend to be associated with integrity, while others are described as incompatible, or even completely opposed to integrity.

A. Things associated with integrity (some examples)

1. Fear of God

a. A characteristic seen in Job

Job 1:1 - ... Job was blameless / a man of integrity. ... he feared God.

Job 1:8 - The LORD said... [Job] is blameless / a man of integrity. ... he fears God."

Job 2:3 - The LORD said to Satan, "[Job] is blameless / a man of integrity. ... he fears God."

b. A command for all the people

Joshua 24:14 - You must fear the Lord and serve him with sincerity / integrity and truth/faithfulness.

c. Fear of God and integrity - together a source of encouragement and hope in times of trouble

Job 4:6 - Shouldn't your fear of God be the basis of confidence (that things will turn out for the good)? Shouldn't your life of integrity / blamelessness give you reason for hope? [A good principle, but it was misapplied to Job.]

2. Uprightness (or righteousness)

a. A characteristic seen in Job (and he knew it)

Job 1:1 - ...Job was blameless / a man of integrity. He was upright; ...

Job 1:8 - [The LORD said:] he is blameless / a man of integrity. He is upright; ..."

Job 2:3 - The LORD said to Satan, "[Job] is blameless / a man of integrity. He is upright; ..."

Job 12:4 - "People treat me like a total joke, though I have integrity / am blameless and am righteous.

b. A characteristic of Noah

Genesis 6:9 - Noah was a righteous man, having integrity / blameless...

c. A requirement for the king (Solomon)

1 Kings 9:4 - You must walk before me in integrity / faithfulness of heart, and in uprightness...

d. Righteousness and integrity - the basis for vindication by God (when being attacked/opposed by the wicked)

Psalms 7:8 - Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and integrity.

e. A requirement for being able to stand in God's presence

Psalms 15:2 - (Verse 1: Who can stand in your temple / presence?) He who walks with integrity / blamelessly, and does what is righteous...

f. It is a characteristic of one who is righteous

Proverbs 20:7 - The righteous person walks in integrity / lives blamelessly...

3. Various other character traits, etc.

a. Avoidance of evil - Job

Job 1:1- ...Job was blameless / a man of integrity. He ... stayed away from evil.

Job 1:8 - The LORD said: [Job] is blameless / a man of integrity. He is upright; he ... stays away from evil."

Job 2:3 - The LORD said to Satan, "[Job] is blameless / a man of integrity. He is upright; he ... stays away from evil."

b. Walking with God - Noah

Genesis 6:9 - Noah was ... a man having integrity / who was blameless... he walked with God.

c. Obedience to God's Word - the king (Solomon)

1 Kings 9:4 - You must walk before me in integrity / faithfulness of heart, ... and do all I command, and obey all my decrees and laws.

d. Additional requirements for being able to stand in God's presence

Psalms 15:2 (+) - (Verse 1: Who can stand in your temple / presence?) He who walks with integrity / blamelessly, etc. [Several requirements (in addition to righteousness, listed above) are given in this passage: speaks the truth; does not slander or do evil to others; honors those who fear God, and despises those who are vile; keeps his promises, no matter what; does not charge interest or take bribes.]

B. Results and consequences of having integrity

1. God's favor

Proverbs 11:20 - The LORD despises those who have perverse/crooked/deviant hearts; he delights in those who have integrity / are blameless / are innocent.

2. Direction - guidance and security

a. Guided by integrity (applies to upright people)

Proverbs 11:3 - The integrity / honesty of upright/good people guides them; the twisted ways/duplicity/hypocrisy of treacherous/dishonest people will destroy them.

b. Walks securely because of integrity

Proverbs 10:9 - He who walks/lives with integrity / honestly will walk/live securely; he who follows crooked/perverse/dishonest ways will be recognized for what he is. [Compare with Genesis 6:9: With integrity, Noah walked with God.]

3. Protection - guarded, shielded, and (when needed) rescued

a. *Righteousness guards the man of integrity*

Proverbs 13:6 - Doing what is right guards/protects the person who follows integrity / honesty; wickedness destroys the sinner.

b. *Protected [also by uprightness]*

Psalm 25:21 - May integrity and uprightness protect me, because I wait (expectantly) for you.

c. *Kept safe*

Proverbs 28:18 - He who lives with integrity / honesty will be kept safe; he who follows crooked/perverse/dishonest ways will suddenly fall.

d. *Can ask for (and expect) rescue*

Psalm 26:11 - I live a blameless life / a life of integrity; so redeem/rescue me, show mercy/kindness to me.

e. *God is their shield*

Proverbs 2:7 - He reserves a treasure of wisdom for those who are upright/honest/decent; he is a shield to those who walk in blameless ways / with integrity. [Verse 8: God also guards... protects].

4. Blessings and life; not put to shame

a. *Not put to shame*

Psalm 119:80 - May my heart be blameless / filled with integrity in regard to your decrees, so that I will not be put to shame.

b. *Blessed*

Psalm 119:1 - Blessed/happy are those whose ways are blameless / filled with integrity, who live/walk by the law/teachings of the LORD.

c. *Even the person's children are blessed*

Proverbs 20:7 - A righteous person lives a blameless life / a life of integrity; happy/blessed are the children of such a person.

d. *Live in the land*

Proverbs 2:21 - For the upright people will live in the land; the blameless / those who have integrity will remain in it; (... after the wicked and treacherous people are removed from it). [Note: Though this proverb had a general application to the nation Israel (during the times when God "purified" it by judgment), its ultimate and most complete fulfillment will be in the eternal kingdom, when all traces of sin will be gone forever.]

5. Even a poor person with integrity is richly blessed

a. *More blessed than a fool*

Proverbs 19:1 - Better is a poor man who lives a blameless life / with integrity, than a fool who has perverse/dishonest/crooked lips (speech).

b. *More blessed than an evil rich person*

Proverbs 28:6 - Better is a poor man who lives a blameless life / with integrity, than a rich man whose ways are perverse/crooked/two-sided.

C. Things that are incompatible with integrity

1. Hostile attitude toward God

Job 2:9 - His [Job's] wife said to him, "Why do you insist on keeping your integrity? Curse God and die!" [He refused to do this - v. 10.]

2. Perverse in actions or heart; perverseness (twisted or distorted morally)

Proverbs 19:1 - Better is a poor man who lives a blameless life / with integrity, than a fool who has perverse/dishonest/crooked lips (speech).

Proverbs 28:6 - Better is a poor man who lives a blameless life / with integrity, than a rich man whose ways are perverse/crooked/two-sided.

Proverbs 28:18 - He who lives with integrity / honesty will be kept safe; he who follows crooked/perverse/dishonest ways will suddenly fall.

Proverbs 11:20 - The LORD despises those who have perverse/crooked/devious hearts; he delights in those who have integrity / are blameless / are innocent.

Proverbs 10:9 - He who walks/lives with integrity / honestly walks/lives securely; he who follows crooked/perverse/dishonest ways will be recognized for what he is.

3. Hypocrisy/duplicity (treacherous, dishonest people)

Proverbs 11:3 - The integrity / honesty of upright/good people guides them; the twisted ways/duplicity/hypocrisy of treacherous/dishonest people will destroy them.

4. Having a bloodthirsty attitude (results in hate for people of integrity)

Proverbs 29:10 - Bloodthirsty people hate a person who has integrity / is blameless; they seek [to kill] those who are upright.

5. Hatred for truth (results in hating those who speak truth)

Amos 5:10 - About the Israelites who had turned away from the true God: You hate the one who speaks out against evil, in court; you despise the one who speaks in truth / integrity.

6. Sinning, wicked/treacherous people

Proverbs 2:21 - For the upright people will live in the land; the blameless / those who have integrity will remain in it; (v.22 - ... after the wicked and treacherous people are removed from it).

Proverbs 13:6 - Doing what is right/upright guards/protects the person who follows integrity / honesty; wickedness destroys the sinner.

More information about the original Hebrew words

For those who are interested, here are the Hebrew words, along with the identification numbers used by Strong's concordance:

- tamiym, Hebrew 8549 - 15 of 85 verses used
- tom, Hebrew 8537 - 16 of about 25 verses used
- tamam, Hebrew 8552 - 1 of about 60 verses used
- tummah, Hebrew 8538 - 5 of 5 verses used
- tam, Hebrew 8535 - 7 of 15 verses used

Words can often be used in different ways. Because of this, some of the words in this list may have additional meanings that are not included in this study. Also, there are other Hebrew words that might occasionally be translated with the word "integrity."

The New Testament, written in Greek, does not have a word that exactly parallels this Old Testament word group. However, there are a number of concepts that are similar, such as "sincerity," "truth," a "pure heart," a "single eye," etc.