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Preface

MATTHEW PARKER SR., MA, HONORARY DOCTORATE

Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

Deuteronomy 16:16–17

In the Old Testament nation of Israel, the men gathered together three times a year to pray for the men, women, and children of the nation; to fellowship; and to share resources. That powerful example illustrates what I pray this book will be to our brothers. Many of the men who contributed to this book have played a role in my life as prayer partners, mentors, and leadership coaches . . . even in my discipline. These men helped heal me and increase my understanding of God's principles. I believe that readers of these chapters will have a similar opportunity to glean from these men what it means to be a man of God as we reflect on what it means to be a husband, father, and leader.

My life experiences are similar to many of the stories shared by these writers. My story starts November 14, 1945, when my father, with his love for my mother, Ruth Spann Parker, gave life

to me. When I was three years old, my mother died in childbirth, and my father did what he could to provide the basic needs of shelter, food, and clothing. Those simple acts laid the foundation for my future as a man, husband, and father.

In 1968, I met the late African American evangelist and thought-leader Rev. Dr. Tom Skinner, who laid critical ministry skills on the foundation my father had established: leadership, networking, and organizational development. Then in 1971, I met Dr. Lloyd Blue, who became my “father in the faith,” and with his wife, Tressie Blue, pointed me toward the next leg of my life journey. His commitment to evangelize and disciple men, especially men of African descent, became my commitment as well. I am grateful for all the men who have had an impact on my life and grateful, too, to know many of the writers in this book. I trust the book will be an encouragement to all who read it.

Introduction

LEE N. JUNE, CTS, MML, PHD
CHRISTOPHER C. MATHIS JR., MDIV, PHD

This book is aimed toward African American men but is for anyone who seeks new insights into the essence of African American Christian men across generations and our lifespan. Whether you are churched or unchurched, a professional, a lay leader, or someone who wants to explore the full range of African American male culture, this book is for you. You will find fresh insights, affirmations, support, and workable solutions that help the reader transcend the challenges of African American manhood to fulfill its rich promise for life's adversities, challenges, and opportunities.

Biblically and academically sound, this book is multifaceted. First, you hear the voices of scholars, educators, community leaders, pastors, professionals, and youth speaking to areas of life that are critical for godly success. Second, the authors, African American men and one African American woman, offer advice and uncover the essence of all that makes the Christian African American man—one who has endured hardships and made major contributions in his community, American society, and the world. The contributions of these authors and their voices are intended to fill a void in the literature that too often ignores African American men, their contributions, and their voices.

Amid the challenges still facing today's African American males in the early part of the twenty-first century, there is much hope and there are many successes. In this completely revised edition of

Men to Men (1996), Black scholars, professionals, practitioners, and youth share personal and practical insights into what it takes to succeed in all avenues of manhood, from family to faith, finances to career, and the criminal justice system to the educational setting. Whether you are a pastor, educator, counselor, lay leader, or simply someone concerned with how to apply your faith to turn life's hurdles into opportunities, this book gives you proven perspectives that can spark success and growth in your own and others' lives.

We draw on the expertise and wisdom of twenty-two individuals from a variety of fields. This includes older men, such as Dr. Lloyd Blue Sr., Dr. Henry Allen, Dr. Lee N. June, Dr. Ken Staley, Claude L. Dallas Jr., Dr. Lonnie J. Chipp III, attorney Kenneth L. McDaniels, Karl I. Bell, Rev. Joseph Williams, Dr. Michael Lyles Sr., Rev. Ron Mosby, and Rodney S. Patterson, MA. We also include younger men such as Dr. Christopher C. Mathis Jr., Rev. Michael T. Westbrook, Rev. Lenroy Jones, Dr. Kevin L. Jones, Amod Field, Michael Lyles II (joint with his wife, Kristina J. Lyles), Tim Herd, Dr. Kenneth D. Russell, Dr. Patrick L. Stearns, and Brian L. June. All share practical advice on topics of vital interest.

In-depth, biblical, encouraging, and based on twenty-first-century scholarship and personal experiences, this book shows how one can avoid the pitfalls associated with Black manhood to achieve spiritual, personal, and social prosperity. As was the first edition, this book is a companion to *Woman to Woman*, edited by Drs. Norvella P. Carter, Quinita Ogletree, and Kamala Williams with Karon Parker as consulting editor. A special thanks to Joyce M. Dinkins for her suggestions for improvement and meticulous editing of early versions of this manuscript.

Part 1: Developing Life-Enhancement Skills

To thrive as men and Christians, there are numerous areas that one must master and control. Some of these critical life-enhancement skills are discussed in this section that contains seven chapters.

Chapter 1. Integrity: A Necessity—Lee N. June, CTS, MML, PhD

The Bible tells us that the Lord orders the steps of a good man. Yet, there are many situations in which we may stray, and as a

result, our witness for God as salt and light is compromised. This chapter challenges readers to do all they can to walk upright and offers tips for doing so. Such a journey can start at an early age and continue throughout one's lifespan.

Chapter 2. Cultivating: Greatness in the Valleys of Disappointment—Henry L. Allen, PhD

Many individuals (young and old) in the Bible and in the society in which we live have had disappointments and failures. This chapter reminds us that greatness can flow from being in valleys of disappointment and can become a stepping stone for success and greatness.

Chapter 3. Stewardship: Generate Wealth with Biblical Values—Karl I. Bell, MBA

African Americans are beginning to accumulate wealth. However, too many men are still not managing their finances as well as they can and would like to. This chapter explores how one can, from a biblical perspective, accumulate and maintain wealth for oneself and future generations.

Chapter 4. Bond: With a Purpose on Purpose—Rodney S. Patterson, MA

Women typically bond with each other easier and often do so better or differently than men. But it is also critical that men of all ages form and maintain productive relationships with each other. This chapter, written by a pastor and diversity consultant expert, shares tidbits from ongoing groups and shows the difficulties and the necessary steps to bonding. It also challenges the church community to do more in this area by bonding with the purpose of eliminating racism and creating racial reconciliation.

Chapter 5. Discover: Finding Our Life's Calling—Lenroy Jones, MA

Finding a career direction and life calling, given the array of possibilities, can be a daunting task. New career possibilities are surfacing at a rapid rate. Drawing on the expertise gained from years in the field of career development and ministry, this chapter

discusses how to approach planning and manage the many steps that follow on the path toward one's calling.

Chapter 6. Perspective: Maintaining a Kingdom Mind—Ron Mosby, BA

How do individuals of all age groups during a period of post-modernity develop and maintain a kingdom perspective? That is, how does one be in the world but not of the world. This chapter, written by a pastor, explores how to do this effectively.

Chapter 7. Health: Becoming an Expert on Our Wellness—Michael R. Lyles Sr., MD

It is critical that we pay attention to our health. Men are especially prone to neglect this area of our lives. Dr. Michael Lyles Sr., a psychiatrist, challenges and shows us how to become an expert on our health. He also shares his personal story with health issues.

Part 2: Mentoring and Guiding the Next Generation

If we are to improve our society and maximize opportunities for young men, we must be laser focused on maximizing the potential of our young men and women. In this section, five chapters focus on how to perform this daunting, but rewarding task.

Chapter 8. Passage: Navigate Christ-Centered Covert Connections on Campus—Dr. Kevin L. Jones, PhD

Many of our future leaders come from college campuses. How does a Black male maximize this experience and remain Christ-centered? A college professor in teacher education shares his insights, perspectives, and his personal journey through the educational system while offering tips with particular focus on how to make Christian connections and utilize them during this period of life.

Chapter 9. Relate: Choosing Role Models Wisely—Tim Herd, MEd, MA

Young men are bombarded with images and public figures. How then does one choose who to emulate in dress, speech, and morals?

This chapter, written by a graduate student, shares his life journey thus far in how he chooses role models and offers helpful tips to others who are traveling and or will travel the same road.

**Chapter 10. Reflect: Developing Spiritual Self-Defense Tactics—
Patrick L. Stearns, MFA, PhD**

Life brings many challenges. Just like a game of sports, one must employ offensive as well as defensive tactics. This chapter, written by a college professor, identifies areas men of all ages face and offers proactive, spiritual self-defense strategies for effective living. He revisits his younger self and discusses what he could have done better, as well as reflecting on what younger people can do differently in the future so as not to have too many regrets.

**Chapter 11. Mentor: Serve Others' Success—Christopher C.
Mathis Jr., MDiv, PhD**

Successful men often have people who have guided them along the way. In this chapter you'll find a discussion on how to maximize the mentoring process of young African American men for later success. In doing so, the author, a college administrator and pastor, shares his personal experiences of being mentored and challenges others to take advantage of both being mentored and mentoring others.

**Chapter 12. Engage: Stepping Up during Your Child's K-12
Journey—Amod Field, MAS**

Since most all of our young men go through the K-12 school system, what can we—students, parents, grandparents, guardians, school personnel, etc.—do to maximize this experience? For too many of our young men, the K-12 experience is often a negative one. A school principal shares his perspective on what needs to and can be done to make it a mostly positive experience.

Part 3: Strengthening Relationships within Families

In the twenty-first century the family remains the most critical unit in society. What are some areas that must be addressed for

continued success? Five critical areas for strengthening families and family lives are discussed in this section.

Chapter 13. *Hear: Attending to Young Black Males' Voices*—Lee N. June, CTS, MML, PhD

In a focus group, six young Black men share their hopes, dreams, and needs for the future. These are voices we must listen to, heed, and incorporate in our decision making in the present and the future.

Chapter 14. *Not Alone: Parenting a Child with Special Needs*—Michael R. Lyles II, JD; and Kristina J. Lyles, JD

Many of us care for or have cared for a child with special needs. Such a situation brings challenges but also great joy. This husband-and-wife team share their personal journey in parenting a child with special needs. Like seasoned storytellers, they take the reader through their experiences.

Chapter 15. *Prosper: Growing Generations with Biblical Values*—Claude L. Dallas Jr., MS, MA

Not only is parenting a skill that men need, but there is also the increasing need for skills in how to effectively grandparent. Both parenting and grandparenting skills are discussed in this chapter by this grandfather.

Chapter 16. *Balance: Balancing Family and Career*—Ken Staley, MDiv, DD

In effective families, men must not only pursue their career, but they must not neglect their family responsibilities. This chapter is written by someone who has had success in both his career—engineering and pastoring—and with his family. Tips on how to balance a career and family are presented.

Chapter 17. *Love: Ways to Romance Your Wife*—Lloyd C. Blue Sr., DMin

Dr. Blue, who has been married for sixty-eight years to the same woman as of this writing, shares one of the secrets of longevity in

marriage—how to keep the love life burning throughout the span of marriage. This seasoned and now retired pastor and husband views romancing as one of the keys for men who are Christian and married.

Part 4: Dealing with the Criminal Justice Systems

In the twenty-first century, Black males continue to be significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. In part 4, two men, a lawyer and a survivor of the criminal justice system, offer their insights and strategies for avoiding arrest and prison. Drawing on their significant knowledge and experience, they also offer advice on how to maintain hope for those already in the system and how to succeed post incarceration.

Chapter 18. Survive: Avoiding Arrest and Prison—Kenneth L. McDaniels, LLM, JD

We constantly see in media the arrests and brutality inflicted on many African American males. What do we need to tell and teach African American males, particularly young men, about avoiding arrest and prison? A lawyer and prosecutor shares his perspectives and experiences. Preventive steps are emphasized.

Chapter 19. Thrive: Overcoming Prison like Joseph—Joseph Williams, MA

There can be a successful transition from prison to being productive in society. An individual who has made this journey successfully, and has devoted his life to helping others do the same, tells his story and provides transferable tips.

Part 5: Facing Contemporary and Future Challenges

As we advance further into the twenty-first century, some old challenges continue, and new ones arise. Three pressing contemporary challenges are discussed in this section. Specifically addressed are the world of technology; issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and a specific challenge and message to young Black males.

Chapter 20. *Navigate: The World of Technology*—Michael T. Westbrook, MA and Brian L. June, MML, MS

Technology is here to stay and is constantly escalating within society. Today's challenge is how to maximize the potential of the powerful technological tools for success. Written by a Gen Xer and a Boomer, a pastor and a member of a church audiovisual team share their personal experiences and give tips on ways to maximize these essential tools of technology within the church setting.

Chapter 21. *Interrogate: What to a Black Man Is a White Evangelical Education*—Dr. Kenneth D. Russell, MDiv, PhD

Many Black men study at predominantly White Christian oriented institutions of higher education. Many often find the approaches of these institutions in covering and discussing issues relating to Black people as problematic. The author shares his personal experiences navigating these institutions. He also discusses the role of Critical Race Theory, and other Crit areas that are too often misunderstood and maligned.

Chapter 22. *Closing: A Letter to Young Black Men*—Lonnie J. Chipp III, MA, Honorary Doctorate

Black men attend church services at rates less than Black women. They also face many life struggles. An experienced pastor shares a message he feels that Black men, particularly young Black men, need to hear.

PART 1

DEVELOPING
LIFE-
ENHANCEMENT
SKILLS

Integrity

A Necessity

LEE N. JUNE, CTS, MML, PHD

Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his *integrity*, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”

Job 2:3 (emphasis added)

The *integrity* of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

Proverbs 11:3 (emphasis added)

Introduction

What is one of the most important personal characteristics we can possess and seek to maintain in life? A characteristic that is difficult, if not impossible, to regain once lost? Many seek first to achieve fame or to be successful in a general sense. There is nothing wrong with the aspiration to become successful as long it is anchored in or undergirded by something and someone beyond the self, that is, God.

Integrity in Everyday Life

Integrity is a word frequently used in our world today. If one were to go to a bookstore or browse the internet for books on integrity or books that have the word *integrity* in their title, several would appear. Such titles include *The Road to Character* by David Brooks; *The Price of Principle: Why Integrity Is Worth the Consequences* by Alan Dershowitz; *Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality* by Henry Cloud; *Integrity and God's Man: The Foundation and Formation of Integrity* by John W. Tucker; and *Leading with Integrity: Competence with Christian Character* by Fred Smith and David L. Goetz. Some of these books discuss integrity in a general sense; others address integrity from a religious or spiritual perspective.

Society often considers integrity to be a virtue. For example, positive psychology advocates certain virtues that should be encouraged, whether in a religious context or not, for the overall benefit and well-being of society. Positive psychology's mission, according to the book *The Psychology of Religion* by Ralph Hood and others, is "the scientific study of the 'good life'—that is, what works, what is improving, what its capacities are, what makes people authentically happy."¹ While integrity is not explicitly listed as one of the virtues of positive psychology, honesty is. Other core virtues of positive psychology mentioned by Hood and his coauthors are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, transcendence, temperance, and self-control.² This list of virtues has deep roots in Christianity.

What Integrity Is

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines *integrity* as "(1) steadfast adherence to an ethical code; (2) the state of being unimpaired, soundness; (3) the quality or condition of being whole or undivided; completeness." Their synonym for *integrity* is *honesty*.³

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary indicates synonyms and antonyms of integrity:

1: firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: INCORRUPTIBILITY

2: an unimpaired condition: SOUNDNESS

3: the quality or state of being complete or undivided: COMPLETENESS

Synonyms: character, decency, goodness, honesty, morality, probity, rectitude, righteousness, rightness, uprightness, virtue, and virtuousness.

Antonyms (opposite in meaning): badness, evil, evildoing, immorality, iniquity, sin, villainy, and wickedness.⁴

From a biblical standpoint, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines *integrity* as the “faithful support of a standard of values.”⁵ The authors note that there are terms in the Bible which occur in parallel to integrity such as *righteousness*, *uprightness*, *without wavering*, and *blameless*. Old Testament individuals the authors designate as having these characteristics include Noah (Genesis 6:9), Abraham (Genesis 17:1), Jacob (Genesis 25:27), Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), and David (1 Kings 9:4). They further note that in the New Testament, the word sometimes translated as *integrity* occurs only in Titus 2:7 (as translated in the NRSV and NIV), and this is in regard to teaching.

The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible lists sixteen occurrences of the word *integrity* as translated in the King James Version of the Bible. All of these are found in the Old Testament. Integrity is therein defined as “completeness.”⁶ While the word *integrity* is not found in the New Testament in the King James Version, the idea of integrity continues in the New Testament in the concepts “perfection” (maturity) and “blameless.”

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary defines and says the following about the word *integrity*.

Honesty, sincerity, singleness of purpose. In the Old Testament, Noah (Gen 6:9), Abraham (Gen 7:1), Jacob (Gen 25:27), David (1 Kings 9:4), and Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3, 9; 4:6; 27:5; 31:6) were called

people of integrity. Although Jesus did not use the word integrity, he called for purity of heart (Matt 5:8) and purity of motive (Matt 6:1–6).⁷

The *Africa Bible Commentary*, likewise, notes the importance of integrity by highlighting its centrality in Job's life.⁸

Why is integrity the lead chapter in this book, a book written primarily to men from men? While integrity is important for all, we have seen too many men face a situation where their promising careers and positive reputations were tested. Too often they failed the test, and their integrity was destroyed, tarnished, or diminished. I believe that this can and must be avoided if we want to have a cadre of mighty men of valor in the remainder of this century and beyond. Integrity must be visible in all areas of our lives and is paramount to the chapters covered in this book, in our families, in mentoring others, in our careers, in our finances, and more.

One must, however, distinguish between failures, setbacks, and losing one's integrity. Failure, as some writers have pointed out, if properly dealt with, can be a prelude to success.⁹ A setback, likewise, if managed correctly, can be merely a temporary pause along one's road to success. To maintain integrity, one must possess the proper tools that can help a person to avoid threats and practice resilience, that is, the ability to bounce back. Just as there are numerous examples of failures and setbacks that did not lead to losing integrity, there are many examples of resilience amid failures and setbacks. Think for a moment and identify individuals you know who have bounced back. What are some of the defining characteristics of such individuals?

A Deeper Biblical Perspective with Examples

While striving for and maintaining integrity is paramount, it cannot be our God, nor is it the source of salvation. The biblical source of salvation is stated in Ephesians 2:8–10. Thus, mature Christians place integrity in its proper perspective.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift

of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Thus, the Christian seeks for and maintains integrity because this is God’s expectation for those who are saved, since “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works” (v. 10).

What men of the Bible come to your mind as men of integrity? For me, the first person who comes to mind is Job. Job is described by God to Satan as a person of integrity. In this instance, we might say that God was bragging on Job that he had integrity and would maintain it even when tested by Satan. As Job was attacked, his wife, observing what was happening, suggested that holding on to his integrity was not worth the cost, given the horrendous attacks by Satan and the results that were occurring. Her words to him were “Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). Yet, while Job was not fully aware of all that was happening to him, and without proper support from his wife and friends, he held on to his integrity. As men, this is what we must strive to do. Our relationship with God must remain preeminent even when we face trials and tribulations.

Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary also mentions Noah, David, and Jacob as men of integrity.¹⁰ In Genesis 6:9, Noah is described as “a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.” Noah’s life was one of obedience to God and he sought to do what God had assigned him to do. This is the hallmark of integrity.

As described in the case of Noah, we see that the idea of blamelessness is associated with integrity. What does *blameless* mean? This is a requirement specified for bishops in 1 Timothy 3:2 as translated in the King James Version. The word for blameless is translated “be above reproach” in the New International Version. It carries the idea of “to be unaccused.” When I think of this concept, I often say that one cannot control what one is accused of, but one can control whether one is guilty. To have integrity and to be blameless mean that a person is living a lifestyle wherein they are in a right relationship with God and are not practicing sin whereby others can legitimately bring a charge against them.

It does not mean that one has never sinned. In the case of Noah, while he obeyed God, he was not perfect as defined in our English language, as the incident of his drunkenness later in life shows.

David is also mentioned by *Nelson's New Illustrated Dictionary* as a person of integrity. Their reference to David in this manner is in 1 Kings 9:4. The context of this description is when the Lord appeared to Solomon at Gibeon during the dedication of the temple. God said of David to Solomon, "If you walk before me faithfully with *integrity* of heart and uprightness, as David your father did . . ." (emphasis added). This is an especially important description of David, given the known sins that he committed during his lifetime.

When I think of men of integrity in the Bible, beyond those already mentioned, I also think of Joseph, Samuel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Paul. Joseph faced the temptation of sexual sin initiated by Potiphar's wife. His situation was as follows:

So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. (Genesis 39:6-10)

Faced with the Joseph situation, what would you have done?

Also, in the case of Samuel, imagine living a life such that you could stand before those in your circle of influence at the end of your life and speak as Samuel did:

Samuel said to all Israel, “I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you. Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these things, I will make it right.”

“You have not cheated or oppressed us,” they replied. “You have not taken anything from anyone’s hand.” (1 Samuel 12:1–4)

Yes, one could stand before a group of people and say this, but what makes this incredible regarding Samuel is the people’s response. “You have not cheated or oppressed us,” they replied. “You have not taken anything from anyone’s hand.” The people affirmed his integrity.

Imagine that you are placed in a situation, and you know the behavior that you are about to do or could undertake would compromise your core values, threaten your integrity, and affect your relationship with God. Would you do as Daniel did, when he “resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine” (Daniel 1:8)? While this statement by Daniel was made early in his life, he continued to live a life of integrity. Daniel’s vow also shows that one can live a life of integrity beginning with and even in youth.

Imagine that you were in a predicament like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Note how they managed their integrity test.

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or

worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:13–15)

Faced with this situation, what would you do? Here is what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16–18)

Further, imagine that at the end of one’s life, you could say as the apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6–8:

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The ability to say what Paul said after the conversion on the Damascus road is also reflective of having lived a life of integrity.

Responding in the various manners these men did when they were tested or when their lives were at stake reflects a set of

principles that they adhered to and were willing to die for. In sum, these principles, indicative of integrity, were

Keeping our relationship with God top priority, even during the most difficult days (Job)

Living a blameless life where no other person can legitimately bring a charge against one (Noah)

Walking faithfully and uprightly before God (David)

Not succumbing to sexual temptations (Joseph)

Not taking anything that does not belong to them, not cheating, not oppressing others, not taking bribes (Samuel)

Not defiling oneself with things of the world (Daniel)

Having absolute trust in God who is with us as Christians, regardless of the circumstances or the outcome (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)

Being willing to stay the course with God amidst a life of horrendous persecutions (Paul)

Tips on Maintaining Integrity

If one of our life goals is to maintain our integrity—to *be* men of integrity—here are some tips and aids that can assist in this endeavor.

Tip one: Do what Scripture tells us to do. For instance, hide the Word of God in your heart: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11 KJV). The following Scriptures are suggested as more of life’s guideposts.

- Psalm 37:23–24 (God upholds those who delight in Him)
- Psalm 119:105 (God’s Word is a lamp and a light)

Study the book of Proverbs and make a list of the passages that you believe can help you to live a life of integrity. You will find many principles laid out in Proverbs. Such principles are too numerous to fully list, but I will share the ones that are extremely helpful to me.

- Proverbs 1:7 (true knowledge begins with reverencing the Lord)
- Proverbs 3:5–6 (trusting, learning from, and submitting to God leads to righteous living)
- Proverbs 4:7 (wisdom and understanding are paramount in life)
- Proverbs 6:16–19 (while God is love and loves, there are things He hates)
- Proverbs 6:32 (adultery is to be avoided)
- Proverbs 9:10 (wisdom begins with reverencing God)
- Proverbs 13:11 (don't be dishonest in matters of money)
- Proverbs 14:12 (everything that appears right is not right)
- Proverbs 15:1, 18 (we need to be gentle in our interactions with others)
- Proverbs 16:7, 18, 25, 32 (God takes pleasure in our right behaviors)
- Proverbs 20:7 (how we live our lives is important)
- Proverbs 21:3 (doing what is right and just is more critical than sacrifice)
- Proverbs 22:1 (our reputation is critical)
- Proverbs 24:1–2 (we must not envy the wicked or desire their company)
- Proverbs 27:1–2 (boasting and self-praise are to be avoided)
- Proverbs 28:13 (secret and unconfessed sin prevent our progress)
- Proverbs 29:11, 18 (the wise person is calm and heeds wisdom)

I am suggesting that we develop a list of Scriptures from the book of Proverbs that can become our life guideposts.

The listing of Scriptures from other parts of the Bible, as guides, is also helpful. Other Scriptures that guide my life are:

- Amos 5:24 (fighting for and promoting justice is pleasing to God)

- Micah 6:8 (God requires us to act justly—do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him)
- Matthew 5:13–16 (remember that we are salt and light in this world)
- Romans 12:1–2 (we are to offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice and renew our minds rather than being transformed by this world)
- Galatians 5:16 (walking by the Spirit allows us to avoid sin)
- Ephesians 5:23–26 (mutual and proper submission and love are hallmarks of a godly marriage)
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 (God can protect us during temptations)
- James 1:5 (God is the source of wisdom and will give it to us if we ask Him for it)
- 1 John 1:7 (walking in God’s light leads to godly fellowship with others)

These are among the main Scriptures that have been helpful to me. I encourage you to make your own list that you feel can help you to develop, practice, and maintain integrity.

Tip Two: Manage the implications and challenges of postmodernity. Philosophers, psychologists, and others have suggested that human beings have lived in three eras regarding how knowledge and beliefs are viewed. These eras have been described as pre-modernity, modernity, and postmodernity. We are now living in what is called the postmodern era. Postmodernity poses challenges to Christians regarding holding on to their beliefs and principles. For example, according to Brian Zinnbauer, author of “Models of Healthy and Unhealthy Religion and Spirituality,” a postmodern approach rejects the idea of revealed truth, asserting that there is no ultimate truth, and that all truths are equally valuable.¹¹ This is problematic for many in the Christian community. How do we deal with this perspective? Zinnbauer suggests an integrative approach where we accept that there are “multiple truths across multiple dimensions” and that there are “multiple methods, local and universal truths.” However, I suggest that for the Christian, the perspective to consider is that there are multiple conceptions

of truths, that these perspectives must be acknowledged and respected, but that each of us must hold firm to the belief that is revealed, and ultimate truth—and its source is the Triune God.

Tip Three: Learn from how Jesus dealt with His integrity tests. The Bible records that when Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested by the devil, He relied on and quoted Scripture in His responses to each of the three temptations. For temptation one, to turn stones into bread when He was hungry, Jesus responded to Satan saying, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). For temptation two, to throw Himself down from the highest point of the temple so God could rescue Him, Jesus responded that—after Satan misquoted a Scripture—“It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matthew 4:7). For the third temptation, to bow down and worship Satan in exchange for receiving all the kingdoms of this world and their splendor, Jesus replied, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matthew 4:10).

Conclusion

Moving forward, we need a large cadre of men, young and old, who are Christian and who will commit to pursuing and maintaining a life of integrity in their family, in relationship with other men and women, and in their careers. The remaining chapters in this book will help us to seek and maintain integrity, and even more.

As reported on Black Demographics, the 2021 US Census Bureau estimated there are 49,586,352 African Americans in the United States, which is 14.9 percent of the population of the total American population of 331.9 million. This includes those who identify as “Black only” and as “Black in combination with another race.”

According to official 2018 estimates from the US Census Bureau, the Black male population in the United States was 21 million in 2018. This is 48 percent of the total Black population, compared to Black females who make up 52 percent of the Black population.¹²

Since Black men are in all areas of society, we need to continue

to help raise up a cadre of Black men who are totally committed to Christ and are making living a life of integrity a central goal of life. Imagine 21 million plus Black men in America dedicated to living a life of integrity. With this, God would be well pleased.

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