

"Walk the Line ~ Joshua 9" [9.23.07]

Let's PRAY [Father, please speak to us this morning]

Today message is about INTEGRITY!

Integrity is...

- doing the right thing when no one else is looking!
& sometimes it's
- doing the right thing even when it does not seem fair!

Did you catch the news report last Monday that highlighted a phone survey conducted on hand washing after using the bathroom!

Survey indicated...

- 92% of those surveyed indicated they wash their hands after using the bathroom
- Cameras were installed in bathrooms across the country & discovered [in reality]
 - only 82% of women wash their hands
 - & only 66% of men wash their hands after using the bathroom ☹

[Survey concluded] that it was interesting that what people said on the phone was not actually their practice.

Integrity [goes far beyond] truth-telling; Integrity is...

When our private - inner world of (values & convictions); actually match our actions that are lived out in our public – everyday life.

This week I read about...

A man was being tailgated by another car on a busy boulevard...

- Suddenly, the light turned yellow [just in front of him]; he stopped his car @ the crosswalk even though he could have beaten the red light by simply accelerating.
- The person tailgating was absolutely furious & honked their horn; pounding the dashboard in pure frustration @ missing a chance to go through the intersection.
- As the tailgater was still spewing venom @ the slow driver [still in mid rant] she heard a tap on her window and she now saw the face of a very serious police officer who ordered her out of her car with her hands up!
- The officer took her to the police station where she was searched – finger printed – photographed – and placed in a holding cell.
- After a couple of hours she was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was awaiting her with [all her personal effects].
- He said, "I'm sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn – throwing obscene gestures & cussing a blue streak @ the car in front of you. I noticed the ...

- 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker; the 'Choose Life' license plate holder, the 'chrome plated Christian Fish emblem on the trunk',
 - [& naturally] I assumed you had stolen the car." ☺

Integrity is...

The state of being when there are no glaring discrepancies between who you say you are and how you really act!

Today's passage deals w/a couple of barriers that often inhibit us from living out integrity filled lives!

I. Joshua 9: 1 – 27 or p. 173 in pew Bible

A. (R) Joshua 9: 1 – 2

- News spread quickly about the crushing defeats the cities of Jericho & Ai had just suffered!
- Reaction to this bleak news was (2) fold:
 - The local kings of the region banded their forces together in a last ditch effort (to just survive)
 - & then there were the Gibeonites who resorted to deception in an all out effort (to save themselves)

B. (R) Joshua 9: 3 – 6

- Franklin D. Roosevelt once said,

"When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot & hang on real tight!"

- I'm not going to [debate nor analyze] the ethics of the Gibeonites deceptive approach...
 - These were pagans who knew their fate was imminently sealed!
 - (Question) What would you do in order to save your life & the lives of your family?

C. (R) Joshua 9: 7 – 13

- Are you easily deceived?
- Do you claim to have the spiritual gift of discernment & occasionally get busted?

Bible says,

there is a real practical reason we occasionally get tripped up!

D. (R) Joshua 9: 14

- MSG translates v. 14, "...the men of Israel looked them over & accepted the evidence. But they didn't ask God about it."
 - Ever make a quick decision & later regret it?
- Practical ADVICE;
 - "Never, never, NEVER trust your own judgment in anything!"

- When voices tell you that action is urgent; that something must be done immediately; better slow down the process; and seek God's advice!
 - If you are still in doubt [dare to stand still]
 - If you are called on to act and you have no time to pray; don't act!
 - If you are called upon to move in a certain direction & can't wait until you have peace from God about it; don't move!

Be strong & courageous [brave enough] to stand & wait upon God.

Bible says,

"Those who wait upon the Lord will never be put to shame." [Isaiah 49: 23]

I'll come back to this thought of [spiritual procrastination] later on.

E. Joshua 9: 15 – 20

- Do you think Joshua (God's anointed – chosen leader) was used to being treated like a chump?
 - Amazing picture of grace displayed in these verses!
 - OT principle - - keeping ones promise is more important to God than (saving face) with our pride.
 - Joshua learned;
 - Mistakes are no reason to nullify promises!
 - Bible reminds us that God has commanded us that oaths be kept in Leviticus 5: 4!
 - Breaking an oath – vow; is serious business in God's economy!

[Sometimes neglect] the law of God is given to obey not to admire!

F. (R) Joshua 9: 21 – 27

- v. 21b "...the Israelites kept their promises to the Gibeonites"

Our enemy the devil loves it when we choose to live w/ indiscrepancies in our personal lives that keep us from being integrity-filled.

Joshua 9 reveals (2) ways we allow him to trip us up:

II. (2) barriers to living integrity filled lives

A. 1st barrier = being self-sufficient [instead of] being God dependent

- In v. 14 we learn a hard lesson on the fruit of being self-sufficient:
 - If Joshua & his leaders had not trusted in their natural understanding (common sense) & simply had taken time to consult w/the Lord; they could have been spared the consequences of being deceived.
 - Integrity; having consistency between actions & inner convictions!
 - We damage our integrity every time we go against our biblical value of complete dependency on God an attempt to solve problems on our own!

- The Gibeonites ability to deceive Joshua & his elders serve as a vivid reminder to us of the subtlety of Satan who exists to make us stumble & fall

This is why we read in Ephesians 6: 11;

“Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies & tricks of the Devil.”

- Satan is [a master strategist] who is not only a roaring lion but is also a subtle snake; and the lion is far less dangerous than the hiss of the snake.
- We are no match in and of ourselves for Satan’s subtle attacks!

- We can only defeat him as we obey the admonition of Proverbs 3: 5 – 7;

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your understanding. Seek His will in all you do and He will direct your paths.”

SAY w/me...

I am completely dependent upon God for absolutely everything!

B. 2nd barrier = being a covenant breaker instead of being a promise keeper

- [Bottom line] God honors those who keep their promises
 - God held Israel to the treaty – oath they had made!
 - For the 1st time in the record of God’s people there stood that day on holy ground in the camp @ Gilgal a company of people who indeed were Israel’s enemies.
 - The Israelites, set apart for God, dedicated to Him, were mingled w/those whom God had commanded them to destroy.

This is the great problem w/a failure to consult the Lord in all matters:

We have consequences now as believers for our wrong actions.

If you have made a mistake, lost your battle, & find yourself in difficulty you can not make that an excuse for breaking your word.

The Christian is one (or should be) a person of principle that is integrity – filled!

(To be fair)

There are some covenants better broken than kept.

(For example)

- Herod’s oath to give anything to the daughter Herodias after she inflamed his lust as she danced for him; was no justification for murder.
- [By all means] break today any covenant made in open – blatant sin!

(Biblically)

- Where we involve ourselves & God’s word in our testimony - - we have to stick by the promise made.
- Take for example the subject of marriage & business

- But some here today may have entered into a wrong alliance in business or in marriage and you find your self tied into an agree-promise that you deeply regret until this day;
- What does the Bible say we should do?
 - (R) I Corinthians 7: 12, 16)
 - Integrity is doing the right thing when it does not seem right!

Close = I'm glad God keeps His promises!!

Romans 5: 6 encourages,

“While we were utterly helpless Christ came @ just the right time & died for us sinners”