

Philosophical Approach to the Issues of Integrity in Nigerian Church

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Abstract

This paper sought to explore the church's integrity in Nigeria using a philosophical approach. Integrity is a character quality that we often talk about but do not see quite as regularly in the lives of public officials or even in the lives of the people we live and work with. The researchers adopt expository method in carrying out this work. However, a person of integrity is living rightly, not divided, nor being a different person in different circumstances. A person of integrity is the same person in private that he or she is in public. Recommendation was made among them are: individuals should practice integrity whenever they found themselves. The church leaders should try to be consistency in setting a standard for emulation by their congregation through constant practice and beckoning of pardon anytime found wronged.

Keywords: Integrity, Church, Philosophical approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word integrity comes from the same Latin root as *integer* and implies a wholeness of person. Just as we would talk about a whole number, so also we can talk about a whole person who is undivided. A person of integrity is living rightly, not divided, nor being a different person in different circumstances. In addition, Khatri & Khatri (2016). opines that a person of integrity is the same person in private that he or she is in public. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about those who were "pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8), implying an undividedness in following God's commands. Integrity, therefore, not only implies an undividedness, but a moral purity as well.

The Bible is full of references to integrity, character, and moral purity. Consider just a few Old Testament references to integrity. In 1 Kings 9:4, God instructs Solomon to walk with "integrity of heart and uprightness" as his father did. David says in 1

Chronicles 29:17, "I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity." And in Psalm 78:70-72 we read that "David shepherded them with integrity of heart, with skillful hands." The book of Proverbs provides an abundance of verses on integrity. Proverbs 10:9 says that, "He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out." A person of integrity will have a good reputation and not have to fear that he or she will be exposed or found out. Integrity provides a safe path through life. Proverbs 11:3 says, "The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the falseness of the treacherous will destroy them." Proverbs is a book of wisdom. The wise man or woman will live a life of integrity, which is a part of wisdom.

Those who follow corruption or falsehood will be destroyed by the decisions and actions of their lives. Proverbs 20:7 says, "A righteous man who walks in his integrity; How blessed are his sons after him." Integrity

leaves a legacy. A righteous man or woman walks in integrity and provides a path for his or her children to follow. All of these verses imply a sense of duty and a recognition that we must have a level of discernment of God's will in our lives. That would certainly require that people of integrity be students of the Word, and then diligently seek to apply God's Word to their lives.

2. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

2.1 Integrity

Integrity means following your moral or ethical convictions and doing the right thing in all circumstances, even if no one is watching you (Monga 2016). Having integrity means you are true to yourself and would do nothing that demeans or dishonors you.

2.2 The characteristics of a person of integrity

People with true integrity will always do what is right, irrespective of whether it concerns their worst enemies or not (Schauber 1996). They do not expect praise or gratitude for their actions. It is simply in their nature to do what they feel is right. Some people might mistake it for weakness but it is actually a very strong personality trait. People with true integrity do things that are best for the society and not just themselves. Their beliefs are their way of life. If you think you have true integrity, you probably have these following traits in you.

1. They are authentic

Authentic people are humble, approachable and genuine. They do not pretend to be better than you but because of their true nature, they are indeed on a high ground.

2. They Know That Other People's Time Has Value

They are grateful for your time and contribution as they know the value of your time and they won't ever keep you waiting.

3. They Give Credit to Other People

A person with true integrity always acknowledges the efforts of deserving people. They will never steal someone else's thunder. They aren't judgmental either.

4. They Are Humble

They are not egoistic and always help others whenever they can and they always admit their mistakes and work harder to be better.

5. They Apologize

People with true integrity never fail to realize their mistakes and apologize when required.

6. The Know When Someone Is Wrong

They quickly understand when someone has done something wrong but they also forgive easily.

7. They Give the Benefit Of The Doubt

They are strong individuals but their integrity should never be taken for granted and have faith in people.

8. They Believe In Others

People with integrity have utmost faith and confidence in others. They would expect you to be honest with them, just like they are to you.

9. They Volunteer For Good Cause

Since they intend to work for the benefit of the society at all times, volunteering comes naturally to them. They don't expect anything in return.

10. They Don't Need To Argue When They Disagree

People with true integrity never argue over disagreements simply because they don't think it's necessary to start conflicts and negativity because of difference in opinions.

11. They Will Never Take Advantage of You

A person with true integrity doesn't make friends get work done but because they truly cherish the relationship.

12. They're Honest

They never tell lies to escape from a situation. They own up to their mistakes and rectify them, which makes them amazing individuals.

3. THE ESSENCE OF INTEGRITY

The single most important quality you can ever develop that will enhance every part of your life, is the value of integrity. Integrity is the core quality of a successful and happy life (Palanski & Yammarino 2007). Having integrity means being totally honest and truthful in every part of your life. By making the commitment to become a totally honest person, you will be doing more to ensure your success and happiness in life than anything else you can ever do.

Integrity is a value, like persistence, courage, and intelligence. It is your choice of values and resolution to live by those values that form your character and personality. And it is integrity that enhances all your other values (Ewell 1994). The quality of person you are is determined by how well you live up to the values that are most important to you. Integrity is the quality that locks in your values and causes you to live consistent with them. Integrity is the foundation of character (Yan 2001). A person who has integrity also has an unblemished character in every area of his or her life. One of the most important activities you can engage in, is developing your character. And one of the best ways to develop your character is by consistently doing the same things that

a thoroughly honest person would do in every area of his or her life.

To be totally honest with others, you first have to be totally honest with yourself. You have to be true to yourself. You have to be true to the very best that is in you. Only a person who is consistently living a life with the highest values and virtues is a person truly living a life of integrity. If you are always honest and true to yourself you cannot be false to anyone else. The mark of people who have high integrity is, they always do the highest quality of work in everything they do. They are the people who are always totally honest with themselves in everything they do, and strive to excellent work on every occasion. People with high integrity realize that everything they do is a statement about who they are as a person.

The Universal Law of Attraction says that you inevitably attract into your life the people and circumstances that are in harmony with your dominant thoughts and values. This means that everything in your life you have attracted, because of the person you are. If there is anything in your life, your relationships, or your work that you are not happy with, you need to begin changing the person you are, so that you stop attracting those people and situations into your life. Your integrity is manifested in your willingness to adhere to the values that are most important to you. It is easy to make promises but often very hard to keep them. But every time you keep a promise that you have made, it is an act of integrity, which in turn strengthens your character. As you act with integrity in everything you do, you will find that every part of your life will improve. You will begin to attract the best people and situations into your life. You will become an outstanding person as well as a success in everything you do.

4. CHURCH

Church is regarded as place where Christian doctrine are observed (Miller 2013). It is a place of worship mainly for Christian. It can be seen as the Christian religious community as a whole, or a body or organization of Christian believers (Edet 2019). A The Greek word *ekklēsia*, which came to mean church, was originally applied in the Classical period to an official assembly of citizens. In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament (3rd–2nd century BCE), the term *ekklēsia* is used for the general assembly of the Jewish people, especially when gathered for a religious purpose such as hearing the Law (e.g., Deuteronomy 9:10, 18:16) (Last 2016). In

the New Testament it is used of the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world (e.g., Matthew 16:18), of the believers in a particular area (e.g., Acts 5:11), and also of the congregation meeting in a particular house—the “house-church” (e.g., Romans 16:5).

5. PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The establishment of truth based on logical flow of thought from nature of reality and existence as we know of OR axiomatic premise. You do not regard something as truth solely on the basis of underlying emotion, personal bias, limited experience or exposure. And you are welcoming to counter examples, willing or readiness to be proven wrong. Your feelings and intuitions may help you in the pursuit but are not acceptable arguments within the realm of philosophical approach.

6. EXAMINING THE DILEMMAS OF INTEGRITY IN TODAY'S CHURCH IN NIGERIA

We claim to be a nation that demands integrity, but do we really? We say we want politicians to be honest, but really don't expect them to be; perhaps because often we aren't as honest as we should be. We say that we are a nation of laws, but often we break some of those same laws—like speed limits and jaywalking— and try to justify our actions.

6.1 Diminishing of moral authority

It is noticed that there is deems of moral authority in Nigeria churches today. Nigerian churches are making up their own moral codes. Only 13 percent of us believe in all the Ten Commandments. Forty percent of us believe in five of the Ten Commandments. We choose which laws of God we believe in. There is absolutely no moral consensus in the Nigerian churches today as there was in the 1950s, when all our institutions commanded more respect.”

6.2 Dishonesty

There was a noticed that most Nigerian churches today are not honest. “Lying has become an integral part of Nigerian culture, a trait of the Nigerian character. We lie and do not even think about it. We lie for no reason. Some normally says I will lie when it suits me, so long as it doesn't cause any real damage. Some take their responsibility quite seriously, and the result is that several people are in prison today for embezzling thousand dollars of church money. Sacred money belonged to God. Some people waver in their

daily temptations. Are we faithful according to circumstances or needs? Are we kept honest because of the good work of the auditor or because we are people of integrity?

What is amazing in Joash's story is that "when all the repairs were finished, they brought the remaining money to the king...No accounting was required from the construction supervisors, because they were honest and faithful workers" (2Chr 24:14; 2King 12:15). God saw that these were people of integrity they could be trusted.

6.3 Infidels of marriage among parties

Marriage and family are no longer sacred institutions. "While we still marry, we have lost faith in the institution of marriage. A third of married men and women confessed that they have had at least one affair. Thirty percent aren't really sure that they still love their spouse."

6.4 Etiquette in the working place

Etiquette which is a code/ conduct which is expected of every Christian has gone to the land of oblivion. Workers around Nigerian churches frankly admit that they spend more than 20 percent (7 hours a week) of their time at work totally goofing off. That amounts to a four-day work week across the nation." Some will say that they will procrastinate at work and do absolutely nothing about one full day in every five (50 percent). The authors conclude by suggesting that we have a new set of commandments for America: We may say that we are a nation that wants integrity, but apparently a majority of us lack it in our own personal lives.

7. UPLOADING THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO INTEGRITY IN NIGERIA CHURCHES

From the examination so far, the researchers found out that nearly everyone in Nigeria lies and does so on a fairly regular basis. Truth telling apparently is no longer a virtue people try to adopt for their lives. We may say we want people to tell the truth, but we do not do it ourselves. That is the problem with corruption; it is corrosive. We believe we can be dishonest just a little bit. We say we want people to be honest, but then we cheat on our taxes. We say we want people to obey the laws, but then we go "just a little" over the speed limit. We want to be honest just enough to ease our conscience.

7.1 Trustworthiness

A philosophical approach to integrity shows that trustworthiness is a characteristic of a person of integrity. A person of integrity is unimpeachable. He or she stands by principles no matter what the consequences. A person of integrity realizes there are moral absolutes even in a world of relative values. There are principles worth standing by and promoting. There are values that should govern our lives. We have a responsibility to follow God's law rather than the crowd. When the book of Proverbs talks of the "integrity of the upright" it implies that we adhere to God's will and God's laws. We have a duty to obey God's absolute commands in our lives and become men and women of integrity.

However, God's very nature is one of integrity. He is absolutely trustworthy. The Old Testament presents Him as the great "I Am" which is descriptive of his immutable character and righteousness. He has worked throughout history to share that righteousness with us, culminating in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we are going to represent God to the world and let our light shine, how can we be effective without building our lives on truth and honesty? Long-term effectiveness in ministry is dependent upon integrity. Today, we live in an increasingly secular society that has lost the joy of a close relationship with God. If we compromise God's standards in our own lives we become indistinguishable from the rest of the world. How can we do that and hope to make a difference? In the days of the early Church, most Christians came out of a pagan society. Paul consistently called upon them to stay faithful to the transformed life of faith in Christ as a witness to others.

7.2 Individualism

The researchers are looking at integrity in the perspective of an individual, in people's private way of life. To uphold integrity universally, we must start it with one's private life. This will trigger the question of 'Who You Are When Nobody is looking'. Who are you when nobody is looking? Will I see the same person that I see when you are in a group of people? Do you do the right thing no matter what the circumstances? Affirming this, Dallas (1966) narrated a story years ago about a man in Long Beach who went into a KFC to get some chicken for himself and the young lady with him. She waited in the car while he went in to pick up the chicken. Inadvertently the manager of the store handed the guy the box in which he had placed the financial proceeds of the day instead of the box of chicken. You see, he was going to make a

deposit and had camouflaged it by putting the money in a fried chicken box. The fellow took his box, went back to the car, and the two of them drove away. When they got to the park and opened the box, they discovered they had a box full of money. Now that was a very vulnerable moment for the average individual. However, realizing the mistake, he got back into the car and returned to the place and gave the money back to the manager. Well, the manager was elated! He was so pleased that he told the young man, "Stick around, I want to call the newspaper and have them take your picture. You're the most honest guy in town."

"Oh, no, don't do that!" said the fellow.

"Why not?" asked the manager.

"Well," he said, "you see, I'm married, and the woman I'm with is not my wife."

Apparently he had not considered the consequences of his actions. Even when he was doing something right, it turned out he was also doing something wrong. A person of integrity is integrated and authentic. There is no duplicity of attitudes and actions. For example, when the apostle Paul lists the qualifications for an elder in the church, he says "he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7). This is not only a desirable quality for church elders, it is a quality we should all aspire to. Christians should be "above reproach" in their public testimony before the watching world.

Finally, integrity is realized through a proper relationship with Christ. He is the pattern of integrity for our lives. In Luke 9:23 Jesus instructed us in how to keep the light of truth shining in our lives. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

7.3 Become the universal lamp

It has been said that we may be the only Bible some people ever read. In other words, people around us often judge the truthfulness of Christianity by its affect in our lives. If they see us as hypocrites, they may not go any further in their investigation of the gospel. Every day we rub shoulders with people who are watching us. Your life will demonstrate to them whether Christianity is true or false. They make value judgments about you by your attitudes and actions. Have we made the right choice? After his Sunday messages, the pastor of a church in London got on the trolley Monday morning to return to his study downtown. He paid his fare, and the trolley driver

gave him too much change. The pastor sat down and fumbled the change and looked it over, counted it eight or ten times. And, you know the rationalization, "It's wonderful how God provides." He realized he was tight that week and this was just about what he would need to break even, at least enough for his lunch. He wrestled with himself all the way down that old trolley trail that led to his office. Finally, he came to the stop and got up, and he couldn't live with himself. He walked up to the trolley driver, and said, "Here You gave me too much change. You made a mistake." The driver said, "No, it was no mistake. You see, I was in your church last night when you spoke on honesty, and I thought I would put you to the test". (Paul 1990)³. Fortunately, the pastor passed the test. Do you pass the test when unbelievers look at you and your life and wonder if the gospel is true? It is a convicting question. When we live lives of integrity, opportunities for evangelism and ministry surface. When we do not, those opportunities dry up.

8 CONCLUSION

Throughout the observation of philosophical approach to issues of integrity in Nigeria churches, it is worthy to enshrine that the integrity is the fulcrum for the development of any church. Since, a person of integrity is living rightly, not divided, nor being a different person in different circumstances. A person of integrity is the same person in private that he or she is in public. Therefore, it calls to mind to uphold integrity in every sectors of life irrespective of whether people are seeing you or not.

To tackle the challenges of integrity in Nigeria churches today the following recommendation was made:

1. Individuals should practice integrity wherever he / she found himself.
2. The church leaders should try to be consistency in setting a standard for emulation by their congregation through constant practice and beckoning of pardon anytime found wronged.
3. Review of various doctrine in the church should be encouraged so as to fish out some negativity that may be include in some doctrines.
4. Church leaders should be constantly having annual meeting so as to be encourage each other.

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