

**BUILDING INTEGRITY
INTO YOUR LIFE**

JFK & Georgina Mensah

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Table of Contents

<i>Preface</i>	5
1 An Introduction to Christian Character	8
2 Why Discuss Integrity?	28
3 What is Integrity All About?	47
4 The Importance of Integrity	63
5 The Characteristics of Integrity	73
6 The Areas of Integrity	97
7 Dangers of Lack of Integrity	113
8 Building Integrity Into Your Life	127
<i>Conclusion</i>	141
Steps to Salvation	143
About The Authors	146
Books by the Authors	148
To Contact The Authors	150

Preface

Keep one thing forever in view - the truth; and if you do this, though it may seem to lead you away from the opinion of men, it will assuredly conduct you to the throne of God. **Horace Mann**

Corruption has eaten into every fabric of society and life in such a way that we are ready to shout with David in Ps. 12:1, *"Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases and the faithful fail from the sons of men."*

We say in our haste that all men are liars, and to speak the truth in these our days is to make oneself a prey to wicked and unreasonable men. This book is a bold attempt to present God's standard of integrity for the Christian.

Our aim is to challenge every child of God to struggle to maintain a level of Christian living that will prove that the followers of Christ are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16) and that the church is indeed the 'pillar and ground of truth' (1 Tim. 3:15).

The amazing truth is that there are some unbelievers who show a stronger conscience for righteousness than

some Christian leaders of today. How can we say we are living under grace in Christ when we are as dishonest and crooked as the unbelievers or even worse? Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Worse still, how can a Spirit-filled tongue-speaking saint be comfortable with lying and cheating under “anointing”?

What hypocrisy! Who will take a second look at Christianity if we who profess to be children of God are compromising before the children of Satan in the very situations that God is depending upon us to set the example and stand firm? The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of us (Rom. 2:24).

The world is in desperate need of men and women with iron convictions about right and wrong: men who are as bold as lions. Women who are as tough as nails. Individuals who can stand for the truth and die for it. These are the people that God, Satan, and men admire. They have the courage to say “No” to dishonesty even when everybody is praising it. Even when they are put under constant pressure to do evil, God supplies them with the inflexible stamina to resist it.

One of these days, God is going to disgrace us. He is going to produce, by His own arm, a generation of church members who will champion truth and shed their blood for it in such a way that even the Anti-Christ will be frightened.

Dear brother and sister, do not give up, no matter how

fierce your temptation may appear. Be as firm as a rock. Do not allow Satan to fool you into thinking that everybody is doing it. You will be shocked on Judgement Day to see the 'seven thousand' from your generation that God has kept from sin.

Our prayer is that this book will strengthen you to stand upright.

No temptation has taken you but such as is common to man. God is faithful. He will never let you be tempted beyond your strength. With every temptation, He will provide a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10:13

JFK & Georgina Mensah,

Accra.

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to Christian Character

The character of great men, of men of integrity, is the dowry of a nation. **Sidney Bremer**

After so many decades of being in ministry, Georgina and I have met with a countless number of people who have confessed that though they have been Christians for decades, they really cannot see any difference between themselves and unbeliever colleagues. They listen to the same music, read the same books, wear the same clothes, watch the same movies and series, tell the same lies, complain about the same economy, cheat in the same examinations, and collect the same bribes at their place of work. Nothing in their character has been transformed by their association with Jesus Christ and His church.

I am very ashamed whenever I hear this. I am ashamed because it means that the Church of God today has lost something vital – we have dropped the ball on co-operating with the Holy Spirit to build deep-seated convictions in

believers, convictions that change their entire outlook and nature until those around them look on in wonder and declare that, “These people have been with Jesus!” (Acts 4:13).

In this book, we will be focusing on one aspect of Christian character – integrity. But before we begin to do so, let us try to understand some basic things about character in general, and Christian character specifically.

What is Character?

Character is the overflow of your inner and heart-level convictions into your outward actions, speech, and attitudes. It is the special set of personal convictions that so distinctly mark you such that people can easily predict what step you will take even when nobody is looking at you or forcing you. These are your inner beliefs, values and principles that fill you, and form your moral code of right and wrong, of good and bad, of do’s and don’ts. Your character is who you are and what you do. In truth, your character is a position of your conscience, and not just a passing thought, outward appearance, or mere mental assent. Your character really boils down to your thoughts and deeds.

Even though there are many other things which influence character, we should always remember that the most powerful forces shaping your character are silent and

almost imperceptible little acts of honesty, sincerity, and integrity which become a habit. Your character is developed when repeated actions grow into habits that graduate into a predictable lifestyle. It is an in-built persuasion, a long-term belief, and a lifelong conviction on issues. It is your individual core policy. It determines your destiny.

Character is what a man is; reputation is what a man is thought to be. Character is within; reputation is without. Character is always real; reputation may be false. Character is substantial and enduring; reputation may be fleeting and like a vapour. Character is in a man's own soul; reputation is in the minds of others. Character is what gives a man value in his own eyes; reputation is how he is valued in the eyes of others.

A man may have good character and a bad reputation or vice versa, since we mostly form our opinions of men from what they appear to be, and not from what they really are. Most men are more anxious about their reputation than they are about their real character. That is a gross lack of integrity; things ought not be so.

While every man should endeavour to maintain a good reputation, they should especially labour to have a good character. Whether our motives and actions are properly understood and appreciated or not, it is important, above everything else, to be right and also act right.

Because of how entwined your character is with your

core personality, we say that you lack character when you lack a personal conviction on core subjects. This lack of character is indecision on truth; it is a lack of firmness on life's critical topics. You vacillate, you doubt, and you are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

Without character, you are unpredictable; without character, you cannot be trusted; without character, you have no foundation to build life on; without character, you choose your friends anyhow; without character, you have no strength to press through with your values. Your walk belies your talk; your actions disgrace your opinions.

Empty, empty, empty: that's what you are. You have nothing to live and die for. Without character, you are condemned to follow the convictions of others because you have none of your own. Without character, you must be pitied.

Sources of Character

But where does character come from? There are three major sources of character:

GOD. God is a source of character because God the Father is an eternal character (Mal. 3:6); Jesus is an eternal character (Heb. 13:8); and the Holy Spirit is an eternal character (Heb. 9:14). This means that God does not change His ways for anybody at any time. What He liked in the past, He likes today with equal passion. What He hated in

the past, He still hates today with equal abomination (Ps. 33:11; Prov. 6:16-19). He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His commitment to being perfect (Matt. 5:48), His mercifulness (Lk. 6:36), and His sinlessness (1 Pet. 2:21,22) are constant.

When a Christian acts according to God's character and nature, then s/he is displaying godly, Christian character. This is the pattern of life that can be identified as Christian or *christianos* (Acts 11:26). We can even say that Christlikeness is really just a word for striving to build Christian character in every aspect of your life.

SATAN. Satan also has character. He is a liar (Jn. 8:44), a murderer (Jn. 10:10), a proud person (Ezek. 28:17). From his fall until his final punishment, his character is warped and forever in enmity with God. Those who live and act according to the nature of Satan live as enemies of the Cross (Phil. 3:18), and base their character on that of their father. Demons also have character, and can influence the character of those they afflict. Thus, lying demons make liars of some people; demons of fear make some people cowards for life; and demons of lust, covetousness, and greed fill some people with these emotions.

HUMAN NATURE AND NURTURE: A final source of character is personality, preferences, background, etc. Jacob was naturally a quiet person (Gen. 25:27). Moreover, some character traits are learned from fathers (Jn. 8:39)

and mothers (Ezek. 16:44). The circumstances in which you grow eventually affect and form certain character traits in you.

Christian Character

Our focus in this chapter is however on godly character. As we imitate God as dearly-beloved children (Eph. 5:1), our character should begin to reflect His.

What, then, is Christian character?

Christian character is an inner man built on the nature of God, the convictions of Jesus Christ, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 5:48; Eph. 5:1; 1 Pet. 1:15,16; Gal. 5:22-23). It is a lifestyle constructed on Bible truths; a core conviction that God's truth is universal, unchanging, and timeless. Christian character is an inward decision to imitate Jesus Christ, and a firm resolve to be filled and led by God the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 11:1; Luke 4:18; Rom. 8:14; Eph. 5:18).

Christian character is co-operating with the Spirit to form Christ within you; to value and live for what Christ valued and lived for (Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18). Christian character is a resolution not to be conformed to the world and its values, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind to test, approve and do what is God's good, acceptable and perfect will (Rom. 12:2). Christian character is the lifelong refusal to allow sin, the flesh, or

Satan's nature to colour your values, opinions and attitudes (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8).

In sum, Christian character is Christlikeness.

Before coming to know Jesus and being born again, our hearts were incurably evil and depraved (Gen. 6:5,6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18,23). We were so accustomed to evil that we could not do good (Jer. 13:23). Our natural character was twisted as the result of the Fall.

When we accepted Christ as Lord and personal Saviour, however, we became new creatures and old things passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). God gave us a new heart and a new spirit, wrote His words on our hearts, and put them in our minds (Ezek. 36:25-27; Heb. 8:10-12). The development of a new divine nature began in us.

Remember, though, that this formation is a process. From eternity past, God's priority is for the Christian to become like Jesus Christ. However, many of us misunderstand this. We relax after becoming born again, complacent in the knowledge that we have escaped hell and are now candidates for heaven. We fail to recognize that God's purpose for our salvation is that every child of His should be like Christ. His ultimate desire for the standards of our character were long determined, and it is a simple truth that God's design is for our character to be transformed into that of Jesus Christ's. Listen to the words of the Bible:

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. **Rom. 8:29***

*Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. **Col. 1:28***

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. **2 Cor. 3:18***

*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: **1 Pet. 2:21***

*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. **1 Cor. 11:1***

Why do we go to church? The supreme aim of the five-fold ministry gifts in the church is to help us grow into Christlikeness (Eph. 4:11-16). We fail God when we conform to the world instead of being transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). The expectation of Heaven is that as you embark on the journey of increasingly knowing God (Jn. 17:3), you will be gradually changed until a time comes when you can also confidently be an example for anyone going to heaven (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7).

The standard for Christian character is therefore Christlikeness. We cannot be satisfied until every aspect

of our nature is as Jesus was. This is why He lived, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

THINK POINT:

Think about your own life. Evaluate your character, and note down five areas in which you find yourself falling short of Christ's standard of character.

Why Build Christian Character?

Now that we understand what we mean by Christian character, we must ask ourselves why it matters that we build this nature into ourselves. Allow us to present you with seven critical reasons.

Christian character is important because ***children carry the nature of their father***. If we are God's children, we must think, feel, act, and speak like God (John 8:39).

The Scriptures teach that when we receive Jesus and believe in his name, we are not only born of God but are given the authority to become and be called the children of God (John 1:12-13; 3:6; 1 John 3:1). Because we are children, God sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, "Abba, Father!" The Holy Spirit himself witnesses to us that we are children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15,16). God's seed lives

in us. We cannot continue in sin and lawlessness because we are born of God (1 John 3:6,9,10). The exceeding great and precious promises of God are to make us partakers of the divine nature so that we can escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

Is it not then a shock and wonder when Heaven discovers a so-called believer whose character is unlike God's? God's children must reflect the nature of God.

Secondly, ***Christian character is the badge of Christian leadership.*** Christianity stands or falls with exemplary character. "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ," says Paul (1 Cor. 11:1).

Character is more required for the bishop, overseer, deaconess and deacon than charisma or spiritual gifts (1 Tim. 3:1-7;8-10; Titus 1:5-9). Church leaders lacking morals are exposed as false Christs, false apostles, false prophets and false teachers. They are wolves in sheep's clothing; blind leading the blind; a brood of vipers and whitewashed tombs (Matt. 15:14). Leaders without character destroy the whole church, because we are commanded to imitate the faith and lifestyle of our leaders and submit to them (Heb. 13:7,17). The more Christlike our leaders, the stronger God's church in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation.

Any believer who ever hopes to occupy any position in the Church of God -- from usher to Sunday School teacher,

choir leader, cell group leader, elder, Youth Group leader -- must determine to build strong Christian character.

Thirdly, ***Christian character makes us useable for God.*** God is holy, and when we clean up our lives, God's Spirit takes hold of our consecrated lives and does what only God can do with man. Five loaves in the hands of Jesus feed 5,000. Peter's shadow heals the sick and demonized. Handkerchiefs and aprons from Paul's body are sent far away to effectively heal the sick.

God can use us as we are, but when we purify ourselves, we become vessels of honour in the hands of the Creator of the universe. When we don't have God's character, we don't have His heart and His mind. All our ministry begins to work against God rather than for Him.

For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Phil. 2:21

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Fourthly, ***Christian character proves to all that we are not fake.*** We are known by our fruit (Matt. 7:15-19). Men do not gather mangoes from thorns, and a good tree cannot bear bad fruit.

False Christs and anti-Christs have arisen to deceive many. The devil has turned himself into an angel of light and his agents are doing the same (2 Cor. 11:13-15). These end-times are the worst. Men with seared conscience and doctrines of demons have risen to draw disciples after themselves (1 Tim. 4:1-3). There are so many counterfeits to Christianity that we are cautioned not to believe every spirit but to test the spirits to see whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). There is only one guarantee to distinguish between the real children of God and those who are only pretending: Christlike character.

It is not the speaking of postgraduate tongues, the working of incredible miracles, or the demonstration of refined gifts that signify your Christianity. Only your character will tell.

Again, ***the enemy is constantly looking for ways to exploit any weaknesses in our character.*** Satan tempts constantly (1 Pet. 5:8-9). The enemy of our souls is going round like a roaring lion to make nonsense of our spiritual life, and to make us a laughing-stock before God, angels, the church, friends, and foes. He seeks any little window through which he can get a foothold that can become a stronghold in our lives. This is why we are cautioned to give him no foothold (Eph. 4:27), because we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

Noah's tendency to drink made the most righteous

man of his generation a drunk whose son could mock him. In the same way, Lot -- saved by angels from a supernatural destruction of his city -- got drunk two nights in a row, and impregnated his two daughters without even knowing. David, the man after God's own heart, was floored by lust for Bathsheba. Reuben slept with his father's concubine and lost the blessing of his birthright. Solomon's heart was led astray by many wives, and he lost ten of the twelve tribes of Israel in one generation. Gehazi's greed cost him a double portion of anointing, and blessed him with leprosy for his descendants. Moses' anger made him a murderer and someone who smashed God's original tablets of the Ten Commandments. King Asa's pride left him diseased in the feet until he died.

Do we need to go on? Too often, God's most useful servants were knocked down by a simple flaw in their character. Will you also be added to that number? Any Christian who does not work on his character is only a ticking time bomb Satan will use to destroy God's work.

Then, ***other Christians copy and imitate us or quote us.*** No one can measure the impact of his life upon others. We affect generations with our character. When offences come, heaven always holds someone accountable for the loss of a soul (Lk. 17:1-2). Abraham probably never knew that his strategy of lying about his wife would be passed on to Isaac. The things we say, wear, or do spread

to those around and under us. Unless we build Christlike character which can be imitated, we should never aspire for Christian leadership or marriage and family life.

Finally, ***character is important for going to heaven.*** Heaven is holy because God is holy. The angels are holy angels (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8).

We are saved by grace and not by works (Eph. 2:8,9), but that does not give us the license to continue in sin so that grace will abound (Rom. 6:1,2). God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). Everyone who hopes to go to heaven must change his or her character to conform to the standards of eternity in heaven (1 Jn. 3:3). Heaven will become hell for you if you love the things God hates and hate the things God loves (Prov. 6:16-19).

Therefore, not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven. Workers of iniquity will be smoked out (Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 21:8). The tares will be separated from the wheat. Without holiness and purity of heart, no-one can see the Lord (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14). The Bible is consistently clear that character will determine those who get into heaven and those who will not be allowed in:

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be

consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. Rev. 21:8

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. 5:19-21

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 6:9-10

Christo-Apostolic Attitudes to Sin and Human Character

Because of the necessity of character, we find Jesus and his apostles uncompromising in their attitude towards sin and human character.

Jesus taught that a man's actions and words proceed from the heart, from deep within him, and betray not only his convictions but the spiritual source of his influence (Mark 7:21-23; Matt. 15:19-21). He rightly traced outward behaviour to inner deposits.

And He said, 'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications,

murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man. **Mark 7:20-23**

The Son of God insisted that before a person speaks or acts, it is from a reservoir of good or evil stored in the heart over time. Men are either good and their character good, or they are evil and their behaviour is bad. No good tree can bear bad fruit; and no bad tree can bear good fruit.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.”
Matthew 7:15-20

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
Matt. 12:33-37

He was very clear in his mind that the works and

lifestyle of the Pharisees demonstrated that they were of their father the devil. He explained to them that if they had indeed been children of Abraham, they would do what Abraham did.

*“But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.’ Then they said to Him, ‘We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.’” **John 8:40-44***

Jesus also believed and taught that spirits influence human behaviour and speech. Look at the way he confronted Peter at his friendly suggestion of avoiding the cross!

*“Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’” **Matt. 16:22-23***

Then again, Jesus believed and taught that anyone who

commits sin is a slave to sin (John 8:34). He instructed that if your eye, hand or foot causes you to sin, it is much better to go to the extreme of cutting it off and throwing it away so you can go to heaven maimed, than to go to hell whole (Matt. 5:29; 18:8-10; Mark 9:43-45). No amount of ministry, prophesying and doing miracles in the name of Jesus can be substituted for righteous living and doing God's will (Matt. 7:21-23).

Apostle John echoes the same. He concludes that anyone who continues in sin is of the devil; and there are only two kinds of people, either children of God or children of the devil. Character determines whose child a person is, whether God or the devil.

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”

1 John 3:8-10

The apostles and the early church believed in holiness of character. They disciplined all unruly church members and wrote against those who lived or taught contrary to holiness. Ananias and Sapphira died for lying. Some were sick, weak, or died after taking the Lord's supper unworthily

(Acts 5:4-6,9,10; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 9-11; 11:29-31). All that called themselves brothers but were living sinful lives were to be punished. Paul was even bold enough to hand some people over to Satan to be taught a lesson for their bad behaviour (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

The expectation of Jesus and his apostles was that children of God would wrestle with sin to muster and overcome it, no matter what. The writer of the book of Hebrews was unapologetic in saying that we must resist sin to the point of shedding blood.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Heb. 12:4

How to Build Christian Character

Now that we have understood what Christian character is, and why it matters so much, you must be desperate to know how to build it into the various aspects of your own life. The most crucial step in building character is to target a Spirit-driven character by identifying the weaknesses in your own life.

We believe that you have picked up this book because you cannot be sure of your integrity as a believer. You are not certain that you are honest and without guile. You find that your words and promises cannot often be trusted. You are not generally faithful and dependable. You have come to Doctor Jesus, who is Faithful and True (Rev. 3:14) so that

you can learn how to be a person of integrity.

May God prosper your journey.

In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at why the issue of integrity is so critical, by delving into how bad a little compromise can become.

CHAPTER TWO

Why Discuss Integrity?

Marden asks, "Suppose we live in a world where natural things would lie and deceive us as does man; a world where the mountains, the seas, the forests, and the rivers were all shams; where the earth, which looks rich and fruitful would mock us by refusing harvest in return for our seed; a world where the force of gravity would not be depended upon and the planets would not keep their orbits."

After three days of ministering at a revival programme in one of our Senior High Schools, I ended my last sermon with an altar call. "Who here," I asked, "is ready to vow to God that they would rather fail an exam than cheat?"

I waited for a few minutes. Nobody stood up. I thought they didn't understand the question, so I repeated it. It took me a few tries before I realized that none of these students was ready to commit to such a life of integrity. I was disappointed. Within the past three days, we had led many of them to Christ, had baptized them by immersion, and had prayed for them to receive the gift of the Holy

Spirit. How could none of them be ready to commit to honesty in something as little as examinations?

The more I meditate on the issue, the more it becomes clear to me that our entire society has become so steeped in corruption because of the failure in integrity at the most basic levels. Let me explain what I mean by corruption.

Corruption

We say that something is corrupted when it has been influenced in any way, so that it is not as whole as it should be. In relation to integrity, it is when someone or a process influences (the giver) or is influenced (the recipient) by a bribe, 'gifts' or 'tips', sex appeal, tribalism, connections, or old boy-ism. It is when justice is twisted in some way. No matter how little the compromise, once any influence has been allowed to tamper with anything, it corrupts the whole. Thus, Paul says that a little leaven corrupts the whole (Gal. 5:9).

This explanation is important because Georgina and I are discovering that many Christians do not even seem to know when they are being corrupt or corrupted. They cannot see what is wrong with paying a "little something" for the policeman to overlook their expired driving license, or with teaching someone in the exam hall, or with lying at the visa interview, or with travelling abroad with someone else's passport, or with accepting tips in the office before

performing some official duty. “What’s wrong with paying someone else to write my thesis for me?” they ask. “Why shouldn’t I flirt with the lecturer until he changes my grades? Why not pay something small unofficially so I can avoid exorbitant official fees which would cripple my business? Why not treat some patients better than others because their family members have come to ‘see me’?”

These questions, though they might seem so novel because of the times we live in, are not actually that fresh. Though the ways it expresses itself may have changed, corruption in itself is not a new phenomenon. Noah’s flood was as a result of the corruption and defilement of human beings (Gen. 6:5). Over the decades, however, it is startling when you consider the statistics on corruption on the global scale, and in Africa in particular.

Corruption in the World

Transparency International performs an annual assessment of the state of corruption across the countries of the world. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which has been published since 1995, defines public sector corruption as “the misuse of public power for private benefit.”

Every year since its inception, the Corruption Perception Index shows that no region or country in the world is immune to the damages of corruption, and two-

thirds of the 180 or more countries and territories assessed score below fifty on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)¹.

Consistently, the top 10 least corrupt countries so far have been Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Singapore, Norway, Netherlands, Canada and Luxembourg. The ten most corrupt countries differ more widely but over the past five years, Libya, Afghanistan, Sudan, North Korea, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, Lebanon have repeatedly featured.

These facts demonstrate two key truths the Bible brings out. The first is that all men are corrupt sinners. Corruption has been with man from Genesis. In Rom. 3:10-23, Paul the apostle quotes from Ps. 14 & 53 to prove his point that there is none righteous. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. There is no single country on earth that meets 100% of even the human standard; how much less God's perfect standard of holiness and righteousness?

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Genesis 6:5-6 NKJV

The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jer. 17:9

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_Perceptions_Index

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. For there is no difference;

Rom. 3:10-20

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:23

The second truth demonstrated by the Corruption Index is that corruption begins early with the individual before it becomes district, regional, national, international. Ministers of State and the holders of public service do not become corrupt overnight. They all start small. Let us listen to the Lord Jesus Christ,

*He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? **Luke 16:10-12***

Lack of integrity, corruption and bribery in a nation can best be attacked, fought and corrected when individuals in the nation have personal integrity. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

Corruption in Africa

As we have just seen, corruption is inherent in every society of the world by virtue of our fallen human nature, but our concern in this section is the endemic corruption on the African continent that our society is willing to tolerate.

The African Integrity Crisis

It was an unbearably hot December afternoon as we approached the Senegalese border town of Rosso at about 1:30pm. The six-hour ride in the bush taxi had left all five of us -- Georgina, myself, and our three youngest children -- tired, hungry, and worn-out.

You would not know that as parents, this was about the twentieth time of doing this 500-kilometer journey, crossing two borders and a river (usually on canoe) to get our children down from an English boarding school in Senegal to our missions base in a North African country. We had started off from Popenguine, a village near their school, at the crack of dawn. As they sometimes did, the kids had refused to take the hurriedly-prepared breakfast we were offered.

Our bush taxi pulled up at the small border police post. The familiar faces of the customs officers appeared, struggling for our passports as the porters also harassed us for our luggage. The two of us trooped into the tiny customs office to process our travel documents, leaving the three children guarding the luggage in the blazing sun.

As usual, the customs officer demanded 2000 CFA per passport from us. Again, we tried to reason with him. We were constant travellers and members of ECOWAS, therefore we were not expected to pay any money. We knew also that this money would not be going into official coffers; it was merely a bribe that he was insisting on. Our consciences could not rest.

As the argument dragged on and on, we heard the scream of one of our children. Aseda, our then-14-year-old, was fainting. Her eyes were all white and turned up. I could not control myself, and in broken French, I asked someone for iced water to pour on her. The attention of the covetous officer was drawn by someone in the crowd to the plight of our fainting daughter who had by now collapsed in a heap at my feet.

Still, though, this customs officer callously insisted that he would not let us go until we paid the money he wanted. Then as if it was some drama or a big joke, Joy, our then-16-year old, who came to help me revive her sister, also screamed and her seemingly lifeless body tumbled down

onto the floor just across the counter.

At this, we could no longer hold out. We paid that officer the money he was demanding before we were released to attend to our children and continue our journey. As we left, JFK was shaking his head in disgust, "This is Africa."

As we write, the 2019 rankings of the Transparency International from 180 countries indicate that sub-Saharan Africa is the most corrupt region of the world, with the lowest score of 32/100 -- far below the global average of 43². The top ten ranking countries in Africa are Seychelles, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Rwanda, Namibia, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, and Ghana. The ten most corrupt nations in Africa are Somalia (9), South Sudan (12), Sudan (16), Equatorial Guinea (16), Guinea Bissau (18), Burundi (20), Chad and Eritrea (23)³.

These statistics are troubling in themselves, but more worrying is the reluctance of our governments to take action against corruption, extortion, and the abuse of public funds and office. Even though bribery and corruption by definition are secret transactions and therefore difficult to measure accurately, the statistics from within and reports from without leave us with no doubt that rampant

2 <https://qz.com/africa/1791822/which-are-the-most-corrupt-countries-in-africa/>

3 <https://weetracker.com/2020/01/23/5-countries-most-corruption-in-africa/>

corruption has become an African way of life.

A Korean missionary once passed by our house on his way to visit some countries in our region. When we asked the purpose of his visit, he informed us that his past househelps had come from the countries he was going to visit. Without exception, each of them stole from the house. He was so baffled by this behaviour that he bought a plane ticket to the region to tour the countries and find out whether stealing was part of African culture. After his visits, he got in touch with us again. Guess what? His conclusion was that indeed, lack of integrity was an African tradition. The evidence was too much against us for any arguments.

65 years after our first nations got independence, Africa is a world leader in corruption and still blaming colonialists. The daily newspapers and personal life experiences of everyone are full of the stories.

Traffic policemen stop you for imaginary faults and bleed money out of you; customs officials collect money before stamping genuine passports or allowing the clearing of goods; parents of brilliant students have to “see” school authorities before their wards are admitted into prestigious schools; contractors and business men give “tips” in order to win contracts; doctors and nurses have to be tipped before they see a dying patient; secretaries must be bribed before they move your letter from one desk to another in the same

office; judges and court officials are visited with envelopes and people's fates are sealed; if you are not alert, the petrol attendant at the filling station defrauds you; land owners sell the same plot of land to two or three different clients; and even in the church, the church member who gives the most influences the pastor's sermons and prophecies most. As for the political scene, there is no need to cite examples.

It is true that 40% of Africa lives below \$2.00 a day, and Africa accounts for over 60% of the world's poverty, with a majority of inadequate salaries which are not even paid on time⁴. We understand that 27 of the world's poorest countries are in sub-Saharan Africa⁵. We empathize that 42 of Africa's countries are in poverty, and in 16 of these, poverty is rising. It is even true that these figures must be observed in the light of the massive population growth in Africa.

We do not disagree that life is hard here, but is it not possible for a person to be poor but still have integrity and be honest? On the whole, the corruption, dishonesty, bribery, fraud, extortion, embezzlement, nepotism, influence-peddling, swindling, cheating, and lack of integrity on the personal, family, public, and national levels in Africa is

4 <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-is-the-future-of-poverty-in-africa#:~:text=According%20to%20projections%20from%20the,living%20in%20poverty%20in%202020>

5 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2018/11/21/figure-of-the-week-understanding-poverty-in-africa/>

frightening.

Moreover, if we delve just a little deeper into the issue, we must ask ourselves if Africa is really that poor. Africa has approximately 30% of the world's remaining natural resources⁶. The continent is believed to hold 90% of the world's cobalt, 90% of its platinum, 50% of its gold, 98% of its chromium, 70% of its tantalite, 64% of its manganese, one-third of its uranium, as well as more oil reserves than all of North America⁷. 70,000 of Africa's brightest and best brains leave to work abroad, while 100,000 foreign experts are paid to work in Africa.

The problem is not therefore that we do not have the resources, or that God has been unkind or unfair to Africa. The greatest enemy to making good use of all these resources to redeem Africa from poverty has remained corruption⁸. The Anti-Corruption Resource Center offers at least four dreadful effects of corruption on the continent.

1. Corruption affects national economy. It is estimated that over \$50 billion is lost ANNUALLY because of corruption⁹

2. Corruption affects aid effectiveness. Every year,
6 <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2016/10/mapping-africa-natural-resources-161020075811145.html>

7 Mishra, SK. (2017). Measuring Degree of Globalization of African Countries on Almost Equimarginal Contribution Principle. Retrieved from https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/82614/1/MPRA_paper_82614.pdf

8 <https://waronwant.org/media/africa-continent-wealth-continent-poverty>
9 <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2013/africa-loses-50-billion-every-year>

about \$30 billion of aid to Africa ends up in the private Western bank accounts of some African public official.

3. Corruption affects revenue collection. 50% of tax revenue never really gets to the government chest. It is either pocketed or bribed away.
4. Corruption affects household expenditure. In Ghana, the Centre for Democracy & Development's 2000 Governance & Corruption Survey revealed that 75% of households see corruption as a serious problem in Ghana, with 66% paying 10% of their incomes in bribes to public officials. 44% of firms admitted making unofficial payments to public officials.

Corruption in Africa is not only chronic, widespread, and costly; it is growing to become a culture. It is amazing that the increase in corruption is accompanied by a simultaneous growth in our Christianity. Patrick Johnstone in his *Operation World* (2001) cites Africa as the first continent to become majority Christian in one century:

“In the 20th Century, Christianity became the religion of the majority in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1900 there were 8 million Christians (10% of the population of Africa); by 2000 there were 351 million (48.4% of the population of Africa, 60% of sub-Saharan Africa).”

Now, Africa is set to become the center of Christianity

for the next 50 years¹⁰. If Christianity is growing at the rate of 4,000 to 20,000 converts a day, should Africa be growing in lack of integrity?

Our solution is to attack the issue from the root: personal integrity. That is the only antidote to corruption, and that is the focus of this book. If we fail here, we fail everywhere. No government official becomes corrupt overnight. To educate our youth and help them build a life of honesty, transparency, and integrity is our greatest challenge. This is what will save Africa.

Why is Corruption Dangerous?

Many people downplay the dangers of corruption because they try to rationalize it. They begin by arguing that since people aren't well-paid in the economy, you are actually helping the system by giving little tips to people before they do their jobs. They hide their lack of integrity under a cloak of compassion.

Some people also recognize that bribery and corruption is wrong, but they tell themselves that the problem is so endemic that there is nothing that one person can do to effect any change. They try not to be corrupt themselves, but they never go out of their way to fight the lack of integrity in the system. The problem with this is that over time, anyone who is not actively fighting against corruption will gradually begin to tolerate and compromise with the

10 <https://qz.com/africa/1587317/how-many-christians-live-in-africa/>

system. Eventually, you who began with clean hands will be just as twisted as everyone around you. Corruption is a cancer that spreads.

Allow us to round off this chapter by presenting some deeper-seated reasons why corruption is dangerous to any country, region, or continent that allows it to run rampant.

1. Corruption is a heart and character issue

A frightening thing about corruption is that it is actually an indication of a much deeper problem. It is a habit and an inner life that enters you and takes over a part of you. Though it begins with one compromise here and one lie there, it begins to seep through your speech, work, walk, and the way you address issues as a person. Judas is the most infamous corrupt person in the whole of history. It is mindblowing to understand that he walked with Jesus, heard all the sermons, saw all the miracles, and even did some himself... yet he finally graduated from stealing coins (Jn. 12:6) to selling Jesus for just 30 pieces of silver. That is how corrupt the human heart can be. You can be in church but be worse than Judas.

Look at Gehazi. Elisha got a double portion out of his master Elijah, but through corruption, Gehazi followed Naaman and all he ended up with was a legacy of leprosy for himself and his descendants (2 Kings 5:20-27). Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) and Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8) are further examples of how even being under an apostolic

ministry is no match for the corruption that can be in your heart.

Another striking example is the governor Felix who sat on Apostle Paul's case. He kept Paul in prison for a while, hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe (Acts 24:25, 26). Paul's freedom at this point would have meant more kingdom expansion, but the Apostle refused to compromise. He refused to give a bribe in order to get out even to serve God more.

Sometimes, we give the excuse that our corruption will help God's work to go on. Lack of integrity in the office may yield more income, allowing you to pay more tithes and give more money to the church. But there is no excuse. Corruption corrupts you yourself, and makes it such that you can't be trusted. You become someone who is basically dishonest, in opposition to the truth. In all your ways, you become defiled and corrupt.

2. Corruption spreads.

A second reason why corruption is so dangerous is because it spreads. When one person is corrupt and manages to get away with it, they have polluted the system. Other people are emboldened to also follow suit, until eventually, bad people and evil reigns in the nation.

More than that, you spoil the hearts and consciences of other people, even when they are the recipients of your

corruption. You convince them to deny truth, and thus, corrupt their hearts. Listen to the Bible:

*Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart. **Ecc. 7:7 ESV***

*You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. **Deut. 16:19 ESV***

3. Corruptions corrupts the entire system

Thirdly, corruption is dangerous because of its far-reaching implications. You think you have only cheated on that Biology exam to pass your final exams in high school. But imagine that you do pass that exam. You get into the Medical School. Eventually, you graduate as a doctor. But are you really a doctor?

In Africa especially, our countries are full of so-called professionals who got there through one form of compromise or another. It has become so prevalent that in some countries, nobody can really trust the doctors, the engineers, the pilots, the businessmen, or even the pastors. They are all sitting in positions they did not earn, because they cheated their way into it. The entire system is corrupted, and no-one can really be sure whether you really deserve the title you own.

The problem is so serious that there is exam

malpractice even among the police; they have been tabled as the world's most bribable institution. In our universities, people register to do their Masters and PhD, and rather than carrying out the research and writing out a thesis, they pay others to do the whole thing for them. They graduate with a certificate, get a job with that certificate, earn titles with it, and earn income. But do they deserve it?

4. Corruption discourages honest people

But that is not all. Not only does corruption wreck the system; it also discourages those who are trying to be honest and live lives of integrity. Someone commented to me that it seems as if you are punished when you are hardworking, when you are diligent, and when you do your work as it is supposed to be done. Those who are corrupt rule the system so much that the honest people eventually withdraw their strength and service.

I have heard from students who have been blacklisted even by their teachers for refusing to cheat in exams or teach fellow students. Some people have lost out on promotions because they did not compromise. When these valuable people get tired of holding on, we lose so much more as an organization or nation.

5. Corruption attracts God's anger

But the final reason why corruption is so dangerous is the most disturbing. We serve a God who is unbribable and

incorruptible (Deut. 10:17). He cannot be influenced. He is absolutely impartial and no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17; Acts 10:33-35). More than that, He hates injustice with a passion, and He punishes it definitively. When God noticed the corruption of Noah's generation, He sent a flood that wiped everything out (Gen. 6:6-7). He categorically instructs that if we cheat the poor and weak, He will punish us for it.

*You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. **Exod. 22:21-24***

*'Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' **Deut. 27:19***

To be like Him, every Christian must develop a character which cannot be bribed or influenced in any way by anything to compromise on truth and justice.

In fact, any Christian who can be influenced by money to do wrong is a shame, a traitor, and a disgrace. You have been bought with the invaluable precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. How can you ever allow yourself to be bought by anything else? You are bigger than money, and you prove yourself to be cheap if you ever allow it to affect

the decisions you take.

We hope that you have begun to appreciate the seriousness of the issue at hand. Let us now progress to the next chapter, where we can take a closer look at what integrity comprises.

APPENDIX

Steps to Salvation

The most important decision you can ever be confronted with in this life is the salvation of your soul. This urgent matter can be settled in a few minutes if you will read the following steps attentively and respond to God's call with all your heart.

Step One

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. In Jn. 3:16, the Bible states this fact.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 NKJV

Step Two

We are prevented from experiencing the fullness of God's love and plan because all of us are basically sinful by nature, by inheritance, by choice, by habit and by practice.

For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 3:22-23 NKJV

Step Three

The righteous and just God must punish sin. Therefore every sinner is cut off from fellowship and intimacy with God and under God's eternal punishment. This is what the Bible calls spiritual death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 6:23 NKJV

Step Four

The loving Father God sent His only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Jesus was born and tempted like us in every way, but he was without sin. On the cross, he paid the full price in our stead.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 5:8

Step Five

Now the choice is yours. You must recognize and admit that you are a sinner. Then you must be sorry for your sins and be prepared to turn away from them.

Next, you must personally accept and invite Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior.

*That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. **Rom 10:9-10***

If you are ready right now to turn over the lordship of your life to Jesus so that he will be your new managing director, you can simply pray this prayer sincerely from your heart.

Dear Lord Jesus, I realize I am a sinner and I have been running my own life. But thank you for coming to die for my sins on the cross. From today, I confess my sins to you and accept you as my Lord and personal Savior. Lord Jesus, come into my heart today. Wash my sins with your blood and make me a new person. Give me power over sin and Satan. Give me power to live a holy life for you alone. Thank you for hearing me in Jesus' name. Amen.

About The Authors

JFK MENSAH is an ordained pastor, head of church, missionary, Bible teacher and speaker, who has served both in Ghana and outside it. He is founder of Christlike Disciplemakers Movement, an interdenominational equipping ministry dedicated to Christlikeness, discipling and raising the 5-fold ministries in the Church to help complete the task of World Evangelism.

JFK is currently most passionate about his work with the Christlike Disciplemakers Movement, an interdenominational initiative for making Christlike disciples worldwide who use their calling and gifting for finishing the task of the Great Commission and preparing the body of Christ for His Second Coming in their various churches, fellowships and families. He is also the Rector of the Movement's accredited Bible College which offers Certificate and Diploma courses in Missions and Discipleship. More information about CDM can be found at www.cdmworld.org.

JFK Mensah and his wife, Georgina -- a 'professional pastor's wife' -- have been involved in a vibrant joint-ministry for over thirty-five years of married life. They are blessed with five children, three sons-in-law and five grandchildren.

Together with his family, JFK responded to God's call to serve in Mauritania as a missionary for four years, where disciples are still carrying on the work today to God's glory.



JFK MENSABH MINISTRIES

BOOK LIST

INTIMACY WITH GOD

Total Commitment

How to Become Like Jesus Through the Daily Quiet Time

Hearing God for Yourself

And There He Prayed

MINISTRY

The Essentials of Christian Leadership

Why Should Anyone Hear The Gospel Twice

The Lost Art of Spiritual Warfare

God's Call on Your Life: An Introduction to Discovering and Fulfilling Your Purpose

God's Call On Your Life: Developing & Fulfilling Your Teaching Ministry

God's Call On Your Life: Developing & Fulfilling Your Shepherding Ministry

God's Call On Your Life: Developing & Fulfilling Your Evangelistic Ministry

God's Call On Your Life: Developing & Fulfilling Your Prophetic Ministry

God's Call On Your Life: Developing & Fulfilling Your Apostolic Ministry

DISCIPLESHIP & DISCIPLEMAKING

Christlikeness: God's Priority

Making Christlike Disciples

Workbook 1: The Disciple's Foundation

Spiritual Growth

Workbook 2: The Disciple's Growth

Christian Maturity

Intentional Disciplemaking

CHARACTER

True Repentance

Am I Really Proud?

Building Integrity Into Your Life

Wisdom: Living According to the Scriptures

The Holiness Without Which No Man Shall See The Lord



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FAMILY LIFE

The Godly Man
The Woman God Uses
The Makings of a Virtuous Woman
The Purpose-Driven Woman
Practical Issues in Christian Marriage
Responsible Christian Parenting

OCCUPATION

The Christian and His Work
Excellence: Giving God & Man Your Very Best

OUT OF STOCK

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God bless you.