

## Overcoming Corruption through Integrity – Jonathan Shibley and Kevin Pate

*Deuteronomy 16:19*

*19 You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.*

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for one's own private gain. It is exceedingly widespread, serving as the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development around the world. Corruption alone is capable of distorting markets, stifling economic growth, debasing democracy and undermining the rule of law. Currently, corruption adds up to 10% to the total cost of doing business globally. The costs are even greater in developing countries, where dishonesty and other immoral tactics add up to 25% to the total cost of procuring contracts.

A corrupt business or business leader enjoys the benefits of success at the expense of customers and competition. When businesses are rooted in corruption, they alter the playing field in their favor, using their connections to shield themselves from otherwise healthy competition. Shady business practices like bribery help them undermine fair competition, leading to a monopolization of power that leverages its control to become richer and stronger despite inefficiencies and shortcomings.

Christians are called to the highest standards of integrity at all times and in all matters. In many cultures, business leaders can actually induce hardships or 'punishment' on their businesses by choosing to opt out of the systemic corruption that is otherwise considered the 'norm'. But as Christians, God is our source – not the world.

There are benefits to operating a "clean" business and not participating in dishonesty. Doing so can:

- Reduce the cost of doing business system-wide for an entire country
- Attract investments from ethically oriented investors who bring capital into a business
- Attract and retain highly principled employees, improving employee morale
- Develop a competitive advantage as the business becomes the preferred choice of ethically minded customers

### Honesty and Integrity

God desires total honesty with no room for 'grey' areas. He takes delight in those who walk in truth in every area of their lives.

*Proverbs 12:22*

*22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.*

*Leviticus 19:11*

*11 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.*

### Why does God have such high standards for honesty?

Truthfulness is an attribute of God. The Bible tells us in John 14:6 that Jesus referred to himself as the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life. If we are called to be Christ-like and were made in the image of God, we too should be rooted in truthfulness and honesty. We absolutely cannot be dishonest and say that we love God. We also cannot be dishonest and say that we love our neighbor.

*1 Peter 1:15*

*15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*

*Proverbs 14:2*

*2 He who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him.*

*Romans 13:9-10*

*9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Integrity goes hand-in-hand with honesty. The Bible says that having integrity pleases God and leads us into His presence. Integrity also acts as a cloak of security, establishing our credibility so that our attempts to evangelize can be successful.

*Psalms 15:1-3*

*1 Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? 2 He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; 3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;*

*Proverbs 10:9*

*9 He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known.*

*Proverbs 11:8*

*8 The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead.*

*Philippians 2:15*

*15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*

### Honesty is required for leaders

As a leader, honesty is not an option – it is a requirement. God is so passionate about truth, that His Word says dishonesty is grounds for disqualification from leadership. That is because when a leader is dishonest, he or she produces dishonest followers too. Conversely, having integrity can actually prolong one's leadership.

*Proverbs 29:12*

*12 If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked.*

*Exodus 18:21*

*21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.*

*Proverbs 28:16*

*16 A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, but he who hates covetousness will prolong his days.*

### Integrity must be present in all areas of life

Christians are called to battle corruption by embracing integrity in every area of life. In business, that means valuing honesty in both the big and small things, regardless of whether anyone knows about them. The Christian business leader should refuse all bribes, which do nothing more than distort justice. Furthermore, integrity should flow into other areas of our lives outside of business as well – especially with regard to our families and the way we raise our children. A child will listen to your words, but will pay closer attention to your actions. When you become a model of integrity, your child will also embrace integrity as an adult.

*Luke 16:10*

*10 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.*

*Exodus 23:8*

*8 And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.*

*Proverbs 17:23*

*23 A wicked man accepts a bribe behind the back to pervert the ways of justice.*

*Proverbs 22:6*

*6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

### Protect integrity in your life

As a Christian, there is little the enemy wants to do more than publicly discredit your integrity. Opportunities will arise that will threaten our integrity and test our commitment to truth. That is why the Bible warns us to be on guard at all times, surrounding ourselves with honest people to whom we can be accountable to.

*Philippians 4:8*

*8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

*1 Corinthians 15:33*

*33 Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”*

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

*9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up*

*James 5:16*

*16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

*Proverbs 27:17*

*17 As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

### What to do when you are guilty of dishonesty

We know that sin separates us from God, but repentance restores us to Him. If you have been guilty of dishonest practices in your business or other areas of your life, there is forgiveness. The Bible gives us clear instructions, telling us to first restore our fellowship with God by confessing our sins, and then return everything we've received dishonestly to its rightful owner.

*1 John 1:9*

*9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*Leviticus 6:4*

*4 then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found*

## **Final Thoughts**

God receives glory in our integrity. He rewards those who fight for honesty and stand up to corruption. Even when those around us use wicked business tactics to achieve an immediate reward, we press on in truth. Psalm 37 repeatedly tells us not to be jealous of or fret over people who achieve success through wrongdoing, because the Lord “upholds the righteous” and “loves the just.” Instead, we must embrace a long-term perspective of sowing seeds to reap in a future harvest.

*1 Corinthians 9:25*

*25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

*Psalm 92:7*

*7 When the wicked spring up like grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever.*

## Forms of Bribes

The Bible is clear in its condemnation of bribery, whether offering, accepting or soliciting a bribe. There are two types of bribes – transactional and variance bribes.

Transactional Bribe - “a payment routinely rendered and usually impersonally made to a public official to secure or accelerate the performance of his prescribed function”

Variance Bribe - payment given where a norm has been varied, “to secure the suspension or non-application of a norm.” Clearly, this kind of bribe is wrong.

While Scripture is clear in disapproving bribes, it is silent on the practice of paying money or its equivalent when it is demanded by force or by withholding of good and services to extort. If this causes you confusion in determining the morality of a particular course of action, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does this action violate the Bible's standards?
- Is this action against the law of the land?
- How are other people affected by this choice?
- What do my conscience and the Holy Spirit tell me?
- Does this action fit in with God's larger purposes for me?

If you find that you are in a situation in which your integrity or character may be compromised, this should be your response:

- Show respect and honor the person who has asked you to be dishonest.
- Relate that because of your faith, you cannot do what is being asked.
- Tell of your Christian work ethic and principles of excellence, productivity and stewardship.
- Remind them of the benefit you are to the organization.
- Give God a chance to work in your situation.