

The Value of Integrity

Imagine the pressure, the burden of responsibility, upon Abraham Lincoln during his presidency. He was leading the United States through its greatest constitutional, military and moral crises – the American Civil War – preserving the Union, abolishing slavery, strengthening the national government and modernizing the economy.

More than enough for any one leader to have on his plate, right?

It is timely to think of the important role Lincoln played in the history of our country; today is his birth date.

After four years of bloody combat that left more than 600,000 soldiers dead and destroyed much of the South's infrastructure, the Confederacy collapsed, slavery was abolished, and the difficult Reconstruction process of restoring national unity and guaranteeing rights to the freed slaves began.

As commander-in-chief, Lincoln endured criticism at every turn – not only for the conduct of the war, but also for his foreign and domestic policies.

But his remarkable courage, his determination, and his integrity came shining through, despite the weight of his office and all the demands placed upon him. Two statements by Lincoln – spoken at different times – reveal his character:

1. "I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me."
2. "I do the very best I know how; the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing it to the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me will not amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, then a legion of angels swearing I was right will make no difference."

How important is integrity to you ... to our company ... to our country? Character – the kind that Lincoln displayed – seems in short supply today.

Integrity is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions. Integrity develops trust, and trust is the basic building block of relationships – in a marriage, in a business, in church and in government.

We are judged on what we say and what we do, particularly when the two are consistent and compatible, and it matters.

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches (Proverbs 22:1 NKJV).
– Beecher Hunter