

JOSEPH: A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND FORGIVENESS

A Classic Series

On-the-Job Integrity

Genesis 46:31–47:26



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Can you be a person of integrity and a successful businessperson at the same time? A Christian should be. Christians are to demonstrate how God would negotiate a deal, try a case, diagnose an illness, teach a class, or build a building. But too often Christians don't demonstrate integrity to the world. The world doesn't judge our integrity on Sunday morning. The world judges our integrity by the way we live on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday . . . God measures our integrity quotient every day of the week.

If you need a standard by which to gauge your own business integrity, Joseph is a perfect example—he demonstrated integrity in every aspect of his life. And by observing his business life, we'll learn how to order our priorities and test our motives.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Some General Observations about Business

Before we turn the page on Joseph's business ledger, let's take a moment to consider how business can affect our Christian witness.

First, *work reveals our character*. Sadly, too many Christians are Sunday-morning Christians and Monday-morning heathens. They refuse to view their work as divine. How can you tell? Observe their character over a forty-hour workweek. Do they demonstrate positive traits or negative traits? How do they approach their work? How do they treat other people?

Second, *work is a demanding arena of pressure*. Some jobs test the limits of a Christian's love for God and others. Every job brings pressure—office politics, deadlines, criticism, evaluations, pettiness . . . The list could go on and on. The pressure-cooker of business causes true beliefs to bubble to the surface.

Third, *work is an exacting test of efficiency*. All jobs require some level of efficiency; some standards must be met. But if you are an inefficient worker, your tasks can be a chore rather than a joy.



Quotable

Work is an exacting test of our integrity: including our efficiency, organization, determination, and creativity.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. A Specific Example: Joseph (Genesis 46:31–47:26)

If Joseph had written a book on business efficiency and integrity or on crisis management and leadership, it would have included at least four traits every professional should possess.

With his family now relocated in Egypt, Joseph didn't abuse his position as prime minister and presume upon Pharaoh by permanently settling his family in Goshen. He didn't remind Pharaoh that he was the one who had warned Egypt about the famine so Pharaoh would offer special privileges to his family. Rather, *he planned ahead with wise objectivity.*

Joseph was a powerful man, but he was a man under authority. He didn't want to do anything that might appear as usurpation or give Pharaoh any indication that he wasn't completely faithful. So, *he submitted to authority with loyal accountability.*

As the keeper of the keys to the granaries, Joseph could have easily taken advantage of the people's desperate plight. He could have raised the prices, gouged the people, and pocketed the excess. Lesser men would have succumbed to these temptations, but Joseph had too much integrity. He turned every dime over to the treasury (Genesis 47:13–14). *He arranged for survival with personal integrity.*

Joseph was never one of those who stifled new ideas with a "We've never done that before" attitude. He couldn't afford such defeatist thinking—lives were at stake. So what did Joseph do with millions of starving people? *He accepted the challenge with innovative creativity.*



GETTING TO THE ROOT

God promised to make Abraham a great nation and to bless those who blessed him (Genesis 12:2–3). This promise came true in Egypt during the days of Joseph. Joseph moved his family to Egypt and, at the command of Pharaoh, gave them the best land where they then prospered (47:27). Such a blessing on God's people brought blessings upon Egypt, as Joseph administered the affairs of state with wisdom—saving the lives of many, prospering Pharaoh, and glorifying God (47:13–26).

The Hebrew word for "bless," *barak*, literally means "to kneel."¹ It conveys the idea of bowing in honor or of attaching value to someone. In the Old Testament, blessings communicated spiritual, physical, and prophetic truths. The blessing of Abraham (12:1–3) was a promise to make him into a great nation and to settle his descendants in a homeland. But the promise also carried with it a spiritual and prophetic element—that Abraham's descendants would be a great blessing to the "families of the earth." This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, "the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1).



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LET'S LIVE IT

Joseph modeled integrity and wholeness in his business dealings—he had the right priorities and motives. Applying these helpful suggestions will help you to further develop integrity in your business life.

Our highest priority as Christian professionals should be our *commitment to Christian principles*. If we have to lie or step on people to succeed, then we've failed. And when we get to the top of the corporate ladder, we'll discover that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

Our other priority should be the *careful investment of time*. Perhaps the hardest word to say in the English language is the easiest to spell: N–O.

Our motives must be pure, *continually watching how we relate to people and asking why we said yes or no to each request*. As business professionals who are Christian, we must always treat people with dignity and respect, show humility, and remember for whom we ultimately work—the Lord.

Take a moment to analyze your work priorities. Are you investing your time wisely? If your priorities are out of balance, make a list of things to which you should say no.

ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 138..



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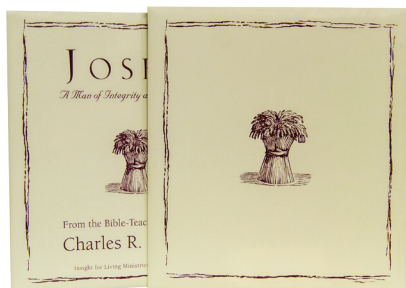
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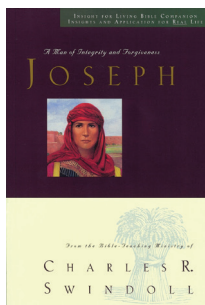
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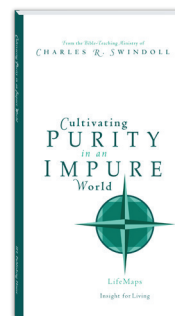
Tools for Digging Deeper



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