

LS101 Developing the Healthy Leader

The most important ingredient of leadership

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Marie Mahan

Dr. Blanche Wallace

The most important ingredient of leadership is Integrity.

Integrity is not a given factor in everyone's life; it is a result of discipline and inner trust and honesty in all situations. Integrity is the pivotal point between a happy person and a divided spirit and it is a hard won achievement.

Integrity is not what we do as much as whom we are. And who we are, in turn, determines what we do. Integrity is one of the top attributes of a great leader. It is a concept of consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations and outcomes. It is not enough for a leader to do things right; the leader must do the right thing. In his book *how do you kill 11 Million People?* [CITATION And93 \l 1033] Andrews dives into the problems that leaders create when they lie to their people. Author Andy Andrews thoughtfully promotes the long-term value of telling the truth, and of being honest. Both tenets are keys to living with integrity.

I am a HUGE fan of John C. Maxwell. In one of his books *'Developing The Leader Within'* [CITATION Max93 \l 1033] he discusses the importance of having integrity as a leader and he shares this story: *In ancient China the people built the great wall that was so high they believed no one could climb over it and so thick nothing could break it down. Not once did the barbaric hordes break down the wall or climb over it. Each time they bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right through the gates.* Interesting story isn't it? So much effort and focus was put on building the wall and making it strong, but when it came down to it, it was the *lack of integrity* that destroyed everything. It was kind of like it seeped through the cracks (*quite literally!*) It diminished the value of the wall. *The Chinese were so busy relying on the walls of stone that they forgot to teach integrity to their children.* Once it's lost, you've lost the basis of leadership.

I agree with John Maxwell that sadly, integrity is a vanishing commodity today. Personal standards are crumbling in a world that has taken to hot pursuit of personal pleasure and shortcuts to success.

People watch leaders very closely. Even if they are supreme leaders with numerous honors to their name, one lapse of integrity can throw their whole legacy into question, and have consequences that long outlast their own careers and lives.

References:

Andrews, A. (93). *How Do You Kill 11 Million People?*

Maxwell, J. c. (93). *Developing the leader within you*. Nelson.