

Integrity: The Mainstay of Pastoral Leadership

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Introduction

Trull and Carter stipulates, “The term “integrity” best describes the ethical wholeness of life demanded of the Christian minister. The morally mature minister experiences concomitant growth in three vital areas: character, conduct, and moral vision”.¹ Based on this premise, the writer will explore the importance of integrity and its overall influence in maintaining effective ethical pastoral care. The writer will analyze the various components of integrity such as: What is the vital importance of integrity in the lives of clergy and by what means is it an extension of their embedded personal actions and behaviors. Given that pastoral leadership is an influential entity honesty, integrity, and high moral standards must be at the forefront of pastors and ministry leaders’ decisions and methods in handling issues that will arise within the church. Therefore, to be successful in the role of pastoral leadership integrity must be the “mainstay” (pillar or chief support) that enables one to fulfill their personal and clergy responsibilities in an ethical manner.²

What is Integrity?

According to Barbara Killenger, “Integrity is a personal choice. An uncompromising and predictably consistent commitment to honor, moral, ethical, spiritual, and artistic values, and principles. Wholeness, a psychological state of internal harmony and consistent moral character, best captures the essence of integrity”.³ Along the same lines Peter G. Northouse concludes,

¹Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 59.

² Collins Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publisher, 2017), s.v. “Mainstay,” <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/mainstay> (accessed December 3, 2017).

³ Barbara Killinger, *Integrity: Doing The Right For The Right Reason*, 2nd ed. (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University, 2010), 12, <https://books.google.com/books/about/Integrity.html?id=tkIK8-4qqkwC> (accessed December 3, 2017).

“Integrity characterizes leaders who possess the qualities of honesty and trustworthiness. Leaders with integrity inspire confidence in others because they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do. Integrity is the bedrock of who a leader is”.⁴ In Figure 11.1 below Northouse provides the connectedness of the leader’s integrity with the projection of ethical leadership:⁵



Figure 11. 1 Factors Related to Ethical Leadership

Taking into consideration these sustainable explanations the writer considers Kouzes and Posner’s Second Law of Leadership “DWYSYWD” to be a critical element in making sure that credibility that stems from ingrained integrity remains intact. Kouzes and Posner confirm, “You build a credible foundation of leadership foundation when you “DWYSYWD-Do What You Say

4 Peter G. Northouse, *Introduction to Leadership: Concepts and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2015), 27.

5 *Ibid.*, 263.

You Will Do”.⁶ Hence, it is of the utmost importance that clergy purpose to be examples that others can follow through relationships that have been built on continuing trust.

Requiring Elements of Integrity

Because of its significance integrity garners some specific guidelines that must be adhere to so that clergy can uphold the responsibilities that have been given to them because of the magnitude of their calling. Trull and Carter proposes, “Through personal identification with Jesus Christ and full participation in the gospel story, an ethical leader gains a moral vision that synthesizes and harmonizes being, doing, and living into a life of moral integrity-living the truth”.⁷ Northouse indicates, “Integrity demands being open with others and representing reality as fully and completely as possible. There are times when telling the truth can be destructive or counterproductive, therefore, a balance between being open and candid must be struck”.⁸ Based on her ardent convictions Killenger confirms:

requires a temptation, deception.	“Integrity compels us to be socially conscious and other-directed, and to welcome both personal and professional responsibility. Integrity self-discipline and will power capable of resisting seduction of whether in the form of desire, self-serving, expediency, or
reward is oxygen to survive,	Integrity acts like a strong beacon in a storm to unerringly guide our action throughout any inner struggles or external conflict. Its priceless peace of mind and true dignity. Just as the body needs the soul needs integrity”. ⁹

Thus, integrity is the benchmark where decisions are made on how to proceed in any given situation. It is essential that clergy and ministry leaders clearly understand their very life,

⁶ James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 5th ed. (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 40.

⁷ Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation For Church Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 63.

⁸ Northouse, 27.

⁹ Killinger, 13.

ministry, and other endeavors rely heavily on their ability to sustain a high level of integrity. Considering, some clergy have not been cultivated by environments that modeled moral values they are still afforded numerous opportunities to change their concept of integrity and grow stronger in developing ethical behavior that is pleasing to God.

Case Studies: Ethical Guidelines

Utilizing Michael R. Milco's Decision-Making Tower the writer will review two case studies that will explain the importance of mobilizing integrity despite what the situation may deem for the clergy or ministry leader. Kenneth McIntosh points out, "When clergy fail to live with integrity, people around them suffer. Failure of integrity do not usually come in one step as he reveals in the following case study":

Case Study Number 1

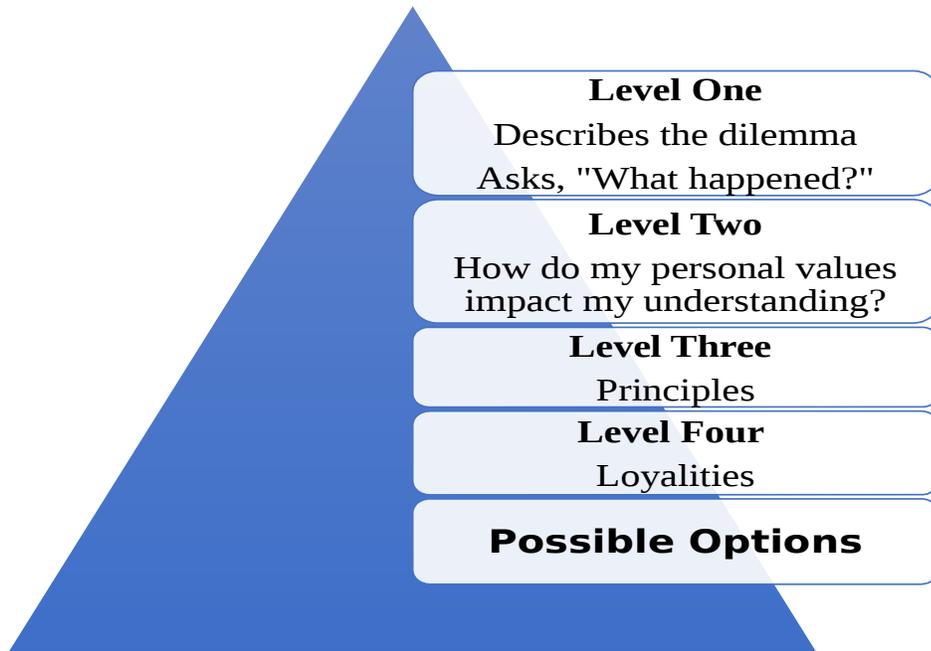
alone. He
college girl at his
time off from classes
Wednesday night. In
on the couch and cries
she might interpret his body
and he decided to move closer.
comfort. Again, not wishing to seem
him. Then he realized her hug
Pastor Jones had fallen prey to
was inappropriate to be alone in the building
and he knew clergy and counselors must
distance from people they try to help. He had
feelings to defeat common sense, breaking one rule
His mind raced frantically. How could he get out of
without making things worse? Once he was out of the
should he admit to anyone else what had happened? He
wished he had not gotten into this mess in the first place.
with an ethical dilemma, he must choose whether he will

“For instance, Pastor Owen Jones did not normally see young
women for counseling during hours when he would be
made an exception to his own rule with Susan, a
church. She sounded upset but couldn't take
during the day, so he agreed to meet her late
his office, the attractive young woman sat
while he sat behind his desk. He felt
language as being cold and distant,
She slid into his arms for
distant, he allowed her to hug
seemed more than sisterly.
deception. He knew it
with a young woman,
keep a professional
allowed his
after another.
this situation
situation,
dearly
Faced
behave

with integrity and trustworthiness. It was not too late for him to choose a moral course of action”.¹⁰ Observing the details of this case study the writer will discuss the ethical dilemma Pastor Jones is facing by focusing on the different levels stated in the Milco’s Decision-Making Tower. This approach will help the writer and others who view this material to find the best ethical solution for Pastor Jones dilemma.

Milco’s Decision-Making Tower Figure 1.2

¹⁰ Kenneth McIntosh, *Integrity and Trustworthiness* (Broomall, Pennsylvania: Mason Crest Publishers, 2003), 14, Electronic Format.



Level one: What happened? Pastor Jones allowed his better judgment to be swayed by the desire to meet the needs of his church member. When he decided to make an exception to his own standing rule red flag number one was set in motion. Despite the various red flags that were developing he did not adhere to the warnings until it was too late. He stepped across the ethical boundaries into a zone that could bring about grave consequences. **Level Two:** His personal needs to please others with personal contact played an intricate part in his decision to move from behind his desk to initiate contact with the young woman. **Level Three:** As stated in the case study, knowing that as a clergy and counselor he must keep a professional distance from the counselee, but he allowed his emotions to rule over making a quality ethical decision.

Level Four: Pastor Jones realized he has broken the Code of Ethics and must now deal with the repercussions that may occur. Not only could his actions destroy his character, it could bring about additional emotional damage to the already fragile young woman, and finally his actions

¹¹Michael R. Milco, *Ethical Dilemmas in Church Leadership: Case Studies in Biblical Decision Making* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1997), 18.

could create an atmosphere of mistrust and outrage within his church and the community. In retrospect, there are various solutions that could be put into operation to solve this dilemma in an ethical manner. First, Pastor Jones should prayerfully confide in a trusted accountability partner concerning his actions. The accountability partner can help him sort out the details of what happened during his vulnerable time, write them down, and prepare to collectively meet with the young women to resolve the issues.

Carrie Doehring provides the backdrop for the second case study that involves Pastor James Donaldson at Hope Presbyterian Church and one of his female members:

Case Study Number 2

“His usual practice, following a funeral service, was to conduct a follow-up visit with those who were in mourning. Lately, he had fallen behind in such visits. One afternoon, after a rancorous encounter in the church kitchen with the chairperson of one of the ladies’ auxiliary groups who wanted locks installed on the cabinets, he gave up the idea of working on his sermon and decided to head home early. On the way he stopped, somewhat impulsively, to visit a woman whose husband had recently died. He remembered her in the middle of the previous night when he was thinking about neglected duties. When he arrived unannounced, she graciously invited him in. He accepted her offer of “something stronger than tea,” and with the first sip of a gin and tonic he felt himself relax in a way he hadn’t in a long time. As he asked about what the past weeks had been like for her and she tearfully described her sadness and loneliness, he remembered what it was like to be competent and helpful. This late-afternoon conversation was the first of many. At each visit he began to share her his frustrations in ministry and she revealed to him intimate details of her sex life with her husband and her desire now for a man in her life. So, they embraced in a long hug before he left for the evening. The stage has been set for sexual misconduct. It is easy to imagine the end of this story”.¹²

Applying Milco’s Decision-Making Tower to this case study is somewhat comparable to the parameters stated in the first case study. **Level One:** What happened? Pastor Donaldson was experiencing ministry burn-out, he was frustrated due to the increase in ministerial

¹² Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 58.

responsibilities, and lacked the stamina to keep up with the needed pace. **Level Two:** He was busy meeting the needs of others while his personal needs went unmet. **Level Three:** Pastor Donaldson made several critical mistakes that could jeopardize his witness. He arrived at the female member's home unannounced, she allowed him to come in, he drank an alcoholic beverage that caused him to relax, combined with all these factors both were in a place of vulnerability. **Level Four:** His unmet needs were being fulfilled through her cry for help while dealing with sadness. As a result, he allowed his integrity and ethical principles to cease in their effectiveness. His loyalty to the code of ethics was in danger of failing by yielding to the forbidden zone. Pastor Donaldson, as well as, the member is guilty of sexual misconduct; therefore, they must repent, cease the relationship, and get help to resolve their unethical behaviors.¹³

Code of Ethics

Unfortunately, scenarios of this nature take place repeatedly within the confines of the church. For this reason, many churches have adopted guidelines that will help clergy and ministry leaders understand what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Although, it is apparent that a Code of Ethics does not guarantee that clergy or ministry leaders will adhere to the stipulates it will help to alleviate any misunderstandings that may occur. James A. Reasons indicates, "A written code of ethics cannot affect a character change. Only internal integrity, the righteousness, and the godliness of a minister, will chart his course through dark murky waters".¹⁴ Trull and Carter concur, "A professional code of Ethics is simply an intensification of the ethical concerns of normal life, but an intensification needed because of the more specialized

¹³ Milco, 18.

¹⁴James A. Reasons, "A Minister's Code of Ethics: A Higher Level of Commitment and Conduct," *Enrichment Journal* (2004): 2, accessed December 3, 2017, <http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200404/index.cfm>.

role, the intense knowledge in human situations of high risk and vulnerability, which are part of functioning as an ordained pastor”.¹⁵ In simpler terms, a code of ethics is intended to help guide clergy and ministry leaders to efficiently perform their duties and responsibilities, provide specific guideline procedures for ministry, and include detailed information on the established consequences of using their power to manipulate members or engaging in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.¹⁶ Since a leadership in ministry is a calling from God clergy and ministry leaders are expected to exhibit his love, compassion, and patience with those they have the privilege to lead and others. When a leader lacks integrity, they will misuse the God-ordained power given them to execute the many facets of their leadership roles. In his discussion concerning leadership power Foster submits, “Power can destroy or create”. The power that creates gives life, joy, and peace. It restores relationships and gives the gift of wholeness to all”. Whereas, destructive power destroys relationships, trust, dialogue, and integrity”.¹⁷ Because of the devastating effects destructive power can evoke clergy and ministry leaders must ensure their leadership is derived from a servant leadership attitude. Northouse recommends, “Since power can be used in positive ways to benefit others or in destructive way to hurt others, a leader needs to be aware of and sensitive to how he or she uses power. The key to not misusing power is to be constantly vigilant and aware of the way one’s leadership affects others”.¹⁸

From their standpoint concerning clergy power Trull and Carter proposes:

“Ministers not only represent themselves and society but also God. A minister, by his or her very presence, exerts a measure of power. When ministers use the power, they possess in a destructive

15 Trull and Carter, 197.

16 Ibid., 211

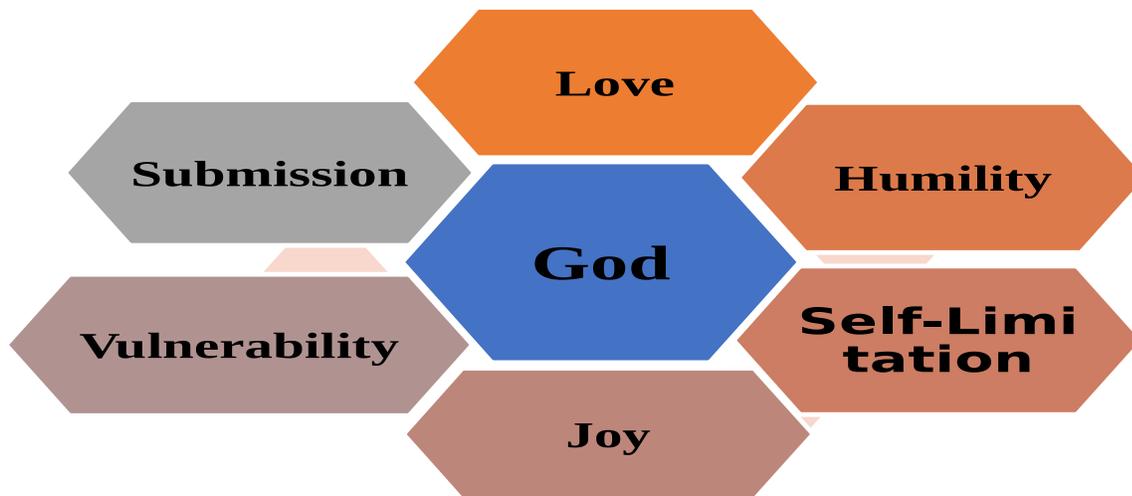
17 Richard J. Foster, *Money, Sex and Power* (San Francisco, California: Harper Row Publishers, 1985), 175-176.

18 Northouse, 272-273.

manner or to gain power over others, it destroys relationships and hurt people. Power is influenced by the way people view themselves. When ministers view themselves as people of power and get what they want, goals or spiritual ends, they pastor is to use the authority image professional and to use it properly. It is his profession, and he is therefore responsible for use".¹⁹

who have the power to do what they want even if it is directed toward church misuse power". The task of the that he carries as a virtue of his

Humility and integrity are determining factor that help clergy and ministry leaders use their designated power to impact positive changes throughout their sphere of leadership. Foster advises, "The power that creates is spiritual power, and it is in stark contrast to human power. He goes on to say, "Since spiritual power comes from God it can be marked through love, humility, self-limitation, joy, vulnerability, and submission".²⁰



Conclusion

The process of analyzing the various components of integrity has given the writer a more detailed glance into the importance of maintaining prominent heights of integrity in our personal lives, in the marketplace, and especially in ministry. It has been confirmed that honesty, integrity,

¹⁹ Trull and Carter, 95-96

²⁰ Foster, 201-205.

and high moral standards must be at the forefront of pastors and ministry leaders' decision-making procedures and the standards they should follow wherever they are. Since integrity is the "mainstay" (pillar or chief support) of pastoral leadership it is of the utmost importance that clergy, ministry leaders, and others strive to approach every facet of their lives with the determination to permit integrity to guide their thoughts, actions, beliefs, motives, and leadership responsibilities.

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