

## Oriented Towards the Truth: In Touch With Reality

Overview: Mature character integrity goes beyond just being “honest” when it comes to the truth. It is a stance in life that is “oriented towards reality.” In other words, this kind of character seeks the truth about themselves, others, and the world around them in order to know what reality is and has a firm commitment to live in that reality. This means that their character is free from the kinds of things that get in the way of seeing and dealing in reality, and as a result, good things happen.

1. Lying is a no-brainer, but that is only the beginning of a truth orientation.

When most people think about being a truthful person, they think of someone who does not lie. And that is true. But that is a very elementary level of being oriented towards the truth. Having a truthful orientation means that one lives in truth, period. It means that they see it, understand it, want it, seek it, and benefit from it. It is holistic, a life about, and “in” the light.

Ultimately they succeed because that is where the good stuff is, in reality, instead of fantasy or deception. If you want love, you have to find “real” love, not fantasy love. If you want success, you have to find “real” success, not pipe dreams. So, real fulfillment only comes to those who live in reality. And that is a lot more than just “not lying.”

But...we have to start there. No one who is an intentional liar ever discovered deeper reality. So, if you want to have the kind of character that succeeds, you must put all deception away from you, in any form. Success in relationships and in work ultimately only comes to truthful people:

Prov. 12:19 Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.

Prov. 21:6 A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare.

Prov. 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

**Possible Illustration Here** (it might be good to have a story here of someone you know where lying did in the relationship or the business.)

Usually, the consequences of lying are worse than whatever was lied about. When people are honest about what is wrong, it is usually fixable, but the covering up is what ultimately does them in.

2. Reality is always your friend because it is ultimately what is. It is where success lies.

**Illustration:** In “Good To Great” the companies that outperformed all others were shown to have as a common factor a tendency to “confront the most brutal facts of your current reality.”

That is true for business as well as relationships and personal lives. We cannot solve anything until we face what “is.”

What if the world has changed and you do not realize it? You cannot succeed. That is why successful “kings” and CEO’s alike are the ones who seek after the truth:

Prov. 16:13 Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth.

Prov. 23:23 Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.

If you are not looking for reality, you are not going to have success.

**Insert Illustration:** This would be a good place to talk about someone who thought he or she understood something until they found out differently and their new understanding of reality made it all work. i.e., marriage, work, kids, God, etc.

3. Truly successful people are not passive about finding the truth. They actively seek it.

**Illustration:** In the book, there is a great story of how seeking reality brings about business success. In the chapter on What People In Touch Look Like, it is the Proctor and Gamble story in China.

Another illustration in the book is a great ministry story. It is about how Rick Warren worked so hard before starting Saddleback to find out what reality was about the people he wanted to minister to. He did that before ever trying to tell them one thing. He found out who they were first.

Prov. 23:23 Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.

4. Successful people seek the truth in three areas:

### **Themselves**

They ask for feedback. They hire people to do 360 degree assessments of them. They desire to know what their strengths are, as well as their weaknesses. Research shows that the most successful people are the ones who know their strengths and have built their careers around those, and know their weaknesses and have managed them well so they don’t get derailed by them.

They ask God to show them the truth about themselves, and He does:

Psa. 51:6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Psa. 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

## **Others**

Many problems in life come from our inability to accurately see other people. We trust untrustworthy people. We make bad hires in business, or get into business partnerships or deals with others who are not competent or of good character. We are attracted to people in relationships who are not good for us.

Successful people seek the truth about other people before giving themselves away to them. They do their “due diligence.”

Prov. 12:26 A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Prov. 14:15 A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.

**Insert Illustration:** Someone who got into a mess because they did not properly find out what reality was about another person before entering into some significant relationship or partnership.

## **The External World**

Successful people seek to find out what is true about life and the world around them in order to negotiate it well. They have a curiosity to know what is true so they can operate well in life, and they hunger for it actively.

Prov. 18:15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

This is contrasted in the Bible with those who are lazy or avoid seeking knowledge:

Prov. 1:22 “How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?”

**Insert Illustration Here:** Possible good place for someone who was clueless and made the shift to “seeking wisdom or knowledge” and achieved relational or business success. Good place to plug whatever classes you have going on for parenting, marriage, dating, recovery, etc.

5. People with integrated character have the ability to observe themselves and see the truth about how they are thinking, feeling, and behaving.

A sign of character maturity is what is referred to as an “observing ego.” Ego means “I” and it is the “I” who looks at “me.” Mature character has the ability to self-correct through observation. That is why they do not get into trouble and do not need as much correction from the outside. As Paul says:

1Cor. 11:31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

Matt. 7:3 ¶ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

Matt. 7:5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Immature characters never look at themselves and evaluate themselves. As a result, they always have to be disciplined from the outside. Our choice in life is either we do it (evaluate ourselves), or God, a boss, a spouse, or the law will do it. But ultimately, truth will show up and overcome us.

**Insert Illustration:** This is a good place for a potential story about someone who “got it” and saw his or her behavior and made a change that resolved a relationship or an issue, and compare with someone who did not observe themselves and reality had to come crashing in on them before they “got it.”

6. Integrated characters see the world in the “whole picture” as opposed to either all good or all bad, or black and white, rigid right and wrong.

Immature people put themselves, others and the outside world into categories of “all good” or “all bad.” As a result, they cannot negotiate reality very well. If someone fails them, or they fail themselves, they see that person or themselves as “all bad.” They do not see the person’s strengths or value. So, they miss out on that person and on resolving the relationship. They label a child the “black sheep” of the family, or see an employee in a negative light instead of being redemptive.

Likewise, the opposite is true as well. They get enamored with a person, idealize that person, and cannot see their faults. So, they can get into trouble by avoiding negatives and being blind. They can do the same thing about a deal that they fall in love with, not seeing the problems or the downside, and then disaster comes and the investment is lost.

Mature people see the world in a balanced way:

Ecl. 7:14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

Ecl. 7:15 ¶ In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

Eccl. 7:16 Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise— why destroy yourself?  
Eccl. 7:17 Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool— why die before your time?  
Eccl. 7:18 It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.

They understand that all people, even the best ones, are not perfect, and can deal with them and help them:

Eccl. 7:20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

7. They are not so proud to find out that reality is different than they might have thought. They can take in new information and change their views.

Pride and narcissism keep people from seeing reality. They are “know it alls” and as a result they miss out on a lot of reality and that keeps them from succeeding. In marriage, they might have to learn that they do not know everything they thought they knew about women, or men. In business, they might have to find out that the world has changed and they need to adapt.

**Insert Illustration:** This is a good place to show how someone saw that reality was different than they thought, and as a result, adapted to it and was successful. They changed their view. In business for example, currently, Apple saw that the world was different now in the way that it listened to music. So, they adapted their view of reality and came out with the iPod. Others remained fixed in their old view of the world and missed it. Churches do the same thing. When they don’t adapt to how the world has changed, they may find themselves preaching to just a few people. Men who have an old fashioned fixed view of women may have a hard time making a relationship work in today’s world with that view.

Prov. 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Prov. 18:12 Before his downfall a man’s heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.

Prov. 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov. 18:2 A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

Prov. 28:26 He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

Conclusion: Reality is the only place where we can succeed. The rest is fantasy. So the challenge is to find reality, always, no matter what the cost. Since God is ultimate reality,

finding Him, as the Bible says, “is the beginning of wisdom.” Start with God, and then develop the kind of character that seeks the truth at all times, and success is much more likely. Build into life the kinds of feedback loops with others that will tell you the truth. Evaluate your performance in a 360 degree fashion. And, always study and learn about the world you are trying to operate in, instead of assuming you know.