

Getting Results

Overview: When we talk about character and work, usually what we hear about is a “work ethic.” We value people who work hard, and have a high commitment to work. Certainly that is an aspect of character integrity. But, there is more to the kind of character that gets results than just working hard, or working “smart.” Personal issues can get in the way of results, and personal character abilities can produce them. A focus on becoming who we need to be is as important as learning your craft. We need to know who we are, be fully engaged, have a balance of due diligence and risk taking, be able to make hard calls, overcome obstacles, and know how to lose. Those are not job skills, but character abilities.

1. We are trained in the “what” of our work, but much less in the “who” we need to become to do it well.

If you are a surgeon, you were trained well in how to operate on someone. If you are a salesperson, you were trained well in how to close a deal. If you are a techie, you are learned in the equipment you work with. But, there are a lot of people who know their skills, but their personhood keeps them from achieving success. A focus on character is the best investment that you can make.

Prov. 21:21 He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.

2. The most successful people know what they are gifted at and focus in that area.

The teaching of the Bible and research is that we all have certain areas of giftedness, and we should find out what those are and focus in those areas. Research on both companies and individuals who do well prove that out, that the more someone works in their areas of strength, the stronger their results as well as the organization.

Insert Illustration: Here is a good place for a story of someone out of their field. There is a good one in the Integrity book about a guy who started a company and his wise investors would only put in more money if he got out of the management and stayed in the areas where he was good. Tiger Woods should not play football. Not only do the people who are not operating in their gifts not perform well, they are also not fully engaged, and that also leads to burnout, lack of motivation, and a feeling of just being lost.

So, the takeaway point is to find your gifts and know who you are, not matter how hard that is to do. If you don't, it will be a lot harder in the end.

Rom. 12:3 ¶ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Rom. 12:4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

Rom. 12:5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Rom. 12:6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

Rom. 12:7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

Rom. 12:8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

The balance is to be very sure of who you are and confident in who God created you to be. That is not bad pride. It is how you are made, and you are to celebrate in your giftedness. It is also humble because you know what you are not, and what your weaknesses are as well. So, you do not think you are so great at everything, but skilled in a particular area in which you have confidence, but not arrogance. That is self-confidence, not pride. (See Gal. 6:4)

3. Successful people have a balance of “ready, aim, fire.”

This means that integrity has a balanced character, of “ready-aim-fire.” Ready means that they adequately prepare for whatever they are going to do. This may mean doing the due diligence of a deal before investing, or practicing their skill before undertaking something. It may mean more study or training. But they have the delay of gratification to do that.

Prov. 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.

Luke 14:28 ¶ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?

Luke 14:29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him,

Luke 14:30 saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

Luke 14:31 ¶ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

Insert Illustration: This is a good place for a story of someone who exemplifies this trait.

Aim has to do with focus. As the Integrity book says, it is the “purposeful goal oriented action that knows where the energy and resources are being spent, and therefore spent well.” People who are scattered exert a lot of effort, but cannot focus on what is important enough to get it done. Therefore, they never really move things forward.

A key aspect of this has to do with limit setting, which is a character issue. If people cannot say “no” to distractions that would keep them away from the goal, they do not have “self-control.” When they lack self-control, then focus is impossible. Self-

control is the ability to say “no” to pressures from the outside, or desires, compulsions and impulses from the inside. Without it, people are too scattered to ever stay focused on a goal.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

2Pet. 1:6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

2Pet. 1:7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

Fire is the ability to pull the trigger. It is the ability to get past the planning stages, past the analysis, and step out to do whatever needs to be done. Whether to take the risk, make the call, start the project or whatever it is, if someone cannot “get out of the boat” and take the necessary steps, nothing gets done.

Sometimes people are afraid of failure, passive, lazy or other things in their character that keeps them paralyzed, dreamers, over-analyzing, and other things. As a result, they don’t ever reach their goals. It is similar to the person in the parable of the talents who buries their talent in the ground and never steps out:

Matt. 25:26 ¶ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?’

4. Successful people are able to make the “hard calls.”

The ability to make hard calls has to do with someone’s ability to do what needs to be done, the right thing, without fears or over-identification with the feelings, anger, or consequences of the decision. This does not mean that they do not care, but it does mean that they have the will to do tough things that need to be done.

It gets into issues like the need for approval, feeling responsible for other people, fears of others’ anger and rejection, and the like. The hard calls can be of varied kinds, like firing someone, doing an intervention on someone, disciplining a child, closing down a division or department where there may be layoffs, or many other things.

Certainly the balance is that they care about the people involved and do everything possible to minimize the pain and results of hard calls. But, they can still do them nevertheless. If people get angry or upset with them, they are still able to do what needs to be done.

Gal. 1:10 ¶ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

1Th. 2:4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

Insert Illustration: Perhaps one of your own life where you had to make a very difficult call, but it was the right thing to do. Show the pain that it caused you to do it, and how hard the struggle is so that others can identify with you.

5. Successful people somehow “find a way” to make it work, and they keep going until they do.

This is the trait of persevering when a person hits obstacles, roadblocks and difficulties in trying to accomplish something. It is resourcefulness when there does not seem to be an answer. Mature characters do not expect things to be easy and just fall into place, but when obstacles and trials come, they keep going and figure it out.

James 1:2 ¶ Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, James 1:3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. James 1:4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

6. Mature character knows how to “lose well.”

Losing does not surprise mature people. They do not get “knocked off their horse.” They are able to metabolize it, work through it, and let it go. When something does not work out, they look at what happened, learn from it, and move on. When it is time to “give up as lost,” they can do it.

On the contrary, people of un-integrated character do not do this. They get stuck because of losses, either in protesting the reality and not being able to let it go, or by not learning from their mistakes, or by going into despair because a loss makes them feel like a “loser.”

Sometimes people cannot let go of something that is lost because they are too emotionally tied to it. A CEO for example, who has his ego and pride tied up in his pet project continues to try to make it work when everyone in the company knows that it is a loser idea and time to move on. As a result, he wastes time and resources, destroying morale. Or in relationships, when it is time to move on from a breakup, or because of some other issue, people cannot let go of the person and stay stuck for years. Their dependency, protest, or idealization keeps them tied to the other person.

Eccl. 3:1 ¶ There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: Eccl. 3:6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away.

As Jesus said, “remember Lot’s wife.” She could not “let go” of her ties in Sodom and Gomorrah and as a result, turned to salt. (Lk. 17:32)

In failure, God accepts us, forgives us, asks us to learn from our mistakes and to “repent” from the patterns that added to the failure. If we do that, then we do not have to repeat past mistakes, but we “lose” well, learn from them, and do better in the future. Winners do not “never lose.” Instead, winners “lose well,” so that they do not repeat their

failures over and over again. That is when someone becomes a “loser.” It is not from losing, it is from repeating the same patterns of losing over and over again.

Prov. 26:11 As a dog returns **to** its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.

7. Integrated character is able to “lose” when it hasn’t even been “lost.”

What this means is that people who do well realize that they cannot do everything, and they are able to let go of the “good” things that are not the “best” things. They will lose good things for the sake of the gaining the best things. They will lose things that they have not lost by giving them up, so that they might gain the best things that God has for them. Sometimes, this is one of the biggest acts of faith that there is, to let go of good things.

Heb. 11:8 ¶ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Immature people often try to hold on to everything, do too many things, and are scattered. They allow things to hold on to them, by holding on to those things. To win in life, we have to let go of things that are not the best things. God has some things for us that are based in his purposes and our gifts and we are to find those things and “walk in them,” and let go of the rest.

Eph. 2:10 For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Conclusion:

Integrity, when it come to results, is about more than “working hard.” It is more than just what we refer to as a “work ethic.” It is about having the kind of character that does not get in the way of achieving results. It is about being put together in a integrated way so that talents and effort can actually produce fruit. That includes many character traits and it behooves us to look not only at our effort, but the ways that we get in the way of that effort as well.

The challenge is to step back and look at these traits and patterns and see if they are keeping us from the results and fruits that we were designed to achieve. When we do, using God’s wisdom, our talents can finally produce real results in the real world.