



INTEGRITY. Based on Daniel 1:1-21

Written by John Allen and resourced from YouthWork Magazine 'resourcebox' April 2007

BEFORE YOU START

MEETING AIM: To examine why integrity is vital to Christian living; what makes us compromise; how we can survive; and what this can cost. Finally we apply the lessons learned to our own life.

BACKGROUND PREPARATION:

- Prepare two table settings with napkins, vegetables, water, crisps and Coke,
- video clips as listed,
- pictures of spies (try Google),
- instruction slips for the 'Backstabbers' game,
- mask-making materials,
- Bible study outlines for each group.
- Research the background story of the Babylonian exile (2 Chronicles 36).

Tonight's menu (5 mins)

As they arrive, have a table in the middle of the room, set beautifully for two diners. Invite two group members to experience tonight's menu. Sit them at the table, ceremoniously unfold napkins, light candles, and offer them the menu:

Pommes a la methode de Walkers with Boisson Americain (Coke and crisps)

or

Legumes au naturel with Eau du robinet (uncooked vegetables and tap water)

They'll almost certainly choose option one! And when God's people were deported to Babylon (tell the story), their young princes were offered expensive foods to eat. But Daniel and his friends chose vegetables and water; they could see what was happening. Their captors wanted to brainwash them into forgetting their Israeli heritage. Tempting them to eat food disapproved by God was a small matter - but the thin end of the wedge ...



Say: tonight's about integrity. Take a moment to think about (and write on a slip of paper) the three most honest, straightforward people you know.

The backstabbers (7 mins)

Divide into groups of eight (or small groups can also play all together). Give each member a slip of paper (which they mustn't let the others see) containing one word: 'stand', 'firm', 'and', 'brave', 'against', 'all', 'pressure'. (If the group numbers don't fit, leave out 'and', 'brave' or 'all'), But one member of each group gets a slip with an X on it. This makes them the traitor.

They must discover the mystery sentence ('Stand firm and brave against all pressure') without speaking. Members must draw their word, Pictionary-style, and others can write underneath what they think the word is, until they get it right. Traitors can draw whatever they like; their job is to mislead the group while seeming to help. If a group thinks it can identify the traitor, they can denounce the suspect, but if they're wrong they lose the game. So it's better to continue but ignore the suspected person ...

The first group to complete receives a prize.

Ask: how did it feel suspecting one another? It's just a game - but in life, when you can't trust someone, it feels horrible. Total integrity - when people know where they stand with you - is one of the most precious attributes you could have.

Shaken, not stirring (5 mins)

Play a clip of any James Bond movie, where 007 is looking impressive.

Say: this image of spies is attractive - but wrong. In real life people who pretend to be one thing, and really are another, are miserable.

Show pictures of Guy Burgess and Donald Mac Lean (or similar examples), and tell their story. Betrayal is a shabby, self- destructive business.

Bottling out (5 mins)

Ask: where do people most often compromise their integrity? Pool ideas. (Suggest some examples to spark imagination: footballers who betray their clubs? Girls who get off with others' boyfriends? Christians who get drunk and sleep around)

KEY POINT: When we lose our integrity, we also lose our self-respect... and possibly our respect in the eyes of others.



The cost of survival (5 mins)

In groups, look at Daniel 1: 1-14. Study these questions then compare answers:

- Why were their names and diet changed? How else did the Babylonian state work on them?
- Only Daniel and his friends resisted. What price did they pay?
- What other actions might they have taken? Why didn't they?
- Do Christians today ever face these pressures?

Sum up: standing for integrity is costly. Yet it's happening all the time.

What would you do? (10 mins)

Voice of the Martyrs (Canada) has a weekly Internet TV show about persecuted Christians.

Download a clip and show how Daniel's dilemma affects lives worldwide today.

Ask: if you were in this situation, honestly, what would you do?

The secrets of survival (10 mins)

Now read Daniel 1: 14-21 and ask: how did they survive? What were their secrets? (Possible

answers: standing together as a group; deciding to put God first whatever happened; being reasonable (the ten-day trial) but firm; being likeable people.)

KEY POINT: Keeping our integrity may cost us quite a bit. But it isn't impossible ... and it may be easier than we imagine.

The Grit Awards (5 mins)

Say: think of the three honest people you nominated at the start tonight. If you had to choose just one of them to receive an integrity award, who would it be? Share conclusions and ask: what do these examples have to teach us? Are they like Daniel in some way? What did they gain by integrity?

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Response (10 mins)

Give everyone paper and felt pens. Ask them to make a mask representing one of the 'false fronts' they're tempted to wear in their daily world. Then get some to explain their mask to everyone.



Finally ... collect them and burn them together, while praying to God to give you strength to live in integrity, faithfulness and honesty.

NOTES FOR ADAPTING:

For younger groups ...

Instead of the Bible studies, split into teams of 2-3, giving each a copy of the passage and a 'true/false' list of (a) the cost Daniel and his friends paid (b) the secrets of survival that emerge from the passage. Include lots of 'wrong' answers as well as the right ones (e.g.: 'Daniel survived by: paying the chief official money ... reading many books ... eating some food but not all of it...') Give a prize (a Lion Bar?) for the first to identify 'true' reasons - but talk through the answers carefully to ensure they all got the point!

For older groups ...

Get them first to write down their personal three biggest areas of anti-biblical pressure (sexual pressures? peer pressures? financial 'spend, spend, spend' pressures'). If brave enough, they can share their conclusions to see how Daniel's dilemma applies today.

For unchurched young people ...

Groups might appreciate the 'younger groups' suggestion above. Or simply tell them the story, and discuss:

- If this were you, What would you do?
- If you acted like Daniel, what would it cost you?
- If you were a Christian, would you ever face such a problem today?

Then later:

- If you interviewed Daniel about why he succeeded - what do you think he'd say?
- How could it all have gone wrong for Daniel? What was he banking on?
- What has this to say to anybody following Jesus today? Any good advice here?

For church young people ...

Before the Bible study, test their knowledge of Daniel with a quick quiz.