

THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY ONE

The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

I've come to realize that there is one rarely mentioned, essential ingredient for ministry. There is no course on it. There never will be. Looking back, I regret that I didn't learn more about it because I realize now that it is invaluable.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

seems like every day another pastor leaves the ministry. Some crumble under the ever-increasing pressure of the role's demands, while others step aside to pursue a more lucrative and comfortable career.

While these departures often fill hearts with sadness, a career shift is sometimes understandable. But it is always deeply heartbreaking and troubling when a minister departs from his post due to a personal moral failure. The annals of church history contain story after tragic story of those who set their ministries ablaze because of an affair, embezzlement, or abuse.

No one is immune to the lures of moral failure. Even the most knowledgeable teacher, the most compassionate counselor, or the most passionate preacher can be consumed by its flames. An essential characteristic, however, enables anyone to withstand such fiery trials and temptations. And that ingredient is *integrity*.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will consider why integrity is an essential ingredient for ministry. The example of a young Israelite named Daniel demonstrates how God uses the ministry of a person of integrity for His purposes even amid the most heated of circumstances.



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Integrity starts as a seed in the heart, and it grows only through a nourishing relationship with Jesus Christ. As you open your Bible, ask God to cultivate your character so you might reflect *His* character in your thoughts, words, and deeds.

Father, I know I cannot produce any good fruit apart from You. Use my time in Your Word today to shape me into a person of the highest integrity—one who looks like Jesus and points a lost world to You. In Jesus' strong name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As exiles in Babylon and then in Medo-Persia, the Israelites lived in a pressure-cooker of paganism. False religions and pagan practices constantly pushed against their faith in the one true God. Many cracked under the tension . . . but not Daniel.

As Israel's oppressors turned up the heat of opposition against God, Daniel's faith and character only grew more refined and more fortified. Everyone could see how impressive Daniel was, and his overlords simply couldn't resist inviting this foreigner to help lead their kingdoms.

So Daniel faced a predicament. Would his closeness to the pagan rulers slowly chip away at his faith in God until he compromised his beliefs? Or would Daniel cling to the One who blessed him so richly, even if it cost him his royal position—or even his life?

Turn to [Daniel 6](#) to witness one of history's greatest tests of integrity.



Observation: A Test of Integrity

Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method shows how understanding God's Word can lead to powerful life change. Every time he engages with a passage, Pastor Chuck follows the same four steps: observation, interpretation, correlation, and application.¹ Read [Daniel 6](#) and carefully observe what the text says.



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

Up to this point in the narrative, Daniel had demonstrated his abilities to the Babylonian rulers, but Babylon eventually fell to the Medo-Persians. According to [Daniel 6:3](#), how did the new king Darius view Daniel? What did he decide to do for Daniel based on this impression?

The other Medo-Persian rulers didn't like their king giving such special treatment to a foreigner, so they wanted to prove that Daniel did not deserve his new prestigious role. "But they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy" ([6:4](#)). So they switched to their backup plan.

What new scheme did the Medo-Persian rulers devise in [6:5–9](#) with the desire of causing King Darius to turn against Daniel?

According to [6:10](#), what did Daniel do when he heard the king's decree? What does Daniel's response reveal about his character?



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

Despite all of Daniel's valuable service to the kingdom, he ultimately defied Darius' decree. The king wanted to keep his trusted vice-regent by his side, but the law is the law. So he begrudgingly threw Daniel into the lions' den to be devoured. According to [Daniel 6:19–23](#), what happened the morning after Daniel entered the den?

According to [6:25–27](#), how did Darius respond to these events involving Daniel?

I've observed in my years in ministry that God is still searching for men and women like Daniel—people of integrity. I hope you are one of them. And if you are not, I hope you will begin today to pursue integrity deliberately, consistently, faithfully.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



Interpretation: The Meaning of Integrity

Integrity is one of those words people use so often that they have grown desensitized to its meaning and rarely stop to ponder its significance. Look up *integrity* in a *dictionary*, and summarize the definition. How did Daniel demonstrate integrity in Daniel 6?

Why is having an integrated private and public life important for a follower of Jesus? Why is it *essential* for a Christian leader?

While Daniel is the main character of the narrative, Darius plays a central role as well. How did the king respond to his subject's integrity? How is this scenario instructive for the people of God today?

Hardly a day goes by that we do not have to choose between compliance to what is expedient or being loyal and pleasing only to the Lord our God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



Correlation: The Wisdom of Integrity

The book of Proverbs contains hundreds of sayings that center on a single theme: wisdom. In Proverbs, wisdom does not exist without godliness, and integrity is essential to godliness. Read each of the following proverbs using a few different Bible translations, and note what you discover about the importance of integrity as you navigate life in relationship with God.

Proverbs 10:9

Proverbs 10:29

Proverbs 13:6



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

The way of wisdom is the way of integrity. Those who follow that path face a difficult road. Yet it's the road where Christ is, and it's better to be on the difficult road with Christ than a convenient and pleasurable road without Him. Never forget: eternal blessing awaits those on the difficult path of faith and integrity.

Application: The Development of Integrity

True integrity cannot exist without Christlikeness. The more you allow the character of Jesus Christ to permeate both your private and public life, the more you will grow in integrity. Practically speaking, you can grow in Christlikeness by:

1. *Understanding true Christlikeness*—even when it challenges you.
2. *Cultivating private Christlikeness*—even when no one sees you.
3. *Exhibiting public Christlikeness*—even when it deeply costs you.
4. *Upholding faithful Christlikeness*—even when life's circumstances test you.

Have you ever had a lapse in your integrity—in either a private or public moment when a strong temptation eclipsed the light of your trust in God? How did you feel after you made that choice?



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

Thankfully, God is merciful and offers forgiveness, and He even uses past mistakes to prepare His children for future challenges. What steps can you take to cultivate your Christlike integrity in private so you can stand strong upon your faith in public when the pressure feels strongest?

You may not serve in vocational ministry, but God gives each of His followers a realm of responsibility and influence. Why is it essential that you lead a life of integrity before your family, your neighborhood, and your workplace? How might your integrity have a Daniel-like impact?

True integrity doesn't arise in us from nowhere. Those who neglect to cultivate this essential quality are bound to fall into sin when the stakes are highest. Yet Scripture is filled with accounts of lives like Daniel's that serve as road maps for those who seek to grow in integrity.

Imitate Daniel. Stand strong whether you're alone or in public. And when the pressure is strongest, look to Christ for divine strength.



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for offering the greatest example of integrity in Your Son Jesus Christ. Help me as I seek to imitate His character so I might grow in integrity. Help me remember Your faithfulness so I might remain faithful to You, even when it's hardest. I pray these things in Jesus' sure name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

