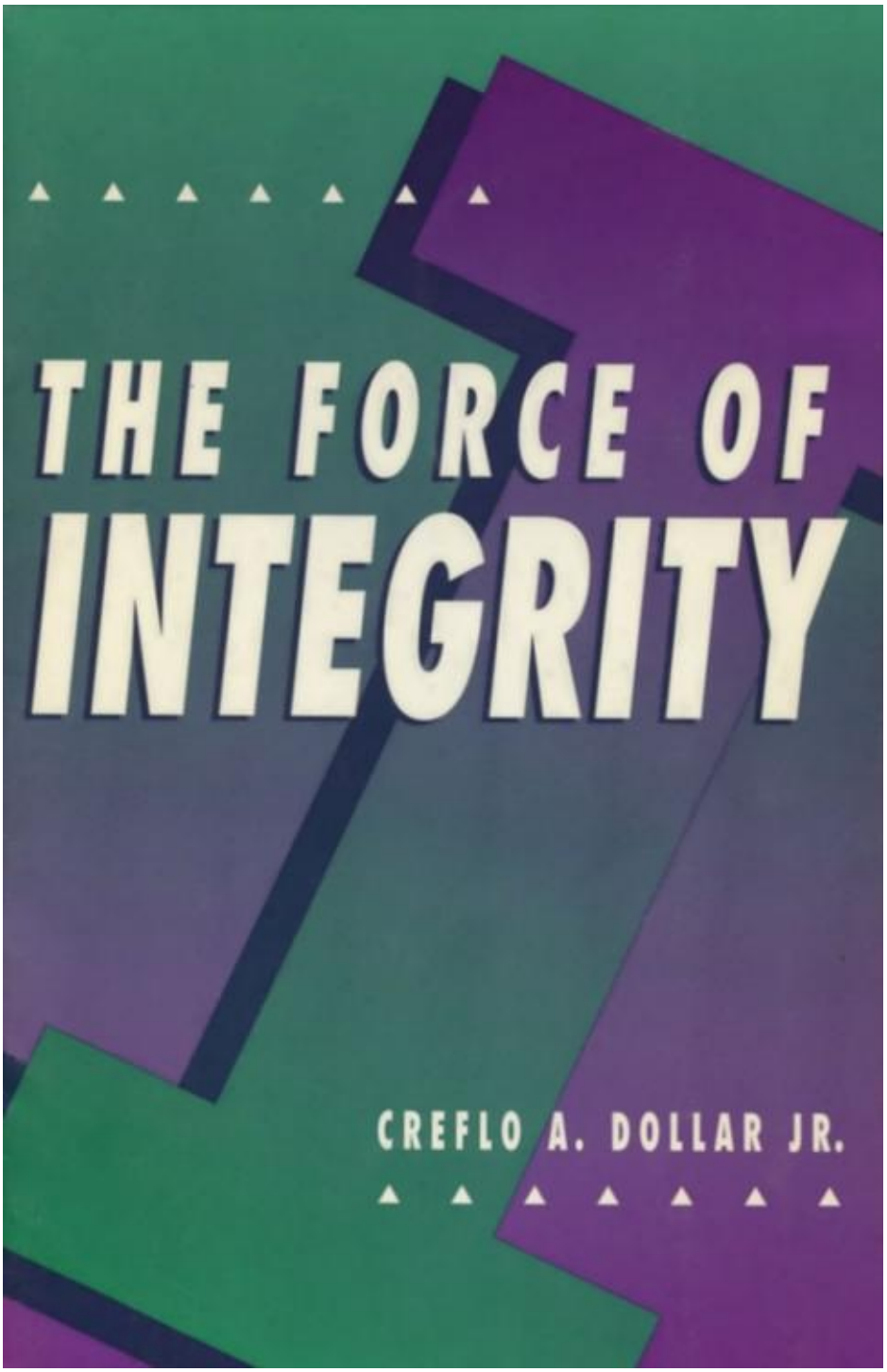
THE FORCE OF INTEGRITY

CREFLO A. DOLLAR JR.



The Force of Integrity

By

Pastor Creflo A. Dollar Jr.

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The Force of Integrity

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I dedicate this book

to my good friend

Kenneth L. Terry.

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Chapter 1

Who needs Integrity?

1

Integrity. It's a buzz word. You hear it thrown around constantly. Nearly everyone talks about it but I'm convinced very few people in our society really know what it means.

In fact, I believe America is in a crisis of integrity. Lying, cheating and manipulation are rampant in our corporate offices, our businesses, our schools, our homes and, sadly, all too many church sanctuaries. Yet integrity is a powerful force. Make it an integral part of your life and it brings tremendous blessings and power. Reject it, and it almost always results in destruction.

To be truly successful, you need to harness the force of integrity.

The Whole Truth

Webster defines integrity as "uprightness, virtue or honesty." However, it's biblical meaning goes much

deeper than that. Biblical integrity also suggests fairness and straightforwardness of conduct. It sticks to the facts. This type of integrity involves more than just a refusal to lie. It refuses to deceive or mislead in any way. It refuses to steal. It refuses to cheat. It refuses to manipulate others to get its way.

A person of integrity is a sincere person. You never have to wonder if they mean what they say. You can take that person's word at face value.

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The Force of Integrity

Are you a person of integrity? You can be.

You may not operate in all the gifts of the spirit, but you can be a person of your word. You may not be able to lay hands on the sick and see them recover, but you can be honest.

Anyone who truly desires it, can walk the walk of integrity. It's not an easy road, but those who make a quality decision to travel it will reap enormous rewards.

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Chapter 2

The Power of Integrity

2

On a daily basis, you're presented a multitude of opportunities to compromise your integrity. The teller gives you too much change at the drive through window. Your spouse asks for your opinion of a new outfit. You're filling out an expense report for your employer. Each of these scenarios is an integrity tester.

In each of these situations and in many others, the easiest thing to do is not necessarily the right thing to do. How you respond in these situations will determine whether or not you are a person of integrity.

The important question for every believer is, "What does God's Word have to say about issues of integrity?" The answer is quite a bit, actually. Much more, in fact, than I ever imagined before I began to study the subject in-depth.

What I discovered was an astounding array of benefits, promises and blessings prepared for the upright man or woman of God. Blessings reserved only for those with enough holy fear and child-like trust in God to dare to

walk in integrity.

Guided by Integrity

The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. (Proverbs 11: 3)

Integrity will guide you. This is a very exciting concept to me. When you choose to live a life of honesty,

straightforwardness and sincerity, those qualities will guide you through treacherous waters. In fact, according to the Word, they may even keep you from destroying yourself.

A great example of this very thing in operation can be found in Genesis 20:1-6.

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. (v. 1, 2)

Sarah was a beautiful woman. And it was not unusual

in that day for a king to take any woman who struck his fancy into his harem. If the woman was married, an unscrupulous king would have the husband killed in order to be able to take her. That's why Abraham and Sarah cooked up the plan to claim to be brother and sister. Just as they had feared, King Abimelech took one look at Sarah, discovered she was single (or so he thought) and brought her into his palace. Then things got really interesting.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Behold, thou art but a dead man... " (v. 3)

Now that's what I call a wake up call! How would you like to be awakened in the middle of the night to have God tell you, "Behold, you're dead meat!"

"... thou art a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife." But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, "Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my

heart and innocency of my hands have I done this."

(v. 4, 5)

In response to this alarming announcement Abimelech says, "Look Lord, I didn't know! I've been operating in the integrity of my heart here, God!"

Notice God's response (Remember, integrity can guide you).

And God said unto him in a dream, "Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." (v. 6)

In essence, God was saying, "Abimilech, I know you didn't know the woman was married. I saw your heart and recognized you were operating in integrity. That s why I stopped you from making a fatal mistake.

That's powerful! Think about it. When you're operating in integrity, even if you take a wrong turn, God will take it upon Himself to clearly let you know before you get into real trouble!

A person of integrity can't miss God's will for very long. That's why you should never be afraid to step out and do what you believe God is telling you to do. Even if you've totally missed it, God has obligated Himself to intervene and give you clear direction before you do any damage. That's provided, of course, you're moving in integrity.

I can't tell you what a comfort this revelation has been to me personally. I used to really be concerned about missing God. But now, when I believe I've gotten some direction from the Lord, I move with confidence knowing that, because of my integrity, He's faithful to intervene if I've missed Him. Do you see how wonderful that is?

On the other hand, if you go around lying, manipulating and deceiving, you'd better watch out. God is under no obligation to warn when you're about to make a major mistake. You're on your own.

Don't ever let the devil convince you that it's profitable to cheat and be dishonest. That stuff will destroy your

ministry, your family, even your very life.

Established by Integrity

Not only will integrity guide you so that you can know what God wants you to do—it will also help you accomplish it.

And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. (I Kings 9: 4, 5)

Notice the first thing God told Solomon here, **"... if thou wilt walk before me ... in integrity of heart...."**

Always remember, integrity comes from the heart. It doesn't come out of your brain. It's not something that is a product of reason or intelligence. It is a product of character. Heart character.

The next thing God told Solomon was that if he would walk in integrity, **"I will establish the throne of thy**

kingdom...”

Child of God, if you’ll adopt a lifestyle of integrity, God will establish your throne. That means He’ll establish you in whatever it is He’s called you to do. It may be a ministry. It may be a vocation. It may be a relationship.

Whatever it is, God will supernaturally equip and establish you in it.

I wish more men and women of God knew and understood this principle. On many occasions I’ve attended minister’s conferences where everybody seems to be handing out business cards. Sadly, some preachers will throw their card at anyone who’ll stand still, hoping to get a meeting scheduled so they can generate some income. I’ve watched them maneuver and scheme to find out which men pastor really large churches. I’ve seen them gravitate to those they believe have the best connections. It’s all manipulation and flesh. Of course, not all ministers engage in this sort of nonsense, but far too many do.

For that very reason, I refuse to even carry a business

card. There's nothing wrong with these cards in and of themselves. I've just purposed that if I'm going to get opportunities to minister they're going to have to come from God and through the leading of the Holy Spirit. I'm looking to God to establish me, not man.

Please understand, I'm not patting myself on the back. I've simply made a decision to walk in integrity because I've discovered I can't afford to live any other way.

Whatever God is calling you to do, if you will be honest and straightforward in all your dealings, He will establish your throne in that area.

That means that in the work place, you don't need to get involved in office politics. There's no need to lie, cheat or step on anyone in your climb up the corporate ladder. Simply walk in integrity and let God take care of the rest. If you'll do that, I promise, God will establish you in such a way that no person or thing on earth can shake you. God will establish your throne.

Preserved by Integrity

O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me: for I wait on thee. (Psalm 25: 2, 21)

Integrity will preserve you from your enemies. What enemies? The enemy of cancer. The enemy of debt. The enemies of violence, strife and hatred. In other words, integrity will preserve you from anything Satan (the ultimate enemy) has in his evil arsenal.

When you choose to wait upon the Lord in integrity, you can rest assured that you will enjoy the protection of Almighty God. What does it mean to "wait" upon the Lord?

It means allowing God to promote you rather than resorting to manipulation and scheming to promote yourself. It means letting others praise you instead of boasting of your own ability. And when you operate in integrity you can live without fear of calamity and disaster. That truth is repeated in Psalm 26: 1.

Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I

shall not slide.

Trusting in the Lord is intricately tied together with walking in integrity. In fact, the two are inseparable. You can't walk in true integrity without complete trust in the Lord. You have to believe that God will take care of you when you choose to live a straightforward life.

That's why so many Christians don't have much integrity. They don't really trust God to prosper, promote and protect them so they do whatever it takes to do it themselves.

The promise of God is clear. Trust Him, walk in integrity and He'll make sure you never slide.

Upheld by Integrity

And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

(Psalm 41: 12)

God will uphold you in your integrity.

Have you ever been in a situation in which telling a lie seemed to the most logical thing to do? I'm talking about a

time where it seemed that if you told the truth, all sorts of problems and negative results would come about?

We're all faced with situations like that from time to time. The next time you are, remember Psalm 41:12 and remind yourself that if you'll maintain your integrity, God will uphold you. And when you've been upheld by God himself, brothers and sisters, you've been upheld.

You can tell the truth with confidence, knowing in your heart that regardless of the apparent consequences, God will make everything come out all right.

Does that mean you have a license to hurt people's feelings in the name of honesty? Of course not. You can tell someone the truth without hurting their feelings. It's called tact.

I remember one occasion in which my wife modeled a new dress for me and asked, How do you like it? I must tell you that it was the ugliest dress I d ever laid my eyes on.

How did I handle that awkward and potentially explosive moment? I simply said, "Honey, to be honest, I love you a whole lot more than I love that dress. You are

the most beautiful thing in the world to me, but I must tell

you that I do not care for that dress." There is always a way to be honest with someone without hurting them.

I didn't always know that. I remember one particular occasion early in my marriage. My wife had just made some candied yams. Now, my mother had a way of making candied yams that was something special. I loved my mama's candied yams.

I took one bite of my wife's yams, made an ugly face and yelled, "What is this?" Needless to say it hurt her feelings. She got fire in her eyes and told me that if I wanted dinner I could get up and cook it myself!

The Lord informed me that I had not been very sensitive toward my wife. My excuse was that I was just being honest. "At least I was straight with her!" I protested.

Sometimes being straight is really a straight arrow that pierces a loved one's heart. There is a difference between honesty and rudeness.

True honesty will bring God on the scene to uphold you when things get tough. But integrity carries another benefit as well. Look at Psalm 41: 12 again, **"... thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before t h y f ace forever."**

A person of integrity stays before the face of God. That's a person who is never out of God's watchful care and protection. Wouldn't it be reassuring to know that you were the constant focus of the Most High God's attention? You can. Be a person of integrity.

Bettered by Integrity

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity,
than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.
(Proverbs 19: 1)

Here's yet another important benefit of being a person of integrity—God's promise to better you! That's right, even if you're poor, if you'll walk in integrity, God will see that you're bettered. In other words, you won't be poor for

long!

The life of a person who is honest and straightforward before God is going to be in an upward progression—ever increasing responsibility, ever growing influence, ever greater rewards. The force of integrity will see to it.

I'm reminded of an occasion shortly after Taffi and I were married. I was applying for a therapist job at a hospital. I wanted and needed the job badly. At that time I had been preaching when I could and selling pots and pans out of the back of my car to help make ends meet.

I was filling out the application at home one night when I came across a question regarding whether I was or ever had been a minister. I remember thinking, "They probably don't want any preachers in this job. They're probably afraid he'll spend all his time preaching rather than doing his job."

At that moment there was a tremendous temptation to check "No." After all, I really needed that job. But my wife and I discussed it and determined to just be honest and glorify Jesus.

In big, bold letters I wrote MINISTER OF THE

GOSPEL on the application, finished filling it out and sent it in.

The next day I got a call from the personnel director of the hospital.

“Hello. Is this Creflo Dollar?”

“Yes, is it.”

“Well, I’ve got your application and resume here. Now

you’ve put on here that you’re a minister of the gospel. I just want you to know that I’m a Holy Ghost-filled, tongue-talking minister of the gospel myself! Hallelujah!”

Needless to say, I got the job. The very thing the devil tried to make me think would prevent me from getting the job was the thing that sealed it for me.

Integrity will better you. Don’t ever succumb to the temptation to abandon it.

Children Blessed by Integrity

The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him. (Proverbs 20: 7)

That’s powerful isn’t it? A life of integrity will not only

bring you guidance, protection and promotion, it will bless your children too! As you live an upright life you are laying up a storehouse of blessing for your children (even if they haven't been born yet).

Of course the opposite is true, too. You can't walk in deceit, manipulation and craftiness and not expect your children to emulate you. In fact, they can pick up your spiritual characteristics even before they're born! Psalm 58:3 says, **"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."** Isn't that amazing! Even as a child develops in the womb, the course of his life can be affected by what you say and do.

No matter what stage of life your children are in, you can make a quality decision right now to live a life of integrity. If you will do that, God promises they will be blessed.

Chapter 3

How to Live in Integrity

3

I’m sure by now you will agree that, for the believer, a life of integrity brings many rewards. But now the issue of how arises. How does one successfully maintain one’s integrity in a world in which lying, cheating and manipulation are “standard operating procedure”? Once again, we’ll find practical answers in God’s Word.

Raising Up a Standard

Understanding the concept of a standard is vital to living a life of integrity. It’s also the key to bringing people to Christ.

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. (Isaiah 49: 22)

Notice that God says a standard must be set up to the people. And that standard will draw the Gentiles (unsaved people) to God. But what standard? The standard of righteousness. The standard of integrity and character. We, as ambassadors of Christ on earth must

raise up a standard through the way we live our lives.

As a person who claims the name of Jesus Christ, your lifestyle is a standard set up for all around you to see. The question is, “What kind of standard are you presenting?”

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The Force of Integrity

If we live our lives filled with deception and manipulation, God is not glorified and people are not drawn to Him.

Furthermore, that standard, good or bad, is not only displayed in our personal lives, it is raised in our homes and churches as well.

Raising a Standard in the Face of Temptation

It’s one thing to establish a standard for your life. It’s another thing all together to maintain that standard in the face of hard temptation.

That’s where most of us lose it. We mean well. We intend to be honest, straightforward and sincere. Then a strong temptation comes along and the next thing we know we’re compromising left and right.

Is it possible to uphold a righteous standard in the face

of temptation? You bet.

When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. (Isaiah 59: 19)

We've all had the enemy come into our lives through circumstances, other people, or our own thoughts and imaginations. Yet this verse says the Holy Spirit can rush to meet and overwhelm the enemy.

I believe the comma in that verse is misplaced. It is well known that water is a biblical symbol for the Holy Spirit. I believe the verse should read, **"When the enemy shall come in, like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."**

The enemy isn't the flood. The Spirit is. The power to overcome the enemy comes when the Spirit energizes and activates our standard. That standard is your integrity.

How to Live in Integrity

When you have an established standard of integrity, you give the Holy Ghost something to energize that will combat and overwhelm temptation when it tries to come

in. The reason many believers are constantly falling into sin is they have no established standard of integrity for the Holy Ghost to work through.

When the enemy tries to come into your household, lift up the standard. For example, if he's attacking your finances, tithe and give. They are God's financial standards.

Wherever the point of attack is, raise up the standard of integrity and watch the Spirit of God rush into that situation like a mighty flood.

How Am I Doing God?

... judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. (Psalm 7: 8)

When was the last time you set aside a time of private prayer and asked God to judge your integrity? Does that prospect scare you? It shouldn't. He's full of mercy and grace. Just be open, transparent and yielded to Him.

There is something very powerful about coming to God in that way and simply saying, "Lord, there may be some things in my life that I honestly don't know are

wrong. Please show me any habits, traits or attitudes that aren't pleasing to you. I want to change them."

In those moments, God will not only show you what's wrong, he'll show you how to make them right.

When you ask the Lord to shine the light of His Holy Spirit into the innermost recesses of your heart, you are putting yourself in a wonderful position to increase in

integrity. But being that naked before God is a sobering experience. It is absolutely necessary however, if you are going to walk the walk of integrity.

Hold On

One of the most outstanding examples of integrity is Job. In many respects, Job has gotten a bad rap. Yes, he made some mistakes in the way he handled adversity. And the Lord straightened him out about those things. The most important thing to note about Job is what God himself said about him. Look at Job 2: 3:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him

in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

The Lord's testimony of Job was that he was an upright man who held on tight to his integrity. And he did so without much encouragement—even from his wife.

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. (Job 2: 9)

Job refused to abandon his stand of integrity. His declaration was: "I don't know why these things have happened to me. I don't know why I'm in the position I'm in. But I will maintain my integrity and uprightness and God will get me out of this somehow."

My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. (Job 27: 4, 5)

I like that. **"I will not remove mine integrity..."**

Child of God, if you purpose to be a person of integrity, you are surely going to be presented some opportunities to remove your integrity. You will face situations where the hardest thing in the world to do is tell the truth. You will encounter opportunities to gain wealth if you will only bend the rules.

The pressure to compromise may come from your family. It may come from your friends. It may even come from inside the church.

At those times you must make the same profession Job did: **“Until the day I die, I will not remove my integrity.”** Those moments represent the true test of your integrity. It is where the rubber meets the road.

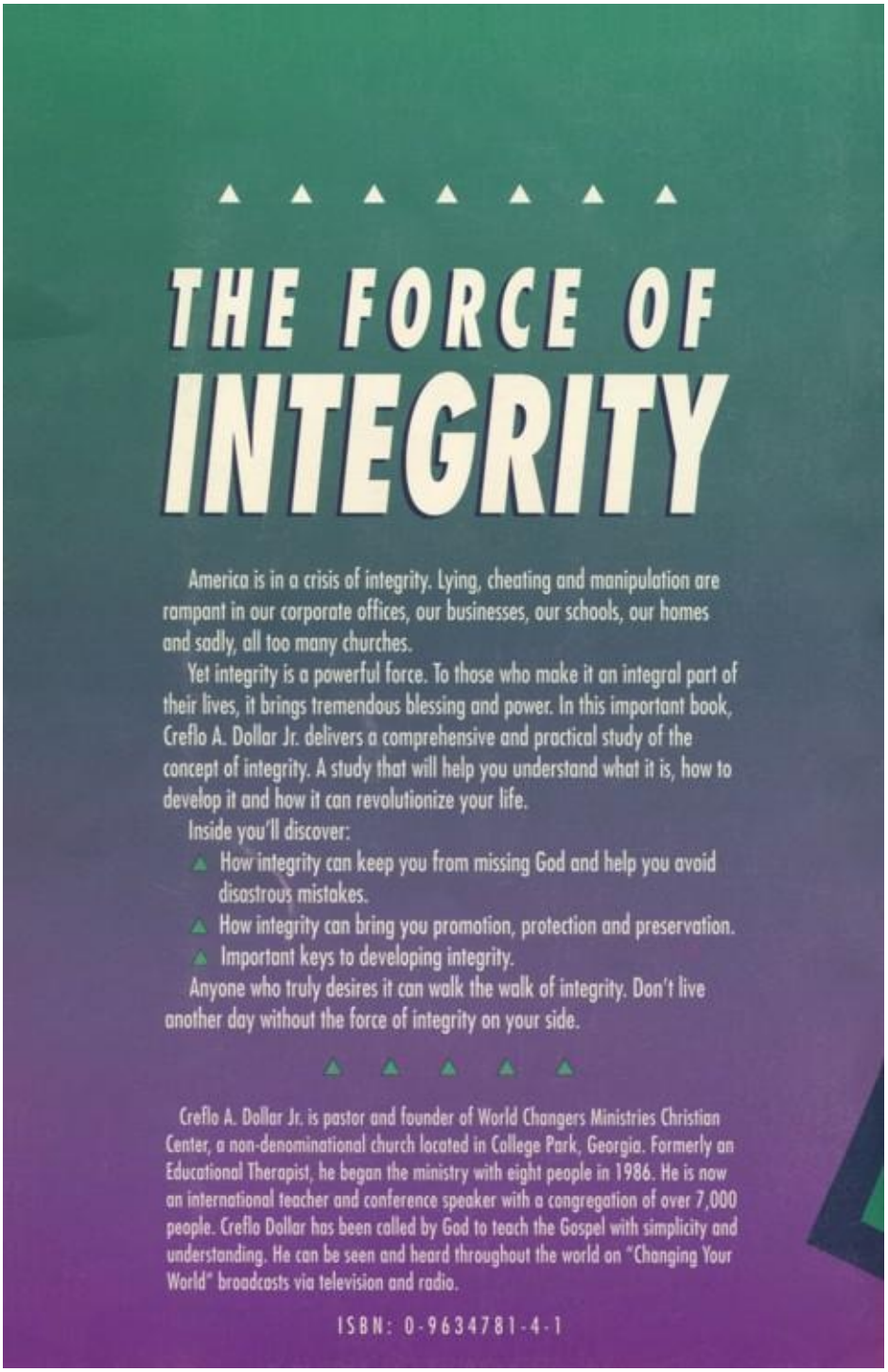
The Fruit of Integrity

Travelling the path of true integrity is not easy. If it were, more Christians would be walking in it. Yet we’ve seen the many benefits that flow from integrity of heart. Integrity will guide you. It will establish you. It will preserve, protect and promote you. It will bless your children. Perhaps best of all, it will please your Heavenly Father.

When you operate in integrity you're being like Him.

And that, brothers and sisters, is what it's all about.

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