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# When No one Sees

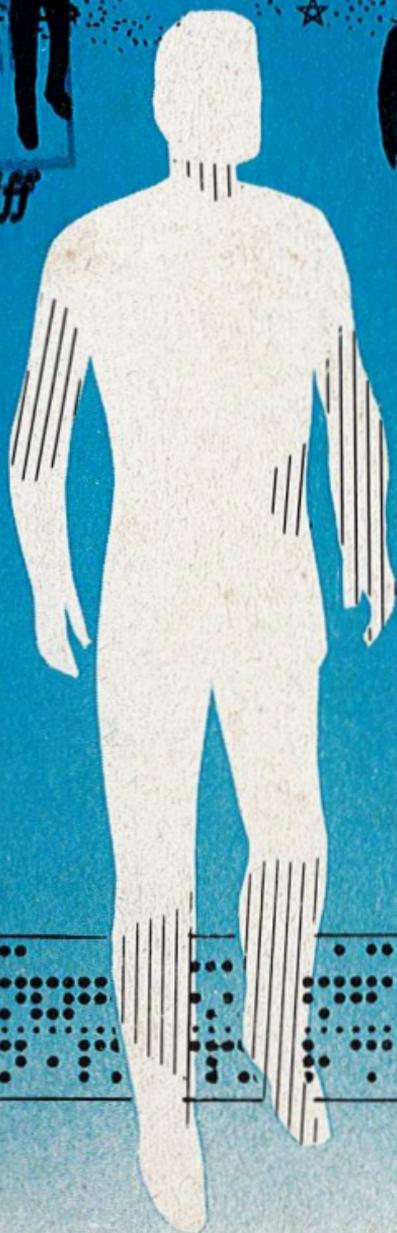
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LEIGHTON FORD

# **When No one Sees**

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What would you do if you thought no one would find out? Think about it for a moment. If no one was looking, if no one would ever know, what action would you take? Would it involve money? A woman? A man? Would it be an act of passion? An act of violence? An act of love?

If no one would ever know . . . what would you do? I'm convinced that it's a question we must all answer, because opportunities to do things without being seen present themselves to us time after time in life. What we do with those opportunities determines the very course of our lives.

Does it sound like the plot for a short story? An impossible scenario? An opportunity you wish you could have but think you'll never get? Think again. The opportunity to do everything you've ever wanted to do is just around the corner in your life. And you may turn that corner today. How you respond will depend completely on your personal integrity.

Integrity is a part of our character. In everyday experience, character is what we are when the lights are out, when no one sees and no one cares. Character determines what we do when we are alone or in a situation outside the scrutiny of family and friends.

For a moment, put yourself in the place of a young man we'll call Joe. He grew up as a victim of parental favouritism in a family where there were sons of only one father, but more than one mother. Sometimes, families have a way of becoming very complicated as they combine children from more than one marriage. Joe's dad simply loved Joe more than any of his brothers and demonstrated that love in tangible ways. Joe had nicer clothes than anyone else, he didn't have to perform the same work and he was always spouting off about his dreams of the future and how great he would someday be. As a result, his brothers hated him.

By the time Joe reached age 17, his brothers viewed him as an arrogant threat to their share of the inheritance. One day as they were working together out of town, they seized an opportunity to solve their problem with Joe. They sold him into slavery and took evidence to their father to indicate that he had been accidentally killed, his body unrecoverable.

Up until that time, Joe had a bright future. He looked forward to meaningful employment in the family business, a large inheritance and a future full of hope. All that changed overnight and Joe found himself transported to another country and sold again, this time as a common household servant.

How would you react if you were Joe? Would you become angry, depressed, determined to

make the best of things or simply resigned to a passive acceptance of your fate in life? Perhaps the most remarkable part of the story is what Joe did. In order to fully understand it, we have to introduce one other key element into the story.

Joe had a very strong personal faith in God. He was a young man who had been raised to believe that God is involved in the lives of people who trust Him and obey His commands. But that was at home, when things were all going his way. What about now, in a strange country where no one knew him, no one cared what he did and it appeared that even God had abandoned him?

By now, perhaps you've recognised this as the story of Joseph from the Bible. In Genesis, Chapter 39, we find Joseph as a servant in the house of a high-ranking military official named Potiphar. The Bible tells us that "The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master." (Gen. 39:2).

"The Lord was with Joseph." He hadn't been abandoned after all. Even in the midst of what looked like a tragedy caused by the injustice and cruelty of his own brothers, Joseph was still very much under the watchful care of the God who loved him.

But someone besides God was watching Joseph. Potiphar's wife decided that this handsome young Hebrew would make an interesting sexual conquest. So she began a process of seduction designed to lure Joseph to her bed. Day after day she tried to persuade him. After all, who would ever know?

Ponder the situation for a moment. Here is a handsome young man at the peak of his sexual

energy. He has needs and desires that are strong, almost overpowering at times. He is in a foreign country whose religion and customs are different from his own. He has been the victim of personal injustice, yet has risen above it to a position of success and responsibility. His boss's very attractive wife is practically forcing him to go to bed with her. After all, we might reason, isn't that part of his job — to keep the household running smoothly and see that everyone is happy? Isn't he entitled to a little enjoyment in life? Don't the spoils belong to the victor? Why shouldn't he celebrate a little?

But Joseph's reaction is very different from our approach to similar situations in life. He told Potiphar's wife that her husband trusted him and that he could never violate that trust. But more importantly, Joseph believed that God trusted him and was with him. Joseph said, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9).

The hallmark of Joseph's life was integrity. It made no difference to him if no one was watching or if the entire world was watching. He would act the same in every case. Whether he was rewarded or punished by men, Joseph ordered his life according to what he believed God wanted him to do. In the case of Potiphar's wife, it cost him dearly. Frustrated by Joseph's refusal, she charged him with attempted rape and he was thrown into prison for a crime he didn't commit.

If you follow Joseph's remarkable story through Chapter 50 of Genesis, you'll find that in spite of temporary setbacks, his integrity eventually brought him to the place of great blessing and usefulness in the hands of God.

His place in history is secured by his refusal to act simply on the basis of what felt good at the time. He stands as an example of the value of integrity that grew out of a personal commitment to God.

That basis of integrity is all-important. Integrity is partly defined as rigid adherence to a code of values. There are some people who act the same no matter who is watching, but who have no regard for God in their lives. Their actions are motivated by self-interest and they don't care who knows it. They are like the man whom a friend described as "the most even tempered person I've ever known — always mad."

But true integrity, like that seen in Joseph, grows out of a regard for God and His way. It is based on the firm belief that God has revealed Himself to us and that His commands are to be followed in every circumstance of life. The resulting life of action based on principle is one that frees us to be the kind of people we long to be.

The first step in developing integrity is to make God the central figure in our lives. Besides uprightness, the word integrity also denotes soundness, completeness and unity. The planets in our solar system share the integrity of revolving around our sun. It is the single greatest influence on them, affecting every aspect of their existence.

In the same way, God calls us to centre our lives around his Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible says that "In Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." (Eph. 1:7 NIV) To have faith in Jesus Christ

means to recognize that only through His death on the Cross can I find forgiveness of sin and right standing before God.

He paid the penalty I deserve for my moral and spiritual failure, and made it possible for me to find a new life through faith in Him. When I accept His forgiveness, by faith, and become His follower, I commit myself to obey Christ's commands and live for Him. The more completely I live for Christ, the more I discover that to live a life of integrity is to live encircled by the love and care of God. A person who follows God's plan and principles can expect to live a life of security, boldness and guidance.

## **SECURITY**

"The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out." (Prov. 10:9 NIV).

"Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner." (Prov. 13:6 NIV).

As these two verses indicate, security and peace accompany the person of integrity. They enable us to maintain a forward look in life without worrying about who may discover something in our past. There is no need to keep looking over our shoulders if we have nothing of which to be ashamed.

This is what the Apostle Paul called a "conscience clear before God and man." (Acts 24:16 NIV) It is a liberating feeling that comes from knowing that we walk and talk exactly the same way with all people. There is no hypocrisy in the life of a person of integrity. The two are mutually exclusive.

## **BOLDNESS**

"The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." (Prov. 28:1 NIV).

In Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "The Telltale Heart", a man who has committed murder and hidden the victim's body is haunted by a heartbeat that continues to echo in his mind. As the police investigators question him, he is finally overwhelmed by this heartbeat which he imagines that everyone can hear. His "perfect crime" is solved by his own admission of guilt.

Integrity gives us the courage to launch out in great exploits for God because we are free from the emotional drain of guilt. Unresolved guilt spawns fear and fear is an emotional prison. Through fear, we are paralyzed by the presence of an imaginary enemy. With integrity, we are free to confront the real challenges of life boldly and courageously.

## **GUIDANCE**

"The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity." (Prov. 11:3 NIV).

Integrity will not protect us from every misfortune in life, but it will keep us from making a mess of things ourselves. We often fear difficult circumstances and the calamities of life, but in the final analysis, we suffer more from our own mistakes than from anything that touches us from outside forces.

Yet, the promise of God is guidance in the decisions of life — both small and great. Integrity keeps us off the treacherous path of duplicity. How many friendships, marriages, businesses, and even governments have been

destroyed by a lack of honesty and openness? But "the integrity of the upright guides them."

Integrity is often costly, but not as expensive as the results of living without it. Not long ago, the president of an international hotel chain resigned his job in protest over his organization's decision to build and operate a \$55 million gambling casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

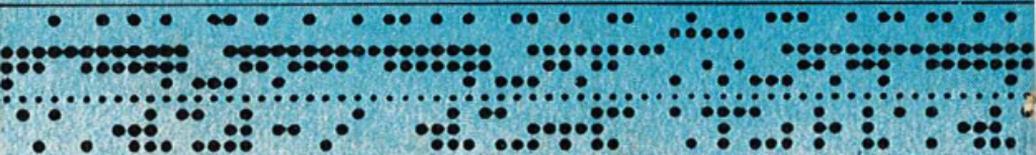
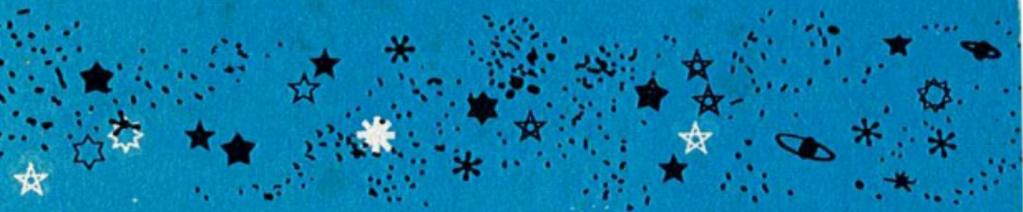
Mr. L. M. Clymer said his purpose in resigning his job was to state his personal position on the issue. Mr. Clymer said: "It is my overriding regard and respect for my Lord Jesus Christ which has led me to this decision." The Bible never promises that integrity will be without its price, but God does promise this: "The man whose walk is blameless, who speaks the truth from his heart, and who keeps his oath even when it hurts, he will never be shaken." (Psalm 15:2, 4-5 NIV).

God wants you to live a life of integrity. His plan for you includes the divinely supplied security, boldness and guidance that come only through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you willing to pay the price of integrity?  
Can you afford to live without it?



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