In Appreciation for Your Support of Dallas Theological Seminary

Dr. Howard Hendricks epitomized a person whose life was lived “by the Book”—the timeless Word of God.

During Prof’s years of teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary, his course on Bible Study Methods became legendary for the lasting impact it had on three generations of DTS students.

Now you can learn those same principles. Prof Hendricks shared his Bible study methods, that have revolutionized many lives, for all of us to benefit from in a book he authored with his son Bill—entitled, very appropriately, Living by the Book.

This volume has become a classic, and we want you to have a copy. It will not only be a keepsake of Prof’s amazing ministry, but your own study of God’s Word will never be the same. Be sure to request your copy of this life-changing work that has influenced thousands.
The Rewards of a Life of Integrity: A Tribute to Dr. Howard G. Hendricks
by Dr. Charles R. Swindoll

The following message was delivered to the DTS family by our chancellor, Dr. Charles Swindoll, shortly after the homegoing of Dr. Howard Hendricks—“Prof” to the many who knew and loved him. Dr. Hendricks taught at Dallas Theological Seminary for 60 years. In 1958 he established the Department of Christian Education, and in 1986 he founded what is known today as the Howard G. Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership. He retired in 2010 after teaching more than 10,000 DTS students and leaving a worldwide legacy of faithful ministry and unparalleled impact. Dr. Swindoll spoke as Prof’s colleague, ministry partner, and longtime friend who held Dr. Hendricks in the highest affection and esteem.
My heart is heavy today because another of my mentors has passed into the Lord’s presence. The sound of his inimitable voice will not be heard again on this earth. The place where he sat on this platform at Chafer Chapel for decades, and for years at Stonebriar Community Church, will be empty from here on. I have not been more grateful for any other adult in all my years as a man than I am for Howard Hendricks. He served as an elder at our church since its inception 15 years ago, and his life was a benediction to all of us.

When I first met Howie in the fall of 1959, I was a first-year student. I took his foundational course, which was called Bible Study Methods in those days, and it literally transformed my ability to handle the text of Scripture. I have never prepared a message since without applying the techniques Prof taught me. His homegoing leaves a hole in my heart that no one else can fill.

A Legacy of Integrity

I ask myself, Why is that? Why has he had that kind of influence? I believe it was because of his integrity in ministry and in life. I want to talk to you about that, because I long for you as I long for myself to have that legacy of integrity that Prof had. That will never go away. All of us need heroes, flesh-and-blood models of people we can trust. People we are not afraid we are going to find out something about that will disappoint us.

My wife, Cynthia, and I used to babysit the Hendricks children when they were small. I decided one night I would sit at Prof’s desk. I guess I expected something powerful to happen to me. I then decided to rummage around in his desk. There I found a list of his finances and his budget. Two things stood out: how little he was paid and the fact that the Lord’s part was at the top of his budget list. That’s integrity.

Prof’s integrity led him to always tell me the truth, even if it hurt. There was no duplicity. He was not perfect, but he was authentic. I saw him through the death of one of his daughters and the time when he learned his cancer was deep and it would mean the loss of his eye. He and Jeanne, his dear wife of 65 years, handled it magnificently. No one heard him utter a word of complaint about having only one eye.

He was teachable, gracious. There are other great professors at this school, and we know that. But there was something about Prof that marked us. We are not the same because we took courses from that man. I took everything he offered, wanting to know how a guy like that comes together. As we got older and I saw how he handled life, I realized it was his integrity.

A Passion for Teaching

I love what Jeanne Hendricks said at Prof’s passing: “His passion in life was to teach other people to teach the Word of God. His students were his primary focus. He would teach them the principles of leadership so they could go back to their churches and teach. That was his gift—he was motivational.”

Indeed, Professor Howard Hendricks was the most motivational, inspiring person whom I and more than 10,000 other Dallas Theological Seminary alumni have ever been around. His life was also marked by integrity—and one of my purposes in this message is to challenge all of us to cultivate that same example of integrity.
Here is one of the countless tributes that arrived at the Seminary after Prof’s passing. It came from Dr. Steve Strauss, a faculty member here at DTS who is also a graduate of this school. Dr. Strauss served for many years with the mission agency SIM in Ethiopia. He writes:

It was Prof’s encouragement in the Bible Study Methods course that led me to first consider what became the calling of my first 20 years of ministry. “Gentlemen, if I had it to do all over again, I would not stay here in the States where there is a church on every block. I’d go overseas to some country where there was no school like Dallas Seminary and I’d start something like it,” he challenged us. That calling was part of the foundation of the Evangelical Theological College of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the Kale Haywet Ministry Training Center in Dilla; and the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology in Addis Ababa. Thank you, Prof, for that inspiration, and thanks from the 1,000+ Ethiopian students who have prepared for ministry because of the vision you helped create.

There are no courses on the kind of integrity Dr. Strauss has described. There are models of it, thank goodness. But ultimately, we are all alone with circumstances that will demand integrity from us. It will be your integrity that will see you through.

That’s why God reached down and chose David, when Saul was pursuing him even though David had done nothing wrong. Psalm 78 says that God took David from feeding his sheep to be “the shepherd of his people Jacob” and that David led God’s people “with integrity of heart” (vv. 71–72).

Was David perfect? Absolutely not. But he was a man of integrity, after God’s heart. David wrote in Psalm 26:1, “Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have led a blameless life.” David was saying, “Here I am, Lord, look inside me.” The prophet Micah put it this way: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Integrity means that when you make a promise, you keep it. When you’re wrong, own it. Don’t look for someone else to blame. When you tell your kids you’ll be in the stands for their game, be there—or first thing Saturday morning, take them to breakfast and apologize. Integrity means you can be trusted when nobody else knows the difference.

The good news is that a life like that is rewarded. And not the least of the rewards is that when they lay you to rest, your children and grandchildren can look at your picture and say with true pride, “That’s my dad.” “That’s my granddad.” “That’s my wife.” “That’s our daughter.”

The Rewards of Integrity

I want to give you six rewards of living with integrity:

1. The sustained cultivation of exemplary character.

Year after year, the person who commits himself or herself to the virtues that spell out integrity can rest assured that they are most beneficial as they take shape within. You become the message.

We once had Joni Eareckson Tada come to speak at a DTS chapel. She was nervous as she sat there in her wheelchair, and she said to me, “Oh, Chuck, I don’t know if anything I can say will make any difference.”
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I told her, “Joni, if we did nothing but wheel you out on the platform, there would be a message, and our students wouldn’t miss it. It’s the integrity of your life that stands out; anything you say is just cream on top of the pie.”

By the way, with integrity there is a humility that is so attractive, especially when a person is so gifted, as Joni is. Later that day we had a meal, and her assistant had been called away. Joni was trying to use a fork strapped to her wrist, but it wasn’t working.

So she asked me, “Chuck, would you feed me?” What humility it took for her to ask me to do that. I venture to say you have never had to say that in all of your adult life, but someday you may have to. Humility will stand you in good stead if that day comes.

2. The continued relief of a clear conscience.

The voice of our conscience is eloquent and convicting, and sometimes it screams. Keep listening to it. The clear conscience of integrity means you don’t have to fear that someone will find a skeleton in your closet.

A clear conscience frees your spirit, because you can speak with greater ease, knowing you have nothing to hide. Cultivate that.

3. The personal fulfillment of intimacy with the Almighty.

Prof Hendricks had a walk with Christ that was rather simple. He was saved off the streets of Philadelphia as a boy. A man named Walt told young Howie there was a meeting at this little church, and he wanted Howie to come. All of us who were Prof’s students remember what he said about that meeting.

Prof said he figured anything having to do with church was bad news, but after Walt cleaned his clock shooting marbles, Prof said, “I decided I’d follow that man anywhere.” Walt was a layman who taught 13 boys, and Prof said just recently that 11 of Walt’s students are still in full-time ministry.

The music minister at our church told me that he read there are two great days in a man’s life: the day he is born and the day he finds out why. Prof Hendricks found out why he was born, and out of that flowed a man, a voice, and a teaching style that was fun and creative. Kent Hughes said in his book Disciplines of a Godly Man: “A transparent soul is a haven for the Spirit of God.” That’s a great statement, and it well describes Howard Hendricks.

4. The priceless inheritance of a lingering legacy.

When you have integrity, you leave a legacy even if your pocketbook is empty when you die. The Bible says a man of God speaks even after he is dead.

That’s why I can still hear Prof’s words. I can hear the way he said it; I can see him in a moment of laughter. I can still see him on an airplane, talking to a flight attendant in the most winsome way, and before she knew it, he was laying out the plan of salvation, also in a very winsome way.

5. The rare privilege of being a mentor.

We need mentors all our lives. If you are a person of integrity, you become a mentor almost without planning to be. People want to be around you. They are curious why you are the way you are. What are your secrets? How do you handle things? The Bible says that Jesus chose His disciples to be with Him and to send them out to preach (Mark 3:14).
But they were with Him first. A life of integrity creates this opportunity to be a mentor.

Mentors help you know how to live and how to minister. They tap you on the shoulder and help you learn. One of the most telling experiences of my ministry was serving an internship under a great leader in California named Ray Stedman. That internship shaped me, but I never would have known Ray Stedman or gone to his church if Howie Hendricks had not introduced me to Ray. It was Howie who told Ray, “You need to take this guy under your wing.” I will be eternally grateful for that.

6. The crowning reward of finishing well.

The apostle Paul said it best in 2 Timothy 4:7 when he wrote at the end of his life: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

I lay these words before you today as a challenge. Do your best to imagine your life however many years from now, when you are near the end, and make certain that you have finished well. Howard Hendricks did just that, and we are all in his debt.