

Lost Words: Integrity

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Scripture: Matthew 5:33-37

³³"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' ³⁴But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Opening Question

How often do you encounter a lack of integrity? Do we as a nation struggle with this? Why does integrity qualify as a lost word in our society? On a scale of 1-10, where are you in commitment to 100% integrity?

Digging for Truth

1. Read Matthew 5:33-37 asking the group to be ready to share some thoughts they have about this passage.
2. Is integrity important to a Christ-follower? Why is it important to you? Are there any stories from your life experiences that affect its importance?
3. What does integrity actually mean?

It has been referred to as "being true to a value system."

The original Latin root means "untouched" or "whole;" something that hasn't been compromised. Uncorrupted. Sound.

4. Les shared a story about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. How willing was he to pay the price of integrity? Isn't that our problem? The price we are willing to pay is very small? Don't we value other things, like more money, more highly?
5. Les said, "We listen to Jesus and want to obey him, not to gain entry into the kingdom, but to live faithfully within it."

Are we more likely to have less integrity if it doesn't affect our salvation?

6. The people of Israel created oaths to allow themselves an out, like crossing our fingers. Do we do anything like that in our society? When is it okay to lie? How should we handle those situations? (That dress doesn't make you look fat.)

7. Is there anyone you know that if they tell you “a chicken can pull a wagon”, you can hitch it up? How refreshing is that? How does it make us feel when someone has misled us?

Have you met people who think they have integrity, but don't? What's with that? How can we be blind to our lack of integrity?

8. Les shared that you and I can help change this generation. Why should we bother?

9. Here are some signs that a person may struggle with integrity. Listen to these and evaluate yourself:

Signs that I may struggle in the area of integrity?

- a. Do I make excuses?
- b. Do I begin projects, but not complete them.
- c. Am I a cynical person?
- d. Do people consistently show a lack of trust in me?

Anyone want to comment?

10. Here are some ways we can practice integrity. Choose one of these to work on this week.

Ways to Practice Integrity

- a. Tell the truth. Keep promises. Let your yes be yes. I must be so truthful that someone who knows me well will be satisfied with a simple “yes” or “no.”
- b. Be dependable
- c. Work hard
- d. Don't compromise on biblical convictions.
- e. Don't make promises you can't keep or that are beyond your control. Let your no be no.

Read this passage: *Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. . . Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” James 4:13-15*

- f. If you make a mistake or have to go back on a promise, admit it and ask for forgiveness quickly.
- g. Be the same person in private that I am in public.
- h. Don't trivialize the name of God by using His name to add credibility to a vow.

11. Integrity and character do the right thing when nobody is looking. What difference does it make in a situation like that (when nobody is looking and there is no way to be discovered)?

12. Les talked about the benefits of integrity. Here are some reasons. Which is most important to you?

- a. Personally, God will be pleased and your credibility will go up in the eyes of others.
The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out. Proverbs 10:9

- b. Culturally, you can help change the DNA of a nation. One by one we can bring back trust between one another and restore hope to a generation who wants to trust us; who wants to be able to trust people in authority, especially when those people represent God.

c. Spiritually, if you are truly a person of Godly integrity, a whole follower of Jesus who's witness is not compromised, then when you speak about the Lord and about being a faithful follower of Jesus, people will listen because you're a person who means yes when he says yes, and no when he says no.

Closing Thought

Like a crack in the "O" ring on the shuttle, a crack in our character can have major implications. Let's make a commitment to God to be totally pure in our character. It's a matter of trust in God and the value we place on it. Think of an area that you have been convicted about today. Let's have a minute of prayer silent prayer for you to commit that area to God. It does matter.

Extra Stuff

What does the Bible have to say about integrity?

1. Integrity means treating people fairly and honestly. (Leviticus 19:35-36, Deut 25:15, Proverbs 16:11-13)
2. Integrity is giving your word and keeping it. (Exodus 8:28-32)
3. Integrity will protect you. In Psalm 25, David prays that integrity and uprightness will protect him. How can it? (Psalm 25:21, Proverbs 2:7-8, 10:9, 11:3, 13:6)
4. Honest Balance Scale Integrity is more valuable than riches. (Proverbs 28:6)
5. The Lord will test and judge your integrity. (1 Chronicles 29:17, Psalm 7:8)
6. The Lord hates lies and lack of integrity. (Zechariah 8:16-17)
7. It may be difficult to maintain your integrity. (Job 2:3, 2:9, Proverbs 29:10)
8. Your character can be corrupted by bad company. (1 Corinthians 15:33)
9. Integrity will be rewarded. (1 Kings 9:4-5, Nehemiah 7:2, Psalm 41:11-12)
10. Your integrity should set an example. (Titus 2:7)