

## Integrity of Life

**A person of integrity speaks and expresses himself truthfully, according to what is already in his heart and mind.**

(Matthew 12:34-37)

Unless a person is holding back or being deceptive, usually what comes out of his or her mouth is what is in the heart. When a person routinely expresses themselves in truthful and compassionate terms, we can know that in general that person thinks and feels similar to the way they express themselves.

1. Ask someone close to you how you usually express yourself. Do they characterize you usually truthful, deceptive, transparent, or cagey? Give careful thought to what is said and compare it to what you routinely think about and how you feel.

**A person of integrity acts in a way that is in keeping with what is in his heart and mind.**

(Matthew 22:37-39)

A person of integrity lives what is known as an integrated life. Their thoughts, feelings, and actions are usually in concert with one another. A person of integrity regards their spiritual life and their earthly life as one and the same. To a person of integrity there is no difference.

1. The greatest example in the Bible of what constitutes an integrated life is found in Matthew 22:37-39. Does your life reflect this passage, or are you growing into it? Explain.

**A person of integrity may sometimes sin or fail, but always repents when he discovers sin in his life. He does not put personal desires, wealth, status, power, or other things in place of integrity.**

(Job 2:10)

Since an integrated life of integrity requires a whole life dedicated to what is right, the principles of God's word and a commitment to Jesus Christ must take first priority in a person's life.

1. What place does Jesus Christ have in your life right now? What place do you want him to occupy?

## God's Character & Man's Ethics, Study #9

# Real Integrity

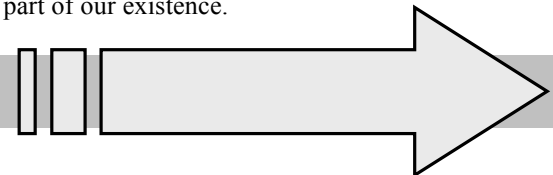
I will never forget the day I was called by an officer with the police department and accused of a crime. "Mr. Terry," the officer on the phone said. "You have been accused of stealing gasoline at a local convenience store. We are giving you notice that you must pay the money or you will be charged with a crime.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I remember purchasing gas at the store on the date in question, but as best as I could remember I paid for it. After protesting for a while I realized that the officer was threatening, but that it was highly unlikely they were going to come arrest me for a theft of \$10 of gas. In fact, since I lived outside of the city from where the crime supposedly occurred, the officer has no legal authority to arrest me. All she could do was harass me on the phone. I was, after all, innocent. There was no evidence I committed a crime, just a simple claim. So I made a decision.

I got into my truck, drove to the gas station and handed the attendant a \$10 bill. I said to the attendant, "I know I paid for the gas. I'm not a thief. But just in case, here's another \$10." The store clerk was stunned. She looked at me dumbfounded and said, "We've accused a lot of people of stealing gas. No one's ever come back to pay before." It's been nearly 20 years since that happened. I've never forgotten it because the clerk was so dumbstruck that someone might be honest enough to either pay back what was stolen, or insist on their innocence, and pay again anyway. I walked out of that store knowing with confidence that I had protected my integrity.

Integrity is more than dealing honestly, or telling the truth, or doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. Integrity involves two important traits. First, integrity means that we are honest in every part of our being—our feelings, our minds, and our outward behaviors. But integrity also requires something extra. We avoid even the *appearance* of evil or sin in our lives—even if we are accused wrongly, even if it costs us, if it is uncomfortable or violates our rights, our integrity must be protected.

In this study we shall examine the characteristics of a godly person that has integrity. We'll also learn how to become men and women who live in integrated life, where integrity permeates every part of our existence.



## Integrity of Heart

### **A person with a *heart* of integrity loves truth and hates all that is sinful and wrong**

(Job 1:1; I Thessalonians 3:13; Philippians 2:14-15)

When the Bible talks about people of great integrity it uses specific language to describe them—like in Job 1:1. Job was “Blameless, upright, fearing God, turning from evil.” A person of integrity doesn’t simply do the right thing. Rather, a person of integrity deeply loves all that is true, and hates all that is evil. Such a person is impassioned for what is right.

1. Make a short list of things you care about deeply. Is there anything on that list that is sinful, or perhaps a distraction from pursuing a full, godly life? How do you feel about that?

### **A person with a *heart* of integrity has feelings that match his or her behavior.**

(Matthew 6:21; Luke 7:47; Matthew 18:35; Proverbs 3:3)

We all know that it is possible to say one thing and do another. Sometimes we say we are not angry, but secretly hold a grudge. Sometimes we say we forgive someone, but secretly wish for his or her downfall. Hypocrisy is the opposite of integrity. A person of integrity feels the same as that which they claim.

1. Have you ever heard the phrase, “As a Christian I have to love him, but I don’t have to like him.” Do you think that is really true? Why or why not?

### **A person with a *heart* of integrity repents when he discovers sin in his life.**

(Psalm 38:17-18, 32:5; Proverbs 28:13)

When a person of integrity discovers sin in his or her life, that person will usually grieve over what they have discovered. A person without integrity does not concern him- or herself with sin and its effects. But a person of integrity will ask for forgiveness and seek to turn away from the sin committed. Their innermost being—their heart—impassions them to do what is right.

1. Look at the list you made. What impassions you the most?

## Integrity of Mind

### **A person with a *mind* of integrity dwells upon truth and righteousness, not evil or sin.**

(Philippians 4:8-9; Romans 12:2, 8:6)

Sometimes we can’t control our emotions. We feel what we feel at any given moment. However, we can always control what we think. We can choose to dwell upon things that are good, true, and right. Or we can dwell on that which is dishonoring or evil. The Bible recognizes that the Christian must intentionally set his or her mind upon right things. When we build a habit of thinking rightly, we can begin to feel rightly.

1. What are some of the things that have occupied your mind in the last few weeks? Are they good or bad? How can you change your thinking?

### **A person with a *mind* of integrity has thoughts that match his heart and behavior.**

(I Chronicles 28:9; Proverbs 12:5)

If we are offended or hurt by someone over a long period of time, chances are our thoughts about that person will turn to dislike, and even hatred. However, the Bible commands us to “love your enemies.” We must intentionally retrain our minds to do what is right, so that our feelings and behavior will follow suit.

1. It’s possible to feel one thing for a person, but know intellectually that there is another reality. Can you think of someone about whom you feel and think two different things? What will you do to bring your heart and mind into unity about that person?

### **A person with a *mind* of integrity evaluates himself to be sure he is living a life of integrity.**

(Lamentations 3:39-40; II Corinthians 13:5)

You can begin to know you are becoming a person of integrity by examining your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to see if they are in concert.

1. Examine yourself. What level of integrity do you think you have right now?

