

## Integrity

In this week's passage, we find, as one author wrote, Jesus "plunging us into the guts of human existence." One common thread in this passage is personal **integrity**, which involves our relationships with other people and with God. When we think of a person having integrity, usually we mean the person follows a highly moral or ethical lifestyle. But what does "integrity" really mean?

The word "integrity" is related to the mathematical term "integer," which is commonly used to talk about whole numbers (no fractions allowed). Both "integrity" and "integer" come from an ancient Latin word meaning "whole." So we can think of a person of integrity as a person who is "whole."

It may also help to look at another related word, "contaminate." Though it may not look like "integrity," the two words actually share the same root word. Contamination occurs when something is corrupted by coming into contact with (or being touched by) the wrong substance. And when you go back to the word "integer" and break it down into its even more ancient pre-Latin parts (n-tag-ro), it means "not touched." So a person of integrity is someone who is untouched by contamination.

Now let's take a look at what Jesus says about our integrity.

### Monday – What were you thinking!?

*"Beauty is not only a [wonderful] thing, it is also a mysterious thing! There God and the Devil strive for mastery, and the battleground is the heart of man."* – Fyodor Dostoyevsky

1. Please read Matthew 5:27-30. By commenting on the seventh commandment, Jesus is expressing his desire to bless and protect the marriage covenant. He is trying to preserve pure beauty by keeping it whole and uncontaminated. What strikes you about this passage?
2. It's not just *what* we think about other people (he's nice, she's a hard worker) that matters. Apparently, the *way* we think about them also makes a difference. Why is lust a destructive way of thinking about someone?

**Digging Deeper** – Look at Romans 12:1-2 and Ephesians 4:22-24. How might renewing your mind help change the way you think about lust and those you might be tempted to lust after? What specific truths or thoughts could help you anchor your mind on the things of God?

### Tuesday – Integrity

*"It is better to be culturally deprived than to be eaten away on the inside."* – John Stott

1. Read Matthew 5:27-30 once more. Why does Jesus link lust with adultery? How are the two similar? How are they different?
2. Read John Stott's quote above. Though a small minority has taken verses 29-30 as a call to self-mutilation, Stott suggests that is not Jesus' intent. Rather, Jesus is calling us to take sexual purity seriously. It is better to forego certain privileges/activities that are commonplace in our culture than to find our integrity rotting away on the inside. What things might we have to say "no" to in order to grow in our purity?

### Wednesday – Relationships

*"Divorce is so painful, a living death. Jesus aims to keep us from this painful death."* – Darrel Johnson

1. In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus covers a subject that everyone recognizes as having consequences: divorce. What consequence does Jesus identify?
2. Relationships are obviously very important to God. Even though you may never be close to contemplating divorce, the Bible guides us in keeping our relationships intact. Take a look at Acts 15:36-38. What relationship is in danger? Now read what Paul wrote years later in 2 Timothy 4:9-13 (paying particular attention to verse 11). What relationship do you see restored? What is involved in restoring a relationship (whether a marriage or otherwise)?

**Putting it into Practice** – If you are married, what are you doing to nurture and renew your relationship with your spouse? What can you do that you are not presently doing? If you are not married, apply these questions to a close friendship God has given you.

### Thursday – A Question of Yes or No

*"Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do..."* Deuteronomy 23:23

1. Please read Matthew 5:33-37. What problem does Jesus identify at the end of the passage?

**Text Insight:** If people can trust your "yes," you don't need to back it up with an oath; if they can't trust your "yes," then can any oath cure that lack of trust?

2. Is Jesus for or against oaths? Why? Though people rarely use a formal oath in everyday speech, what sorts of things might they say that are similar to an oath?
3. **Digging Deeper** – Sometimes actions speak louder than words. In Exodus 2:11-14, Moses found out that his fellow Hebrews had been watching him closely and they didn't trust him. Look at verse 12 again. What led Moses to think he could get away with murder? Is there an area in your life where your actions and words are not quite consistent?

### Friday – Restored Integrity

1. Today we will study a turning point in King David's life, an example of restored integrity. Take a look at 2 Samuel 12:1-14 where we find Nathan, a prophet of Israel and close friend, confronts David. In verses 1-4, Nathan uses a story to describe a grievous wrong. What was David's initial reaction in verses 5-6?
2. In verse 9, Nathan explicitly lays out David's sin. How do you think David felt, having his life exposed by a prophet of God? How would you react if you were confronted about a sin area in your life? David's immediate response is in verse 13. What did he do?

**Making it personal** – Do you have difficulty bringing your sins to God? Allow David's example to guide you as you approach God in confession. Consider praying Psalm 51 in your own words (David's prayer of confession).

**For the Weekend:** Consider your integrity. Read back through the verses this week that have meant the most to you. Pray, asking God to lead you in his path, so you can walk in integrity with him.