

### Talent

For students, doing well in one course may make that student eligible to take a more advanced class that requires greater skill and more responsibility (can you imagine someone getting into engineering school without mastering basic math?). The same thing happens in the workplace. If we do well with one job, we might get offered another. *“Great work washing out those test tubes! How’d you like to run the lab today?”*

People receive more responsibility not only because they show an ability to get the job done, but also because of how they act while getting the job done: those who show integrity and faithfulness are generally rewarded with more responsibility. That reward then carries with it the requirement that they work harder at increasingly more difficult tasks as they carry out those responsibilities. And once again we watch to see how the person performs those new tasks. Eventually the time will come to give the person even greater tasks.

God watches how we carry out the tasks he has given us, wanting us to be people of integrity, faithful people who will honor him in our dealings with others. He in turn honors us with greater responsibility for him. Let’s study this week what it means to be faithful people, people of integrity, for God.

#### Monday – Faithful and True

*“Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it.”*

Blaise Pascal, 17<sup>th</sup> c. French mathematician and philosopher

1. Please read Proverbs 20:6. What would unfailing love be like? Why is it difficult to find someone who is faithful all the time in everything they do?
2. When is it most difficult for you to be faithful (all the time in everything you do)?
3. What does 1 John 1:8-10 tell you about faithfulness. What does it say about your integrity and God’s faithfulness?

**Making it Personal:** Ask God to give you the strength to be faithful in your weakest moments.

#### Tuesday – True Purposes

*“We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives.”* Charles Spurgeon, 19<sup>th</sup> c. British pastor

1. Please read Proverbs 20:5-11 and make a list of what is involved in having integrity.

**Text Insight:** The word “integral” is closely related to “integrity” and refers to something that is required for an object or idea to be *complete*. A person who lacks integrity lacks what it takes to be a *whole* person.

2. Jesus and the biblical writers make a strong correlation between what we say and what we do. What instructions do you find in Matthew 5:33-37 and James 5:12 for leading a life of integrity? Is there ever a time when you have trouble following through on what you say?

**Making it Personal:** Is there something you can do so that your “yes” always means “yes” and your “no” always means “no”? What practical step can you take today (or this week) to grow in integrity so that your actions keep in step with your words?

#### Wednesday – Trusted with Much

*“Do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the places you can at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can.”* John Wesley, 18<sup>th</sup> c. English theologian

1. Please read Luke 16:10-15. When has your ability to handle a task led to increased responsibilities? Has the Lord ever given your increased responsibility because of your faithfulness to him?
2. What does Jesus mean when he compares worldly wealth with true riches (v. 11), God with money (v. 13)?
3. How are you doing with the things God has given you? Who are you serving with them? How?

**Making it Personal:** God already knows what you’ve been up to and what’s on your mind (v. 15). What is preventing you from turning away from your own pursuits and pursuing what he considers to be of real value?

#### Thursday – Exercising Your Talents

*“I do not want to die ... until I have faithfully made the most of my talent and cultivated the seed that was placed in me until the last small twig has grown.”* Kathe Kollwitz, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c. German artist

1. Please read Matthew 25:14-30. How do you think Jesus feels when we let the gifts he’s given us remain idle?

**Text Insight:** A talent was a unit of measurement, weighing 75 pounds, used for large sums of money (a talent of gold or silver). The present meaning of the word “talent” – ability or aptitude – comes from Matthew 25.

2. Why might the extra talent go to the person who already has ten and not the one who has four?
3. Read verse 14 in conjunction with 1 Peter 4:10. What has God entrusted to you? How can you use it well for him?

**Point to Ponder:** *“The reward of being ‘faithful over a few things’ is just the same as being ‘faithful over many things’; for the emphasis falls upon the same word; it is the ‘faithful’ who will enter ‘into the joy of their Lord.’”*

Charles S. Robinson, 19<sup>th</sup> c. American pastor and hymn writer

#### Friday – Keeping Faith, Breaking Faith

*“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”* C.S. Lewis, 20<sup>th</sup> c. Anglo-Irish writer

1. Please read 2 Kings 5:1-27. What had the slave girl gone through? Why do you think she was eager to help Naaman by sharing her faith in God with Naaman’s wife?
2. How did Naaman interact with the various people in this story: the slave girl, his king, the king of Israel, the attendants, Elisha and Gehazi? What sort of integrity did he show?

**Making it Personal:** What attributes of Naaman, Gehazi or the unnamed slave girl would you like to grow in?

**For the Weekend:** Re-read Proverbs 20:5-11. Which verses are most significant to your life right now? Use those verses as you pray, asking God to help you follow him with faithfulness and integrity in all you do.