



## Topic: The Voice of My Integrity

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*We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us,  
and no one will find fault with our ministry. In everything  
we do, we show that we are true ministers of God...*

~2 Corinthians 6:3-4 (NLT)~

### Introduction to the Lesson

As I was sitting in my quiet place in reflection of life; not thinking about anything in particular just being thankful for all the Lord is and has been in my life, I begin to think about the positive influence the Christian should have in the world. I recall the words of the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. Paul told this group of saints that their lives were all the written witness needed to demonstrate the life of Christ in the believer's life. What Paul was saying in essence is that how we live our life will testify as to whether we are living in right relationship with the Savior or not. We are called to be like Jesus. In Christ, we are new creations and can be considered without blemish before God. In Christ, we also have the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in us, sanctifying us and making us more like Jesus. It is the Spirit's abiding within us that we live, move and have our being. Meaning, the Spirit's work in our life is to equip us to reflect the image of Christ in word and in deed. When the work of the Spirit of God is actively working and manifesting in one's life the result will be a life lived in integrity.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated "integrity" means "the condition of being without blemish, completeness, perfection, sincerity, soundness, uprightness, wholeness". In the New Testament, "integrity" means "honesty and adherence to a pattern of good works". From both the Old and the New Testaments, we see that one who names the name of Christ must in all conduct exemplify characteristics or attributes consistent with one who walks in integrity.

### Our Study

There are several descriptions for the word "**Integrity**"...

- Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching.
- Integrity is making sure that the things you say and the things you do are in alignment.
- Integrity is the essence of everything successful.
- Integrity is not something you show others. It is how you behave behind their back.
- Integrity is choosing your thoughts and actions based on values rather than personal gain.
- Integrity is doing the right thing knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not.
- Integrity can be regarded as the opposite of hypocrisy.

From these descriptions, we can sum up that integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles and moral uprightness. It is the state of being whole and undivided. With that said, how does integrity factor in the life of the Christian? This will be our focus for this study.

## The Character of Integrity

Without a doubt, Jesus is the supreme model of the character of integrity. His life evidenced His purity and excellent character, that those against Him could only declare that what they heard Jesus teach was the way of God in truth (*cf. Mark 12:14*). Even at the conclusion of His life here on earth as He stood before Pilate in the mockery of a trial, the ruler said, “I find no grounds for charging this man” (*cf. Luke 23:4*). In Jesus’ life, there was no basis for guilt nor evidence of fault found. In other words, Jesus’ behavior matched His belief; His walk matched His talk; His character matched His confession. What a testimony to leave in the world.

Because of the example of Jesus’ life, the Apostle Peter instructed the believers in how they were to conduct themselves.

### 1 Peter 2:21-23 (MSG)

***This is the kind of life you’ve been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step. He never did one thing wrong, Not once said anything amis. They called him every name in the book and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right.***

Like Christ, we too are called to always do what is right; even if it means suffering for the cause of right. From Peter’s instructions to the church, we see that with God’s strength it can be done. Regardless of what comes our way, it is our obligation as witnesses of the life of Christ to respond with correctness knowing that in the end God will set things right on our behalf. This is what integrity does.

The character of integrity exhibits the obedience and practice of the moral code of ethics, morals, values, and precepts from God’s Word. In practice, integrity will produce honor, truth, and reliability. It will allow one to keep his or her word and do the best even when no one else is aware. Integrity is considered the embodiment and application of character. It is the demonstration of who we are in Christ and that our faith is real and backed up with our attitude and word. The absence of integrity is an indication that we as Christians are perhaps fakes and frauds at worse, and ineffective and useless at best. It is essential that we pursue integrity and God’s transforming work through Christ to make Christ’s Name real and shown.

Romans chapter 12 demonstrates the characteristics of Christian integrity. As Christians, we are called to the Christian duty to live the surrendered life unto God. The Apostle Paul outlays the steps leading to the surrendered life we are called to.

### Romans 12:1-4 (NKJV)

1. ***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.***
2. ***And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.***
3. ***For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.***

The Apostle Paul urges us to present our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices devoted and consecrated to the Him as this is our reasonable service and an act of spiritual worship. This offering before the Lord is in view of His mercy toward us. Understanding the abundance of God’s grace and mercy toward us will

change our hearts. Paul wanted us to understand that we received God’s grace and mercy in spite of anything we have done apart from knowing God. The greater our understanding of God’s abounding grace and mercy, the more our lives will reflect the worship lifestyle with God as its center. The result of this will be a life lived with integrity.

The book of Proverbs lets us know that our thoughts will reveal our hearts (*cf. Proverbs 23:7*). Our actions are the results of what we think. Intellectually we may believe something to be true, but our real convictions will be demonstrated through our actions. This is why it is so critical to renew our minds through the word of God. We must take the scripture and implant it in our heart so that we can live in alignment with what God has said. Only then will we be able to know God’s good and acceptable and perfect will.

In verse three, we are warned not to think of ourselves above where we truthfully and actually are. In other words, we mustn’t live above where our faith is. We are most effective in our pursuit of Christian integrity if we are living our truth. It’s okay for us to admit that we are not there yet in our integrity. However, our not being there yet is no excuse for us to stay where we are. When we recognize our lack of wisdom to live in the integrity that becomes a Christian, we are to turn to our Lord and Savior who will give us what we need to continue on to a life of integrity.

#### **James 1:5 (NLT)**

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.*

We have an open door to the Father who will supply the wisdom and insight we may be lacking that will enable us to embody the true essence of integrity. All we need to do is ask the Savior to help us.

#### **Romans 12:9-10 (NKJV)**

9. *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*
10. *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.*

In verse nine, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are to have a true genuine love abiding within us. Our love mustn’t be in word only. Paul calls this type of love “hypocrisy” which is demonstrated when our behavior contradicts what we claim in word to be. Another way of saying this is that our video must match our audio. What people see in us and experience from us must be alignment with what we speak out of our mouth. Anything short is considered hypocrisy; we are living an untruth. Paul then tells us that we must disregard in our life all that is evil and must draw unto us all that is good.

In verse ten, we are called to be benevolent in dealing with others. Remember Christ is our example of how we are to treat one another. We are to be warm hearted in our actions giving preference toward others. In layman’s terms, we must treat others with the same attitude we expect to be treated with. We must be honest in our conduct not giving way to our feelings but leaning on the Spirit of God to live in and through us.

#### **Romans 12:14-16 (NLT)**

14. *Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them.*
15. *Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.*

16. ***Live in harmony with each other, Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!***

Here the Apostle speaks to us concerning how we are to respond in situation where we are coming under attack from without. Verse 14 leaves no excuse for us to retaliate. Regardless what we may be suffering at the hands of others, we are to always respond in harmony with the Spirit of God. Remember, Christ is our example of how we are to treat those who come against us.

Verse fifteen lets us know that we are called to genuinely rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. In other words, integral people will demonstrate a genuine happiness when something good happens to those around them just as they will feel the pain of those who weep.

Verse sixteen backs up the prior two verses in instructing us to live in harmony with each other. While we may not always agree with one another, integrity understands that we can still agree to disagree. Verse sixteen in the King James Version says that we are to be of the same mind one toward another. There are times we must agree to walk away from a situation or from a conversation for the purpose of avoiding destructive communication and/or conduct.

#### **Romans 12:17-18 (NLT)**

17. ***Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.***
18. ***Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.***

As Christians we should be above reproach according to the world's standards. In verse seventeen, the Apostle Paul lets us know that we are not repay for the evil done to us. We must take heed to always do what is right in the sight of God and men. This does not mean that we should seek to please mankind; rather it means that we should live righteously according to God's principals in plain view of everyone. We must be fair and honest in all our dealings.

Paul tells us in verse eighteen that we should live at peace with one another and conduct our lives aiming for what is noble and proper. Even though we cannot be responsible for others behaviors; as far as it depends on us we can live at peace with everyone.

#### **Romans 12:19-21 (MSG)**

19. ***Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I will take care of it."***
20. ***Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness.***
21. ***Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.***

An amazing thing happens when we internalize a passage of scripture such as this and start living it out. Once you show consideration for people who disregard you, then enemies can no longer stay enemies. By caring for them, God's love spills out of your heart, becomes an action and people respond to it.

God's love showed action when He sent Jesus into a hostile world. The book of Romans tells us that while we were still steeped in sin, God demonstrated His love for us in the person of Jesus Christ (*cf. Romans 5:8*). Just think it was this act of the mercy of God that brought us into fellowship with God where we are

no longer enemies but friends with God. Remember, Christ is our example of how we are to live a life of integrity.

The Apostle Paul closes his discourse in the book of Romans by instructing us to overcome evil with good. As Christians we are called to overcome in this world, but to overcome we must master evil. To do this, we must hate sin and cling to what is good. This does not mean that we should try to be good to ward off evil in our lives, but we should operate in biblical principles to overcome and conquer evil. The word of God when received by faith is powerful enough to overcome the forces of hell that come up against us.

## **The Voice of My Integrity**

As Christians, our lives are always on display; in the home, in the work place, in the community and in the church. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:14 that we are the light of the world; that we are a city that is set on a hill and cannot be hid. No matter whether we choose to or not, we are always giving voice through the character or integrity we embody. Our lights are always shining before men but are they shining forth good works that glorify our Father which is in heaven?

Remember, *Integrity* is making sure that the things we say and the things we do are in alignment; and that alignment must reflect the life and character of Christ. All throughout His ministry, Jesus talked about the principles of integrity. In His sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught on the character of those who choose to follow after Him.

### **Matthew 5:8-9 (NLT)**

8. *God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.*
9. *God blessed those who work for peace, for they will be called children of God.*

The heart used in this passage refers to the center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling and volition. It is the place where we make our moral decisions. It is the computer center or control room of our personality. The heart represents the whole of our inner state, thought and will as well as emotions. Psychologically it is the seat of man's combined energies, the focus of man's personal life, the seat of the rational as well as the emotional and volitional elements in human life. This is the center of the moral and religious life of the individual. The spiritual influence and activity have their origin in the heart of man. The heart is the seat of all our intellect, will and emotions.

Jesus is concerned that the very center of our being is pure. He demands purity of heart. This is the core of the problem with man. It is not man's circumstances but the center of man's personality (which is the heart) where problems develop. Unless we are transformed by the renewing of our intellect or thinking which can only happen as we surrender our heart to the Lord, our voice of integrity will speak as it is in the unregenerated world. The message spoken through our life will reflect that of one who knows not the Lord.

Our focus text taken from 2 Corinthians speaks of the integrity we are called to exemplify.

### **2 Corinthians 6:3-4 (NLT)**

3. *We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.*
4. *In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God...*

As Christians, we are to live and conduct ourselves in such a way that our life will cause no one to stumble or fall short of entering into a relationship with the Lord. In everything we set our heart and mind to do, we must be true witnesses of Christ. Jesus warned us in Matthew 18:6 that if we cause anyone to fall or stumble, it would be better for us that a millstone was hung about our neck and we were drowned in the sea. So, we can see just how seriously Jesus takes the conduct of those whom He has redeemed with His precious blood.

The good about our life in Christ is that we don't have to attempt to live it on our own. Our heavenly Father has sent His promised Holy Spirit to abide with us. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit working in our life that we are able to overcome any obstacle that tries to stand in our way and hinder us from emanating integrity.

## **Am I Living A Life That Matters?**

Before you conclude our lesson, let's ask ourselves: "*Am I Living A Life That Matter?*" I'm sure most Christians would say that they want to live a life that matters. For some people a life that matters seems to mean being in the midst of important meetings with important people making important decisions. However, this is not the totality of life to which God calls us to. While we understand, there are some who *are* called by God to do important things with integrity, but many Christians equate *goodness* with *greatness* which actually are not the same. A person can live a life of greatness and yet not be living a life of goodness. To be real, there are those who know all the right things to say and perhaps have a following of people who believe in them, but when one takes a close look at their everyday life, we see their living life is in contrast to their spoken life. Their life and their words don't match up and the result is that their life, in truth doesn't matter in the eyes of God. All of their, quote "good" end quote, life will not have the impact that God intended it to have.

Obviously, God can use broken people and broken ministries however He sees fit. People living with no integrity can still be used by God for incredible things—even church leaders who have fallen the farthest and hardest have likely still told someone the truth of God. But that doesn't let them off the hook. God doesn't care how "big" or "small" our lives are, only that we are living lives that are filled with the integrity He commands. It doesn't matter to God if you're a famous person or if the only people who have heard of you are in your community. What matters to God is that you're living with integrity to the commands He has given you. That might mean you become a great leader with a huge following, or it might mean you live a quiet life being the best wife, father, or employee you can possibly be.

So how can we live a life of integrity? We must accept God's call to live in His will and walk in the footsteps of Christ. We must live the kind of life that Jesus lived, even if no one is watching us. We must obey the command of James 1:22: "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*" It's simple, and it's not difficult. And it's all that God asks.

## **Conclusion**

As we have shared, integrity is who we are; it is who we have become on the inside. The man of integrity does what he does because he is what he is. He is the same in public and in private, during times of relative ease and during times of great pressure. He does not pretend to be something he is not. True integrity is not something you can put on and take off. The person of true integrity possesses a unity of life and character. As we have shared, we are all called to live integral lives in our service to the Lord. This will

only be accomplished or possible in our life by the transformation that occurs when we renew our minds through the word of God. This is the message the Apostle Paul conveyed to us in his letter to the Romans. My brothers and sister, when we align our thoughts and philosophies to what the Bible says concerning what manner of man ought we to be, we will then see the manifestation of the life of Christ in our lives. Then the voice of our integrity will represent the God of our salvation in all we are and in all we do.

*God's peace and blessing be upon you....*

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