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INTEGRITY IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

STUDY GUIDE



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SCRIPTURE READING

Proverbs 22:1 (NKJV)

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 (NKJV)

A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NKJV)

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

Luke 6:31 (NKJV)

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

THEME

Integrity, or the lack of it, is associated with a person's name. The Bible places great emphasis on a good name. The character of a person generally accompanies the name. When people hear a name, they usually have thoughts associated with that name—whether good or bad. As representatives of Jesus, our name should be above reproach. Since ethics are principles of conduct, we must conduct ourselves in a way that draws people to Jesus.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The word "integrity" is used sixteen times in the Bible. It was translated from two Hebrews words: *tom* (tome), which means "completeness or innocence;" and *tummah* (toom-maw'), which means "innocence." Both of these words convey the same message: no guilt.

- B. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, integrity is “steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code.”
- C. The word “Christian” is used only two times in the Bible. It was translated from the Greek word *Christianos* (khris-tee-an-os’), which means “follower of Christ.” (Acts 11:26; I Peter 4:16)
- D. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a Christian is one who professes belief in Jesus as Christ or follows the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus.
- E. The word “ethics” is not used in the Bible; however, the principles of ethics are threaded throughout the Scriptures.
- F. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, ethics is a set of principles of right conduct or a system of moral values.
- G. From these definitions, we can conclude that “Integrity in Christian Ethics” is “completeness and innocence as one follows the life and teachings of Jesus, maintaining principles of right conduct and moral values.”

II. INTEGRITY

- A. Although integrity is defined as adherence to a strict moral or ethical code, this definition is not to infer that the code is a written set of rules to which one adheres. It relates to one’s internal belief system.
- B. Integrity comes from within. A person of integrity has a standard within himself that he refuses to violate.
- C. Integrity is not moved by circumstances, peer pressure, or privacy. A person of integrity will be the same, whether alone or being observed.
- D. When I think of integrity, I think of consistency and commitment.
- E. A person of integrity is predictable in behavior.

III. ETHICS

- A. Some ethics are taught, but ethics of integrity come from the heart.

- B. Right principles in the heart will produce right behavior.
- C. Teaching and demanding respect may produce a desired result, but it does not mean that a person truly respects. His actions may be based upon consequence rather than desire.
- D. Ethics cover a very broad area of behavior. Attitude, consideration, dependability, and action are all a part of ethics.
- E. Ethics should start in the home. Husbands and wives and parents and children should respect one another and practice proper attitude, dependability, consideration, and conduct. Ethics are not only taught; they are also caught.
- F. Many Christians hurt their witness because of their conduct. "Thank you, pardon me, and that's OK" have positive influence on those with whom one is dealing. They are actually good phrases to learn.
- G. Ethics on the job are also observed and critiqued; therefore, it is imperative to maintain a Christ-like character at work.
- H. Ethics in the church are imperative as well. The church should be a place of peace and tranquility. It should be a place where respect and consideration are major factors.
- I. Love is the motivating force behind ethics; love prefers. One cannot walk in love and be unethical.
- J. Unethical practices come from selfishness and inconsideration.

IV. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

- A. In John 13:35, Jesus said that everyone would know that we are His disciples because of our love for one another. I Corinthians 13:4-8 defines the love that produces right conduct.
- B. How we treat people reveals a great deal about our character. Opening doors for others and allowing them to go ahead of us is practical ethics; it is called preferring the brethren.
- C. Proper training will generally produce respect, if the training is supported with appropriate disciplinary action when a violation occurs.
- D. Ethics begin with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of these attributes.

1. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines reverence as “a feeling of profound awe and respect and often love.” It also means “to consider or treat with profound awe and respect.”
 2. We must love and respect the Word of God.
 3. We must love and respect the Spirit of God.
 4. We must love and respect the house of God.
 5. We must love and respect God-ordained authority.
 6. We must love and respect the people of God.
- E. One who does not truly love and respect the Lord will probably not display love and respect for others.
- F. Ethics and humility are closely related; one who is humble is modest in behavior and attitude. A humble person is not arrogant or prideful; he will actually exhibit deference or submissive respect.

V. HUMILITY BREEDS CHRISTIAN ETHICS

- A. Humility is meekness, not weakness; it is demonstrated in consideration and a kind disposition.
- B. A kind and considerate person will conduct himself appropriately; he will not be offensive.
- C. A humble person will treat others in the way he desires to be treated; humility is not demanding or self-centered.
- D. A humble spirit will manifest ethical practices, even when mistreated.
- E. The conduct or character of Christ will not emanate from the proud.

VI. HONESTY & INNOCENCE PRODUCE RIGHT CONDUCT

- A. Those who follow the teachings and practices of Jesus will be honest and free from guilt—they will do what is right, and they will treat people fairly and with respect.

- B. People of integrity know the importance of time; they are prompt, and they honor the time of others.
- C. The honest and innocent are reliable and trustworthy.
- D. Integrity is not what you convey with words; it is what is perceived by others with whom you have interaction.
- E. Integrity in Christian ethics is personified through the life and ministry of Jesus.

VII. BIBLICAL PATTERNS OF INTEGRITY

- A. God viewed Abraham as a man of integrity. He made this statement about Abraham: "...I know him that he will command his children and his household after him..." (Genesis 18:17-19 Darby Translation)
 - 1. God knew the consistency and dedication of Abraham.
 - 2. The pattern of Abraham's life had proved him to be trustworthy.
- B. Joseph proved himself to be a man of integrity. His integrity and good attitude resulted in favor and promotion.
- C. Moses was also a man of integrity. We learn from his lifestyle and actions that he was a man upon whom God could depend.
- D. David was identified as a man after God's own heart. (Acts 13:22)
 - 1. God was confident that David would fulfill the will of God.
 - 2. David had proved himself as both a shepherd and a soldier.
- E. Job was a man who held fast to his integrity. He did not let circumstances change his character; he remained consistent. (Job 2:3)
- F. Daniel was a man of impeccable character. The only fault his enemies could find in him was his dedication to the God Whom he served. (Daniel 6:4-5)
- G. Abigail was a woman of integrity. Although her husband was an evil man, she did not allow his ungodly character and actions to influence her decision to do what was right. (I Samuel 25:2-42)

- H. Esther is also a woman of integrity. From the information that we can gather about her, we find that she was a woman who was consistently submissive, she was obedient to her authority, she took counsel from the one who attended to her, and she risked her life to save her people. (Esther 2; Esther 4)
- I. These biblical patterns were just ordinary people who chose to be extraordinary in character.
- J. From the patterns of behavior of these godly people, we learn that integrity is a choice—a choice to be faithful to both God and to oneself.

VIII. THE FRUIT OF INTEGRITY

- A. One who operates with integrity will gain favor with both God and people.
- B. One who operates with integrity will be at peace with himself.
- C. One who operates with integrity will do what is in the best interest of all concerned.
- D. Integrity is rewarded with respect, confidentiality, honor, and promotion.
- E. Doing what is right does not go unnoticed by God, nor are people ignorant of the fact.

IX. SUMMARY

- A. Integrity is a standard by which one lives that emanates from the inside and manifests outwardly.
- B. Integrity is an inward code of ethics.
- C. Ethics is a set of rules or principles by which one governs his life.
- D. A Christian, in the true sense of the word, is one who seeks to follow the teachings and lifestyle of the Christ.
- E. Integrity in Christian Ethics is manifesting an outward life that is governed from the inside by character becoming to Jesus.

X. CONCLUSION

- A. One cannot portray the life of Jesus without demonstrating integrity in Christian ethics.
- B. We must develop a standard by which to live that depicts the character of Jesus.
- C. Doing unto others as we want them to do to us is an excellent starting point.
- D. We can conclude by asking ourselves some simple questions and replying with an honest answer.
 - 1. How do we want leadership to treat us? We should treat leadership with the same honor and respect that we desire.
 - 2. How should leadership treat the people? We should treat the people with the same honor and respect that we desire.
 - 3. How should we fulfill our assignments? Whatever our hands find to do we should do with all our might. A job worth doing is worth doing right.
 - 4. Integrity will do what is right, even when no one is watching.
 - 5. One who conducts himself in the same manner as Christ will operate with integrity and display proper conduct at all times.
- E. Integrity in Christian Ethics is a mark of true discipleship.