

SESSION 6

Honor All Relationships



QUESTION 1:

Who has been an example of personal integrity in your life?

THE POINT

Integrity and contentment in Christ form the foundation for good relationships.

THE PASSAGES

Exodus 20:15-17; Psalm 37:1-6

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

The implosion of a structure can be an amazing thing to watch. One minute you are looking at a fully standing building, bridge, or tunnel, and then within seconds, the entire structure collapses into a pile of ashes and debris.

In the controlled demolition industry, experts place a number of small explosives strategically throughout the structure. Strategic placement is pivotal to destroy the structural integrity of the building without destroying what's around it.

The structural integrity of our lives and relationships matters just as much as it does for a building. It takes only a second for a relationship to implode. One lie can collapse a friendship. One slanderous accusation can destroy people's perception of us. One wrong choice carried out to its fullest can cause a decade of growth to crumble. The Ten Commandments provide a solid foundation—built on honor and contentment—to ensure the structural integrity of our relationships.

Exodus 20:15-16

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

A preacher got on a bus one day, gave the bus driver money for the fare, and the driver gave him the change. As the preacher sat down, he counted the change, and discovered the bus driver gave him too much change. Returning to the front of the bus, he handed the driver two quarters and remarked, “You gave me too much change.”

The bus driver smiled and said, “Pastor, I really appreciate this, because I was in your church service yesterday, and I heard your sermon on honesty. I intentionally gave you too much change to see whether you live by what you preach.”

Integrity ought to be automatic for us. We never know who is watching our actions or listening to our words. The apostle Peter framed integrity in such a way that it shows itself as a ready defense: “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12).

Conducting ourselves honorably and with integrity is at the heart of two of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” We are to treat others with respect—and that includes respect for their possessions. Our words should also show respect for the other person. Jesus said, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay” (Matt. 5:37). These virtues are manifested in love and define a kingdom disciple. Jesus summed it up when He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

QUESTION 2:

Why is it so important for believers to be people of integrity?

Loving one another includes “speaking the truth in love” at all times (Eph. 4:15). Many people excuse a lie, calling it only “a little white lie.” A “little lie” is like being a “little pregnant”; it’ll always show up after a while. Lies have a way of creating a boomerang effect and coming right back at us to cause a lot of damage.

It’s like the man who didn’t want the neighborhood kids eating his watermelons. He put up a sign that said, “One of these watermelons is poisonous.” This was not true, but it kept the kids away. However, one night someone tampered with his sign, crossing out the word “one” and writing “two” in its place! He lost his whole crop because he had no idea which watermelon the kids had contaminated.

Lies always have a way of coming back around. For that reason alone, we ought not to lie. But above that, we need to live with integrity because our lives have been given to us as a way of bringing glory to God and advancing His kingdom on earth. Our lives should be a mirror of the One who made us. When we operate outside of the virtues of the kingdom, we are not reflecting the truth of who God is. Instead, we are showcasing the deception of Satan, “the father of [lies]” (John 8:44), whose goal is to thwart the rule of God on earth. When we choose to lie or misrepresent the truth, we are putting Satan’s nature on display instead of God’s.

Living a life of integrity means modeling our thoughts, words, and actions after God. As we do this, we are able to advance His kingdom agenda on earth while bringing glory to Him and good to others.

QUESTION 3:

What are the consequences for society when people don’t live with honesty and integrity?

Exodus 20:17

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Among Aesop's Fables is the story of a dog crossing a bridge with a bone in his mouth. As he looked into the water, he saw a reflection of what he thought was an even larger dog with what seemed like an even larger bone. Wanting the bigger bone, the dog immediately opened up his mouth to go after it. Yet in the process, the bone in his mouth dropped into the water and quickly sunk to the bottom out of reach. Not only did the dog fail to get the illusion of the larger bone, but he lost the one he had been enjoying all along.¹

DIGGING DEEPER

The Secret Sin: Coveting

"Covet" (Hebrew, *chamad*), root idea is "to desire, to take pleasure in." Whether the object that elicits desire or the act of desiring, all of the terms refer to some external object (usually visual) that evokes an inward emotion wanting to obtain it. Sometimes *chamad* has a positive connotation for something "desirable" and "pleasant" (Gen. 3).

In some cases *chamad* has a negative connotation of "inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire."

These we usually translate *covet*. A person may covet or desire the wrong things. The act of desiring or coveting is not in itself bad, but instead the object of one's desire will determine its vice or virtue. Inappropriate coveting is "to desire that which belongs to someone else and that which one has no right to possess."

Kevin C. Peacock, "The Secret Sin: Coveting," *Biblical Illustrator*, Summer 2014, 53-55

Not being satisfied with what you already have is the quickest path toward losing it. Advertisers are well aware of our propensity

toward covetousness; they spend an inordinate amount of time and money attempting to make us dissatisfied. They know if we become discontent enough with our current state, we will succumb to their sales pitch. Due to our chronic covetousness, many of us have adopted the motto, “I shop, therefore, I am.” We’re not happy unless we’re constantly obtaining more.

Contentment does not rest on these things. Contentment is realizing that God has met your needs, and coupling that realization with gratitude.

- ▶ Contentment is being just as happy driving on old jalopy as you think you’d be driving a brand-new Mercedes®. In both cases you have transportation.
- ▶ Contentment is taking as much pleasure living in an 800-square-foot apartment as in a 4,000-square-foot house. In both cases, you have a roof over your head.
- ▶ Contentment is enjoying a hot dog as much as a T-bone steak. In both cases you are not starving.
- ▶ Contentment is being just as satisfied wearing clothing from a thrift store as you would be decked out in a fancy designer outfit. In both cases you have clothes on your back.

When we live in a contented mind-set, we are acknowledging the goodness of God in His provisions. We allow gratitude to replace a spirit of want. Circumstances or stuff should never drive our contentment. The apostle Paul penned the secret to contentment when he wrote:

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:11-13).

The secret to contentment comes through knowing that all we have and all we can do comes through Christ who strengthens

us and provides for us. Contentment is the key to living a life of integrity because it provides the security necessary to rest in the reality of the moment. When you know that all you have comes from the One who loves you most, you can let go of any scheming, manipulating, lying, slandering, or maneuvering to get ahead. When you let go of all the flawed efforts to get ahead, you can rest in the truth that God's sovereign providential hand will provide all you need to experience life to the fullest. Find contentment in what God provides and you will find the secret to a satisfying life.

QUESTION 4:

What are some practical steps we can take to prevent coveting in our lives?

Psalm 37:1-6

- 1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.**
- 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.**
- 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.**
- 4 Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.**
- 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.**
- 6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.**

These words capture the heart of the commandment not to covet. King David began by reminding us not to envy those who do wrong. It's easy to envy those who have no regard for God yet seem

to flourish. The antidote for such envy and dissatisfaction comes from looking to God instead of gawking at the wicked. We are to “trust” and “delight” in Him and Him alone. All we could ever desire rests in God.

I’ll admit I struggled with contentment in the early days of my ministry. I wanted the ministry to grow and expand. I wanted to reach more people. I wondered at times how much of that growth rested solely on my shoulders. That may all sound noble and commendable, but my attitude caused me to work long hours when I may not have needed to do so. My focus was on my own efforts.

One key piece of advice changed all of this for me. I received this advice from a former seminary classmate of mine who had gone on to a great, impactful ministry of his own. He said, “Tony, never forget this truth: you only have one Source. God is your Source. Everything else is just a resource.”

That truth enabled me to rest. I knew since God was my Source, then even when it seemed I could not possibly accomplish all that I felt I needed to do, God would provide a way to achieve the outcomes if it was His will. This truth rests on a powerful verse: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).

It’s a normal human inclination to make comparisons. David appeared to struggle with this, and we do too—but that doesn’t mean it’s healthy. We can let go of competition and embrace our completion in Christ. “Trust in the LORD, and do good,” living by the virtues and values of God’s kingdom.

When you do, you will receive the desires of your heart. You will receive what God has for you—and He never runs out of His provisions! He always has enough. That’s why you can rest. You can let go. You can align your thoughts, words, and actions under His rule and trust Him to bring you all that you truly need for a life of love and happiness. Give Christ your heart by giving Him your allegiance. Then watch Him bring you delight as He delights in you.

QUESTION 5:

What evidence have you seen that God's commands are for our own good?

ENGAGE

On a scale of 1-10, mark where you think you are in living a life of integrity and contentment. Then do the same for how others would view your life. Take any difference that exists to the Lord in prayer.

My Integrity (as viewed by me):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My Integrity (as viewed by others):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My Contentment (as viewed by me):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My Contentment (as viewed by others):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My Prayer:

LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek to live a life of integrity?

- ▶ **Check your words.** Be mindful of your words and actions this week. If you are tempted to say or do anything that is not honest and truthful, stop yourself. Commit to being a person of integrity.
- ▶ **Memorize.** Commit to memory 2 Corinthians 9:8: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” Let this verse continually remind you that you already have all that you need to live fully in Him.
- ▶ **Encourage.** We could all use some positive affirmation and encouragement in the area of integrity and contentment. The things we view on TV or social media can bring us down or cause us to become dissatisfied with our own lives. Choose to be a source of encouragement to those who struggle with discontentment.



END NOTES

“The Dog & His Reflection,” <http://read.gov/aesop/026.html>.