

CHAPTER FOUR

INTEGRITY IN LIVING

We struggle each day with issues of right versus wrong, good versus evil. We often tend to rationalize our behavior and compromise God's standards of integrity. We may explain away or ignore these sins. These are the "vices of the virtuous"—sins which may have become accepted as the normal standard. But God is holy, and we must not allow any compromise with sin to infiltrate our lives.

THE STRUGGLE FOR INTEGRITY

1. What does God say about the need for integrity or honesty?
Leviticus 19:11

2. Read Jeremiah 17:9.

a. What fact in your life makes the struggle for honest living so intense?

b. Can you list an example of when you tried to justify an action which you knew to be wrong?

c. How did God work in your life to show you that it was wrong?

3. What are some ways we can be deceived?

By Ourselves

James 1:22

1 John 1:8

By Others

Romans 16:17-18

Ephesians 4:14

By Satan

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

Genesis 3:1

4. Since we can be deceived so easily, how can we know when we have sinned?

Psalms 139:23-24

Hebrews 4:12

**DISHONESTY
EXPOSED**

- 5.** Compare 2 Corinthians 8:21 and Acts 24:16.
a. What guidelines helped Paul in his daily living?

- b. In order to keep a clear conscience, what do you suppose Paul did when God exposed a sin in his life?

- c. Can you think of any area in your life right now in which you do not have a completely clear conscience?

- ☛ Yes
- ☛ No

- d. If you answered “Yes,” take a moment to confess that sin frankly to God. Ask for his help and wisdom in dealing with it. Give thought to what steps you can take to gain a clear conscience. (Check one or more blanks below.)

___ I have confessed it.
___ I have asked God for his help and wisdom.
___ I have given thought to steps I can take to gain a clear conscience.

- 6.** We must be careful to avoid hypocrisy.

- a. How did Jesus describe hypocrites? *Mark 7:6-8*

- b. What is one reason this style of living is dishonest?
Romans 2:23-24

- c. Give an example of how God’s name might be dishonored because of us.

- 7.** Our lives should be able to withstand close examination by other people. We should live honestly—not pretending to be something we are not in order to create a false impression.

Imagine an invention that could tell us what a person is really like and what he is thinking.

- a. Would you want this invention used on you?

- b. Why or why not?

- 8.** Read Acts 5:1-11.

- a. Why was this an act of dishonesty toward the Holy Spirit?

- b. What effect did the death of Ananias and Sapphira have on the other believers in Jerusalem?

- 9.** Meditate on 2 Corinthians 8:21, then consider the following list. Are any of these problem areas for you? Place a check by any that are.

- ___ Exaggeration
- ___ “White lies”
- ___ Cheating
- ___ Failure to keep promises
- ___ Allowing people to believe false impressions

How can you deal with this problem?

10. Read Psalm 15:1-5 and list at least five qualities of an honest person.

11. What does Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 2:10 reflect about the way he lived?

THE PRACTICE OF HONESTY

12. Honesty should be displayed in all aspects of our lives. List below some of the areas we might neglect.

Romans 13:6-7 _____
Colossians 3:23-25 _____
1 Peter 2:13-14 _____

Two essential standards for honesty are:

- Make sure everything you own was obtained honestly.
- When you speak, speak the truth. There is no such thing as a “white lie.”

13. Read 1 Samuel 15:10-23.

a. Was Saul's statement honest? _____
b. In what way did he disobey? _____

c. What was Saul's response to the accusation?

d. How did he try to justify his disobedience?

e. Have you ever used a similar method? _____

f. In what does God delight? Verse 22

HONESTY IN SPEECH

14. What does your speech indicate? *Matthew 12:34-35*

15. How does the psalmist describe the tongue? *Psalms 52:2-4*

16. Why are lying and abusive speech inconsistent with the Christian life? *Colossians 3:8-10*

17. Can you think of a personal situation in which dishonest action led to lying? Explain.

Any distortion of the truth—in word, actions, attitudes, or silence—is deceitful and lying.

18. Paraphrase the following passages:

Ephesians 4:29 _____

Colossians 4:6 _____

19. Can you apply one of the verses in question 18 to a relationship with someone you know? What will you do? When will you do it?

Who? _____

What? _____

When? _____

Remember These Points

Add a sentence or two to the following statements to summarize the most important things you learned from each section of this chapter.

The Struggle for Integrity

Deceit creates a struggle and exposes the need for integrity.

Dishonesty Exposed

Our goal is a clear conscience and a transparent life.

The Practice of Honesty

God sets forth standards for honesty in the Scriptures.

Honesty in Speech

Our speech exposes and expresses our heart.
