

OFFSTAGE

DROP THE ACT



LEADER and PARENT GUIDE TO BEING 'TRUTHFUL IN WHATEVER WE SAY AND DO'

Since the very beginning of time, not only has God has been true to His word, but He's been faithful in His character. Because we know that God is good, we can choose to live our lives with integrity, like He does. When Jesus lived on earth, He lived a perfect life, one that we are unable to live. However, through His Spirit, we can become people of integrity. Integrity means choosing to be truthful in whatever you say or do. Who we are in private should match who we are in public. Stop and think about how you want people to describe you. Our actions not only affect how people see us, they also impact those around us.

When Daniel and his friends were captured by Babylonian officials, no one would have known or possibly even cared if they continued following God's dietary laws while they were in captivity. However, in their hearts, they knew what was right. They decided to stay true to their faith, so God rewarded them for it, and the king gave them favor. When we are people of integrity, people who are truthful in what we say and do, it can affect how others relate to us. Like Daniel, we must be truthful with our whole lives. One way we can have integrity is to do what is right, even when no one is looking. When we trust in God and follow His example, by the power of His Holy Spirit, we can be truthful through our words and actions whether we are in front of people, or by ourselves, and live the life that God wants us to live.

Another part of integrity is honesty with God. What kind of things do you talk to God about? Prayer is more than simply asking God for what we want. God wants to hear what's on our hearts and minds. We can confess what we've done wrong, we can ask questions and we can be honest with how we're really feeling about life. In 1 John 1:9, John writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." You don't have to keep secrets from God. God loves you just as you are, no matter what you've done, and He is ready to forgive you. Being truthful with God keeps you close to Him. We can also be truthful with God about our feelings and questions. God doesn't look down on us because of our doubts and confusion, or even because of our mistakes. God created us, He is our father, He loves us, and He wants to hear from us. God is ready to forgive, and we can trust God no matter what.

Not only is it important for us to trust God, it is also important for people to trust us. Our words and actions have consequences, including whether or not people feel that we're trustworthy. This is important because integrity and trust are connected. With God's help, we can become trustworthy with our own words and actions. In 2 Kings 5, the prophet Elisha had a servant named Gehazi. Through God's power, they helped a man named Naaman. Gehazi seized the chance to use dishonesty to take advantage of Naaman's gratitude and obtain riches for himself. He went behind Elisha's back, lied about his actions, and inevitably lost Elisha's trust. When you are not truthful, you will experience consequences and lose trust. However, the effects of lying go much deeper than the immediate consequences that you will experience. When you don't have integrity, people will start to see that you're not really who you say you are.

In the book of Philippians, Paul reminds the church, "Finally, my brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." If we want to have integrity with our whole life, we have to fill our minds with good things in the first place. When we fill our minds with what is true and good and worth thinking about, it can help us live our lives with honesty and integrity. So, what do you tend to focus on? Do you focus on keeping up with everyone around you or on what others think? Or do you focus on reading scripture and learning God's truth and the kind of person you want to be? Remember that God is trustworthy and that we should be honest with Him. Through the power of His Holy Spirit that lives within us, God can help us be truthful in what we say and do so that we can earn people's trust and point them to Jesus through our integrity.



Anyone who lives without blame walks safely. But anyone who takes a crooked path will get caught. - Proverbs 10:9



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Read Daniel 1:3-20

1. Integrity is doing what's right – even when no one is looking. How did Daniel and his friends show integrity in their situation? Daniel and his friends did what was right and continued to follow the laws of Israel, even though no one would have known any differently.
2. How did God reward Daniel and his friends for their integrity? God gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning, and God also gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams. Because of all of that, they gained favor with King Nebuchadnezzar.

Read 2 Kings 5:14-27

3. How did Gehazi's actions and words lack integrity? Gehazi was greedy and went behind Elisha's back to get the riches that he saw Elisha turn down. Then, Gehazi also lied about it when he was caught.
4. How did Gehazi's actions impact the trust Elisha had in him and what were the consequences of Gehazi's actions? Because he went behind Elisha's back and then lied about it, Gehazi lost Elisha's trust. The consequences for his actions were that he not only lost his job, but he and his descendants were also cursed with leprosy.

Read Memory Verse

5. What happens when we choose to be deceitful and do the wrong thing? We will get caught. Even if we think we get away with it, God still sees us and knows and one day we will have to give an account to him of everything we have done – good and bad.
6. What are the benefits of living with integrity and doing what's right? We will remain safe and will not have to suffer the negative consequences of our actions.

Life Application Questions

7. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Even when we do things wrong, if we are honest with God about our sins, what does He do for us in return? He forgives us, loves us, and cleanses us from our sins and He gives us the righteousness of Jesus.
8. Philippians 4:8 states, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." How does filling your mind with these things help you live with integrity? Being a person of integrity takes focus. When we choose to fill our minds with good things and right things, they can help us to stay focused on living our lives with integrity when tough choices come our way.
9. What have you learned today that can help you live with more integrity in your life? Answers will vary. Do what is right, even when no one is looking. We still have to answer to God. Integrity has benefits, lack of integrity has consequences. Focus on good things.



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