



Introduction

The temptation is ever present. The vast majority of both men and women admit to the practice. In marriages, in the church, in business, to our friends and to our enemies, the practice of deceit knows few boundaries.

Jesus calls us to a life of integrity. Consider Peter's witness in 1 Peter 2.

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that ***you should follow in his steps.*** ²² "He committed no sin, and ***no deceit*** was found in his mouth."

This study will explore the concept of integrity. It will challenge you to live a life of truthfulness, honesty and uprightness.

The Challenge of Truthfulness

With so many people admitting to deceit, it is appropriate to ask the question "What's wrong with lying?" Jesus identified the source of lies during one of his discussions with his Jewish questioners.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44

- Circle the identity of their father.
- Underline the amount of truth in the devil.
- Circle the title Jesus gives the devil at the end of the verse.
- *When someone lies, they are sharing the nature of the evil one.*

In contrast to the devil, God is identified in this way:

He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

1 Samuel 15:29

- Underline the identity of the one who does not change His mind.
- Circle the aspect of God's conduct related to truthfulness.

Because lying is a characteristic of the evil one, those who lie share his nature. God wants us to turn from the devil's nature and take on the nature of God. He does not lie.

"Do not steal. "Do not lie. "Do not deceive one another.

Leviticus 19:11

The tendency to lie is imbedded deep within our being. Knowing where deceit comes from is essential to knowing how to overcome it.

In a recent survey of over 5000 British women, the vast majority (84%) said they could lie with a clear conscience - many said deceit was justified as a way of sparing other people's feelings.

Similarly, in a 1998 study of over 20,000 United States teen-agers, over 90% admitted to lying to their parents at least once during the year. 80% admitted to lying to their teacher and 70% admitted to cheating on an exam.

The Devil made me do it?

While it is true that the lying nature has its source in the evil one, we cannot blame our failure to tell the truth on him. We each have a choice in the message we communicate. Lying is a choice we each make or do not make.

Sources of Deceit

Scripture identifies our heart and our tongue as key contributors to a failure in integrity.

The Heart

Jesus singled out the heart as the source of many expressions of evil.

²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

Mark 7:21-22

- Circle the source of evil within each person.
- Underline each instance of evil that might be classified as a lack of integrity.

In another place Jesus identifies the link between the heart and the tongue.

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew 12:34

- Underline the source of the mouth's information.
- Circle the portion of the heart which find's it's way to the mouth.
- *Words of deceit that find their way to the mouth come form an overflowing abundance of like thoughts within the heart.*

The Tongue

Jesus indicated that the heart and the tongue are connected. James describes the problem of the tongue in greater detail.

⁵ Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸ but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

James 3:5-8

- In verse 6, circle each phrase describing the tongue.
- In verse 6, underline what the tongue corrupts.
- In verse 8, circle who can tame the tongue.
- In verse 8, underline how the tongue is described.
- The word "fire" is used repeatedly in verse 6. In what ways is the tongue like fire?

The English Dictionary defines **integrity** as an implied trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust, responsibility, or pledge.

Guard your Heart

Solomon advised in Proverbs 4:24 that we guard our hearts with all diligence.

Some ways to guard your heart include:

- > **Select good reading material**
- > **Listen to things that are wholesome**
- > **Don't watch entertainment that incites to evil**

Your eyes and your ears are the door to your heart

Solomon gave good advice about restraining the tongue.



- Proverbs 10:19
- Proverbs 11:12
- Proverbs 17:28
- Proverbs 21:23

Even though "no man can tame the tongue" the tongue can be mastered when it is yielded to the transforming power of God.

Living a Life of Integrity

Even though our heart and our tongue are inclined to deceit, God has given each of his children an inner ability to practice integrity.

Listen to Your Conscience

Every man has a conscience. It is a gift God has given to Christian and non-Christian alike. Listening to conscience is one important way of living in integrity.

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Acts 24:16

- Circle that which Paul worked to keep clear.
- Underline the identity of the ones before whom he maintained a clear conscience.
- *How do you think a person keeps their conscience clear?*

It is possible to not pay attention to conscience.

holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

1 Timothy 1:19

- Circle the two things we are to hold onto.
- Underline the result that some have experienced who have rejected conscience.

Listen to the Holy Spirit

While every man has a conscience, God has given each Christians an additional resource to help him or her maintain a life of integrity. Notice how John describes the Holy Spirit:

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 16:13

- Circle the descriptive name given to the Spirit.
- Underline into what the Spirit will guide each Christian.

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

1 Corinthians 2:13

- Underline from whom Paul received the words he spoke.
- *Notice that the nature of the words Paul used were words of truth. That is because it is the Holy Spirit's intent to communicate truth.*



What is Conscience?

Conscience is the inner prompting to do that which is morally right and good. It is present in every person whether Christian or not Christian.

Two studies in the "Getting Started" bible study section of the vDRC website can help you in your relation with the Holy Spirit. **Assured Forgiveness** will help you in the important area of confessing sin. **Assurance of a Changed Life** will help you understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the bringing about internal change.

The Practice of Integrity

David described some standards of right living in Psalms 15. Imbedded in the midst of his description are guidelines for living with integrity.

*¹ A psalm of David.
LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?*

*² He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from his heart ³ and has no slander on his tongue,
who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman,
⁴ who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the LORD,
who keeps his oath even when it hurts,
⁵ who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe
against the innocent.*

He who does these things will never be shaken.

Psalms 15

- Draw a circle around each statement that in some way relates to living with integrity.

The standard of truthfulness fills the pages of Scripture. Anyone who wants to walk in integrity must embrace honesty and truthfulness as the basis for living.

¹⁶ These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; ¹⁷ do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the LORD.

Zechariah 8:16-17

- Circle what we are to speak to each other.
- Underline what should occur in court.
- Draw a box around the things God hates.

Truthfulness is not just an Old Testament idea.

¹ Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2

- Circle what Paul had renounced..
- Underline the two things he did not do.
- Draw a box around the action he took to commend himself to others

Some questions to ponder

- > Why is integrity essential for one to walk blamelessly?
- > Is slander a form of deceit?
- > Would showing honor to a vile man be a form of deceit?
- > Why is keeping an oath "even when it hurts" an act of integrity?
- > Is accepting a bribe an act of integrity?
- > What is the motive behind someone who offers a bribe?

Honesty is necessary in every aspect of our life. Consider the following passages and the message they bring concerning integrity.



Paying taxes	Romans 13:6-7
Neighbors	Leviticus 19:13
Work	Colossians 3:22-23
The Church	Ephesians 4:15
Business	Proverbs 11:1
Leaders	Titus 1:7

Summary

The fact that many people admit to practicing deceit should not be surprising because the devil, who is their father, is a liar and the father of lies. We should strive for truthfulness because God does not lie or change His mind.

We cannot blame Satan for our lies because all types of evil come from within us, from our heart. And the heart becomes the source of information that comes out of our mouth. Taming our tongue is an impossible task apart from the help of the Spirit of God that lives within us.

But God has given us tools to help us live a life of integrity. Each human being has a conscience that guides them. We can ruin our faith by failing to listen to our conscience. Additionally, God has given us His Spirit, who is a spirit of truth. His job is to guide us into truth.

The practicing of integrity includes speaking the truth, refraining from slander, keeping promises and refraining from the influence of a bribe. Integrity touches every aspect of our life including our work and our approach to helping other people.

Application

In what way has God spoken to you about your need for integrity?

Is there some area of your life where you are currently not practicing integrity?

Is there some application you need to make?

Write out the plan for your application.

What is your plan for checking up on yourself.

Look back through the study and find the verse that the summary statement reflects. Write the verse references in the space to the right of each summary paragraph.

Don't skip the application. God's Word must be practiced with the heart not just learned with the head.