

Don't Be That Guy

Week 3 | A Life of Integrity

BOTTOM LINE

You can be broken and imperfect and still live a life of integrity. Integrity is a healthy response to the hypocrisy the world sees in the church at large.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

To discuss, explore and apply this concept in our lives:

Christians should work hardest, be the kindest, live with the most gratitude, and be the most generous people. We should strive to live our lives in a way that matches what we believe. Only through embracing brokenness and fully relying on Jesus Christ in our lives is that possible.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 10:9, 11:3, 19-1; Psalm 25:21; Matthew 22:16; Titus 2: 6-9; Matthew 23:12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share:** Have you ever met a person who lives a life of integrity? If we are all imperfect (the depravity of man that we talked about last week) then how do they do it? Do you see them as someone on a pedestal?
- Imagine what the world would look like if we all made living a life of integrity the highest of priorities. What are the challenges that keep us from living this way?
- There are **PROMISES** of integrity in the book of Proverbs. **Read Proverbs 10: 9; Proverbs 11:3 & Proverbs 19:1:** Which of these 3 basic principles makes you take a closer look at your own life choices or those of someone else? Why?
- Let's look at the **PURPOSE** of integrity in the life of Job. Job is someone who had such a strong faith in God that even the temptations and struggles that God allowed Satan to bring to his life didn't make him give up his faith. **Read Job 2:3.**
 - Job's integrity has God bragging on him! How do you think Job's integrity impacted his faith?
 - He feared (in reverence) God. What role did this have in his ability to trust God and maintain integrity through his trials?
- Look at David's **PRAYER** of integrity when he prays. David was someone who had opportunities to turn away from integrity. **Read Psalm 25:21.**
 - What does David say integrity will do for him? Who does he call to for help to keep his integrity?
 - Have you ever considered this role of integrity in your life?
- Jesus and Paul (the apostle who went from hating Christianity to be its biggest fan!) talk about the fact that Integrity has **POWER**. **Read Matthew 22:16 and Titus 2:6-9.**
 - When our lives reflect integrity (like Jesus) what does that give us with people who are in our life? (hint: explore words like credibility and influence.)
 - What is Paul's challenge to us? What are we to strive for?
- Read Matthew 23:12.** To humble ourselves means we don't rely on ourselves daily. We depend on Jesus by humbling ourselves to the example of His life.
 - What is the connection here between being humble and having integrity?
 - What is the common denominator in this equation of removing hypocrisy from our lives?
 - How can imperfect people live a life of integrity where our words and actions reflect what we believe to an unbelieving world?

Integrity shines best when admitting fault or guilt of imperfection.



TRY THIS

We often don't see ourselves the way others do. The first step to a life of integrity is to identify areas in your life that lack integrity. Ask someone you trust (someone who knows you well and who will be honest): Are there any areas of my life where you see a lack of integrity? Ask yourself: What changes can I make in these areas? Pray and ask God to give you heart to reflect what is right, true and honest.

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Week 2 | Admitting Depravity

■ BOTTOM LINE

The only answer to hypocrisy is to embrace the complete depravity of man.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

To embrace the concept of humility and brokenness. If we don't learn to embrace the depravity of mankind, in our own condition and embrace what is true, we will never be able to move forward with the right perspective on how to live out our faith and effectiveness.

■ SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 14:12; Romans 3:23; Romans 7:15-25; Psalm 32: 3-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Have you ever tried to make yourself feel better by comparing yourself to someone worse than you? Or compared the 'bad' you did to someone whose 'bad' was worse than what you did to justify yourself?
2. By doing this we lower the bar for ourselves instead of raising it. The Bible reminds us that the bar is actually lower than we think. Read Romans 3:23. What do we all have in common? How does that impact the way you see yourself? The way you think God sees you?
3. **Discuss:** What happens when we trust our human nature to lead us out of our problems? Why do we repeat the same mistakes? Discuss in the context of our desire to be in control and to make our own choices.
4. "You can do anything you want in Paradise except one thing: Don't eat from this one tree. If you eat this fruit you will be like God." (paraphrased from Genesis 3). Imagine yourself in this story. Where can you see parallels in your own life to their desire to be in control and be like God?
5. We try to control our image, control other people and control our problems. These are a few ways we try to 'be like God' in our lives.
 - a. Do you agree with this statement? Have you ever considered this line of thinking reflects a desire to 'be like God?'
 - b. If this is new to you, what would you have to do to change your thinking?
6. **Read Romans 7:15-25:**
 - a. Share what ways do you see yourself in what the apostle Paul is saying? Can you relate to his frustration?
 - b. Paul declares the answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. He even says, "Thank God!" Trying harder is not the answer. Look at areas of your life that you struggle the most in. What would it look like to stop trying harder and invited Jesus Christ to be a part of navigating those situations?
7. **Read Psalm 32:3-5 & 2 Corinthians 12:10:** David experienced the fatigue of pretending he wasn't a sinner. Paul says just let Christ take over in order to be stronger. That goes against our self-sufficient culture.
 - a. In what areas do you need to stop trying harder? Share aloud if you're comfortable. If not, then confess the privately to God.
 - b. What is God challenging you with today?

"We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, and yet at the same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."
- Tim Keller



TRY THIS

Embracing our own depravity is the first step to living in victory. Choose one area in your life that you want to change. Write it down on a piece of paper. Date it. Write down how and where you want Jesus Christ to work in this area of your life. Be specific. Pray daily for this to be manifested in your life!

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Week 1 | Hypocrisy

■ BOTTOM LINE

The word "hypocrite" is a very negative word, and unfortunately associated with Christians more than any other group of people. Everything we say and do flows out of who we believe we are.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

To create meaningful conversation that stretches our faith and draws us closer to the heart of God. This guide is a suggestion. Adjust the questions as appropriate for your group.

■ SCRIPTURE

Matthew 23: 4-5,13,15,23-28 (all NLT)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Have you ever met someone who said one thing and did another? Share your experience with the group. How did that impact your view of that person?
2. Webster defines a hypocrisy as "imposing a standard on others that you yourself aren't living." This is the reputation of 'the church' for many people. This may be the reason you or someone you know has avoided church for years. No church bashing here, but if you've had this experience share it with the group.
3. **Read Matthew 23: 4-5, 13.** Does it surprise you to read that Jesus strongly called out those in church leadership (Pharisees) for being hypocrites? Does it surprise you that hypocrisy was experienced 2,000 years ago just like it is today?
 - a. v5- Jesus said they did their deeds to be noticed by men...An important question to ask ourselves is, "If I'm honest, do I impose my beliefs on others with a shadow mission of looking good in front of them?" This is a tough question to answer! Discuss ways you've personally experienced this.
 - b. v13- The Pharisees actually hindered people from coming to God! 'Religion' itself becomes a barrier between a person and their personal relationship with God. Discuss in the group ways that this is still happening in churches today.
4. **Read Matthew 15.** What does Jesus mean by 'and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!'" (Hint: What happens when people are dedicated to false systems centered around legalism?)
5. **Read & Discuss Matthew 23-28**
 - a. v23- Jesus isn't condemning their concern for the law, but he says there are 'more important' aspects of the law. What are those? Discuss why they are more important.
 - b. Do you struggle with a focus on 'the letter of the law' instead of 'the spirit of the law'? Can you share a personal experience with someone who leads their life this way?
 - c. Jesus uses the metaphor of 'cleaning the cup' to illustrate the difference between what we look like on the outside and what is happening inside. The answer to removing hypocrisy isn't to try harder on the outside, but to look closer at the inside—to our hearts and minds. Jesus is saying we are all hypocrites in some way because we are broken on the inside. Is there an area of hypocrisy that you struggle with in your life?
6. How do we remove hypocrisy in our lives? Intuitively it all leads back to 'try harder.' We impose the 'try harder' on ourselves and others where they lack. The answer is not intuitive. It's completely the opposite. It's about giving up. Surrendering to the power of Christ to lead to freedom and victory. Discuss together why this should be easy to do, but for some of us it is a struggle. What would it take to surrender this area of your life to Christ?

In 2015, George Burna did study on why millennials don't go to church. After interviewing thousands, 85% said the number one reason they don't attend organized religion was because of hypocrisy, found in both the leaders of the churches as well as the people who attend. It concludes: "Modern people contend that the greatest proof that God does not exist is the behavior of Christians themselves!"



TRY THIS

We all must be willing to admit that there is a little bit of 'try harder' in all of us. From time to time we all develop a shadow mission of some sort. We must all own our part in burdening others with the 'religion' of our faith. This week take some time to be quiet and still. Ask God to illuminate areas of your life that reflect 'trying harder.' If you're not comfortable asking God, ask a close friend or family member if they see hypocrisy in you. Don't get defensive if they do! Pray and ask God to change you on the inside. Write down what you discover. Watch for changes in yourself!