



Lecture 4

Spiritual Integrity

In our first three lectures, we learnt that genuine, spiritual integrity, is essentially imitating Jesus. In our fourth lecture, we want to focus on choosing consistency and refusing compromise. Christian author C. S. Lewis once wrote, “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”

WHO ARE WE WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING?

This is a big question to ask ourselves! In Lecture 1 we studied Colossians 3:17 (Wuest translation),

“And all, whatever you do in the sphere of word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, constantly giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

“Whatever you do in the sphere of word or deed,” this means, “**everything** you say or do”. Do we seek to “do **all** in the Name of the Lord Jesus,” even when our pastor or another believer isn’t standing there watching (or listening)? Does our integrity remain intact even when it seems like our words, behaviour or choices, in that moment, don’t matter or won’t have any lasting consequence?

Have you ever, for example, rushed a job or completed a task at work half-heartedly and thought to yourself, “Who cares? Nobody’s going to see it!”.

Seeking to imitate Jesus even in the little things and the seemingly insignificant moments, is having integrity. The word integrity is defined in dictionaries as “the state of being whole and undivided”. If we live one way when people are watching, and another way when alone, we are living a “divided” life and will not experience the peace and security that integrity always brings. As we learnt in Lecture 2, “integrity brings harmony between the soul and the spirit. It produces peace, rest and truth in every part of the believer.” (p.50)

The world wear invisible masks in public in order to "look" a certain way or play certain roles. Sadly, we often see the same culture of religious pretension in churches: believers who speak religiously - who say the right things, speak bold words of faith, or express their heartfelt commitment to Christ - on Sundays, but live differently when nobody is watching.

As we examine God’s definition of spiritual integrity, as outlined in Psalm 15, we want to challenge you to examine your life and ask yourself, do I seek to live this way *even when no one is watching*?

Psalm 15 (AMPC)

¹“LORD, WHO shall dwell [temporarily] in Your tabernacle? Who shall dwell [permanently] on Your holy hill? ² He who walks and lives uprightly and blamelessly, who works rightness and justice and speaks and thinks the truth in his heart, ³ He who does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his friend, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; ⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but

he who honors those who fear the Lord (who revere and worship Him); who swears to his own hurt and does not change; ⁵ [He who] does not put out his money for interest [to one of his own people] and who will not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.”

Verse 4 reads, “who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” In other translations this phrase is rendered, “who hold to an oath [promise], no matter the cost” (CJB). This is a tough one, especially in guilt-based cultures such as that which exists in Australia. “Guilt, shame, and fear are present in every person and every culture, but to differing degrees.” Christian missionaries serving cross-culturally are often taught the guilt/shame/fear model of classification to help them make sense of the differences they encounter between the culture of their homeland and the country they are now serving in. Most cultures are mixtures of guilt/innocence, honor/shame, and fear/power. However, one type often dominates and therefore drives the thinking and behaviours of those born into the culture.

In a guilt-based culture, a sense of inner guilt will prompt a person to say they will do something, even though they don’t want to. Later, they will not follow through on their promise because in all honesty, they never wanted or intended to, they were simply seeking to avoid feeling guilty in the person’s presence. Have you ever, for example, promised to call someone and then never followed through? Or promised an acquaintance, “We’ll have to have you over for a meal!” but then never extended an actual invitation. These examples are the opposite of having integrity and are both simple examples of living a “divided life”.

In truth, our culture in Australia has a tendency at times, to be insincere and lacking in integrity. The reality is, every culture in the world has developed ungodly traits as a result of the Fall. As believers in Jesus Christ, however, **Jesus calls us to a higher standard than is socially acceptable in our culture!** We are called to live from the “inside out”. Since God lives within us, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are holy, honest and righteous in our ‘inner man’ (Colossians 1:22). Our call to live holy, as spiritual people of integrity, even in the seemingly insignificant moments, is not a call to self-effort or striving. It is a call knowing who we now are, as new creations in Christ, and depending on God *in us* to empower us to live as the holy people we now are (1 Peter 1:15-16).

INTEGRITY BRINGS PROTECTION, SECURITY & DIRECTION

Spiritual integrity is seeking to honour God in everything we do and say, even when no one is watching. When we live with spiritual integrity, we will experience security in our hearts and lives:

Proverbs 10:9 (NASB)

He who walks in integrity walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will be found out.

Proverbs 13:6 (NASB)

Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless, But wickedness subverts the sinner.

Proverbs 2:7 (NASB)

He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

Proverbs 11:3

The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.

LET’S PUT OUR HEARTS INTO SEEKING TO BE PEOPLE OF INTEGRITY, CONSISTENTLY AND WITHOUT COMPROMISE!