



Life Issues Part 1 of 5: Integrity

'Like Seaside Rock'

Opening up! Connecting with each other: Welcome back! This is a chance for you to catch up after the summer break and talk with each other about what God has been doing in your lives.

Listening in! The dictionary definition of integrity is 'the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards'. Someone with integrity is the same inside and out, they have an inner truthfulness, their actions match their words. The opposite of integrity is hypocrisy. The word hypocrite comes from the Greek word for an actor. In Greek plays, the characters wore masks showing various moods or expressions. A hypocrite is defined as someone who says one thing and does another, who appears to be one thing when, in reality, they are someone else.

Activity Look at the drama sketch attached and either act it out for a bit of fun, or read it through together (there are three parts) and then explore the questions that follow therein.

Discussion Discuss honestly with one another whether you feel that you are a person of integrity. Do your actions always match your words, or do you sometimes say one thing and do another? Are there times when you struggle with this? How often do you seek counsel from a trusted mature Christian friend or leader and confess your hypocrisy? Looking around you, particularly on your frontline, do you see people of integrity? And if you do, what defines them? If you don't, what challenges does this present and how do you respond to those challenges?

Jesus: Man of Integrity Read the below pairs of verses together. Each time the first verse gives something that Jesus said; the second shows Him putting it into practice.

Matthew 6: 19-21 and Matthew 8:18-20 - Jesus says '*do not store up treasure on earth*'; He has no home of His own.

Matthew 10:29-31 and Matthew 12:46-50 - Jesus honours people who have left their families; He welcomes everyone into His family.

Matthew 10:38-39 and John 19:17-18 - Jesus told people to take up their cross; He carried His cross and then was crucified on it.

Matthew 6:5 and Luke 5:16 - Jesus tells people to pray in secret; Luke says that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Matthew 6:14-15 and Luke 23:34 - Jesus tells us to forgive; He prays from the cross for God to forgive those who are killing Him.

Discussion: What does the text reveal about Jesus? How does this shape our understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus (man of integrity)? Having read these verses, in the light of where we have each been today/this week, how are we challenged? Thinking about this, how should we pray? Are there any actions we need to take i.e. how can we grow in integrity?

Looking Out: Now and Later

Jesus is the ultimate example of a man with integrity. In order for us to be Christ-like, it may be helpful to discuss the actions that we are going to take in an effort to develop our own integrity and how we can ensure that we provide support and accountability for one another. One practice which may prove helpful might be the organisation of prayer partners/triplets, from within your group or with other trusted, mature Christian friends. Some small groups have already established such arrangements and are reporting significant benefits.

Memory verse (perhaps to be placed on your fridge door): "*Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.*" Proverbs 10:9.

Spend some time now and in the week ahead praying firstly for each other and secondly that we may be people who demonstrate integrity in all that we are, wherever we are.