

LIVE WITH INTEGRITY

Part 3 of IMITATE ME. 2 Timothy 3:10-11.
Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. October 8, 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Our message means nothing without integrity.

- When we started the Cornerstone, a group of outsiders tried to sabotage us by attacking my integrity. One preacher writes:

In a world that's eagerly looking to call into question and destroy the credibility of God's Word, as believers we need to diligently guard our own reputations. (www.gty.org/library/blog/B130313/marks-of-an-excellent-shepherd-integrity).

Integrity is the third step on the path to spiritual maturity.

2 Timothy 3:10-11 (ESV) You, however, have followed my teaching, **my conduct**, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra— which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me...

PAUL: A MODEL OF INTEGRITY

Timothy spent a lot of time with Paul and witnessed his conduct.

- In 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his integrity to the church in Corinth.

2 Corinthians 1:12-14 (ESV) For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. 13 For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— 14 just as you did partially understand us — that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.

HOW TO LIVE WITH INTEGRITY

Question 1: Am I OK with Me?

- In verse 12, Paul writes about the *“testimony of his conscience.”*

- The conscience is like an inner judge evaluating our lives against God's standards.

Romans 2:15 (ESV) 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

- The conscience can be insensitive, non-functional (1 Timothy 4:2).
- Only Jesus can cleanse our guilty conscience.

Hebrews 9:14 (ESV) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

- The Holy Spirit and the Bible shape and renew our conscience.
- If you're a genuine Christian, you'll feel sick about representing Jesus while living like the devil. Your conscience will call you a hypocrite.
- Alone in the quiet, what does your conscience say to you? Am I OK with me? If not, what am I doing about it?

Question 2: Is God OK with Me?

- Verse 12 goes on to say, *"We behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you."*
- Paul gives three proofs of his integrity and a clear conscience.
- He behaved with **simplicity**. He didn't have a hidden agenda.

2 Corinthians 1:13 (NLT) Our letters have been straightforward, and there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can't understand.

- He showed **godly sincerity**: He didn't have a secret life.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV) So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

- He rejected **worldly wisdom**. He didn't use godless methods.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (ESV) ... 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power...

- Is God OK with me? If not, what am I doing about it?

Question 3: Will Jesus Be OK with Me?

- In verse 14, Paul writes, *“On the day of our Lord Jesus, you will boast of us as we will boast of you.”*
- Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1). Every Christian's hidden thoughts, motives, and ambitions will be brought to light when Jesus returns:

1 Corinthians 4:5 (NLT) So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time —before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

- When Jesus evaluates your inner life, what will he find? Will Jesus be OK with me? If not, what am I doing about it?

WHAT AM I DOING ABOUT IT?

Do my beliefs match my behavior?

- Jesus forgives our sins AND frees us from their power.
- Spiritual growth will not happen until my walk matches my talk.
 - I should run to Jesus. Shelter in his goodness and love.
 - I should confess my failures to Jesus and receive cleansing/forgiveness.
 - I should ask for more sanctifying grace so I can live with integrity.

2 Corinthians 4:2 (ESV) We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

SMALL GROUPS GUIDE

GET STARTED

- What's your favorite fall season meal?
- Share a Bible passage that changed your life.

DIVE IN

- Review the study guide. What were Peter's main ideas, insights, or Bible passages related to living with integrity?
- Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-14. If possible compare Bible versions to gain insights and clarity. Discuss why Paul felt the need to justify himself to the Corinthians. Read 2 Corinthians 10:1-12, and 11:1-15 for ideas.
- Share a time when an outsider was skeptical about the Christian faith because of the hypocrisy of a professing believer. In your opinion, what harm is caused by lack of credibility; that is when our walk doesn't match our talk?
- If you've blown it, what can you do to restore credibility with, for example, your kids, friends, and co-workers? What can Jesus do for us when we fail? What can Jesus do to help us live a life of integrity?

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

- Discuss how to use the three questions from Peter's teaching - am I OK with me, is God OK with me, will Jesus be OK with me? - to increase your motivation to live with integrity.

PRAY TOGETHER

Take some time to pray for each other, for the Cornerstone Church, and for our Outreach Partners. Pray that the Lord would give us grace to live with integrity and credibility before a watching world.