



PLEASING GOD IN ALL
Aspects of My Life

Mission Trip Devotional

Written by Aaron Ferguson



MY PLEASURE

Day 1

We all live to *please* someone, but *who* is it?

Take a minute to read *Ephesians 4:17-5:10, 15-17*.

Sammy saw the money lying on the trail, five twenty dollar bills. It had to belong to a member of his group. They were the only ones hiking that day; but, since he was in the back of the line, no one would ever know. He picked up the money and kept it for himself.

Susie had to get an “A” on the final exam. So much was riding on this one test. She would do anything to ensure her success. Since she sat on the back row and the teacher was at her desk, no one would ever know. She cheated.

Steve’s parents were out of town. Their instructions were to have no one in the house, but he didn’t want to disappoint his friends, who were expecting to come over. He threw a party anyway. His parents would never know. He later lied about it when they asked.

Sally hated her job but she needed the money. Most of the time her boss was not around, so she just played on her phone. At times, she even took a nap. It didn’t matter; no one would ever know, and she got paid the same anyway.

Stu was a popular mechanic. However, he would often charge his customers more than he should for repairs, saying that he fixed something when he really hadn’t. No one would ever know anyway, so people paid whatever he asked.

These five people have several things in common. What are they?

The world is in great need of people with *integrity*. People without integrity do whatever is best for them, whatever it takes to win, or whatever it takes to get by. Who cares if someone gets hurt in the process? People without integrity choose the path of least resistance, the way that is fastest and easiest, rather than doing the right thing. Therefore, they choose to cheat, to steal, to lie, to work behind closed doors, and to cut corners. If it helps them get ahead, they are willing to do just about anything, except do it the right way.

People without integrity are lazy rather than industrious. They prefer easy money rather than honest gain. They prefer conniving, lying, manipulating circumstances rather than being considerate of others. They choose perversion over decency, immorality over morality. Character, responsibility, fairness, and following the rules are all sacrificed to their pursuit of success, wealth, and happiness.

However, God expects more of His followers. From the passage that you read, write out some of the expectations that God has for us.

Why does God expect His followers, Christians, to be different?

Which verse in our passage do you think is the basis for the rest of the verses, pinpointing the standard for our conduct? Why that one?

Everyone lives to please someone. With every action, you either please yourself, other people, or God. Who is pleased by these actions?

1. _____ Buying clothes or shoes
2. _____ Cooking dinner
3. _____ Cleaning your room
4. _____ Watching TV or a movie
5. _____ Telling the truth
6. _____ Cheating
7. _____ Forgiving an offense
8. _____ Trying to be like your friends
9. _____ Working hard

Everything you do pleases someone. The question is who, *who are you trying to please?* Most of what you do, you do for your own pleasure or for the pleasure of others; but, more deserving than all others is the Lord, and He desires your actions to be pleasing to Him.

Paul wrote in our passage, “Be imitators of God, as beloved children” (*Ephesians 5:1*), which simply means that you should do the things that He would do. He is your guide, your standard, your measuring stick. Paul continued, “You are light in the Lord, walk as children of light... trying to learn what is *pleasing* to the Lord” (v. 8, 10). Finally, he wrote, “Do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is” (v. 17). In other words, know what God expects of you and do it.

How can you know God’s will, what He expects of you?

Over the next several days, we will explore the elements of *integrity*. It is a complex topic with many personal applications; but, for now, let me make it simple. To be a person of integrity is to *please God in all aspects of your life*. Scripture says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (*1 Corinthians 10:31*).

One of the things that Sammy, Susie, Steve, Sally, and Stu all had in common was that they thought no one could see their actions; and, since no one could see their actions, then no one would know what they had done. However, what they don’t understand is that God sees everything that you do; He even knows what you do in “secret.” You can’t hide anything from God. You can’t think, say, or do anything without His knowledge. Therefore, even when you are alone, you are being watched. Thus, what you do when you are “alone” matters. It matters to God.

Are you living a life of integrity, *pleasing God in all aspect of your life*, even the part of your life that you think no one sees?



OPEN HOUSE

Day 2

A person with *integrity* has nothing to *hide*.

Take a minute to read *Proverbs 10:9; Philippians 2:12-16*.

Summarize Solomon's wisdom in *Proverbs 10:9*.

I came to CHA in the summer of 1994. I could tell immediately that something had happened just before my arrival that unsettled the faculty, staff, and students. I soon found out what it was. A young lady named Krista Speas, a fun, outgoing spiritual leader in the junior class had been killed in a car wreck just weeks before I was hired. Her death impacted the school greatly.

I'll never forget the chapel service that fall, when Krista's parents addressed the student body for the first time since her death. They stood together weeping at the podium as they told her story. Krista's father expressed the anxiety that he felt as he went through all of her belongings. He was afraid that he was going to find something in her room that would shame her name and embarrass the family. I still remember what he said next. "Rather than find any hidden sins or secret shame, I found only things that were glorifying to God." It was the first time that I understood what it meant to be *above reproach*.

A reproach is a sin in your life that would disgrace your name, your family's name, or the Lord's name, if it were made public. I left chapel that day convicted by Krista's story. I thought, "What if I died today? Would my family find anything that would be a reproach to them?" I prayed for days, asking the Lord to reveal sin in my life, to show me areas that I had not yet surrendered to Him. I desired to live a blameless life, above reproach. What about you? If you died today, would your family find anything that would be a reproach to them? Living a life above reproach is closely related to *integrity*. Remember our definition? Integrity is to *please God in all aspects of life*.

Another way to think about living a life of integrity, above reproach, is to view your life as full of compartments, like a house with rooms. Each compartment or room represents an area of your life. Imagine those compartments or rooms with signs on each door. One room sign might read, "Relationships" or "Entertainment." Write out as many "compartments or rooms" of your life that you can think of.

As you look over your list, can you honestly say that every room or compartment is pleasing to God? If not, which ones have you not yet surrendered to the Lord? Which one would be a reproach to you? It seems inconsistent that we are ready to surrender our eternal life to Christ but not our present life. Have you given everything to Him?

Take a few minutes to stop and pray. Ask God specifically to reveal areas in your life that are not pleasing to Him. What are you doing

that you shouldn't be doing? What are you not doing that you should be doing? Write here what the Lord says to you.

The builders of the *Titanic* had a theory that they thought would prevent tragedies at sea. They built it with sealed compartments. In other words, the entire ship had little spaces that could be sealed off in case they filled up with water; that way the entire ship would not be compromised. However, while their theory sounded good, it did not work. The *Titanic* sank when it hit an iceberg that gashed a hole in a few of those compartments. The entire ship sunk and lives were lost because a few compartments were filled with water.

The same principle applies to you. While you may believe that you can compartmentalize your life and keep sin hidden in certain areas, you cannot. Sooner or later, your hidden sin will sink your life and hurt others. Living a life of integrity, pleasing God in all aspects, means that every room, every compartment is honoring to Him, and not one compartment will compromise the rest of your "ship."

Imagine for a minute that you had distant relatives call to tell you that they were in town for a few hours and they wanted to stop by and see you. Your family hurries to clean the house but simply doesn't have enough time to get it all done, so dirty clothes and trash and other things your mom wants hidden gets thrown into a closet or back room. She announces, "No one is allowed to go in there!"

We often treat our lives this way. There are areas that people regularly see, but there are also areas that we would rather not let people see. *To live a life above reproach is to surrender all of our rooms to Christ*, to allow Him to change every aspect until they please

Him. This process is called *sanctification*, a big word for allowing God to change you from the inside out.

When Paul wrote “Work out your salvation...,” he was not telling them that they could earn their salvation through works. There is nothing you can do in your sinful nature to please God. He makes you pleasing to Him through the work of Christ. We do good works *because* of our salvation *not to earn* our salvation. To work out your salvation means to allow God to change your life from the inside out. To do it *with fear and trembling* is to take it seriously. If you have given your life to Christ and His Spirit lives within you, then over time you should see a difference, a life that looks more like His.

When a real estate agent sells a home, she puts a sign in the front yard that says, “Open House.” This means that potential buyers can go into the house and view any part of it. No area of the house is off limits. When you surrender your life to Christ, you are committing to an “open house” relationship, asking God to transform it into the image of His Son, Jesus, who is blameless and above reproach. God does not expect you to be *sinless*, but He does expect you to *sin less*.

How have you seen God working in your life? Is He changing you?

God is at work in you, for His good pleasure; and His good pleasure leads to a life that is starkly different from the world. You are not perfect, but you should stand out from others because of your choices, your words, your works, your attitude, your perspective, and your character. Are you living an “open house” life, opening all of your “doors” to the Lord, or are you “hiding” closets from Him?



THERE'S AN ELEPHANT ON THE BRIDGE

Day 3

People of *integrity* can be *trusted*.

Take a minute to read *Proverbs 20:6, 7; 22:1*

When his boss asked him to build a bridge across the Mississippi River for the *Pennsylvania Railroad*, no one believed it could be done; but, young Andrew Carnegie was determined to find a way. Wood bridges were fine over short distances, but they were no match for the mighty Mississippi. That's when Carnegie discovered a new building material, one that would change the world – steel. After six years and \$10 million (\$220 million today), the bridge was completed, but would anyone trust it? Americans were unfamiliar with steel and, therefore, skeptical of its reliability. Carnegie would have to convince them that steel was, indeed, trustworthy, but how?

On June 14, 1874, Carnegie held a parade at his new bridge (named Eads Bridge, after the designer). The main attraction was not the bridge itself but a huge circus elephant that he had rented. Carnegie read that elephants had a keen sense for identifying shaky ground. In other words, they won't walk forward when they feel that it is unsafe to do so. Carnegie would use the famous elephant to prove to the world that his steel bridge was safe to use. When the parade began, the elephant walked forward and slowly crossed the steel structure. Onlookers cheered and followed him across the river. The publicity stunt had worked. Carnegie's bridge was a success, and soon his steel was in demand all across the country.

Noah Webster defined trust as a “confidence, a reliance, or a resting of the mind on the *integrity* of another person” (*Webster’s 1828*). The people of St. Louis walked across Carnegie’s bridge because they trusted an elephant. His keen sense of safety gave them confidence in the *integrity* of the structure. Because they believed the bridge to be trustworthy, they risked the hazard and stepped out on it.

What do you think it means that the bridge had integrity?

List a few people that you trust completely.

What is it about those on your list that makes them trustworthy?

Did you list God as one who can be trusted at all times? Take a minute and read *Psalms 62:5-8*. Why is God so trustworthy?

Now, think about people whom you do not trust. What is it about them that causes you to distrust them?

Whether you realize it or not, there is one question that you ask yourself about every person that you meet and know. You might use different words, but it is essentially this, “Can I trust this person?” In other words, do you believe what this person says? Is this person lying or telling the truth? Is this person a fake or phony? Does this person act one way around you and act differently around others? Can you tell this person a secret and trust that they will keep it confidential? Does this person steal, cheat, lie, gossip, or betray others behind their backs?

In a lot of ways, people are like bridges and you are the elephant, testing whether or not their “bridges” are trustworthy. What exactly is that trust built upon? It is built upon the *integrity* of the person. The English word “integrity” comes from the Latin word “integer,” meaning “whole,” as in whole numbers without fractions in math (called integers). Thus, integrity is wholeness or completeness, an unbroken state, a lack of defects, or a purity of character.

Engineers regularly inspect the integrity of bridges to ensure their safety. To be approved, a bridge must be entirely sound or stable. If any part of the bridge is cracked or broken, it affects the integrity of the entire bridge, and it is marked as unsafe to use. Thus, a bridge that has integrity is unbroken, whole, solid, sure, or sound and, therefore, trustworthy. Likewise, a person with integrity is morally whole, solid, sure, or sound, and, therefore, trustworthy.

So what about you, do you have integrity? When others inspect your life, do they see major moral defects or someone worthy of trust?



WITHOUT WAX

Day 4

A person with *integrity* is *real* at all times, in all places.

Take a minute to read *Psalm 15:1, 2; 26:1-4*.

Before the age of the kiln, which is an oven for baking pottery, potters had to use an open fire to dry their work, which meant that they had to rotate their bowls, plates, or urns for each side to harden. If they weren't careful, they risked over-drying an area and causing it to crack. A broken pot is worthless; it cannot be sold or used.

However, dishonest potters figured out how to sell a cracked pot, by covering up their mistakes and deceiving their customers. They would use wax and paint to hide the places that were broken. Therefore, customers were tricked into purchasing a worthless product. Over time, the wax would melt or fall off, and the blemishes or broken areas would be revealed.

Another aspect of integrity, or living above reproach, is *sincerity*. The Latin word "sincerity" literally means "without wax." In other words, to be sincere is to be *transparent*, to speak in such a way as you have nothing to hide. You are not trying to deceive anyone but rather you speak to others with transparent motives, not with a hidden agenda.

Whom do you know that is sincere, "without wax," or transparent? You believe what they say because they have nothing to hide.

The opposite of being sincere or transparent is to be *hypocritical*, to say one thing but do another, to act in such a way that is not real. A hypocrite is a fake or a phony, a pretender, someone who acts like something that he is not in real life. The word “hypocrite” is Greek for “actor” or “stage player,” one who wears a mask and performs.

What does living a life of integrity look like when applied to one’s relationships? It means that you are the same person in *public* as you are in *private*. It means that you don’t act one way around your family but a different way around your friends. It means that you don’t act spiritual and godly at church and then act defiantly and worldly at school. It means that you don’t put on masks and perform for people, so that they never see the real you.

Think about how you interact with others – family, friends, teachers, church members, co-workers, or even strangers. Do they see the *real you* or do you wear masks?

What are some reasons that people wear “masks” around others?

What does wearing “masks” reveal about a person?

Who really knows you, the real you? Would that person say that you act differently around him/her than you do with others? Would that person say you are sincere or would he/she call you a hypocrite?

What is required of a person to live a life of sincerity and transparency, to avoid hypocrisy and wearing masks?

When you get down to the root of hypocrisy, it is really just *another form of lying*. You are deceiving people into believing that you are one thing when you are really another. Your deception may stem from shame or embarrassment; you are afraid that people will discover the real you and you don't want that to happen. Hypocrisy could also stem from pride. You want others to think of you in a certain way. You want them to have a certain image or impression of you in their minds, but it's all a big lie.

A third motivation for wearing masks is *people-pleasing*. You want people to like you, to think well of you, or to accept you, so you will do or say anything for their approval. However, being a people pleaser has its problems or consequences. What are some of them?

Ultimately, you must determine that it is more important to please God rather than people. He expects you to live with integrity, without wax, not to deceive others by wearing masks or trying to hide or cover up your faults. Be the *real you*, in all places, at all times. If people will not accept the real you, then they are not the kind of people you need. The Lord desires you to be pleasing to Him in all aspects of your life. Determine today to please Him, to be real and not a fake or a phony. Live a life *without wax*.



WORD FILTER

Day 5

People of integrity are *careful* with their *words*.

Take a minute to read *James 3:4-10*.

Summarize what James expressed in these verses.

Filters are wonderful inventions. They remove the bad elements so that only good elements remain. A coffee filter, for example, allows only water to pass through and keeps out the coffee grounds. A face mask filters out dust and allows us to breathe only clean air. An Internet filter prevents you from seeing inappropriate material. Imagine if we had a filter that helped prevent what comes out of our mouths. The Bible has much to say about filtering words. Read and summarize the following verses.

Psalm 19:14 _____

Proverbs 2:11; 3:3, 4 _____

It is clear that God expects His followers to be careful with words, because *words hurt people*. His instructions can be summarized by saying only those things which are *kind, true, and necessary*.¹ Let's consider each of these more closely.

First, your speech is to be *kind*. During my first season as a volleyball coach, we had one game in which we got beaten badly at home. I was so embarrassed that, after the game, I yelled at my girls in the locker room. By the time I was finished, every player was crying. I felt terrible. I was coaching the way that I had been coached, and it didn't work. I was so ashamed and convicted of my wrongdoing that I spent all night calling each girl to apologize and ask for her forgiveness.

It was that night that I realized just how powerful words can be. As a coach, my words would either cause players to stand up tall and feel good, or my words would cause them to stoop, even cry. I promised my girls that I would never treat them like that again. I committed to being a coach, teacher, husband, father, and friend who would build others up rather than tear them down.

Finish these three "rules" of kindness.

I will be kind even _____

I will be kind even _____

I will be kind even _____

My mom used to say to me, "If you don't have anything kind to say, then don't say anything at all." That's a good rule to live by. Here's another one, speak to others the way that you want to be spoken to.

¹ Mr. David Holmes, CHA Secondary Headmaster
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Second, your speech is to be *true*. When I was in second grade, my teacher gave us an assignment on the first day of school, to describe our family vacation during summer break. I totally made up a story about going to the Super Bowl, getting called down at halftime to have my picture taken with my two favorite quarterbacks. It was a great story but all a lie. After reading the story to my classmates, my teacher called my mom. I got in trouble on the first day of school! I also made my mom cry. She asked me in a sobbing voice, with tears in her eyes, “You don’t like our family vacations?” I assured her that I did like them but I wanted to have fun with the assignment and write about my dream trip! My lies had hurt my mother, disappointed my new teacher, and ruined my second-grade reputation. Ugh!

What are some reasons for why people lie?

Finish these three “rules” of honesty or truth-telling.

I will tell the truth even _____

I will tell the truth even _____

I will tell the truth even _____

Do you tell the truth or are you trying to cover up lies all the time? Do you embellish, exaggerate, or stretch the truth? People with integrity are honest to a fault, even if it means taking the blame for something they did or getting into trouble somehow.

Third, your speech is to be *appropriate*. In other words, you should say only things that are *necessary*. Cut out corrupt communication.

One time, when our kids were little, we took them to swim in a neighborhood pool. My wife and I were putting sunscreen on them when a large woman walked by in an extremely tight swimsuit. Imagine a giant egg with a rubber band around it, and you'll get the image. Even I noticed her size and thought to myself, "She should not be wearing that in public." About that time, one of our boys blurted out, "Wow, Dad, she's fat!" It was one of those record-screaming moments, when everything stopped. There were a few seconds of complete silence, people aghast and staring at us, and my wife and I looking like deer in the headlights, with our jaws dropped. The lady whipped around and gave us the evil eye. I apologized profusely.

I then had the talk with my son about *discretion*. Not everything that comes into your mind needs to come out of your mouth. There are times when you must refrain from saying something that may hurt other people. That's why Solomon wrote, "Discretion will protect you..." (*Proverbs 2:11*). My son's lack of discretion nearly got me beat up that day! I think that lady could've taken me out!

Finish these three "rules" of discretion.

I will hold my tongue even _____

I will hold my tongue even _____

I will hold my tongue even _____

An often overlooked piece of discretion is *complaining*. Complaining rarely does anyone any good; in fact, complaining either discourages others or invites them to complain also. I try not to complain unless I am willing to be a part of the solution to the problem.

A friend of mine trained her children not to complain by speaking only those things that are positive. When she heard her kids complain, she would say, "No neggy," meaning those words are negative, not positive. One time I even complained in her presence and she said to me, "Neggy, neggy." She was right and I apologized.

Paul wrote, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth but only words which are good for edification or encouragement, according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (*Ephesians 4:29*). Are you demonstrating integrity with your words, pleasing God in all aspects of your speech?

In regard to your use of words, in what areas are you doing well?

In what areas of your speech do you need improvement?

Paul also wrote, “Urge young people to be sensible. In all things show yourself to be an example..., sound in speech which is above reproach, so that your enemy will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about you” (*Titus 2:6-8*).

What would others say about your words? Are they kind, true, and necessary, or are they hurtful, dishonest, and inappropriate? Do you quote others accurately? Do you use foul language or share crude jokes? Do you credit others when credit is due? Do you encourage and build people up, or are you always complaining, criticizing, using sarcasm, or belittling people? What would the Lord say about your words? Are they a demonstration of integrity? “May the words of your mouth... always be pleasing in the sight of God” (*Psalms 19:14*).



THE HIGH ROAD

Day 6

A person of integrity refuses to *cheat* in order to *gain* an advantage.

Take a minute to read *Proverbs 28:6; Galatians 6:7; James 4:17*.

I am a fierce competitor. I hate to lose. In fact, as a boy, I would change the rules of a game just so that I could win. Basketball, cards, pool, or some board game – it didn't matter; I was going to prevail somehow. It got so bad that my sister, my friends, and even my grandfather wouldn't play games with me anymore, because I regularly cheated. That's when my mom began an *integrity* campaign, drilling into my mind the truth, "It's not about whether you win or lose but how you play the game that matters." It worked, especially after I surrendered my life to Christ. I realized that bending or breaking the rules was not pleasing to God. While I'm still very competitive, there is a line that I will not cross. I am more concerned about playing with *integrity* than winning the game.

God did such a work in my life that I became an admirable rule follower, an impartial referee or judge, one that others began to trust. I really noticed it when playing sports. For example, when playing basketball on the driveway, I would call only legitimate fouls and freely admit it when I fouled someone else. When playing volleyball, I would admit when I touched the net or tipped a ball out of bounds. When playing tennis, I fairly called the lines or admitted foot faults. When playing baseball, I accurately called balls and strikes and admitted when a runner beat my throw to a base. You get the picture. How I played the game mattered to me because it mattered to God. I refused to cheat, even if it meant losing.

How would you define cheating? What does it reveal about a person?

Do you know a cheater? What has cheating done to your impression of him or her? Describe his or her reputation or character?

Have you ever cheated or been tempted to cheat? Explain.

You are a natural rule breaker. Rule-breaking was handed down to you by your first parents – Adam and Eve. Rule-breaking is in your blood. You do not like rules. You do not like being told what to do. You are a rebel at heart and would do away with rules if you could.

However, rules exist for a reason. They are put in place for your good. Imagine a world without rules. What kind of world would it be if everyone did what they wanted when they wanted? It would be chaos. Thus, rules are meant to protect you, to maintain order, and to preserve sanity in society. Therefore, when you break the rules, you are promoting lawlessness, acting as if the rules don't apply to you. Is it not hypocritical to apply the rules to some people but not all?

God also has rules, ten to be exact. While there are blessings for obeying His rules, there are also consequences for disobeying them. You might think that you are getting away with something when you break one of His rules, but you are not. He sees everything. He hears everything. He knows everything. You can't hide anything from God. He knows if you break a rule, even if no one else does.

You are probably a lot like me, in that I have no problem following rules when others are watching. It's when I am alone that rule-following becomes a challenge. But following rules in view of others is easy; following rules when no one is watching is not. If you follow rules when no one else is watching, that's a sign of *integrity*.

Worldly people want to succeed and win, just like you; the difference is that they will do anything to gain an advantage. You can't. Honoring God by following rules is more important than your success or advantage. How you live your life is more important to Him than what status you achieve or what accolades you collect.

How can you defeat the temptation to cheat, especially when alone?

Have you ever heard someone say, "He took the high road?" Taking the high road means doing the right thing, even when it's not easy, common, or popular. I have a friend who was a sales rep for a multi-billion dollar company. When they asked him to cheat a customer on a deal, so that the company could make more money, he refused. The company gave him the option to complete the deal or to quit. He took the *high road* and quit. It was not easy to walk away from a well-paying job, but God honored him for his *integrity*.

When I was in college, I was the starting quarterback. Halfway through the season, my coach wanted to play the second guy. He told me that he had arranged for me to “take a fall,” to act like I was hurt, so it would look like I was coming out because of an injury. I was completely caught off guard and offended. I couldn’t believe that my coach thought so little of me that he would ask me to do such a thing. I was furious and told him, “You’re the coach! You can start whomever you want! Just don’t ask me to lie to my teammates, to my family members, or to the fans, by asking me to take a fall!” I took the high road. Was it embarrassing to sit on the sidelines as a senior? Absolutely! But I maintained my *integrity* and did the right thing!

Very few people take the high road today. We want to do what’s easy, what’s common, and what’s popular, but seldom is that way God’s way. Which road do you take most often?

Taking the high road means *accepting a late assignment* grade rather than copying another student’s answers.

Taking the high road means *admitting your faults* rather than lying to hide them.

Taking the high road means asking your parents for *permission first* rather than asking for forgiveness later.

Taking the high road means *taking responsibility* for something that went wrong, rather than blaming others for it.

Taking the high road means being *where* you are supposed to be *when* you are supposed to be there.

Taking the high road means *following through* with your promises, rather than saying whatever it takes to get your way.

Taking the high road means *accepting a low test score* rather than finding a way to cheat.

Taking the high road means *following the rules* of the game, even if that means you lose.

Taking the high road means *congratulating* or *crediting others*, especially opponents, even when you don't like them.

Taking the high road means *doing your own work* rather than plagiarizing the work of others.

Taking the high road means *refusing to complain* about circumstances or to *criticize others* for their weaknesses.

Taking the high road means *refusing to compromise* or *cut corners* just because you don't like something or are in a hurry.

King David took the low road when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then killed her husband and lied about it. King Ahab took the low road when he had Naboth killed just so he could take his vineyard. Joseph took the high road when he refused to sleep with Potiphar's wife, even though she begged him day after day. Nehemiah took the high road when he was frugal with the people's tax money and refused to abuse his position as governor.

Which road do you usually take – the high road or the low road? A person of *integrity* follows rules and refuses to gain an advantage by cheating. Whether it's in sports, on the job, or in the classroom, cheaters never *truly* win and *true* winners never cheat.

Finish these three "rules" in regard to *cheating*.

I will follow the rules even _____

I will follow the rules even _____

I will follow the rules even _____



YOUR SIXTH SENSE

Day 7

People of *integrity* live with a *clear conscience* before God and men.

Take a minute to read *Psalm 32:1-5; Acts 24:16*.

In 1984 a Spanish airliner named *Air Avianca* crashed into the side of a mountain. Rescue teams combed the area for the black box, as they always do in such an incident. The black box records data that allows experts to reconstruct the events prior to the accident, to analyze the technical data, and to replay the cockpit voice recordings. What they discovered was startling.

Modern airplanes are fitted with Ground Proximity Warning Systems, and about a minute and a half before the accident a shrill computer-generated voice was heard to say repeatedly, "Pull up, pull up, pull up!" The pilot inexplicably snapped back, "Shut up gringo!" Then he flipped the warning system off and flew directly into the face of the mountain, consequently killing everybody on board.²

As human beings, we do not have a "Ground Proximity Warning System," but we do have a "Sin Proximity Warning System" that God has given to each of us. It is called the *conscience*. When you hear its shrill voice repeating, "Pull up, pull up, pull up," the most dangerous thing you can do is tell it to shut up and switch it off. Sadly, though, many people do just that, and rather than live a life of integrity, they crash and burn.

² Post on Sermon Central, by Emily W., www.sermoncentral.com
26 - Integrity - Wholly Pleasing to God

Paul said that he always tried to maintain a *clear conscience* both before God and before men.

How would you define the *conscience*? What is it designed to do?

What does it mean to have a *clear* conscience?

What does it mean to have a *calloused* conscience?

The comic book superhero Spiderman has a sixth sense. His “Spidey sense” can detect when danger is near. Likewise, God, in His wisdom, has wired you with a sixth sense. In addition to seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting, you have the innate sense of knowing right and wrong. That sense is called your *conscience*.

When you do what’s right, your conscience rewards you with a pat on the back, a good feeling, and a sense of satisfaction. When you are tempted or when you do what’s wrong, your conscience makes you uncomfortable; it will even shame you, grieve you, and, like a judge,

convict you of wrongdoing. You won't be able to sleep, your thoughts will be consumed by your sin, or you will experience fear, panic, depression, and other wild mood swings. Your conscience is relentless, but it's there to protect you from the danger of sin traps.

To have a clear conscience is wonderful. There is nothing that you've done or said that causes you to worry or fret. You have a sense of peace with God and with people. You've done nothing to offend Him or others.

However, when you have a guilty conscience, you feel like you're constantly being chased by barking dogs. You are ashamed in the presence of God. That's why David wrote in *Psalms 32*, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away... For day and night, God's hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was drained away..."

If you've sinned against someone, every time you see that person, your sinful words or actions come flooding back to your memory. You can't stand to be reminded, so you avoid that person at all costs. You ask yourself that nagging question over and over, how can I escape this terrible plague?

What would you suggest as steps to take, if someone asked you what to do about his guilty conscience?

Perhaps the worst thing you could do is to ignore your conscience. It is like a friend who warns you when danger is near. Why would you ignore him? When your "Spidey sense" begins to tingle, pay attention! If you sense danger before you sin, avoid it at all costs. If it goes off after you've done something, immediately make it right.

People of integrity do their best to maintain a clear conscience before God and before men. How about you? Is there something that has been triggering your “Spidey sense”? Are there words or deeds that are causing you shame, guilt, or grief? Perhaps your conscience is trying to tell you something – make it right.

How do you make it right? How can you have a clear conscience before God and before men? Two words – *repentance* and *forgiveness*. Repentance involves confessing your wrongdoing, admitting your guilt before God, and choosing to turn from your sin. When you do that, God is faithful to forgive you and restore your heart and mind.

The same goes with people whom you’ve offended. If you know that you have sinned against someone, go to him, repent of your words or actions, and ask for his forgiveness. It will not be easy, but I can assure you, it will be refreshing. You will experience a freedom, a peace, and a joy that you won’t be able to describe! That’s why David wrote in *Psalms 32:1*, “How blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not call guilty, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!”

Take the time to read and pray over *Psalms 32:1-5; 51:1-12*. Ask God to reveal to you any wrong that needs to be made right. What is it that you need to repent of? What do you need to ask forgiveness for? Is your conscience clear before God and men? Do the difficult thing and clear your conscience with repentance and forgiveness.



THE HANGER ROOM

Day 8

A person of *integrity* works as if God is his *employer*.

Take a minute to read *Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24*.

My first job in high school was at a clothing store called Anthony's. I thought that I would be selling clothes, learning to use a cash register, or dealing with customers. Instead, on my first day, my boss put me in the Hanger Room, or "Hanger Hell," as it was known.

Hanger Hell was a small square room, hidden in the back of the store, with five horizontal rods on every wall and boxes of hangers piled high on the floor. Keep in mind that, in a clothing store, there are all types of hangers – hangers for pants, skirts, and shirts, children's hangers, big and tall hangers, black and white hangers, padded and unpadded hangers, one and two-piece hangers. They were spilling out of the boxes in all directions. I couldn't step into the room because of the tangled mess. What had I gotten myself into?

My new boss looked at me and said, "Your first task is to clean up this room. Organize the hangers on the rods and dispose of the boxes. People on the showroom need to be able to come in here and get hangers. I'll check on you in a couple of hours." I'm not one to back down from a challenge, so in I went, knee-deep in Hanger Hell.

I was not only in that room for a couple of hours, but I was in that room for a couple of days. Progress came as slowly as Christmas! Have you ever tried to pull a hanger out of box? Rather than pull out one hanger, you pull out half a dozen, all tangled together! It was pain-staking and tedious, but I did it.

My boss returned at the end of the second day, after I had organized the room. It was no longer Hanger Hell, disorderly and diabolical. It was now Hanger Heaven, simple and systematic. She was impressed, so impressed that she bragged to the other managers and employees, and they all came to see the “new” hanger room. The next day, I was on the floor, learning how to sell clothes, work the cash register, and deal with customers.

It was not until several weeks later, when other new employees were hired, that I realized what my boss had done. One girl came in and my boss put her in the hanger room for a day. All she did was cuss and complain about what a sorry job this was and that this was not what she had signed up for. My boss fired her.

It was then that I realized that Hanger Hell had been a test. My boss was trying to understand what kind of employees she was hiring. If they could not handle a remedial task like the hanger room, then how would they handle the important responsibilities on the floor of the showroom? I thanked God for giving me parents who taught me the value of hard work and to avoid complaining.

Read *Genesis 39:1-6*. What kind of employee was Joseph?

Read *Daniel 6:1-5*, what kind of employee was Daniel?

Read *Nehemiah 5:14-19*. What kind of employee was Nehemiah?

Combining the examples of these three men, write out a profile of the perfect employee?

Look back over your list of qualities for the perfect employee. Would this list describe you? Which qualities do you exhibit? In which areas do you need to improve?

Joseph, Daniel, and Nehemiah were men of *integrity*. They were faithful servants who worked hard and proved to be reliable. What was it about them that stood out from others? Why were they so different? How did they distinguish themselves? The key is found in our opening passages.

Paul wrote, “With good will render service, *as to the Lord*, and not to men...” (*Ephesians 6:6*). Then he wrote, “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, *as for the Lord* rather than men...” (*Colossians 3:23*). Your motivation on the job is not to be your salary, your success or achievements, not even your boss or co-workers. Your motivation on the job is to be the Lord. *You are working for Him* and no one else.

When you work *as unto Him*, it will not matter what you are asked to do; you will do it with joy, to the best of your ability. It will not matter if your boss is a jerk; you will be respectful and obedient. It will not matter if you are getting paid millions or nothing at all, you will do the same quality job either way.

God’s people should be the best employees in the work force. We should do our jobs so well that we distinguish ourselves from everyone else. We should be the hardest workers, the most reliable and productive, and the most respectful and obedient. We should never be problematic, neglectful, or argumentative. Why, because we work for one person, not ourselves, not our family, not our boss, and not for money. *We work for God*, who promises to reward us, even for those times when we think no one sees what we do. Do you work like that? Would God hire you to work for Him?

Finish these three “rules” in regard to integrity on the job.

When working, I will _____

When working, I will _____

When working, I will _____

Some people tend to think that work is a result of the curse of sin, but in truth, work existed before the Fall of man. The Bible tells us that God planted a garden in Eden, and there He put the man He had formed. He put the man in the garden “to work and take care of it” (*Genesis 2:8, 9, 15*).

In essence, *work was God's idea*, and it was established as a good thing, not something to be dreaded. Work is a reflection of the nature of God. You work because He worked, when He created the world. Certainly work was tainted by sin, but work was created for a good purpose. Man needs to work; it was meant to be a joy to him. Thus, when you work, you are doing what God intended for you to do; and, when you work well and enjoy it, it brings Him pleasure. Since these things are true, then you can make the following assumptions.

- First, *your work has eternal implications, even if it has no eternal value*. You can glorify God in the little things you do as you work, even if those things aren't “important.”
- Second, *how you perform at work is more important than where you work*. Whether you are a trash man or a CEO of a large company, what matters is that you glorify God with your effort and attitude.
- Third, *how you perform at work is just as important as how you behave at work*. Christians should be exemplary in the work place, punctual, diligent, honest, and reliable.
- Fourth, *putting your heart into your work allows God to bless what you do*. God cannot bless a half-hearted, dishonest, work-hard-only-when-the-boss-is-around attitude. He gives favor to those whose hearts are completely His.

Do you demonstrate integrity when you work? Would God, your true Boss, be pleased with your efforts and attitude? Remember, you please God when you enjoy your work, and you will find His favor when you do it as unto Him.



AS GOD IS MY WITNESS

Day 9

A person of *integrity* pursues a life of *virtue*.

Take a minute to read *1 Kings 9:1-5; Psalms 78:70-72; 101:1-4*.

It is written in Scripture three times that David lived “in the integrity of his heart” before the Lord. What do you think that means?

Have you ever heard someone swear that something is true by saying, “As God is my witness”? What they mean is that only God knows that something is true because no one was around to hear or see it happen. Someone who says this understands and believes that God hears everything, sees everything, and knows everything, that nothing can be hidden from Him. Therefore, he tries to live in such a way that pleases God in every aspect of his life, even when alone. That is demonstrating *integrity*. That is also demonstrating *virtue*.

Virtue is “moral goodness,” consistently knowing and doing what is right in God’s eyes. However, before doing what is right in God’s eyes, one must know what is right to do. How is that possible? Where do we discover how to live a virtuous life, what is right by God? We won’t discover how to live a virtuous life by watching athletes, Hollywood stars, or political leaders. We go to God’s Word. To do what is RIGHT is to do what is “Revealed In God’s Holy Truth.”

Read and summarize *Psalm 119:9, 11*.

Read and summarize *2 Timothy 3:16, 17*.

Before you can do what's right in God's eyes, you must first know what's right in God's eyes, and the best way to do that is to read His words. How would you describe your commitment to reading the Bible on a regular basis? Has it been a struggle? Why or why not?

For David to live in the integrity of his heart meant that he desired and determined that everything he did and said would be morally pure and right before God and others. Would people describe you as virtuous? Would God describe you as virtuous? Why or why not?

David was not perfect; we know that. He made mistakes. However, it was his desire to live by high moral standards, but who was going to keep him accountable? The Lord would. The Lord was his witness.

No one is going to force you to live a life of integrity. No one is going to make you seek and do what is right in God's eyes. It is a choice that you have to make, a choice to live by principles, principles that you will not break, no matter the temptation, no matter the pressure, and no matter if anyone is watching or not.

Will you commit to doing what is right, even when you would rather do what's wrong?

Will you, like Joseph, commit to doing what's right, even if it would help your situation to do what's wrong?

Will you, like Daniel, commit to doing what's right, even if no one would care if you did what's wrong?

Will you, like Daniel, commit to doing what's right, even when you may be outnumbered by those doing what's wrong?

Will you commit to doing what's right, even though others may ask you to do what's wrong?

Living a life of virtue, consistently doing what is right by God, is easier said than done. Why do you think it is so hard for us to do?

Every one of us needs help to live the life that God intends. We cannot do it in our own strength. No amount of will power is enough. We all need some holy guardrails to keep us on the right path. What are some guardrails that will help you stay on the right track?

Finish these three “rules” for living a life of virtue and integrity.

I will do what’s right even _____

I will do what’s right even _____

I will do what’s right even _____

As God is your witness, are you pursuing a life of virtue, consistently doing what is right? It is a pursuit that begins in the heart. The Lord searches your heart; He knows your every thought (*1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 139:23, 24*). He desires for every meditation of your heart to be acceptable in His sight (*Psalm 19:12-14*). Are they? Are you living in the integrity of your heart?

Finish today by writing out a short prayer, expressing to God your desire to live a virtuous life.



THE LION IS PROWLING

Day 10

The *enemy* seeks to *destroy* your integrity.

Take a minute to read *John 10:10; Ephesians 6:10-18*.

Here is a review of the things we've discussed this week.

Day 1 – Everything you do pleases someone. The question is who, *who are you trying to please?* Most of what you do, you do for your own pleasure or for the pleasure of others; but, more deserving than all others is the Lord, and He desires your actions to be pleasing to Him. Living a life of integrity is *to please God in all aspects of your life*.

Day 2 – A person with *integrity* has nothing to *hide*. When a real estate agent sells a home, she puts a sign in the front yard that says, "Open House." This means that potential buyers can go into the house and view any part of it. No area of the house is off limits. When you surrender your life to Christ, you are committing to an "open house" relationship, asking God to transform it into the image of His Son, Jesus, who is blameless and above reproach.

Day 3 – People who lack *integrity* cannot be *trusted*. Engineers regularly inspect the integrity of bridges to ensure their safety. To be approved, a bridge must be entirely sound or stable. If any part of the bridge is cracked or broken, it affects the integrity of the entire bridge, and it is marked as unsafe to use. Thus, a bridge that has integrity is unbroken, whole, solid, sure, or sound and, therefore, trustworthy. Likewise, a person with integrity is morally whole, solid, sure, or sound, and, therefore, trustworthy.

Day 4 – What does living a life of integrity look like when applied to one’s relationships? It means that you are the same person in *public* as you are in *private*. It means that you don’t put on masks and perform for people, so that they never see the real you. A person of integrity is real, in all places, at all times.

Day 5 – People of integrity are *careful* with their *words*. Are they kind, true, and necessary, or are they hurtful, dishonest, and inappropriate? Do you quote others accurately? Do you use foul language or share crude jokes? Do you credit others when credit is due? Do you encourage and build people up, or are you always complaining, criticizing, using sarcasm, or belittling people? “May the words of your mouth... always be pleasing in the sight of God.”

Day 6 – A person of integrity refuses to *cheat* in order to *gain* an advantage. Worldly people want to succeed and win, just like you; the difference is that they will do anything to gain an advantage. You can’t. Honoring God by following rules is more important than your success or advantage. How you live your life is more important to Him than what status you achieve or what accolades you collect.

Day 7 – People of *integrity* live with a *clear conscience* before God and men. God, in His wisdom, has wired you with a sixth sense. In addition to seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting, you have the innate sense of knowing right and wrong. That sense is called your *conscience*. You can keep your conscience clear through repentance and forgiveness.

Day 8 – Your motivation on the job is not to be your salary, your success or achievements, not even your boss or co-workers. Your motivation on the job is to be the Lord. *You are working for Him* and no one else. When you work *as unto Him*, it will not matter what you are asked to do; you will do it with joy, to the best of your ability. It will not matter if your boss is a jerk; you will be respectful and obedient. It will not matter if you are getting paid millions or nothing at all, you will do the same quality job either way.

Day 9 –A person of *integrity* pursues a life of *virtue*. Virtue is “moral goodness,” consistently knowing and doing what is right in God’s eyes. However, before doing what is right in God’s eyes, one must know what is right to do. How is that possible? Where do we discover how to live a virtuous life, what is right by God? We won’t discover how to live a virtuous life by watching athletes, Hollywood stars, or political leaders. We go to God’s Word. To do what is RIGHT is to do what is “Revealed In God’s Holy Truth.”

Now, before we wrap up our study, there’s one more thing you need to know about integrity. You have an enemy who seeks to destroy it. He cannot stand to see a follower of Christ trying to live his or her life in a way that is pleasing to God. Therefore, he will constantly find ways to trip you, to cause you to stumble.

Remember Joseph? The enemy sent Potiphar’s wife multiple times, to cause him to sin against God and her husband. Remember David, the man who ruled “in the integrity of his heart”? He arranged for Bathsheba to enter his path. Remember Nehemiah, the upstanding governor. The enemy tried to intimidate and implicate him.

As soon as you commit to living a life of *integrity*, pleasing God in all aspects of life, your enemy will do what he can to make it difficult for you. You must be vigilant to guard against him. How do you do that?

Reread *Ephesians 6:10-18*. What are some things you can do to protect yourself?

People of integrity make easy targets. Remember *Daniel 3*, when Nebuchadnezzar forced everyone to bow before his image at the sound of the music? When the music played and everyone bowed down, three men stood upright, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Because they stood upright, they were easy to spot. Those who stand upright will always be attacked by those who are bent or crooked.

The world always takes aim at the blameless. Nebuchadnezzar threw those three men, who would not bow to a false god, into the furnace. In other words, he made things “very hot” for them. But, don’t be afraid. The Lord has promised to walk with you “through the fire” of trials and persecution.

Read *John 15:18-20; 16:33*. What promises does Jesus make here?

Peter warned us to “be alert, for the enemy is like a lion, prowling about, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same suffering is being experienced by your fellow believers; and, after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (*1 Peter 5:8-10*).

In other words, with God’s help, you can stand your ground against the enemy, for “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (*1 John 4:4*). You can live a life of integrity! You can please God in all aspects of your life! You don’t have to give in to the pressures of this world. You don’t have to play the pretender. You can live the life that God intended and enjoy living in truthfulness, sincerity, transparency, trust, and virtue!

INTEGRITY REMINDERS

Reminder 1

To have integrity is to live a life that is *wholly pleasing to God*.

Reminder 2

A person with integrity is *above reproach*, having nothing to hide.

Reminder 3

A person of integrity *can be trusted*.

Reminder 4

Be the real you at all times, in all places. Live without masks.

Reminder 5

Practice *discretion*; speak only what is *kind, true, and necessary*.

Reminder 6

Take the high road; refuse to *cheat* in order to *gain* an advantage.

Reminder 7

Keep a *clear conscience* both before God and before men.

Reminder 8

Do your work as if *God is your boss*.

Reminder 9

Pursue a life of *virtue*, consistently doing what is *right in God's eyes*.

Reminder 10

You have an *enemy* who wants to *destroy* your integrity.



“Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be *pleasing in your sight*, O Lord,
my rock and my redeemer.”

Psalm 19:14