

## session 7 study guide

# living a life of integrity

### starter

TO TELL THE TRUTH: Before the meeting begins, choose three contestants. Make sure one contestant has an unusual or humorous personal account to tell.

Instruct the one contestant whose story you will be sharing to tell the truth. Then instruct the two others to lie about the story being theirs. Have each person introduce himself or herself and give the same description of the story. For example, the contestants might say something like, “Hi, I’m John, and I threw up on my first date.”

After the introductions, allow the students to ask each contestant any question they want. After a few minutes, take a vote and choose who the students think is lying and who is telling the truth, and then have the person whose story it was to stand up. Following this, discuss these questions:

1. What is a “white lie”? Does such a thing actually exist?

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2. Is there ever a time when it is okay for you to be dishonest? If so, when?

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3. What are some examples of being dishonest—at school, at home or in your community?

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### message

One of the greatest compliments you could ever receive is to be called a person of integrity. People of integrity are honest, have pure motives and unselfishly put God first. One person in the Bible who characterized this type of integrity was Daniel. Daniel was an Israelite living as a captive in Babylon, a foreign land where God wasn't worshiped. In one story, the king had just put an edict into effect that stated the people had to worship him for 30 days. Those who disobeyed this command would be thrown into a lions' den. However, as the following account relates, that had no impact on Daniel's commitment to remain faithful to the Lord:

*Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel*

*praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions’ den?”*

*The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”*

*Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him (Daniel 6:10-14).*

1. How did Daniel respond to the decree that the people could only pray to the king?

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2. What does Daniel’s response say about his character?

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3. Why do you think the king was distressed when he heard from the other leaders that Daniel had broken the decree and remained faithful to his God?

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Daniel had broken the law, and the king had no choice but to carry out the punishment against him. The king thought that would be the end of Daniel, but the Lord had other plans:

*So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"*

*A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.*

*At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"*

*Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."*

*The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God (Daniel 6:16-23).*

1. What did the king say to Daniel before and after sending him into the lions' den?

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2. What do the king's words say about Daniel's commitment to God and his example of faith to the king?

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3. Why was Daniel protected in the lions' den (see verse 23)?

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4. How did Daniel's integrity and faithfulness to God impact the people who admired him?

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## dig

Being a person of godly integrity is work, but it is a job that results in knowing God more intimately and drawing others closer to Him. God’s Word tells us that being honest, keeping ourselves pure and seeking God’s wisdom will help us become people of integrity. We will look at each of these in this section.

### honesty

Honesty means telling the truth in every situation—even when it is difficult to do so or the lie doesn’t seem to be that big (a “little white lie”). The Bible has the following to say about honesty:

*Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:9-10).*

*Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31).*

*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13).*

1. According to Colossians 3:9-10, how does honesty show others that you belong to Christ?

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2. How does Luke 6:31 reflect the idea of living honestly?

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3. What reason does Hebrews 4:13 give for why it is useless to try to deceive God?

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4. Based on these verses, why is honesty the mark of a person who belongs to God?

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### **purity**

Purity means refusing to allow sin to leave a mark on your life and instead choosing a godly lifestyle. God's Word has the following to say about this aspect of integrity:

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God (Matthew 5:8).*

*They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more (Ephesians 4:18-19).*

*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16).*

*Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22).*

1. According to Matthew 5:8, what is the reward for the pure in heart?

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2. In Ephesians 4:18-19, how did Paul describe the relationship that those who practice impurity have with God?

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3. What instructions do we receive in Galatians 5:16 and 2 Timothy 2:22 about how to live a pure life?

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## wisdom

Wisdom involves not only using your intellect but also having the ability to discern or judge what is true, right or lasting according to God's Word. In this respect, there is a difference between the "wisdom" of the world and the wisdom that comes from God. The Bible has the following to say on godly wisdom:

*If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice (James 3:14-16).*

*My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright; he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways (Proverbs 2:1-15).*

1. How does James distinguish between the wisdom of this world and godly wisdom?

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2. What are some of the rewards given in Proverbs 2:1-15 for seeking wisdom?

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3. What are some of the steps involved in growing in wisdom?

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4. How does wisdom help you to become a person of integrity?

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## apply

The English philosopher Francis Bacon once said, “It’s not what we eat but what we digest that makes us strong; not what we gain but what we save that makes us rich; not what we read but what we remember that makes us learned; and not what we profess but what we practice that gives us integrity.” Having integrity means living a life of love and service for others that will compel them to acknowledge that you truly practice what you profess.

1. How would you define integrity in your own life?

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2. What can someone your age do to display integrity? Describe some circumstances where integrity would be noticed by others.

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3. If you became more honest, pure of heart and wise, how would these traits impact your home life? How about your friends and community?

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4. How does your integrity depend on the quality of your relationship with God?

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5. Is there someone in your life who looks up to you? If so, how can your integrity draw them closer to God?

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## reflect

As you conclude today's session, take a personal integrity inventory. List some areas in your life that you know need some attention. Beside each one, note what you can do to infuse that area of your life with integrity.

Quality	How to Improve It
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on these traits of integrity?

- \_\_\_ Honesty
- \_\_\_ Purity
- \_\_\_ Wisdom

1. Sometimes the hardest person to be honest with is yourself. Is this true for you? If so, what do you need to "get real" about?

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2. If you are someone who is known for his or her integrity, how does that impact your ability and effectiveness when sharing your faith with others?

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3. How about if you are someone who is known for lacking integrity?

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4. Write down a prayer, asking God's forgiveness for the areas in which you are lacking in integrity. Ask Him to give you His transforming power in your life so that you can lead a godly life for Him.

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Remember that you need God's help to build integrity. Seeking His help by knowing Him and His Word better are the best places to start. Take this journey with a friend who will hold you accountable, and see what you and God can do!

**meditation**



May integrity and uprightness protect me,  
because my hope is in you.

PSALM 25:21