

Honor All Relationships

Who has been an example of personal integrity in your life?
parent, grandparent, youth worker, pastor, school teacher, neighbor, fellow worker
We value those friendships and those people we can depend on.

The Point: Integrity and contentment in Christ form the foundation for good relationships.

When God met with the Israelites at Mount Sinai, He was as concerned about their relationships with others as He was about their relationship with Him. We too are to be persons of integrity in both our actions and our speech.

In Exodus 20:15-16, God spoke of two ways to show integrity. 15. You shall not steal. 16. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

To steal includes taking, keeping or using something that does not belong to us. It can also refer to kidnapping, damaging someone's property or defrauding someone. Because of these actions, the thief deprives the person of the use of an item or diminishes the item's values. This command means we are to have respect for another person.

Why is theft an insult to the creative intentions of God?

- God works in your life to supply your needs
- to steal from another person implies that God has *not* been faithful in providing for you. It is ok to own things, but we have the responsibility to be good stewards of what God has entrusted us with.
- theft violates God's laws ... to steal is a rejection of God's principles of living

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. This is called perjury when a witness lies about a person or event. It could also apply to someone who withholds pertinent information.

In what settings might the ninth commandment apply?

- theft of actual objects
- robbing an employer of your full time at work by doing personal business
- cheating on a school assignment or exam
- taking credit for work that someone else did
- cheating on income tax

Proverbs 6:16 – 19 notes seven things God hates, including a lying tongue and a lying witness. The devil is a liar and there is no truth in him. When we choose to lie, we are following the example of the devil instead of God who is the father of truth.

Why is *truth* critical to personal relationships and the fabric of society?

- we need to be able to trust what people tell us
- relationships can be destroyed when people around you choose to lie
- to live peaceably, we need to be able to trust one another
- consider how harmful mass propaganda is to what people understand and believe

How does a person's conduct reflect their character?

- we act based on who we are and what we believe is acceptable
- even small children are known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and upright? Proverbs 20:11
- how people talk reflects how they think and what they are like

We need to be content with God's Provisions.

Exodus 20:17 (NIV) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The definition of "covet" is to wish, long, or crave for something. What did these Bible characters covet?

- David: another man's wife (Bathsheba, wife of Uriah)
- King Ahab: wanted Nabal's property, had him killed
- Jacob and Esau: Jacob wanted his brother's birthright, his father's blessing
- Abraham: wanted his promised son, not willing to wait

What are dangers of coveting as illustrated in these stories?

- willing to murder
- willing to commit adultery for what you desire
- end up sinning more to cover up the original act
- willing to deceive
- God told Abraham, "This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."

God commanded His people to find contentment in what He provided. Jesus taught that even a thought can be sinful. James 4:1-2 states that covetousness is a source for many conflicts with other people. Others may not see our covetousness, but God sees it. It is a sin against God because it reflects a dissatisfaction with what God has provided. It is a lack of faith that God's sufficiency is not enough.

Why is it difficult in today's world to be content with what God has provided us?

- bombarded with advertising
- western culture values owning more and more stuff
- we like to have the latest and the greatest
- clothing styles change so fast, we want to have what is current
- we live in a "throw away" culture – throw them away and get a new one

How can we overcome the temptation to covet, to long for what someone else has?

- daily express to God thanks and praise for His provisions
- take care of what you do have
- value what God has provided you
- trust God ... tithe, give to special offerings, help others in need

Listen for a challenge to trust God.

Psalm 37:1-6 (NIV) Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; 2 for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. 3 Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. 4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: 6 He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

What issue is the psalmist addressing in these verses? How would you summarize his challenge? don't worry about how evil our culture seems to be prevailing

- God is in charge
- God's justice *will* prevail
- you should live by faith and obedience to God

Why did the psalmist urge those he instructed not to allow the wicked to influence the direction of their lives?

- trust in God and obedience are what really count
- realize that you can delight in what God wants to do in your life
- a humanistic focus seems to offer happiness, but it is temporary

What alternative did he encourage them to take?

- trust in the Lord
- do good
- dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture
- delight yourself in the Lord
- commit your way to the Lord

What does the psalmist say will result in trusting God?

- as you delight yourself in God, He gives you the desires of your heart
- your desires match what God wants to be doing in your life
- He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn
- the justice of your cause will be as bright as the noonday sun
- God will accomplish good things for you and through you

We are to remain committed to God because He provides for our needs and fulfills all our (godly) desires. Often, we try to tackle difficult situations with our own strength. Things can eat away at us sometimes causing stress, bitterness, and depression. We need to trust in the Lord. We must depend on Him and put our confidence in Him.

In addition to trusting God, we are to do what is good. We should be committed to obeying God's words. Jesus was our example. Not only are we to do good to those we care about, but we are to do good to those who are evil or our enemies, those who persecute, imprison, and even those who put to death God's people.

The Psalmist encouraged us to take delight in the Lord. We can do this by spending time with God, reading and studying His word, worshipping Him and through prayer. We are to commit ourselves to the Lord. Cast all our cares upon Him, because He cares for you. God's way is the only way that brings true blessings.

Application

Check your words.

- Be mindful of your words and actions.
- If you are tempted to say or do anything that is not honest and truthful, stop yourself.
- Commit to being a person of integrity.

Memorize.

- Commit to memory 2 Corinthians 9:8: "*And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.*"

Encourage.

- We could all use some positive affirmation and encouragement in the area of integrity and contentment.
- The things we view on TV or social media can bring us down.
- Choose to be a source of encouragement to those who struggle with discontentment.