

# Integrity: Wholeness *and* Holiness



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 39:6–12; 1 Sam. 24:1–10; Dan. 6:1–10; Matt. 4:1–11; Rom. 1:26, 27; Eph. 3:14–21.*

**Memory Text:** “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (*Titus 2:7, 8, NIV*).

The preacher was being distracted by noisy children. To make matters worse, they were his own. Finally, he had to stop preaching and tell the children they would be punished when the service was over. Silence descended on not only the children but everyone. The sermon was completed, the service ended, and Sabbath lunch was a delight. Visitors laughed and relaxed, and it was a happy Sabbath.

That evening a pleasant euphoria came over the household. The little daughter, feeling perhaps the freedom of relaxation, came to her preacher dad. “Daddy?” she said. “Yes, dear?” he responded. “Today, you promised to punish me, and you didn’t. You told a lie.”

No question, integrity is a lot easier to talk about than to display. Even the *best* of us find ourselves easily compromised unless we are careful. Truly in the *littlest things* it is so easy to slip.

This week we will take a look at this topic and how it impacts our lives on so many levels.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 5.

To view and/or download a Hope Channel program on this week's lesson, visit [www.lifesbeat.org](http://www.lifesbeat.org).

## Jesus in the Wilderness

Compromise is so easy, isn't it? Especially as one gets older, things do not often appear so black and white as they once did. We give in a little here, a little there, and hold firm from our new position. Then, over time, we give in a little here, a little there, and hold firm from our newest position. Then, over time, from this latest position, we give a little here, a little there, and then hold firm. Before long, we find ourselves in a place that we once never would have dreamed we would be in. That is what compromise is all about.

And though sometimes we need to loosen up a bit and be willing to give here and there, oftentimes we do so on the very things that we should not budge on at all!

**Read** Matthew 4:1–11. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, what were the three avenues of temptation through which Satan approached Him? How did Jesus refute those temptations, and what can we take away from this account for ourselves?

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Satan found Jesus an impregnable wall. No matter what he tried to do, he failed to get Jesus to compromise on anything. Jesus was as impregnable as the Great Wall of China had been for centuries. Only better. And that was because the Great Wall was once breached. What happened? Someone bribed the gatekeeper! All that work, all that masonry, all that stone became almost useless when one single guard stopped doing what he was supposed to.

Yes, compromise is easy. Too easy. Satan will work through our appetite, through our presumption and pride, through our desire for worldly things, through any avenue he can in order to lead us into sin, to get us to violate our integrity, and to push us away from Jesus. We not only need to be aware of his devices, we need to know how to claim God's promises and not be seduced into doing what we know is wrong. Only through a constant and firm reliance on the power of God, and a willingness to die to self, can we overcome.

**In what areas of your life have you compromised what you know is right? How did you feel the first time you did it? Does it bother you less now than at first? Or does it not even bother you at all anymore?**

## *The Lesson in Brief*

► **Key Text:** *1 Corinthians 6:19, 20*

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Outline the boundaries that Scripture provides for our conscience in upholding godly integrity and sexual purity.

**Feel:** Acknowledge our need to rely on God’s grace and power in order to flee from compromise and degradation.

**Do:** Honor God in our bodies.

► **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: Like a Needle to the Pole**

**A** How can we have a conscience that holds firmly to integrity? How did Jesus and other Bible story characters meet temptation and escape evil?

**B** “It is written” is the foundation for our beliefs. How does having a fresh and abiding experience with God’s Word safeguard our conscience?

**II. Feel: Grace to Flee Temptation**

**A** Compromise can come in such easy stages that it may be hard to detect unless we keep our eye full of God’s vision for us. How can we be filled with the fullness of God?

**B** How can we offer God our wills, so that His will may be worked out in our lives?

**III. Do: Our Body, a Temple**

**A** Since our bodies don’t belong to us, purchased as they were with such a high price, how do we honor God in our bodies?

**B** How do we honor God with our sexuality?

**C** How do we honor God with other lifestyle choices?

► **Summary:** God’s laws that regulate healthful lifestyle practices are designed to protect our sexual and mental purity. Following these laws helps condition our bodies and minds for clear thinking and communion with God.

## Maintaining Integrity

There are so many temptations out there, temptations that can so often lead to moral compromise. How easy it is for a traveling staff person to pad the expense account. How easy for a man to sneak a few looks at Internet pornography. How easy for children to lie to their parents. How easy for folk to cheat on their taxes. How easy to overindulge in food and drink. How easy to cheat in school. How easy to . . . and the list goes on, and on, and on.

**Read** the following accounts. In what ways could these men have so easily violated their integrity? What can we learn from these stories? As you read each account, think of the background to these temptations, think of all the pressure on these men to compromise, think about how easily they could have rationalized another choice.

*Gen. 39:6–12*

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*1 Sam. 24:1–10*

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*Dan. 6:1–10*

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If we are honest with ourselves, many of us will admit we are devious or at least less than transparent in many of our dealings. Sometimes we will not tell a lie, but we do not exactly convey the truth. We may believe a situation is not helped by openness. Such behavior can be found in many areas of life. What are ways in which you may have chosen expediency over forthrightness? Why is it so easy to do?

**Think about a nonbiblical character, either from history, from the news, or from a personal acquaintance, whom you deem as a person of integrity. What are the traits this person has that you wish you had? How can you seek to emulate those traits better in your own life?**

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## *Learning Cycle*

### ► **STEP 1—Motivate**

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** A life of integrity fosters total health.

**Just for Teachers:** Emphasize for the class that the goal of this week's study is to understand the impact of integrity on health.

When God created humans, He brought together spirit and earth to form life. By nature we are physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental creatures. Whatever affects one aspect affects the others, too. Those who aspire to physical health cannot achieve the maximum benefit of their efforts if they ignore the mental and spiritual. Equally true, those who value spiritual wholeness must pay careful attention to the physical. Moral integrity, the sense of life lived rightly, has a tremendous impact on every aspect of health.

**Activity:** Use recent headlines to begin a discussion about integrity. This discussion may involve moral or structural integrity, or both. The following are cited as examples of the kinds of things to look for in *current* headlines: (1) The collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A., on August 1, 2007; (2) Turkish earthquake fatalities caused by defective construction done by fraudulent contractors.

### ► **STEP 2—Explore**

**Just for Teachers:** Small cracks lead to big collapses in construction. Big doors swing on small hinges; but there is a big problem if the hinges fail. Elaborate national defense plans may be compromised by one spy. Caring for small items is important to the goal of maintaining integrity.

## Bible Commentary

I. Jesus and Integrity (*Review Matthew 4:1–11 with the class.*)

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## Integrity in Our Spiritual Lives

A young man purchased a pleasure boat with a nice little motor and trailer. The unit appeared clean and satisfactory, and—being purchased secondhand—it was not too expensive. Eager to try out his new acquisition, he took some friends and rode out to the public slip and launched the boat. It ran well, and the group made their way to a small island off the mainland in Lake Ontario.

Beaching the little boat, they explored the island and returned to the boat to head home. A short distance out, a splashing sound alerted them to the fact that they were taking on water. Quickly, the boat capsized, dumping the three friends into the chilly waters. A most fortunate rescue forestalled serious repercussions. What had happened? A single rotted timber was found in the base of the hull that, with the wave action on the beach, had led to a split in the wood. Just one bad piece, out of all the others, was enough to overturn the boat.

How similar it can be in our lives, as well. We might be so solid, so faithful, so firm and unwavering in so many ways, and yet, with one area in which we have not surrendered to the Lord, one sinful area we seek to hold on to, we can find ourselves in deep moral, spiritual, and even physical trouble.

**Read** Ephesians 3:14–21. What is Paul saying to us here? How does this bear on our personal integrity? How can we experience these promises in our own lives?

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So much is promised us in these texts. The Holy Spirit can strengthen us from within; that is, He can change us, not like some cosmetic surgery but more like heart surgery, something working deep within us. And this change comes to us by faith, by knowing the reality of God’s love for us. The Lord seeks a complete transformation in our lives; He desires that we be “filled with all the fulness of God.” Notice, too, that unlike many self-help and New Age philosophies, Paul is not talking about our tapping into some innate power found within us. No, the power that “works in us” is the power of God, who can do more than we ask or think. The question is are we allowing Him to, or are we letting our carnal natures rule instead?

**What might it mean to be “filled with all the fulness of God”? Be prepared to talk about your answer in class.**

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Satan offered Jesus good reasons to do bad things: (1) prove that You are the Son of God, (2) give God a chance to demonstrate His power by saving You, and (3) save Yourself the trouble and the pain of saving the world by accepting this easier way. Each offer, however, required that Jesus compromise His integrity. Even when Satan sugarcoated the offer with Scripture, Jesus failed to take the bait. Jesus could have given in and excused His failure on hunger or something else. Excusing our shortcomings is what we often tend to do.

We also tend to excuse our moral failings by blaming others or particular circumstances: “If Dad hadn’t treated me this way . . .” Or “I grew up in the ghetto and just did what everybody else was doing.” Or “I never would’ve done this if I’d been sober.” Or “I didn’t do it. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.” If ever there was a person who could have excused moral failure on dismal circumstances, it was Joseph. Instead we see in Genesis 39:6–12 the record of a young man who overcame family rejection, kidnapping, and enslavement to leave for posterity a sterling example of sexual integrity.

While the temptation to *commit* wrong acts may be strong, the stronger temptation is often to omit good ones. Paul did not confront Peter because he had made derogatory remarks about Greeks; instead, Peter simply found it inconvenient to eat with them. He could have excused this faux pas on his calling to reach out to the Jews and said that it was Paul’s work to reach the Greeks. Rationalize his acts all you will, but at the end of the day Peter had compromised his integrity by omitting the good. Contrast this incident with the story of Daniel (*Dan. 6:1–10*). Daniel could have changed his prayer life, conducted it privately for a month, simply become too busy for a brief period, or gone out of town to make it difficult to be observed. It would have been a brief omission, not a permanent arrangement. Daniel, however, refused to compromise his witness for even a day and was willing to die for his convictions. He, too, left a legacy of integrity.

**Consider This:** Why was Satan unsuccessful in causing Jesus to compromise? Since we often are tempted to create good reasons to do wrong things, how can Jesus’ example help us to discern Satan’s deceptions? What tools did Jesus employ to fortify His integrity against Satan’s attack? Moral and structural collapses almost always are preceded by erosion. What was originally solid *gradually* is compromised by everyday wear and tear. How did Jesus guard against erosion?

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## Sexual Integrity

**Read** Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:15–18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Jude 7. What is the basic message of these texts to us today?

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Young Megan went off to college. It was her first time away from home for a long period of time. Though she had been taught about sexual immorality, and though she knew what the Bible and her church taught about it, she suddenly found herself in situations where the pressure was very great to give in. She knew it was wrong, she knew this was not what she wanted for her life, she knew that God had something better for her. At first she was strong; at first she resisted. Then, slowly but surely, she compromised, one step at a time. In the beginning, the guilt was terrible; but over time it did not bother her as much as before—not until she found herself with an incurable sexually transmitted disease. Then, and only then, did she start to really ponder the reality of her mistakes.

Sexual immorality in and of itself is bad enough. It is sin, and sin damages our relationship with God and with others. But in this day and age, it can be a very real physical hazard. There are numerous sexually transmitted diseases, from herpes to HIV/AIDS, that can be physically devastating. The surest way to protect yourself from these diseases is to follow biblical principles of sexual morality. Sexual pleasure is for a man and a woman within marriage. Period. Anything outside of that is outside of God's plan and is wrong; even worse, it can lead to some very serious physical consequences, as well. Even some secular organizations agree that sexual abstinence outside of marriage is the best choice a person can make.

And not just physical either. The emotional toll can be terrible, especially for women upon whom the stigma for sexual immorality often falls the heaviest, however unjustly.

Of particular concern today is the question of pornography, which since the rise of the Internet is more prevalent than ever. God alone knows how many millions of lives will be ruined through this terrible scourge. There is help for those who get caught up in it; however, for many the shame seems so great that they are afraid to get the help they need.

**What are your temptations, struggles, frustrations, and fears in this area of human life? Whatever your situation, how can you better avail yourself of the promises of God to see you through them?**

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Learning Cycle CONTINUED**II. Acting on Belief** (Review Romans 12:1, 2 with the class.)

The wholeness (integrity) of Christian service (worship) is embedded in this passage of Romans. Christians are to present their bodies (physical) to God as living sacrifices (spiritual), which is a rational (mental) service. The Greek word, λογικὴν, from which English derives such words as *logic*, seems better rendered as “rational” (compare *KJV*, *NKJV*, “reasonable”; *not* “spiritual”—*NIV*, *NASB*, *NRSV*). The passage properly reads, “I therefore urge you brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your rational service.” (For more on the translation, see Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993], p. 438.) Paul’s basis for this overhaul—renewal of body, spirit, and mind—is the living Christ, whose power alone transforms.

**Consider This:** How might our witness be compromised if our verbal profession is not integrated with our life choices? Why do you suppose James found it important to emphasize “doing” over “hearing” God’s Word? (See *James 1:22*.) What can happen if our mental assent to truth is not complemented by physical and spiritual submission to God’s will?

▶ **STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Use the following excerpt, pages 21 and 22, of Randy Reese and Frank Minirth’s *Growing Into Wholeness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993) to stimulate a discussion about the impact of integrity upon health. Focus on how understanding the human predicament guides our evangelistic witness.

**Excerpt:** “Bart came into our clinic with several serious problems, all related, though neither he nor we knew it at first. What brought him to us was a physical disorder, an ulcer. . . .

“What had caused Bart’s ulcer? It seems he was worrying a lot. . . . And worry, which is mental distress or preoccupation with a fear that something bad is going to happen, often stimulates the stomach to produce excess acid. . . .

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## Acting on Belief

In Romans 12:1, 2, Paul implores the Christian to present himself or herself in wholeness to the Lord in service. The integrity of body, mind, and spirit is brought as a whole to the Lord. This requires integrity in each part of the whole.

Some easily comprehend the importance of pure minds but are lax about their physical bodies. As we have seen, this is not a biblical position. Our bodies are gifts from God, and because of that we are commanded by God to take care of them.

Integrity requires that our actions reflect our belief. Today, there remains little room for debate over the broad principles of healthful living. Medical science teaches what we have known for years now. Exercise is important for the body. If we know this, we show a lack of integrity if we neglect giving our bodies the exercise they need. Fresh, clean water and moderate amounts of sunshine are so very beneficial. Because we know these things, we are called upon to follow them.

In a time when an epidemic of obesity sweeps many nations, few would refute the dangers of gluttony. We must make choices that only we as individuals can make, regarding how much food we eat and the kind we eat, especially if we are having problems with weight. Tobacco is recognized by nearly all as being the world's most rampant killer. The use of substances ranging from alcohol and marijuana to cocaine has gutted the productive lives of millions. The Spirit of Prophecy no longer stands alone in advocating fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. Even government departments of agriculture recommend a reduction in the consumption of many high-fat flesh foods. In short, how much better to follow a vegetarian diet, especially when we know how much better it is for us.

“True religion and the laws of health go hand in hand. It is impossible to work for the salvation of men and women without presenting to them the need of breaking away from sinful gratifications, which destroy the health, debase the soul, and prevent divine truth from impressing the mind. Men and women must be taught to take a careful view of every habit and every practice and at once put away those things that cause an unhealthy condition of the body, and thus cast a dark shadow over the mind. God desires His light bearers ever to keep a high standard before them. By precept and example they must hold their perfect standard high above Satan's false standard, which, if followed, will lead to misery, degradation, disease, and death for both body and soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 480.

**Review all of your personal health habits. Are you living up to all the light you have? If not, what is keeping you from making the kinds of changes that can do you only good?**

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

“The root of all his trouble was a spiritual issue. Bart was involved in an extramarital affair, and he was also a Christian. . . . No wonder he was worried so much. To flout God’s clearly expressed will is a serious matter. In a person who has any conscience at all, such rebellion creates enormous guilt—spiritual pain. And when a person like Bart refuses to accept the spiritual remedy God offers, the result will be emotional pain as well, in the form of anxiety: *What will God do to me? What will happen to my marriage if my wife finds out? How much longer can I keep the affair hidden? What would my friends and fellow church members think? What effect would discovery have on my children?*” (author’s emphasis).

**Application Questions:**

How does Bart’s problem prove the link between health and integrity? What aspects of Bart’s being are affected? How should we approach Bart to bring complete healing? In what areas does healing need to take place?

**► STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** Humans tend to follow their unique inclinations and tendencies. We have prayer warriors who are overweight and never exercise, academic overachievers who get no sleep and look unkempt, athletes who excel in multiple sports but cannot read two consecutive sentences. Our contention that a life of integrity fosters health begins with the premise that the physical, mental, and emotional/spiritual faculties must be integrated. Moral integrity, a sense of right living, must apply to every area. Even a cursory reading of Proverbs suggests that gluttony, laziness, stupidity, adultery, drunkenness, and atheism are sins; and that sin destroys good health.

**Activity:** Give each member three small wads of different colored playdough, representing the major areas of life. Ask them to knead them into one ball. Explain to the members that they are, metaphorically, integrating life. Ask if any area can be ignored if they are to enjoy the renewed health God offers. As they knead, encourage them to consider lifestyle changes that they plan to make in order to achieve total integrated health.

**Further Study:** “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 57.

“There is work for us to do—stern, earnest work. All our habits, tastes, and inclinations must be educated in harmony with the laws of life and health. By this means we may secure the very best physical conditions, and have mental clearness to discern between the evil and the good.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 28.

“Our danger is not from scarcity, but from abundance. We are constantly tempted to excess. Those who would preserve their powers unimpaired for the service of God, must observe strict temperance in the use of His bounties, as well as total abstinence from every injurious or debasing indulgence.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 29.

### Discussion Questions:

- ① Look at the last Ellen G. White quote in Friday’s study. What does she mean when she writes that our danger is from excess?
- ② Sunlight is an important component of good health. Here, too, however, we need a balance: a few minutes of sunlight each day can be a great blessing for us; on the other hand, overexposure can lead to health problems. How do we find the right balance here as with everything else?
- ③ What can your local church do to help with the problem of HIV/AIDS in your local community? Though in some parts of the world, the problem is greater than in others, we all can do at least a small part.
- ④ What can you do to encourage the young people in your church to abstain from sexual activity outside of marriage? Why is this so important? How can the church help, not just in sexuality but in other things, as well, that the young struggle with? How can you help the young (or old, for that matter) make the right choices when it comes to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco? It is one thing to give them dire warnings; it is another actually to do things to help them avoid making the wrong choice or to give them help if they do make mistakes.