

## CHARACTER MATTERS: Integrity Matters

Scriptures used: [Matthew 6:1-2 \(NIV\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Integrity has never been more important than it is now. The world is full of fake news, photoshopped social media, AI-generated images and videos, and misleading political advertising. We are constantly being challenged to compromise our values. We are being asked to obsess about the questions “What do they think about me?” and “Who do they see when they look at me?” But integrity does not let us compromise, no matter who “they” are. Instead, integrity focuses on the harmonious integration of what we believe, what we say, and what we do. Integrity means that we do what is right when no one is looking. Integrity means that we do what is right even when it is difficult. In other words, our outside must match our inside.

### KEY POINTS

1. **The Bible shows us what it is like to live a life of integrity.** Despite being sold into slavery, Joseph quickly earned the trust of his master Potiphar. Joseph was put in charge of his entire estate, and refused to give in to temptation when the opportunity presented itself. Esther is another example. She risked her life to speak up for her people, saving them from genocide. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus poured out His heart to God. He prayed for a way out of the crucifixion, but ultimately prioritized God’s plan over His will. Each of these people matched their external actions with their internal values.
2. **Jesus saw hypocrisy differently than we do today.** Back then, a hypocrite was an actor who wore masks during performances. A hypocrite would change masks during the play. This idea of changing your outside appearance is what Jesus meant when He accused Pharisees of being hypocrites. In [Matthew 6:16 \(NIV\)](#), Jesus warns us not to act in certain ways in public. This is a “mask” that we don’t need to wear because God has already seen our good works and knows our motivations. That’s what Jesus meant when we talked about hypocrisy. He wanted our outside to match our inside!
3. **Hypocrites will miss out on God’s destiny.** Acting in certain ways may help us achieve public fame, or wealth, or forms of worldly success. But that is only one part of our lives. Our destiny is not a luxurious destination full of material things. We can reach great heights in the world without becoming the person God wants us to be. We should focus on who we are on the inside, not what we have around us.
4. **We need to pull off the masks of hypocrisy.** Keep remembering that our real audience is not other people. Our real audience is God, as Jesus reminds us in [Matthew 6:4 \(NIV\)](#). Keep practicing better behaviors, shrinking the gap between our values and our actions. Keep these efforts secret (don’t do them publicly “for show”), since God knows our private deeds. And finally, keep it real. Work hard while staying honest about our remaining flaws. King David turned back to God after committing adultery and murder thanks to Nathan. That accountability allowed David to live a life of integrity, calling out to God to “search my heart” and “lead me along the path of everlasting life” in [Psalms 149:23-24 \(NLT\)](#).

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Jesus lived a life of integrity. He was the same on the inside as He was on the outside. Every time the word “hypocrite” is mentioned in the Bible, it was Jesus who spoke the word. He was especially concerned with the religious leaders who were both inconsistent and deceptive. He wanted people to turn toward God and be transformed from within. Who is someone in your life that you admire for their integrity? What does it feel like when you are around them? What difference does their integrity make?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Our integrity is challenged when we obsess about the questions “What do they think about me?” and “Who do they see when they look at me?” We need to shift our thinking to focus on God. Then we start to ask a new version of those questions: “What does God think of me?” and “Who does God see when He looks at me?” When we are sensitive to God, we won’t have to worry about whether we are doing right by others. What is the greatest challenge in your life right now to live with integrity? What is the cost of living without integrity, and what is the benefit of living with integrity?
- 3) **DO** - Think about the person you want to become. Think about the gap between that person and who you are today. Identify a person who can be your accountability partner, helping you close that gap. Ask that person to regularly check in with you to discuss your progress. See you next Sunday!