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2  **What is integrity?**

- “To me, integrity means always doing what is right and good, regardless of the immediate consequences. It means being righteous from the very depth of our soul, not only in our actions but, more importantly, in our thoughts and in our hearts.” -- Joseph B. Wirthlin

3  **Matthew 5:33-37**

- *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:*
- *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne:*
- *Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.*
- *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*
- *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

4  **Matthew 5:33-37**

- *“Again you have heard that it was said to the people of old, ‘Do not swear falsely, but fulfill your oaths to the Lord.’*
- *But I say to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, because it is the throne of God,*
- *or by the earth, because it is the footstool of his feet, or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king.*
- *And do not swear by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black.*
- *But let your statement be ‘Yes, yes; no, no,’ and anything beyond these is from the evil one.*

5  **The Pharisaical excuse**

- Pharisees loved to emphasize their own piety and sincerity by swearing an oath:
  - “by heaven”
  - “by all that is in the earth”
  - “by Jerusalem”
- When they could not keep their promise or what they said was found untrue, they had an excuse. “Since God wasn’t a party to my oath, it isn’t binding.”

6  **But it was binding**

- Heaven is God’s throne (5:34)
- Earth is God’s footstool (5:35)
- Jerusalem is the Messiah’s city (5:35)
- So in each of these cases, the oaths the Pharisees made DID involve God! So they were binding after all!
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7  **Oaths are unnecessary**

- If you are a person of integrity, you don’t need to add “by God” or “by thunder” or “by \_\_\_\_\_” to help people think you really mean what you are saying.
- Simply be a person who keeps your word. Your reputation for integrity will precede you.
- Your life should be sufficient to back up your words.

8  **The scope of integrity**

- Jesus wants disciples who are so transparently honest that people can always count on their word. Such integrity involves punctuality, dependability, financial integrity, and keeping promises.
  - Lawson, LeRoy. *Matthew: Unlocking the Scriptures for You*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1986. Print. Standard Bible Studies.

9  **Truth is increasingly rare**

- In the *New York Times* a few years ago, a new ruling by the National Labor Relations Board was published.
  - It stated that it was permissible for either union or management to lie to workers when trying to persuade their vote.
  - Here's the ruling: "Exaggeration, inaccuracies, partial truths, name calling, and falsehoods, while not condoned, may be excused as legitimate propaganda before a union representation election."

10  **Even liberal editors get it...**

- Even the Times editors were upset. They editorialized, "If respect for the commandment, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness' lapses, there will be no hope of maintaining a free society of self-governing men."
- Without a certain modicum of honesty, no democracy or republic can exist.

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What does it mean to keep your word?

12  **"Swear not at all"**

- 1 • This command does not refer to the process of "swearing in" that takes place in a court of law.
  - Christ was referencing a common practice of the day used to get out of keeping a promise.
- 2 • Christ emphasized that all promises are important; regardless of on what you took your oath.
  - Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay; in essence, stick to what you said. Keep your word.

13  **Jesus under a judicial oath**

- During Jesus' trial in the Sanhedrin, the high priest forced Jesus to answer his question by invoking an oath.
  - *But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."*
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14  **How does God view lying?**

- Proverbs 18:21 -- *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.*
- Matthew 12:36-37 -- *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be*

*condemned."*

- Proverbs 12:22 -- *Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight.*

15  **James 5:12**

- *But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*
- James caught this truth.

16  **Dwight D. Eisenhower**

- The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.

17  **Two Lies in Scripture**

Abraham & Sarah  
Ananias & Sapphira

18  **Abraham & Sarah**

- Story actually repeats itself twice (Genesis 12, 20).
- Genesis 20 – Abraham lies and tells King Abimelech that Sarah is his sister. Sarah, it seems, corroborates.
- Abimelech wants to take Sarah for his wife, but God warns him and the deception is revealed.
- Seemingly no real punishment for Abraham or Sarah.
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19  **Ananias & Sapphira**

- Story found in Acts 5:1-11.
- Ananias & Sapphira sell a piece of land and give some of the money to the Church.
- They lie about the amount, telling Peter they've given it all.
- God punishes them for this deception by striking them dead on the spot.
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20  **A double standard?**

- Was God too harsh with Ananias & Sapphira?
- Did Abraham and Sarah "get off easy?"
- Why does God deal with them differently?

21  **Similarities**

- Both couples were believers.
- Both left their lands for "a better country."
- Both lied to protect future plans or desires.
- Both lacked faith for complete honesty.
- Both agreed beforehand to lie.
- Both were reproved for their lies
  - Abraham by Abimelech

– Ananias by Peter.

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22  **Two kinds of punishment**

- 1 Timothy 5:24 – *“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.”*
- Abraham and Sarah’s sin followed them.
- Ananias and Sapphira’s received immediate judgment.

23  **Abraham & Sarah’s Judgment**

- 1 • Abraham & Sarah’s sin follows them; they commit it twice.
  - Their iniquity is passed down to subsequent generations.
  - Isaac commits this same sin – and does not even have the excuse of it being a “half truth.”
- 2 • What you excuse in moderation, your children will indulge in excess.
  - Jacob was a notorious liar and deceiver. That deception followed him the rest of his life.

24  **Ananias & Sapphira’s Judgment**

- Ananias & Sapphira are judged swiftly and surely – God takes their lives.
  - Their sin had the potential of poisoning the formative Church.
  - Lying in any way demonstrates contempt for God.
  - The end result was that the Church feared God and glorified Him greatly. God insists we take Him seriously.
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25  **When is it acceptable to lie?**

26  **Situational Ethics**

- What if the Nazis come to your door, demanding to know if you are hiding Jews. What do you tell them?
- Are there sometimes when it’s okay to lie?
- Isn’t it really your motivation that matters?
- What about the story of Rahab?
  - Rahab lied to hide the spies.
  - Later God commended her.

27  **Just how strong is our God?**

- 1 • The problem with these “what if” scenarios is that they deny the power of God.
  - There are actual times when God blinded Nazi eyes to keep Jews hidden during WWII.
- 2 • These kind of lies show contempt for God’s power. It’s as if we’re saying He needs our help.
  - “The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” A lie with a good motivation behind it is still sinful.

28  **So what about Rahab?**

- Hebrews 11:31 – *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”*

- Rahab is praised for her faith in the one true God – NOT the lack of faith she demonstrated by lying.
- God could have easily protected the spies without Rahab's sinning.
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29  **So what's the big deal?**

30  **The source of all lies**

- John 8:44 – *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."*
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31  **The Lord is a holy God**

- Psalm 138:2 – *"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."*
- Deuteronomy 32:4 – *"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."*
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32  **Jesus Christ is Truth**

- John 14:6 – *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*
- Revelation 3:14 – *"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;"*

33  **Keeping your word**

- *A single lie destroys a whole reputation of integrity.* -- Baltasar Gracian
- The same can be said about the failure to keep a promise.
- How important is this for parents?
  - *"Moral authority comes from following universal and timeless principles like honesty, integrity, treating people with respect."* --Stephen Covey