

"O LORD, who may abide  
in Your tent? Who may  
dwell on Your holy hill?  
He who walks with  
integrity, and works  
righteousness, and speaks  
truth in his heart.  
He does not slander with  
his tongue, Nor does evil  
to his neighbor, Nor takes  
up a reproach against his  
friend; In whose eyes a  
reprobate is despised, But  
who honors those who  
fear the LORD; He swears  
to his own hurt and does  
not change; He does not  
put out his money at  
interest, Nor does he take  
a bribe against the  
innocent. He who does  
these things will never be  
shaken."  
Psalm 15:1-5

# The Heart of the Matter

## Integrity - Psalm 15 - Introduction

"The best measure of a man's honesty isn't his income tax return. It's the zero adjust on his bathroom scale." – Arthur C. Clarke

They say repetition is the key to understanding.

If that is true then there are certain foundational issues that we should review again and again in our lives so that we can better understand them. One such issue that is always crucial, particularly in our current culture, is the issue of integrity. David, in Psalm 15 deals with the issue of genuine integrity.

How would you define integrity?

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Often, we either oversimplify the issue of integrity or give up on it altogether. We may say to ourselves "I'm a pretty good person. I don't need to worry about my integrity." Or we may say "I've messed up too much. It isn't possible for me to live a life of Godly integrity." Either way, we feel like integrity is beyond our grasp.

What is your perspective of your personal integrity?

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We can learn much about integrity from looking at the life of David and what he wrote in Psalm 15. Stop and read Psalm 15 right now.

How do we make sense of what David is writing here since we know about the failures of his life? There was an incredible breach of integrity in David's life. How could he honestly feel so strongly and write so passionately about integrity?

Experience can be a great teacher. Fifteen years have passed since David sinned with Bathsheba. He suffered the pain of terrible consequences, and lost his first child with Bathsheba. His son Amnon raped his sister Tamar, and later Absalom killed his own brother Amnon. Brother raping sister. Brother killing brother. David's whole family was racked by division and strife. The pain, deep, long-lasting pain, seemingly caused David to turn around. David always had a haunting reminder of what he did; yet, it drove him closer and closer to the Lord and gave him an incredible desire to be a man of integrity after this point of failure in life. He could write so passionately in Psalm 15 about integrity because he had learned lessons in an incredibly painful fashion, but he learned them well. David allowed his failure to drive him to the Lord, rather than away, and we must do the same.

What are your failures doing in your life? Are you allowing them to drive you to the Lord?

“Finally, brethren,  
whatever is true,  
whatever is honorable,  
whatever is right,  
whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely,  
whatever is of good  
repute, if there is any  
excellence and if  
anything worthy of  
praise, dwell on these  
things.”

Philippians 4:8

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And more importantly, how do you allow them to drive you to the Lord?

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In verse 2 of Psalm 15, we see three things about a person of genuine Godliness.

Having integrity is a part of one's lifestyle- it is part of who you are. David says the genuine worshipper "walketh uprightly" (KJV, vs. 2a) or as the NIV says, "His walk is blameless;" which is simply talking about a walk of integrity. The Hebrew here carries with it the meaning of completion or entirety. Integrity is not an isolated action here or there, but who you are.

Did you get that? You cannot do integrity or turn it off and on. It is who you are.

Living a life of integrity involves one's deeds, one's actions. In vs. 2b, David goes on to say that this man who walks uprightly "works righteousness." This simply means that he who walks with integrity will have deeds that are right deeds. So who you are shows itself in what you do.

Now, let's focus now on this third point of what it means to be a person of integrity, and that is the issue of having a truthful heart. That is the matter of our internal conversation, the words we speak in our own hearts. In Proverbs 4:23 we read, "Above all else guard your heart, for it is the well spring (the source) of life." There is nothing more important you can do than guard your heart.

Proverbs does not say the mind, although we know that our mind needs to be filled with things that are good (Philippians 4:8). It speaks of the heart because it is the heart that drives or controls what we put in our minds.

Have you ever done something that you know you shouldn't have?  
What?

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Your mind said, "No", but your heart said, "Yes". Guard your heart and your mind will follow.

Probably the most important principle David learned through his sin of immorality and murder is revealed in his prayer of confession in Psalm 51. This lesson is found in verse 6. "Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being; in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know wisdom." David said."God I understand now that you desire truth in the innermost being."

So you see, this little phrase in Psalm 15 shows us the core of integrity. The individual with integrity, the person who has his act together in God's eyes, at the core of life, knows what it means to speak the truth in one's heart.

*“So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”  
Matthew 23:28*

In this passage the Hebrew is referring to the reasoning, words, and thoughts of the heart. It is the internal conversation that each of us carries on mentally, and that is going on in your heart and mind right now. So in the person of integrity, this internal conversation is certain, sure, and right. What this man says to himself is always reliable, firm, faithful, and truthful. It is not shaky or questionable; it is not wavering and does not contain lies or half truths. There is no room for hypocrisy here. That is what David knew and what he tells us here is the core of integrity. God wants you and me to have integrity and truthfulness not just when it is visible, but even in what only we and God know is going on in our hearts and minds. A person of genuine integrity is a person who is absolutely truthful in his inner man, about himself, about who he is, about where he is, about what he is. Unless integrity is to the core, it is not integrity.

You see the breakdown of integrity begins when you fail to be truthful in your heart. You don't just wake up one day and all of a sudden your integrity is shattered because you get up on the wrong side of the bed. No, it is not that simple. You see, it starts with a pattern of refusing to speak the truth in your heart.

And I want you to notice something even more startling: What we say in our hearts eventually produces behavior in our lives. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that from your heart comes your entire life. Your words, your thoughts, your deeds, all start in your heart. You are and you will become what you think in your heart. When you say something in your heart, it is either the beginning of downfall, or the beginning of recovery.

But please note, apart from Christ you cannot have integrity. The core of integrity is a transformed heart and until Christ transforms your heart you can't truly have it all together. The classic example of people who thought they had integrity, but didn't were the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:25-28, Jesus calls the Pharisees, who were the religious men, the righteous men of the day, hypocrites. He goes on to say that the outside of the cup is clean, you look like you have it all together, but the inside of the cup is filthy. Jesus says to clean up the inside of the cup and then the outside will truly be one of integrity.

What about you? Are you like the Pharisees who look good on the outside but you know you are not speaking truth in your heart?

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Let's take a good look at Psalm 15 and rediscover integrity.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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