

A liar With Integrity

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Ethics is a defined standard of right and wrong, good and evil, like the Ten Commandments.

Morality

Morality is a lived standard of right and wrong, good and evil. It's what we say and do as an expression of our true ethic. In other words, how we behave expresses what we truly believe, not what we say we believe.

Integrity

Integrity is different from ethics and morality.

The word "integrity" comes from the word "integer" and means "whole." An integer is a whole number-not 1 ½, but 1 or 2. Integrity means sound, complete, integrated. To the extent a person's ethic and morality are integrated, that person has integrity. If a man tells you he will lie, cheat and steal from you, he has a low ethic. If he does business that way, he also has a low morality.

An Unexpected Conclusion

Now here's an unexpected conclusion: that lying, cheating, thief is unethical and immoral, but has integrity. Why? Because his morality is consistent with his ethic. He is the same on the inside as he appears on the outside. If a man or woman claims to cheat and steal but DOESN'T cheat and steal, they are moral in their practice but lack integrity because their morality doesn't match their stated ethic.

Seven Woes

Jesus denounced those who lacked integrity. That's why he condemned the Pharisees. Seven times he called them "hypocrites" (Matthew 22: 13, 14, 15, 22, 25, 27, 29). Notice that each verse that lists the word "hypocrite" begins with the word, "Woe." He summed up their character in Matthew 22:3, "They say things and do not do them." Hypocrites suffer from a lack of integrity. They believe one way and act in another.

Yet, he praised sinners who acknowledged their sinfulness. Why? Could it have been because, in spite of their sins, they possessed integrity? Was it because they didn't pretend to be moral while engaging in sin?

Choose Your Ethic and Live by It

You may have a high or low ethic. You may be moral or immoral. But if you want integrity, you must choose your ethic and live by it.

Jesus calls us to integrity. One who claims to be a Christian, or lives by the Bible, makes an ethical statement. A moral believer is one who allows that ethic to govern their thoughts and actions. To possess integrity, then, is not simply to believe in the biblical ethic, but to live by it.