

The Integrity Problem . . .

The CEO lines his pockets at his stockholders' expense. The politician commits to promises he has no plans of keeping. The student "borrows" answers in order to pass the test. The minister commits adultery in the name of "unmet needs." The driver exceeds the speed limit—he thinks he won't be caught. The lawyer overbills his client in order to pad his income. And the list goes on.

If you were to ask people, "Do you consider yourself a person of integrity?" almost everyone would answer yes, including those just mentioned. Yet those with real integrity are the same in the dark as in the light. The Lord loves to honor those with a heart like His . . . those who are right in His sight. For He says,

*"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much."
(Luke 16:10)*

Q: "Doesn't the wide diversity of opinions regarding what is right or wrong prove that there are no moral absolutes?"

No, just because a test has multiple choice answers does not mean that all the answers are correct. Most often only one is correct. Likewise, just because a culture accepts an immoral custom doesn't make that practice moral.

*"Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules. You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness."
(Psalm 119:137–138)*

Q: "Shouldn't a democratic culture that protects freedom of speech and religion also accept freedom of morality and reject moral absolutes?"

No, in a free society, you can hold to moral absolutes. Freedom of speech simply guarantees your right to speak—it doesn't guarantee that what you speak is right. Often through open dialogue people are able to see the fallacy of their thinking. A democracy simply guarantees both your right to be right and your right to be wrong.

*"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether."
(Psalm 19:7–9)*

Ethics

Cultural Ethics—making decisions based on popular opinion

- Have your values been swayed because of the belief that “everyone is doing it”?
- Have you spent excessive money or time in an attempt to gain recognition and acceptance?

Situation Ethics—making decisions based on what seems good for the moment

- Have you lied to protect another person’s feelings or desires?
- Have you encouraged someone to do something that violates the Word of God because it seemed like the most loving thing to do?

Emotive Ethics—making decisions based solely on your feelings

- Have you thought, *This can’t be wrong because it feels so right?*
- Have you felt it was necessary to vent all your feelings?

Behavioral Ethics—making decisions based solely on natural inclination

- Have you justified your negative behavior saying, “I just can’t help it”?
- Have you blamed your negative responses on your family upbringing?

*“Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.”
(Psalm 119:104)*

Arguments and Answers on Ethics

- **Argument:** “People have integrity as long as they are true to their system of ethics.”

Answer: From a human point of view, you have integrity if you are completely true to your system of ethics. However, since God created the universe and established His laws for all people, if your ethical system violates His system of right and wrong, then from God’s point of view your system is flawed . . . you cannot be a person of true integrity. (Psalm 24:1–4)

- **Argument:** “There are no moral absolutes—the issue of right and wrong varies from person to person and culture to culture.”

Answer: Moral absolutes are both transcultural and transhistorical. In one country it may be right to drive your car on the right side of the road, yet it may be wrong in another country. However, in every country it’s always wrong to intentionally drive into a crowd of children, killing innocent lives. While many laws are based on a country’s changing wants, God’s moral laws are based on His unchanging Word. (Psalm 119:89)

*“Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules.
You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.”
(Psalm 119:137–138)*

Truth Tests

The Ethics Exam

- Is there a principle about it in God’s Word? (2 Corinthians 4:1–2)
- Is it beneficial? (1 Corinthians 10:23)
- Is it self-serving at someone else’s expense? (1 Corinthians 10:24)
- Is it setting an example you would want everyone else to follow? (1 Corinthians 11:1)

The Integrity Interrogation

- Am I choosing to do this in order to look good in the eyes of others? (Galatians 1:10)
- Am I doing this only to receive financial gain? (Proverbs 15:16)
- Am I willing to do this even if I don’t get the credit? (Luke 14:11)
- Am I doing something unethical because I know I will not be found out? (Hebrews 4:13)

*“Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”
(Psalm 119:89)*

Key Verse to Memorize

*“I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.”
(Psalm 119:11)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 101

Value the importance of moral purity.
(1 Thessalonians 4:7)

Implant God’s Word in your heart. (Romans 12:2)

Recognize your dependence on God’s grace.
(Psalm 26:2–3)

Trust in Christ for your identity.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Understand that your strength is in Christ.
(Proverbs 3:26)

Expect testing and temptation. (John 15:18–19)

*“Count it all joy, my brothers,
when you meet trials of various kinds.”
(James 1:2)*

Related Topics . . .

- Decision Making:
Discerning the Will of God
- Habits:
Success in Self-Control
- Lying:
How to Stop Truth Decay
- Manipulation:
Severing the Strings of Control
- Stealing:
Catch the Thief Hiding in Your Heart

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For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Ethics:

The Same in the Dark as in the Light.

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