

# LIVING HOLY

**Life Application:** Maintaining our moral principles, values, and integrity in an ungodly environment.

**Key Verse for Meditation:** The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. – Proverbs 11:3

**Focus Scriptures:** Job 2:3; 31:6; Psalm 15:1-5; Isaiah 33:15-17; Daniel 6:1-28; Romans 12:17

## The Danger of Small Deviations

Scientists now say that a series of slits, not a giant gash, sank the Titanic. The opulent, nine-hundred-foot cruise ship went down in 1912 on its first voyage from England to New York. Fifteen hundred people died in the worst maritime disaster of the time.

The most widely held theory was that the ship hit an iceberg, which opened a huge gash in the side of the liner. However, an international team of divers and scientists recently used sound waves to probe the wreckage, buried in the mud under two-and-a-half miles of water. Their discovery?

The damage was surprisingly small. Instead of the huge gash, they found six relatively narrow slits across the six watertight holds.

Small damage, invisible to most, can sink a great ship. And “small” deviations from the moral principles of God’s Word are even more dangerous, for they carry eternal consequences.

We live in a world where corruption, dishonesty, and immorality are increasingly commonplace. However, God’s Word establishes certain lasting principles that are fundamental and universal. For instance, the Ten Commandments give us some moral absolutes. These principles do not change with circumstances, cultures, or eras in history, and they are the foundation on which the Christian life must be lived.



**Lesson Key:** As holy people, we have devoted ourselves to God and have been consecrated or set apart for His use. Because we have been separated unto Him, we are called to be people of spiritual integrity—to hold true to godly beliefs, moral values, and standards of ethical behavior—regardless of the ungodly environment we live in.

Maintaining our integrity in an ungodly environment is closely related to the experience of sanctification. When we have devoted ourselves to God and set ourselves apart for His purpose and glory, we have a deep desire to please Him in every aspect of life. Our consciences become geared by the righteousness of God. We are not merely conforming to a set of rules, but we behave with integrity through the transforming power of God who enables us to live free from sin and be obedient to His purpose in our lives. We have a desire to receive instruction, a readiness to obey God's Word, and a motivation to please Him.

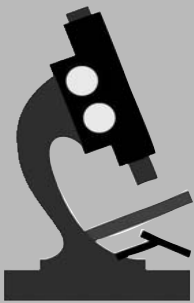
Paul counseled the Ephesians to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1). Our values, our worldview, our ethical behavior must reflect our commitment to Christ. How do we make sure this is the case?

We begin by grounding ourselves in the Word of God. When we face an ethical question, we should search the Bible for what it says on that particular subject. We must maintain a close walk with God, making sure nothing hinders us in receiving guidance from Him. We should listen carefully to our consciences and to the Spirit of God as He speaks to us. Finally, we must obey what we know, responding to what God asks us to do.

Remember, integrity is built and maintained as we diligently apply God's principles to our choices in life. We must guard against the small "slits" in our integrity that would imperil our Christian testimony. As we live each day as sanctified people who are controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit, we can depend on the power of God to direct our responses to each situation that comes our way.



"No nation has ever made any progress in a downward direction. No people ever became great by lowering their standards. No people ever became good by adopting a looser morality. It is not progress when the moral tone is lower than it was." – Peter Marshall, a Scottish-born minister and Chaplain of the United States Senate



## Word Search

The word *integrity* comes from the same Latin root as *integer*, which means "a

whole number." It appears twenty-two times in the Old Testament. Just as we would talk about a whole number, so also we can talk about a whole person, or one who is undivided. A person of integrity is the same person in private that he or she is in public.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about the "pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8), indicating an undividedness in following God's commands. Integrity not only implies an undividedness, but moral purity as well.

## The World Needs Men

Josiah Gilbert Holland was a doctor, teacher, editor, and author. Though he lived more than a century ago, the need he saw in his time is far more evident today. In a piece titled "The World Needs Men" he penned these memorable words which speak eloquently to the subject of integrity:

"The world needs men who cannot be bought, whose word is their bond, who put character above wealth, who possess opinions and the will, who are larger than their vocations, who do not hesitate to take chances.

"The world needs men who will not lose their individuality in a crowd, who will be as honest in small things as in great things, who will make no compromise with wrong, whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires.

"The world needs men who will not say they do it because everybody else does it, who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity, who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hard-headedness are the best qualities for winning, who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular.

"The world needs men who say no with emphasis, though all the rest of the world says yes."



# For Personal Study

1. Relativists assert that it does not matter what we believe, as long as we believe something. They tell us truth is whatever we perceive it to be; we are on our own to discern what is right or wrong for us. How does Proverbs 14:12 refute that position?

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2. How would you summarize the ethical standard outlined in 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23?

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## In God's Hands

Rick Husband was just four years old when the future NASA Space Shuttle Commander first determined that someday he would explore the far reaches of space. Rick pursued his dream relentlessly through years of college, grueling training as a fighter pilot, and three failed attempts to become a NASA pilot.

Then something changed in Rick: he put God at the center of his life. Over the months that followed, Rick realized that if God wanted him to become an astronaut, it had to be done in God's time and way.

On his first three applications to become part of the NASA team, Rick had come to one question he knew could change his future: whether he had ever worn hard contacts.

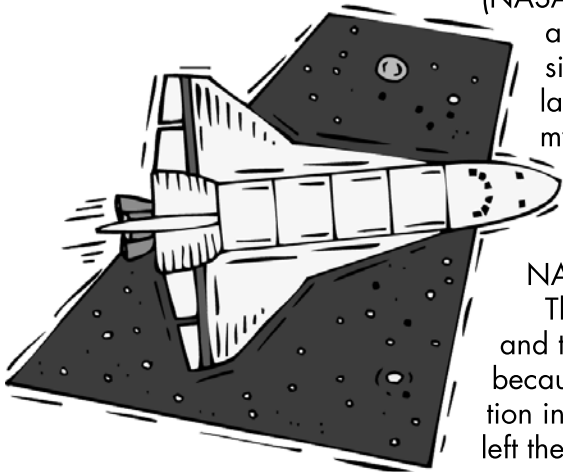
(NASA does not allow them.) Rick had done so for a brief time, but he knew that answer would disqualify him, so each time he wrote no. He reasoned that since he was not currently wearing them, his answer was acceptable. Years later, he wrote in his journal, "My selfish desire to be an astronaut overrode my integrity and I lied on my NASA application."<sup>1</sup>

After submitting his life to God, the day came when Rick decided to make a fourth application to NASA. This time, he answered the question yes. He knew he was likely removing any possibility of being selected by NASA, but he felt as if God were saying, "Trust Me. Do it My way this time."

The enemy stepped in right away to let him know that by honoring God and telling the truth, he would amount to nothing, but Rick took that chance because he had to do what was right in the eyes of God. Dropping his application into the mailbox was one of the hardest things Rick had ever done, but he left the matter in God's hands. God honored his step of faith and his determination to be a man of integrity. In December of 1994, the call he had longed for came at last. He had been chosen to be an astronaut!

On February 1, 2003, Rick Husband was commander of the Space Shuttle Columbia when it disintegrated in a flash of light in the Texas sky upon re-entry. But by then, Rick's faith and testimony had impacted countless numbers of his friends and co-workers in NASA. Today, through the biography his wife wrote about his spiritual journey, his testimony lives on, transforming what would have been heartbreaking loss into a record of courage, faith—and ultimate triumph.

<sup>1</sup> Husband, Evelyn. "High Calling," 41-43. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2003.





## Biblical Examples of Key Words

**Beliefs**—*The truths of God’s Word which are adhered to by believers.* Daniel was a shining example of one who lived by his beliefs. When presented with a situation that contradicted his principles, he “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8), choosing instead to eat food that agreed with his conscience.

**Values**—*The concept of what is right, worthwhile, or desirable.* The word *values* brings Job to mind. He said in Job 23:12, “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” He was setting his affections on things above (see Colossians 3:2).

**Morality**—*Conformity to the rules of right conduct based on godly principles.* Morality was scarce in Noah’s day. Genesis 6:5 states: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” However, “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

**Ethics**—*The set of moral principles or values by which one’s life is conducted.* Samuel asked the Israelites to point out any wrongs he had committed during his time as Israel’s judge. The people responded, “Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man’s hand” (1 Samuel 12:4). Samuel’s actions backed up his commitment to God.

3. The world around us constantly seeks to conform us to its value system. We are pressured on every hand, both subtly and openly, to adapt to its way of thinking. What instruction do we find in Romans 12:2 regarding this?

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4. What do the following verses tell us about integrity?

1 Chronicles 29:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 10:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 11:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 20:7 \_\_\_\_\_

5. What are some ways we can develop Biblical convictions and values?

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6. As Christians, we are called to be people of spiritual integrity. How can we be sure we are measuring up to God’s standards in every area? Psalm 139:23-24

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