

Teacher's Guide for Living Holy **Theme: Holiness in Beliefs & Values**

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

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.

Introduction:

What is right? What is truth? The moral decay that permeates our modern society has its roots in these two questions. Today's morality is often determined by the whim of the individual and based on circumstances. The course of action is based on what seems to be "right" for the case at hand.

As Christians, we are called to be people of spiritual integrity. When our heartfelt desire and purpose is to be set apart for God and His service, we refuse to accept moral standards which are defined by circumstances or opinions. Rather, we stand for moral absolutes even in a world of relative values. We adhere to the benchmarks set by the Word of God, and look to it as the foundation for our principles and decisions. We determine, with God's help, to be people who uphold without compromise a Bible-based code of ethics, whose commitment to righteousness is complete and undivided.

A sanctified person must demonstrate the transforming presence of God in his life, and this will be reflected in the way situations are handled in everyday life. A valuable question to ask in making any ethical or moral decision is: What would Jesus do? Our lifestyles should reflect the model that we have in Christ. That will mean living by a different value system and a different standard of behavior than is dominant in our culture.

Opener Ideas/Activities:

Bring to class a ruler, measuring cup, tape measure, scale, and other measuring devices. Point out that our physical lives are governed by standards. We have standards of measurement for time, weight, size, length, distance, etc. Standards make life easier by providing a commonly agreed upon reference for measurement. Do we also allow the Bible to establish standards for our spiritual lives?

Show photos of crumbled houses that were not built on firm foundations to show the importance of building our lives on the right kinds of values.

Bring to class a rock and jar of sand. Explain to your group that our values and beliefs are the foundation of our lives. Ask them to give five words that describe the qualities of a rock. (Examples: durable, strong, impenetrable, solid.) Then ask for five words that describe the qualities of sand.

(Examples: movable, shifting, unstable.) It is not difficult to determine which would make the best foundation. If our values and beliefs are built upon the Word of God, they will be a solid foundation for our lives.

It takes courage to stand up for our beliefs and values. To illustrate the power of peer pressure, prior to class time ask a number of your group to stand when you say a certain phrase. Watch how long it takes for the rest of the group to stand also!

Sometimes our beliefs or values will be challenged. This may come about in the form of a crisis of some sort. Ask: What do you think of when you hear the word “crisis”? The Chinese have an interesting way of explaining what a crisis is. (Show the Chinese characters provided in the supplemental materials.) The first part, when written alone, means “danger.” The second character by itself means “opportunity.” Written together, these two characters mean “crisis” and explain it as a “dangerous opportunity.” God can help us to utilize “dangerous opportunities” to witness for Him and take a stand for the values He has established in our hearts.

Bring a picture of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and use it as an example of the importance of a firm foundation laid on solid ground. Much time, effort, and funds have been spent trying to counteract this bell tower’s flawed design and construction. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/pisa/> is one of several online sources for information on this troublesome structure.

The Sunday school song “Don’t build your house on the Sandyland . . .” might be a nice opener for this lesson.

For high school classes, you could begin the lesson with an Oreo-stacking contest where contestants try to build the tallest stack of Oreos cookies. Have some students build on solid foundations, such as wood or a table, and others on weak foundations, like sand, dirt, or water. Students will see that the foundation is the most important aspect of a firm structure. Spiritually also, without the foundation of the God’s Word, our spiritual houses will not stand.

If you can obtain a copy of “The Chair” video by Frank Perretti, it could be shown as an adjunct to this lesson. It is an excellent but simple portrayal of the necessity of solid values.

Questions from Student Handout:

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?

Proverbs 14:12 clearly indicates that man’s thoughts about what is right will end in death. The Christian understands that God is the only source of absolute truth, and accepts His Word as the revelation of that truth.

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

Verse 22 says we are to abstain from all appearance of evil. Note that we are not encouraged to just stay away from evil—things that are blatantly wrong or sinful. Rather, we are told to stay away from things that might appear evil or have even a hint of being improper. This is the standard of holiness: not to merely stay away from the big or obvious sins, but to stay away from even the shades of gray that bear a slight resemblance of ungodliness. We are not doing this just for looks or as a pretense. We do it to

defend our testimonies and the Gospel. As we continue to abstain from even the appearance of evil, then the Lord will present us blameless when we stand before God.

Discussing the practical application would be helpful. Some of your students might be willing to share examples of putting this verse into practice in daily living.

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?

Paul told the believers in Rome not to be conformed to this world, but to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” In other words, he was saying, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed.” Christians are called to be separate from the behavior and customs of this world that are usually selfish and often corrupt. We must be alert to these areas where worldly thinking presses in upon us, and ask for God’s help in withstanding the attempts to mold our thinking.

4. What do the following verses tell us about integrity? 1 Chronicles 29:17; Proverbs 10:9; 11:3; 20:7

- *1 Chronicles 29:17 – it pleases God. An upright heart makes it possible for us to worship God.*
- *Proverbs 10:9 – it provides security and confidence. If we do not walk uprightly, it will be known.*
- *Proverbs 11:3 – it offers guidance. Those who are not upright will be destroyed by their transgressions.*
- *Proverbs 20:7 – it leaves a legacy. The children of people of integrity will be blessed.*

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

Class discussion should bring out the following thoughts.

- *Search the Bible for what it says on a particular subject, such as honesty or integrity.*
- *Examine your walk with God. Make sure you are spending time with God daily so He can teach you, and that your heart is open to hear from Him.*
- *Listen to your conscience. Often the Holy Spirit will speak to us in this way, making us uncomfortable about a potential action or attitude.*
- *Seek godly counsel from someone who lives by God’s values.*
- *Obey what you know. Do not ignore what God asks you to do through His Word, the prompting of the Holy Spirit, your conscience, or godly counsel.*

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

We must open our hearts before the Lord and let God’s searchlight shine in, revealing what we need to do in order to establish and maintain our spiritual integrity.

Additional Questions:

How do Biblical holiness and the concept of being set apart for God relate to our beliefs and values?

If we have truly dedicated our lives to God and set them apart for His purposes, our beliefs and values will reflect that. We will accept only that which conforms to His standards of holiness because we have a deep desire to please Him in every aspect of life. There will be a prayerful and conscious setting aside of ourselves from all that would contaminate or detract from a lifestyle that closely reflects the attitudes and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ, and other godly examples from the Bible.

What characteristics do you think will mark the person of integrity?

Your students' suggestions may include honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness, a life above reproach, follows through on what he says, and undivided in beliefs, values, and standards.

What are some synonyms for the word *integrity*? What are some areas of life where our commitment to Biblical integrity might be tested?

Synonyms include: uprightness, honesty, rectitude, truthfulness, virtue, trustworthiness, faithfulness, justness, fairness. In response to the second question, your class may list some areas such as honesty, sexual purity, obedience, courage to stand for convictions, speech, trustworthiness, etc.

What are some examples of how our convictions and values will impact our lives?

Your class can no doubt generate quite a list. Some thoughts might include:

Learning the values political candidates stand for and basing our vote upon them.

Not lying for a boss, even though he asks.

Not cheating on a test.

Careful preparation of tax returns.

Define the word *compromise*. When is it right to compromise? When is it wrong?

Webster's Dictionary says compromise means in part, "a settlement in which each side gives up some demands or makes concessions; an adjustment of opposing principles by modifying some aspects of each." Compromise is all right when it does not involve our values, but it is wrong to change values that are based on God's Word. God does not change.

As Christians, what is the fundamental basis for our values and beliefs?

Our basis is love and respect for God and adherence to the principles outlined in His Word. In contrast, many belief systems other than Christianity have a selfish basis—a good reputation, a legacy, networking, living "the good life," etc. While these are not necessarily bad things to desire, they are self-centered.

What is an "unclean thing"? (See 2 Corinthians 6:17.) What does this warning have to do with maintaining integrity and a pure Christian testimony?

The word translated unclean means "impure; morally lewd." The word translated separate implies a boundary that limits or excludes access. Separation from evil and those who compromise their Christian standards is a basic Biblical doctrine. If we are to maintain a pure life, we are not even to touch those things which are not clean. There is no way to completely extricate ourselves from the sinful influences around us, but we are to resist them, not to play around the edges of them or give in to them.

Who are some Bible characters who proved their integrity by their actions?

Names suggested could include the three Hebrew children, Noah, Abraham, Daniel, Joseph.

Contrast the actions of Samson in Judges 16:5-20 with the actions of Joseph in Genesis 39:7-12. How did they differ in their actions?

Help your students see that Joseph made a clear verbal stand about not doing what was wrong, whereas Samson just played word games. As time passed, Joseph supported his verbal declaration about his values with the physical action of getting away from temptation. Samson continued to toy with words while his grip on the secret of his strength became steadily looser.

What are the benefits of living by a strong, God-based value system?

Your students' thoughts may include:

- *We are pleasing to God.*
- *We model a good example for those who are watching our lives, both Christian and non-Christian.*
- *When we lead lives of integrity, opportunities for evangelism and ministry surface.*
- *We are trusted.*
- *We have a clear conscience so our prayers are unhindered.*
- *We will be more healthy spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally.*
- *We will be blameless when we stand before God.*

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 a moral purity as well.

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.

Supplemental Resources:

“A High Standard of Excellence” by Joe Bishop, *Higher Way* Vol.89-5

“Who Sets the Moral Standard?” by Ed Habre, *Higher Way* Vol.91-6

“Choosing Integrity” by Nolan Roby, *Higher Way* Vol. 92-6

“Christian Character: The Fruit of the Soul” by Joe Bishop, *Higher Way* Vol.91-5

“Right or Wrong? Making Decisions as a Christian” Tract #124

Chinese character for the word “crisis”