LifeGroup

resource guide

for the week of October 30

*I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity... (1 Chronicles 29:17)*

Integrity is not mere truth-telling. It is a pattern of living in Christ that is unbroken, whole, and unified by the direct continuity between the “inner” person and the “outer” person whose words and behaviors are witnessed by all.

How can we cultivate integrity in our lives? Where can we turn to discover a model of integrity which is distinct and inspired by God Himself? I would suggest the Ten Commandants are a good place to start (Exodus 20.1-17)... Here we are challenged and encouraged in 10 crucial areas that are essential to a lifestyle of integrity that pleases the heart of God. (In fact, I think the 10 Commandments could be re-titled, *Every Person’s Guide to Integrity*).

* *The Affection of Our Hearts* (“no other gods before Me’): Do I love God— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do I seek to make Him preeminent in my life, my loves, and my ambitions?
* *The Imagination of Our Minds* (“no idols’): Is my “God” little more than the projection of my thoughts and fears. Is my imagination and fantasies consistent with the images of God revealed in Scripture or do they indicate that someone or something else comes first?
* *The Expression of Our Mouths* (“wrongful use of God’s name’): Do my words reflect reverence or irreverence? Is there congruity between my “God-talk” and the current state of my relationship with God? Is my walk with the Lord as intimate as the walk I publicly portray?
* *The Reflection of our Trust* (Sabbath): Does my use of time indicate trust and reliance upon God’s provision? Do I see time as a gift to be given back to God? Do I trust God enough to take time off?
* *The Honor of Parents* (honor father and mother); Do I respect my parents or do I blame them for my problems? How can I say I will love my neighbor when I cannot honor my parents?
* *The Sanctity of Human Life* (“you shall not murder’): Jesus said, “You have heard it said, ‘Do not murder.’ But I say whoever is angry with their brother has committed murder in their heart.” How can I bring the love of Christ to others when there is so much violence in my own heart? Do I experience and express the mercy, peace, love, and reconciliation that Jesus brings? Do I honor life?
* *A Healthy Esteem for Marriage/Sexual Intimacy* (“do not commit adultery): Do I honor marriage? Do I contend for God’s plan for marriage and sexual intimacy? Do I allow myself to be aroused by pornography or sexual imagery? Am I flirtatious? Do I consider divorce an option?
* *The Respect for Property* (“do not steal’): Do I steal “time” that belongs to my job, family, or friends? Am I responsible with my financial obligations? Do I rob God of the tithe He is due? Do I rob others of their reputation through gossip, innuendo, or slanderous speech?
* *The Veneration of Truthfulness* (“do not bear false witness’)— both judicial and social: Who am I when no one is looking? Am I a man of my word? Am I willing to take responsibility for my mistakes and failures? Do I fabricate excuses when I feel under pressure? Do the ends justify the means?
* *The Cultivation of Contentment* (“do not covet’): Do I direct my desires towards contentment in Christ? Do I seek contentment through the acquisition of things or people? Do I think that relationships, money and/or things will bring me contentment? Does my spending reflect accountability and contentment? Does my lifestyle reflect the freedom of simplicity or the chaos of worldliness?

Integrity anchors our souls in a world that wants to misdirect our worship and redefine our identity…

Enjoy your LifeGroup! *Mark*

Getting to know one another better…

What was the first "I got to have this or I'll die" purchase you remember making? Why did you want it so badly? What did its possession represent for you? How did you feel once you had it? What happened to it once you bought it? How long did you keep it? Did it fulfill your expectations? Why or why not?

Romans 12.1-2

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Commentary

Paul's "Gospel challenge" in the Roman world was to make the case that God should be regarded as the "capital 'G' god" above the "little 'g' gods" of the Empire (N.T. Wright). Paul heralded the supremacy of God-- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-- above every other god amidst cities filled with majestic statues of their gods. These statues were idols -- images that people worshipped because they were the authorized presence and the gateway for the god they represented. In addition to the worship of these gods, there was the worship of the emperor himself. Emperor worship regarded the emperor as the core of the empire’s foundation, development, and continued success. The worship of the Jewish/Christian God was problematic—according to the Roman worldview-- because they failed to participate in the life and culture of the cities in which they lived and ultimately failed to associate with the empire. Furthermore, because Jews did not worship the local deities and the Emperor on whom the health and welfare of the region depended, they were not doing their part to secure the welfare of the empire. Therefore, there was this constant pressure upon the church to participate, engage, and worship the gods and the emperor because the health, wealth, and future of the Empire depended on it. Rome was tolerant of any religious expression or cultural engagement as long as it fit in with the Roman agenda.

In the Roman world, as in our own, idols are the currency of compromise and conformity. In every age, they pose a viral threat to the vitality and life-giving capacity of God's people. Despite God's commandment and constant rebuke across the pages of Scripture, idols and the "gods" they represent tempt God's people in every age. That is why we will take time to reflect together on this theme… As we do so, let’s begin with the first two commandments of “God’s top ten”!

Exodus 20.1-6

*Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 “You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

Reflecting on Exodus 20.1-6…

What is the difference between the first commandment ("no other gods before me") and the second ("you shall not make for yourself an idol”)?

Jealousy is an unwelcome emotion for most of us. What does it mean for God to be jealous?

How do you reconcile God's love with God's jealousy?

A "god" is spiritual. An idol is physical and something WE make to represent the god/goal we aspire to serve/achieve. What do you think are the idols of our age and who are the "gods" they represent?

What idols need to be confronted in your own life?

What do you think an "idol-free" life would look like for you? Can you think of some examples?

How can your LifeGroup encourage and strengthen your resolve before the pressure of idols you face?

My prayer requests (write in advance what you want your group to pray for…)

Praying for my group…