

Discovering God's Character through our Struggles: Integrity - Sunday, August 2nd

Well, as I said, August is here and we have started Christmas season planning as of this month. And you might laugh at me, but I tell you, I was at the farmer's market a week ago and I saw Santa Claus and I'm like, that's my sign. So I'm telling you, you know, go ahead and start planning now because you know it's going to be here faster than you think it will. And I feel like these days go by quicker anyway, no matter what it is. I did. I don't know if I should share this. Oh, I know. I was talking to... I'm pretty sure it was my dad. I was talking to my dad. He turned 70 last year. I was talking to him and I was... We were just... talking about how fast time seems to go now as it used to when you were a kid. I mean, a year was forever long. And it just, now it's like a year is a couple months and then it's gone. And we were talking about that just a little bit. And he said, well, he said, I was always told by people when I was growing up that life is like a roll of toilet paper. And the faster, the closer you get to the end, the faster it goes, right? And I was like, well, that's an interesting truth there. He said, it's a lot like life. The closer you get to the end, I mean, it just, it moves quicker. Anyway, it's not moving that fast for me yet, but maybe for some it is. It feels like the trend is getting quicker, though. But anyway, last week, I digressed into something more important. We talked about the God of truth who cannot lie. And so... I have to admit that has been such a great comfort to me this past week as I've looked at the world and looked at different things and how the world so easily redefines truth to make it whatever they want it to be. They don't have to have any proof. They don't have to have any substance. They don't have to have any facts. It's almost as if I believe it, it's real no matter how wild or crazy it is. If I believe it, it's true. And that's not what truth is. And it's unfortunate, but we see it in all forms and all points of society, from the news that we watch to the social media that we take in, to the thoughts that we repeatedly put on replay in our minds and make reality, whether they're true or not. And we all struggle, thank you, with truth in our own way in our lives. But what's amazing about God is he stands and he declares truth from a platform that has no deception, no falsities, and no lies because we serve a God of truth who cannot lie. And that's amazing. And that should bring us comfort as we put our trust in him. And we talked about this last week because the way that this world is shifting and changing today, God doesn't do that. He stands in truth, and he proclaims truth to us. What's beautiful, we talked about the scripture out of Hebrews 13 where it says God does not change. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. So that means that if we are truly going to listen, learn, and apply truth to our life, you and I have to change how we perceive truth. We must change our beliefs to line up with the truth that he gives us if we want to know true truth. That's a weird statement, but it is. True. Last week had a lot to do with truth. And the part that makes this really easy is that God doesn't have an angle other than my best is in his mind whenever he's thinking of me. And we talked about that, how sometimes that means God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want. He doesn't always give us everything we would like. Rather, he gives us the truth that we need. And what's amazing about God, truth isn't merely what he speaks. It is actually who he is. Just like he is love, he is also truth. This morning, continuing in this vein of thought with the next commandment, we're going to be in 2 Samuel 12. So if you want to turn your Bibles there, you can. We will have it up on the screen as well. But we're going to move on to the next commandment. If you have not been here or do not know, we are working through the Ten Commandments, talking about our greatest struggles in life and revealing a characteristic of God that helps us in the midst of these struggles that we have. And so our commandment this week is the Eighth Commandment, Thou shalt not steal. The struggle that we have is with integrity. And the character of God that we are going to identify today is that He is generous and God is generous. So that's our outline this morning. So 2 Samuel chapter 12, we're going to read a couple of scriptures here. And this is what it says. It says, I gave you your master's house. Now, I guess I should preface this. This is God talking to King David in the midst of a season that he made some bad choices. And so God says to David, I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why then have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? You have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Amorites, and you have stolen his wife. Let's pray this morning. Father, we thank you, Lord, that we have the opportunity to be in your house today, God. I pray that you would help me to speak your word this morning, Lord, that I would be clear in speaking the thoughts that you have given me to speak, Lord, and that you would help us to hear by the power of the Holy Spirit that which you would want us to apply to our hearts today. And we thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I don't know if you had the opportunity to grow up in church, but how many of you remember learning the Ten Commandments? We would talk to them. We would sing them. We would have to quote them. We would get rewards in Sunday school if we were able to quote all ten of them. And it's interesting, as we get older and as we think about the Ten Commandments, I find it fascinating how many of us measure the commandment by an extremely strict interpretation of the prohibition. So let me tell you what I mean. Has anyone in here, oh, maybe I shouldn't ask it this way. You

don't have to raise your hand. This is rhetorical, okay? You just never know. The Ten Commandments say not to murder. So whenever we think of that, everyone in here says, well, I have never stabbed, shot, or killed someone where they died. I'm not guilty of that one. It's a check mark for my plus. The next one is I have not committed adultery. This is why I was like, don't raise your hand. I don't know. I don't. I have never slept with another woman besides my wife. So I have never committed adultery. Thank you, Lord. It says not to steal. Well, I have never taken something from a store that I didn't pay for. Well, at least since I was little and didn't know of it, or especially without malicious intent. I wasn't, I just, well, anyway. The Bible says not to covet. And I can say that maybe I have coveted, but I haven't taken it to the extreme where it's like it's sinful. I haven't done anything malicious with it. I haven't been bad. I've just wanted things. But the point I'm trying to make is that we take this list of commandments and we define them so narrowly and we sculpt the qualifications of what would transgress this commandment. And we draw the lines a lot like politicians do to our benefit. And we draw it and we're like, well, that's okay. And then we move it over here. to make sure that we're on the good side of the commandment. And so we draw the lines to benefit us. That's how we work it. And I found myself guilty of that very thing this week. As I opened up the passage and I began to think of where we were, I took pride in the fact that I have never stolen anything from a store that I didn't pay for. I began to interpret this very narrowly. I've even been so good as if to notice things in the buggy when I got to the... I'm from the South. We have buggies down there. I know you guys don't have a buggies up here, but we have buggies down there. I think you guys call it carts up here. Okay. We do buggies way better. I've even gotten to the point where I've realized something didn't get scanned. And I'm like, darn, the part of me wants to be like, oh, free things. I'm like, no, got to take it back in. I'll take it back in and scan it and pay for it. So really was like super prideful. And I launched into this week's sermon prep thinking, this is going to be so easy because I got this command down. I'm almost perfect in this one. I don't steal anything ever. not good because it all fell apart almost immediately because i happened to google i didn't even look for the bible i just feel like what does google say stealing is and that didn't go so good So my definition, my narrow interpretation of stealing as not taking something I didn't pay for was one of many ways that we can steal in life. So I want to start with the commandment. So we have our scriptural reference, and you know where I'm talking about, and then we're going to dig into this idea of stealing. And I will bring you to a place just like me, where you come to the realization that you are guilty of stealing, as the court of law would define said guilt. So it's going to be a very fun morning. So you are presumed guilty before we even start this, I want you to know. Exodus 20, verse 15, a very long passage of Scripture that says, Thou shalt not steal. Such a short scripture, but so much to unpack. The Hebrew word used in this passage of scripture in Exodus is ganab. It almost sounds like you grabbed something. And it means to thief, to deceive, to secretly bring, or to get by stealth. So, Here is a truth, since we talked about truth last week. Everyone sitting in this room, practically everyone who has ever walked this planet, except for Jesus, are all guilty of stealing something at some point in your life. So hear me out. Because you're probably like me, it's like, I don't steal. How many would be like, I don't steal? It is one of those things that are reprehensible to me. I don't like people who take things that aren't theirs. I mean, a lot of us have this feeling, a lot of us have this sense about us, and we would balk at the reality that we do, in fact, possibly, pretty sure, steal at some point in our life. So I believe the question is that we need to think about is not, I'm sorry, the question we need to think about isn't, do I steal? Rather, the question is, how or what do I steal? Because God wouldn't have put stealing in the Big Ten if it wasn't something we struggle with on a pretty regular basis. So here's a list of common practices people employ when they decide to steal something. So the very first one, we've already talked about it. It is physical theft, where you take something that isn't yours with the malicious intent of not paying for it or getting what is not in your own possession. So most people define stealing in that category. And a lot of people can say, I haven't stolen anything that wasn't mine. Okay, you're not guilty of that one. Now comes all the guilt. There are those who steal by using dishonest business practices. This is when we cheat customers or we take advantage of people who are unsuspecting of anything. Maybe not all of us have done that, but there is a lot of that that happens. We steal time or labor. Now this one's gonna be hard. For those of us who punch a clock, How many of us have fudged or changed or manipulated that start time or finish time to be a little bit more correct in our own estimation of it? Because no matter how you slice this cake, that manipulation of the time card always works out to your benefit somehow. It's amazing, isn't it? It just happens. I just know. I mean, it always falls to the right, no matter what happens. Okay, here we go. The next one. We steal by tax evasion. Oh, taxes. Why? I'm touching a nerve. But you know what Jesus said? Jesus said, give to Caesar. What is Caesar's? Guess what Caesar said? needs, taxes. And then on the other hand, Jesus said, give to God what is God's. Tax evasion is a form of theft. I know, I'm sorry. It's going to get worse before it gets better, so hang on. This next one was one that hurt me a little bit. What about debt avoidance? Debt that we have taken on, we have actually gotten something, but have either refused or delayed or denied payment of said good. And

I'm not talking about the credit card type. That's one of its own category. But when we withhold payments, because either it's tight right now, I'll get to it later, You are in fact stealing something from someone else, having gotten the goods already. Boy, it's getting quiet now. In our tech age, now most of us may be like, I'm not smart enough to do this, but another type of theft that we engage in is intellectual theft. This can touch a lot of things. This is something that a lot of preachers can be guilty of, where they plagiarize stuff. They take something that someone else has done and they make it as if I have done this. That's intellectual theft. There's pirating of music, pirating of movies. I know, don't shake your head, but it is true. Whenever we take something that is not ours to take, that is not free to take, it is in truth stealing. So, let's have a little bit more fun. Let's make some spiritual applications here. I'm only going to really do one because, well, maybe two. If we were to put this in a spiritual connotation... What about someone who is what we would call a shallow Christian? In other words, I believe in Jesus. But that's all I'm doing. I'm not ever going to grow. I'm not ever going to progress past accepting Jesus Christ as my Savior. I'm going to stay that infant that Paul talks about where I just want the milk. I just want to be coddled. I just want to feel safe. But I'm not actually going to try to grow. I'm just going to be a baby Christian. See, this happens when we refuse to mature and grow in the spiritual gifts that God has given us, because it says in the New Testament that God has given every believer gifts. Guess what? Those gifts aren't for you. They're not to be like, oh, Merry Christmas, me. Boy, Christmas is here. Those gifts, just like the fruit that God gives us, they're for us. other people. They're for us to minister to people who are struggling. They're for us to come alongside someone who is just in a state of needing love and us being able to pour out the gift of love on them in this time. And whenever we choose to live shallow Christian lives and not develop the gifts that God has given us, Not only are you stealing from God because he's given you these things to give out, you're stealing from your fellow Christians and your fellow people that you're around because these gifts aren't for you, but yet we hoard them for me. These are my gifts. Micah talks about stealing from God. How many of you have ever stolen from God? Malachi 3, verse 8 says, Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, In what way have I robbed you? In tithes and offerings. I don't know how you feel about tithes and offerings. A lot of people say, Well, that's the Old Testament. You can't put that on me. It's Old Testament. Okay. If that's what you want to say, Paul says it this way. So let each one of you give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. So maybe in some regard it says that you might feel like you don't have to give, but you have at some point in your life felt the need to give, and you're like, gosh dang it, you're fine here. Take it. Ouch, that is not cheerful. That's right, Dave. stealing, doing something out of compulsion. When God says, I just want you to be like me, a giver, happy, enjoys doing it. So you definitely don't have to raise your hand, but How many of you found a point in that list where you were like, well, dang, guilty as charged. And if you want to raise your hand, how many of you said multiple points? I found a definition from a pastor about stealing and he defines it this way. So it's not my definition. But he defines stealing and where we find ourselves guilty in some way is stealing is getting as much as possible by giving as little as possible. And I read that and I'm like, well, shoot. How does that definition hit you? My mind went back to a lot of things where I was like, I'm trying to get as much as I can, but I only want to give just this little bit. I don't want a lot of energy invested in this, but I want all the reward of this. It's not just taking something that isn't yours. It's bigger than that. It begins to reach into your work ethic, the attitude in which you do something. It seeps into our relationships. Am I trying to get as much out of my spouse but not giving anything back? I'm just trying to, I want all the benefits, but man, I just, I'm too busy to return them. What about our commitments? Like, I know that I said I was going to do this and I really want to, but man, there's this, there's a baseball game on. I really wanted to go to that too. I can help. I can be lax. I can forego my commitments. The problem is, is it moves and it becomes the intent and the motive of our heart is to get something. what we don't have without giving anything in return. That's stealing. So now I believe the question therefore isn't how or what do I steal? But now it's going to move into why do I steal? Because we've already established it's not if we steal, we've already established how we steal. But now the question has to move deeper and say, why do I do this? Why is this a struggle in my heart? Why is there something compelling me and you to always shortchange the system, to find a shortcut, seeking to get as much as we can, to give as little as we can. Some people might say it's the American way, but it's definitely not God's way. And at the base of this, as with all of these struggles we're going to find out, it is a heart issue. It is an issue we have inside of us. It's not for lack of stuff. How many of you have storage sheds full of stuff? How many of your houses are packed full of stuff? It's not for lack of having, so it's something else. See, beneath the act of stealing is the struggle you and I have with integrity. We struggle with integrity. Integrity. So Paul tells the church in Corinth that we should strive to have integrity before both God and man. This is what he says in 2 Corinthians 8, verse 21. Paul talking, he says, we intend to do what is right, not only in the sight of God, God is always watching us, but also in the sight of God. people. They're not always watching us. There are times when we can get away from the scrutiny of people, but we can never get away

from the sight of the Lord. I'm going to tell this story understanding that I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home and that this is a truth about my life that some people might not be able to identify with. But it is a blessing that I had growing up, and I want to share it with you, because my dad became a pastor when I was 10 years old. Prairie turned 10 yesterday. My youngest turned 10. And it was extremely nostalgic for me, because I remember my dad entering into the ministry at that age, and that's old enough to understand what's happening, but young enough to not really care. Yeah. And that was me. And I have a lot of great stories from that first church that my dad pastored. And I will tell you this, until I was the age of about 17, I never knew that churches had issues. I didn't know that it wasn't just great fellowship and fun and good times. I didn't realize that there were hard parts about going to church and that there were some people who were just mean. I ran into that, and I'm thankful my dad protected me from that part of church until I was almost 18 years old. So I spent some very vital and important years of my life at that church because he pastored it until I was 18. And I learned a lot of things in that church. I developed a lot of the character that I have today during that time. And as a young teenager, God began to drop a word into my heart. And I would often find it. I would often hear it. I would be walking through life in high school and I would be reminded of it. And again, I wasn't perfect with it, but I do believe it helped me avoid some very common pitfalls we make in our teenage years, some things that we try and we regret later on. And that word for me was integrity. From a very early age, God began to put this word in front of me. And I, of course, I was young. I didn't have any clue what it meant. And as I began to look it up, or when I say look it up, we didn't have internet back then. Wow. I actually had to go to the book, the dictionary. Anybody remember what a dictionary is? It's not a website on the page anymore. It was an actual book back in the day. And I felt God nudging me to move in the direction of integrity, to become a person of integrity. And it would show up at extremely appropriate times in my life. Most notably when I was considering something very stupid with which to engage my time as a teenager. God would drop this word into my heart and tell me, is this something someone of integrity would do? And of course, if I would take the time to think of it, because like I said, I wasn't perfect, it would always be, no, not really, this is pretty dumb. I probably shouldn't do this. So God used that word to help me and guide me through some very formative years of my life without me making a huge mess of my life and growing many regrets from that time in my life, as many of my friends did. And if you're familiar with this word, if you've heard the word integrity, you might define it this way. This is one of the most common ways of defining integrity. It's doing the right thing even when no one is looking. It's much easier to do the right thing when you have a bunch of eyes on you and be like, oh man, I better behave. They'll see it. But yet, we find times when we're alone and we're by ourselves and we're in the dark and it's like, well, there ain't anybody here. I can, nobody would know but me and God. Preaching my sermon over there. So what does it mean to be a man or a woman of integrity? Simply, it means to tell the truth even if it comes at your expense. It means to keep your promises even though it's extremely difficult and it's very hard to do because life is very busy, but you keep your promises. You make good choices. We always can come up to a situation and there's a right choice and there's a wrong choice. We can weigh those and be like, well, I'm going to make the right choice today. We take responsibility when we're wrong. I could just let it go. I don't need to go address that. It'll just be swept under the rug. To do what is right, even when it costs you something. That's on repeat because that's really hard for us to do. So this definition is how we have integrity with one another. To make right choices, to do the right thing, however that shakes out in whichever situation you find yourself in. But there's another side of integrity that's even harder for us. That's integrity before God. So two weeks ago, I preached about contentment, and I made the comment that we can be content because I know that in every situation I look back on, God has done right by me. You guys remember that? God has done right by me in every situation, whether I believe it or not, because it is true in every sense of the word. And again, don't raise your hands, but how many of you have experienced times in your life when you feel like God did not do you right? We all have. There's all been times where we look back and be like, God, I don't understand how you think that's right, but I can't make that add up to a positive thing in any way. But God does. God can. Because if you feel this way, you would be in good company. Job suffered tremendously. In one day, he lost his wealth, his livestock, which is like his wealth. He lost his kids. In one day, one fell swoop, it's all gone. But here's what God said about Job in chapter 2 of Job, verse 3. It says, Although you incited me against him to destroy him without cause. Guys, that scripture has so much impact. He holds fast to his integrity. And I love what God says. Although you incited me against him. Huh. I read that so many times. I'm like, wow. Here's Job. He loses all of this stuff. And yet his integrity before God stands strong. Even though most people, including his friends who come to visit him later, all say that this was God judging him. This was God moving against him. This was God destroying his life because he did something wrong. Job didn't buy into it. It says right at the end of chapter 1, this is how Job held on to his integrity before God. It said, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. I don't know of a person today who couldn't endure a part of what Job did who wouldn't have their finger

pointed at God saying, what are you doing? You have wronged me. But Job never once accused God of doing him wrong. See, integrity is having consistency between your inner convictions and your outward actions. Jesus said it this way, what's in your heart comes out your mouth. So we might go through seasons and we begin to complain and accuse God of wrong. Guess what? That's your inner conviction. That's what's coming out of your heart. I know the old saying when I was growing up was, you know, when someone hits their thumb with a hammer, we see what's really in there. Because if it's a bunch of cursings, like, oh, you're not even saved, are you? But if they hit their finger and are like, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, like, oh, look, he's actually, it's really in there. We don't like this thought. But the actions that we produce is really the mirror of what's in our hearts. We don't like that because we want to think we're better than that. We want to think, well, that's not really true. That's not what I truly believe. But yet, in the moment of trial, it's what comes out. See, our struggle with integrity is a condition of the heart that feels like it has been jaded or cheated. Whenever we struggle with integrity before God, it's because we feel, we believe, that God has done us wrong for some reason. So to remedy that feeling, if God's not going to be who he says he is, we have to remedy that. We take shortcuts. We hedge our bets. We take a little extra just to compensate for when God shortchanges us, like I know He will. He's going to make it difficult. Because we perceive that God is stingy to us. And that God almost provides enough. I have been guilty of saying that to God. I was like, God, you're great, but man, you just always almost provide almost kind of enough. I've accused God of that. As we go through these sermons, we're going to see this See, we steal because we don't believe that God will be truthful. We don't believe that God will provide what we need, so we covet. These things all build upon each other. So we steal and we lie and we covet because we don't actually believe God is who he says he is. We don't trust God. And all of these struggles start with a heart charging God with some form of wrong that we believe he has done to us. So we feel like we have to compensate and we dive into these struggles, these sins. So we steal and we sacrifice our integrity and we charge God with not being generous. That's the character of God that we're looking at today. God is a generous God. James 1, verse 17 says, And I picked this scripture up But it's one of hundreds I could have picked about the generosity of God. But as we look at our life, the truth is that every good thing we have comes from God. And it might not have always come from a good place. Sometimes the good that we have today is because of something that negatively happened to us. that were like, why did that happen? Why did my business venture there fail? Why did God have to take that person home at that time? I could have used them to mentor me and grow me. A lot of times the good that he does to us comes from a place that we don't always consider good. And from Genesis to Revelation, God consistently reveals himself as a giver to us. And here's the thing, I know that I've said this before, God is not a genie in a bottle. You don't get to rub him in prayer and be like, God, I need this, this, and this. Thank you, I expect it tomorrow. That's not how God works. That's not the generous type of God that he is. But I do want you to take a deep breath just for the moment. And I want you to take a second. And I want you to think back. Remember in your life how much God has blessed your life. Take a moment. How much has God blessed your life? Amen. way more than we deserve, setting us free, delivering us from addiction. If you heard the testimony this morning, such powerful testimonies of people who were trapped in their own vices, but yet God brought deliverance to them. And while it's not always perfect, and it's not how you might have desired or dreamed it or wanted it to be, the truth is God has been generous and good to me My whole life, back before I even believed in God, before I believed in Jesus, He was generous and good to me to bring me to the place where I could accept His Son as my Savior. I want to give you two quick stories to share how generous God is. One is from the Old Testament, one is from the New. 2 Samuel, we find King David. This was our scripture we opened up with today. David is the man after God's own heart. He is the guy whom God just blesses and blesses and blesses and blesses. He's the king of Israel. He's the man whom God made a covenant with, saying, I'm going to bring the king who will sit on the throne forever, which is Jesus Christ, through your heritage, through your lineage. And if you look at David's life, the guy needed nothing. He had everything. But yet David stole something. He engaged in activities that destroyed his integrity and he offended a generous God. And guys, I'm talking about he didn't lack for anything. So Nathan comes to David and he tells him a story of a man who had many sheep, but yet his neighbor had one and this rich man had guests come over and he needed dinner. So he went and stole this neighbor's sheep who had one sheep. He killed it and he served it to his guest. It's in 2 Samuel 12. David gets furious and he says, I'm going to have that man's head. I'm going to kill him. But David was the man. David was the man. What did David steal? He stole Uriah's wife. Do you realize that whole story comes from an act of theft? We always get mad that David murdered Uriah, and while that's bad, it started by stealing something that wasn't his. 2 Samuel 12, verses 7 through 9. David is told by Nathan, you are the man. Thus says the Lord of God, I anointed you king over Israel. I delivered your enemies. I gave you Saul's house. I gave you his wives. I gave you his possessions. I gave you Israel. I gave you Judah. I gave you everything. And then he says here, and if that had been too

little, generous God, I would have also given you a little bit more no much more why have you despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight you have killed Uriah and you have stolen his wife ouch it wasn't enough for David His heart had an issue with God. He didn't see God as generous. I don't know why. And as you thought about and examined your life earlier, is what God has generously given you enough? And while we can all say, well, it would be nice to have and fill in the blank, Yet you're here today, you're fed, you're healthy, you're happy. God has generously given these things to you. And he states here in Samuel that as long as we are willing to ask, he is so much more generous than we think he is. But rather than seek God, our hearts get jaded. We despise the commandments of God, thinking, why are you so irritable sometimes, God? And we begin to steal, to get as much as possible without giving anything in return. to do evil in the sight of God with confidence because we just know that God's not going to be there. He's not going to be kind. He's not going to be generous. So I have to hedge my bet. And God knows that we're prone to that. He knows that that is a natural inclination for us. That's why it makes the Big Ten. Don't steal. And in closing this morning, I want to share the most generous aspect of God. We talked about it with communion. And while you and I hated God, while we were yet sinners, He sent His Son, offered His Son, His only Son, Jesus Christ, to go to the cross and to experience a shameful death, to hang on a tree, not because He was guilty, but because He loves you and I and His heart is generous to give what we can't provide ourselves. See, you and I are saved from our sin because God refused to hold anything back. His generosity knows no bounds. And you don't even have to like him. There's nothing that we can even give him in return that would satisfy it. He did it because we couldn't do it. And he offered the very best to save the very worst sinner like me and because of that he asked me to walk in integrity to live right to daily choose to follow him to deny myself to trust in his generosity to not think I have to steal or despise his commandment. Guys, I see a problem in so many Christian lives today. And I know that there are many people will be like, well, it's the world we live in. It's the day we live in. It's the culture we live in. We all have excuses. But here's the problem I see in so many Christian lives. Christians show up to church, or they show up to their small group, they act spiritual, they speak in tongues, they seek to prophesy or to speak into someone's life, and to have this spiritual authority only to leave and revel in their brazen, sinful life for the rest of the week. when they think no one's watching, when they think that they're away from any of the Christians or anyone who can see what they're doing, they live this life of, it's all about me. But yet they get in front of other Christian people like, oh, I'm so holy. Too much of the church Live like the world. The devil is their best friend. Until Sunday, when they come to church, they say a really quick prayer of forgiveness. Lord, forgive me for my stupidity this week. They don't. It's not sincere. They pretend to be spiritual. They want to pray for people. They want to speak into people's lives. They want to do all these things. But it's not the reality of their life. It's an act. It's seeking to be right in the front of the eyes that they're in. So when they're in front of the church, they want to be holy. But like Josh was saying, when they're in front of their friends who are drinking and drugs and doing, they want to be just like that. You got to blend in. They'll use the scripture, you know, Jesus to everybody in every situation. I had a friend in college who was that. He was like, I'm just trying to be Jesus to them. And he would go to their parties and he would engage in what they were doing. And I was like, you're not being Jesus to them. You're being fake. Church, I want us to know that I believe the Holy Spirit is calling our bluff. And I believe that the Holy Spirit is calling us. And I'm going to speak to us because you're the people I have in front of me. To be a church of integrity 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. To walk in integrity. No longer is it going to be acceptable to serve the church on Sunday and pretend to be Christian to live like hell the rest of the week like you don't even know who God is. So much of the church in America is negatively impacted because many Christians live their life this way. See, the Christian life is a daily walk. Sunday, Monday, even though we hate it. Guess what? You still got to be a Christian on Monday. I don't take phone calls so that I can maintain that Christianity on Monday. Guess what? Monday ends Tuesday. ah, dang it, still got to be a Christian today. Wednesday, Thursday, that's pretty easy. Oh, Friday's here. Man, I got some plans this weekend. Nope, guess what? You still have to be a Christian on your Friday and your Saturday. I mean, most of us are used to it on Sunday. We just kind of give that day to God and be like, ah, you know. Yeah, God, today I'm here. I'm holy today. Kind of. This morning, I feel compelled to ask, because when I tell you guys I preach these sermons, I don't preach them to you. I preach them to us, because I'm going to be the very first one to raise my hand to this question. I'm getting ready to ask you. So understand, I'm the first in line. You can't have that place. Is there anyone here who would want to join me maybe whom God is convicting and calling you to walk a walk of integrity before him today. Not only before him, but also before men. Paul says that he lived right not only before God, but also before men. When I'm in the public, When I'm in private, my faith is my faith. It doesn't get to go on the shelf. I am who I am. The Holy Spirit here this morning is here this morning to change hearts and minds. But we have to be willing to let him. Are we willing to say, help me walk in integrity? And I would ask if you are wanting to stand with me, to stand. Are you willing to walk in integrity? To become a man or a

woman who says, you know what, I'm not going to play with Christianity. I'm not going to pretend to walk in faith. I'm actually going to do it daily. Every day. All the time. Because that's what God is looking for. It is people who do this... that God uses to change the world. It's not the perfect people. It's not the most qualified people. It's the people who have their heart positioned correctly before God saying, I'm not perfect, but I'm willing to walk in integrity before you. I need your help. We only do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. The only way we can accomplish this is through the power of the Holy Spirit. But that doesn't mean you don't have a part to play. It's trusting in