



WEEK 5: CLIMB THE LADDER

Key Scriptures: *Mark 3:21, John 5:19, Matthew 18:15*

And when [Jesus'] family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

-Mark (Mark 3:21 ESV)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."

-Jesus (John 5:19 ESV)

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

-Jesus (Matthew 18:15 ESV)





WEEK 5: PRE-GROUP READING

And when [Jesus'] family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." -Mark (Mark 3:21)

Almost everyone had expectations to impose on Jesus's life. He disappointed his family, who thought he was crazy in the early days of his ministry. He disappointed the people in his hometown, who tried to throw him off a cliff for declaring he was the Messiah (Luke 4:28-29). He disappointed the crowds, who wanted an earthly Messiah who would feed them, heal them, fix their problems, and overthrow the Roman oppressors (Luke 23:23). He disappointed the religious leaders, who finally attributed his power to demons (Luke 11:15).

But Jesus was secure in his Heavenly Father's love, in his identity, and his calling. Consequently, he was able to withstand enormous pressure. He was able to remain self-assured in his beliefs. He was able to maintain a non-anxious presence amid great stress. He was able to continue to serve people even as they fought and betrayed him.

Integrity is when we have unity between our deepest values and our actions. Jesus modeled perfect integrity. His every action was in alignment with his deepest values, which were in alignment with his father (John 5:19). It was this integrity that gave him the incredible strength to remain himself in the face of tremendous pressure and expectation from others.

One of the most important "people skills" we can develop is the skill of staying true to ourselves and communicating what we know about ourselves in an honest, non-combative manner. When something is bothering us relationally, many times it involves a violation of something we feel is important to us. Learning to identify our values and then—when appropriate—respectfully sharing them is foundational to walking in integrity.

Jesus' sense of self came from a place of union with His father, and He invites us to access the same strength. When we experience an "iceberg moment" – an emotional response to the behavior of another person – we often think first to go to other people for advice or sympathy. But Jesus warned about talking first to others in these situations: *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. – Matthew 18:15*

Instead, Jesus modeled turning first to His Father when facing stress: to prepare for a task (Luke 4:1-2, 14-15), to recharge after work (Luke 5:16), when facing difficult decisions (Luke 6:12-13), to work through grief and distress (Luke 22:38-44). In Jesus' *iceberg moments*, He turned to His Father. With this week's tool, we will learn to do the same as we focus on the prayerful response to an iceberg moment through the lens of **what we value most**.



Dr. Murray Bowen, the founder of modern Family Systems Theory developed a new term to describe this quality: *differentiation*.

Differentiation: a person's capacity to define his or her own life's goals and values apart from the pressures of those around them.

Differentiation involves the ability to hold on to who you are and who you are not. The degree to which you are able to affirm your distinct values and goals apart from the pressures around you (separateness) while remaining close to people important to you (togetherness) helps determine your level of differentiation.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. He was a friend of sinners and tax-collectors, yet did not sin. He could contend with scholars and Pharisees, yet was never caught up in religion. We have access through the Holy Spirit to the same empowering prayer life with our Father that Jesus enjoyed.

Modified Bowen's Scale – Peter Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Updated Edition

<p>0-25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't distinguish between fact and feeling. • Emotionally needy and highly reactive to others • Much of life energy spent in winning the approval of others • Little energy for goal-directed activities • Can't say, "I think . . . I believe . . ." • Little emotional separation from their families • Dependent marital relationships • Do very poorly in transitions, crises, and life adjustments Unable to see where they end and others begin. 	<p>25-50</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some ability to distinguish between fact and feeling • Most of self is a "false self" and reflected from others • When anxiety is low, they function relatively well • Quick to imitate others and change themselves to gain acceptance from others • Often talk one set of principles/beliefs, yet do another • Self-esteem soars with compliments or is crushed by criticism Become anxious (i.e., highly reactive and "freaking out") when a relationship system falls apart or becomes unbalanced • Often make poor decisions due to their inability to think clearly under stress. 	<p>50-75</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of the thinking and feeling functions that work as a team • Reasonable level of "true self" • Can follow life goals that are determined from within • Can state beliefs calmly without putting others down • Marriage is a functioning partnership where intimacy can be enjoyed without losing the self • Can allow children to progress through developmental phases into adult autonomy • Function well—alone or with others Able to cope with crises without falling apart Stay in relational connection with others without insisting they see the world the same 	<p>75-100 (Few people function at this level)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are principle oriented and goal directed—secure in who they are, unaffected by criticism or praise • Are able to leave family of origin and become an inner-directed, separate adult • Sure of their beliefs but not dogmatic or closed in their thinking • Can hear and evaluate beliefs of others, discarding old beliefs in favor of new ones • Can listen without reacting and communicate without antagonizing others • Can respect others without having to change them • Aware of dependence on others and responsibility for others Free to enjoy life and play • Able to maintain a non-anxious presence in the midst of stress and pressure
---	--	---	--





WEEK 5: GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Take some time to catch up and connect as a group. Pray to transition into discussion.

Growing Connected

Last week we talked about not mindreading. Did anyone find themselves tempted to mind read this week? Did anyone use the tool to clarify an assumption with another person? What was that experience like?

Today we are talking about living with integrity. When we experience an *iceberg moment*, it is a signal that one of our values feels threatened. God invites us to consider with Him: 1) why we feel the way that we do, and 2) what do we value most deeply?

Bible Study

When the apostle Peter first came to Antioch from Jerusalem, he welcomed and ate with uncircumcised Gentile Christians. Later, a group of Jewish Christians arrived and convinced Peter to withdraw and separate from those Gentiles. They convinced Peter it was against God's will to eat with the uncircumcised and "unclean" Gentiles. Read Galatians 2:11–14, the apostle Paul's account of this situation.

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

1. Why, according to Paul, did Peter separate himself from the Gentiles?
2. Imagine what could have gone wrong. What did Paul risk in speaking to Peter? What would he have risked by staying silent?
3. In what areas of your life might you be like Peter, desiring the approval of others and acting in a way that is inconsistent with your values?

Most of us "fall out of integrity" because of a clash in our values. Peter understood that God had now included the gentiles in His new work, the Church. It was Peter who had received that revelation from God (Acts 10:9-33). But when an influential group of Jewish Christians arrived, Peter also valued their support and approval. Paul chooses to confront Peter by pointing to Peter's own deeper-held value.





WEEK 5: TOOL OF THE WEEK

This week's tool is the **Ladder of Integrity**. It is a series of questions designed to be asked in prayer before God to help you determine your own deepest values in a situation with another person or people.

Identify a nonvolatile issue that is bothering you (e.g., someone's lateness, cell phone usage, driving, messiness, TV/computer usage, texting during a meal, your family's holiday plans, lack of honesty, missing meetings).

Note: Before you start, make sure that your issue is not because of faulty assumptions

Write down the issue with the following sentence prompt:

Dear Jesus, Right now, the issue on my mind is....

Try to be specific about a behavior or incident, and not to imply motive in your framing of the issue. For example, "the conversation I had this morning with my boss," is a better issue to examine than "the fact that my boss doesn't care about her employees."

Then with your issue on the page, move on to telling God about what is happening inside of you in response to that issue. We have provided five possible prompts for you to consider under this section. You do not need to answer every prompt. The goal is to "examine your iceberg," around a specific issue, with your Father.

What is going on inside me:

- Right now I am feeling...
- I am anxious in talking about this because...
- What my reaction tells me about me is...
- My part in this is...
- My need in this issue is...

The goal in writing this section is to come to an understanding of what you felt and why as you experienced your iceberg moment. Our strong feelings are always tied to our values and expectations, our unspoken "commandments."

What I Value:

You are ready to move on to the next stage when you can take that understanding and answer the prompt:

- **This issue is important to me because I value...and I violate that value when...**

In the example given above of an intense conversation with a boss, the sentence might read: "This issue is important to me because I value her respect as a boss. She said things about me that I believe are untrue and I violated my value when I didn't say anything."



What I will do:

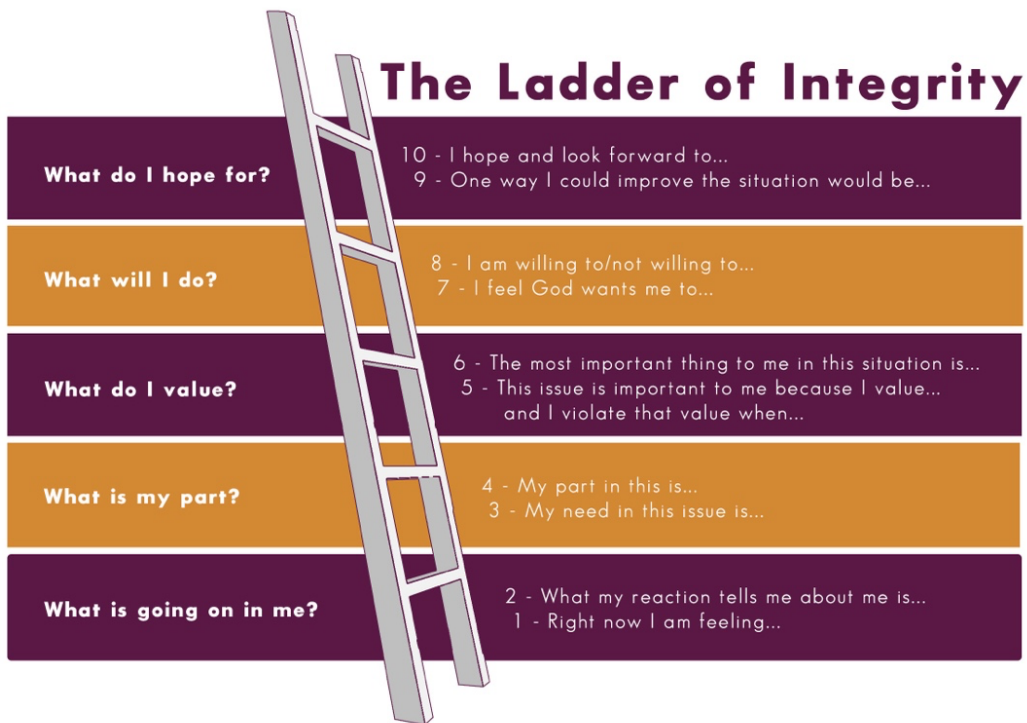
Once you have identified the value violation that caused your iceberg moment, the next stage is working with God to think about how you will proceed.

- The most important thing I want in this situation is...
- I am willing to/not willing to...
- I feel you (God) would want me to...
- One thing I could do to improve the situation is...

My hope:

Close by sharing with God what you would hope for and look forward to as to respond to the situation:

- I hope and look forward to...



Response

Take a few minutes to discuss this tool. Was it helpful in identifying what you value most in the situation?

Conclusion

If you would like your group to join you in prayer, share what you prayed for. God calls us to a life lived out of our deepest values, not in reaction to the moment. This is the life of integrity, and we hope the ladder will be a useful tool as you pursue integrity *in Christ*.