



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**.





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 God, 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 climbing the ladder. Start at the base with examining your reaction, and conclude with what you hope for in this situation.

The Ladder of Integrity

What do I hope for?	10 - I hope and look forward to... 9 - One way I could improve the situation would be...
What will I do?	8 - I am willing to/not willing to... 7 - I feel God wants me to...
What do I value?	6 - The most important thing to me in this situation is... 5 - This issue is important to me because I value... and I violate that value when...
What is my part?	4 - My part in this is... 3 - My need in this issue is...
What is going on in me?	2 - What my reaction tells me about me is... 1 - Right now I am feeling...

Using the Ladder of Integrity

In this exercise we asked you to climb the ladder by writing down your prayer as a letter to God. This is helpful as we are learning to climb the ladder or when we are experiencing significant iceberg moments – but we can climb the ladder without a pen and paper.

Any time we experience an iceberg moment is an opportunity to pause and pray – so that we can know and understand our hearts and align our words and actions with God's values. Climb the ladder quickly by asking the five questions from the left-hand side of the tool:

- What is going on in me?
- What is my part?
- What do I value?
- What will I do?
- What do I hope for?

Taking this moment to pause and pray, rather than reacting in the moment will help us live lives of integrity – where the decisions we make and the words we say are aligned with who God has called us to be.

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*.