HONESTY & INTEGRITY

It's Week 2 of the 10 week Husband Challenge! I'll be using the *Scripture Book Vol 3* for this series so if you want to follow along, you can order your copy on the website.

Let's start with a definition from my favorite dictionary: the *1828 Webster's Dictionary*, rooted in scripture.

> ***Honesty*** *is an upright disposition; moral rectitude of heart; a disposition to conform to justice and correct moral principles, in all social transactions; the honesty of a narrative.*

Now let's read the definition of **Integrity** -

> *the entire, unimpaired state of any thing, particularly of the mind; moral soundness or purity; incorruptness; uprightness; honesty.*

So what's the difference? Honesty is truth telling in speech and action, whereas integrity is consistently following moral and ethical principles, even when no one is watching.

It sounds like Integrity addresses the heart posture and disposition of the whole man, while Honesty focuses on facts stated in the current situation. Someone can be honest and tell the truth yet have a motive of destruction. Integrity is doing the morally right thing, even when it comes at a cost. Integrity heeds honesty, but not all honesty is ruled by integrity.

After spending a bit of time reading about examples and commands regarding Honesty and Integrity, I've concluded this one thing: to struggle in this area is to experience a **lack of fear of God.**

God sees all and knows all. What's done in the dark is not hidden from Him. If we fear man, we may think it's only lying if we get caught. But to have a healthy fear of God is to *always* choose the better way.

I want to emphasize, I do not mean "fear" as anxiety or being scared. Fear of the Lord is to be reverent towards him. Respectful. Worshiping.

If you want to dive into more scripture surrounding the Fear of God, check out *Scripture Book Vol. 1*.

EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLE

If you've been around for a while, you know I love to include Old Testament examples of these topics in action. The characters of the OT are so great. They can be really great illustrative examples of what God wants us to do, or they can royally mess it up. In both situations, we learn!

Flip to **2 Samuel 18:12**. King David has sent his armies to fight against Israel. David tells everyone very clearly, "don't hurt my son, Absalom" if they happen to see him. (Back story: Absalom is fighting David for the throne so he's being a rebel and isn't an innocent bystander here.) Well, Absalom is riding his mule and gets clotheslined by a tree and now he's stuck just hanging there because his steed rode out from under him. An unnamed man sees him and with an Honest heart, tells Joab, who then is responds with, "What?! He's easy pickings and you didn't kill him?! I would have paid you for to do that!" The unnamed man tells Joab there wasn't any amount of money he could have been paid to kill him because the king gave very specific orders to not kill him and he wasn't going to go against that.

I want to pause for a minute on a small note of thought. This passage is about someone taking a bribe to kill someone. Hmm, that theme sounds familiar, but where have we seen it before... Oh that's right! We can look at 2 Samuel 18:12 as the example of what it looks like to act with Integrity and **Matthew 26:15** as the example of what happens when you have no fear of God, no integrity, and no hope. Yes, this is the verse where Judas initiates his own bribe to kill Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. And later, Judas offs himself. Folks, this is what happens when Honesty and Integrity are traded for greed and lies. We'll get into greed next week when we talk about Money.

Look at **1 Kings 13:8**. A prophet of the Lord has confronted King Jeroboam and gives him not so good news. Jeroboam gets angry and extends his hand to have the man seized but his hand withers immediately. The prophet prays for Jeroboam *(aside: take note that he prays for his enemies)* and his hand is restored.

"Jerry" is so grateful and offers to reward the prophet and have dinner with him, but the prophet is not persuaded. Everything "Jerry" stands for is against the Lord and this prophet knows where his loyalty lies. He essentially tells "Jerry" there's nothing in this world that would make him say yes to this invitation because the Lord had specifically told him not to eat or drink in this place. Good job, unnamed prophet!

But wait, there's more. We're all human. And sometimes one minute, we may stand strong against the forces of evil, and the next minute, we can be as disobedient and forgetful as Eve in the garden. In the very next chapter, the unnamed man of God is approached by a slimy prophet who invites him to dinner. The unnamed man once again refuses because God told him not to eat or drink in that land, but the old man responds, "well, an angel told me to invite you for food!" And without hesitation, the unnamed man is tricked into eating and drinking with this slimy old liar, much like Eve and the serpent, and as a result of his disobedience, he was eaten by a lion after dinner. Let that be a lesson for us all! Stay the course or be a snack.

The second part of that story is totally unrelated to our topic at hand but I wanted to mention it in case it's been a while since you've read it. Even Elijah was calling down fire from Heaven one moment, then running from a girl and wishing he was dead the next. We are human. Your husband is human. Love covers a multitude of sins. If we were ever perfect, we would never get to experience God's grace. Remember that the next time he forgets to take out the trash.

Moving on! Let's go to Daniel 6:4. Daniel has been getting gold star achievement awards and it's made some bad guys really jealous. As a result, they're trying to dig up some dirt on him to get him arrested. But verse 4 tells us how that's going:

> **Daniel 6:4** - *Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.*

To not have any skeletons in the closet is no small feat. This is a man who clearly lives by the Spirit of God as a result of his fear of God. Not only is he honest in all his dealings but his commitment to Honesty throughout his life shows Integrity is a foundational part of his character.

So how do these examples work for highlighting scripture in a prayer Bible? I'm so glad you asked! For one, I love a good New Testament one-liner but there's something to be said about the helpfulness that comes from reading a tried and true example, and then watching the person either rock it or miserably flop. If I were to highlight one of these verses in my husband's Bible, the prayer I might write next to it would be one that explains how I see the situation through his current circumstance.

For instance, 2 Samuel 18:12 encourages me to be fervent in prayer for my husband's heart to remain steadfast through temptation. That even when there seems to be a short cut or way for him to get ahead in life, that he chooses the narrow path that's rooted in honesty and integrity.

My prayer for 1 Kings 13:8 may sound like an earnest prayer that when my husband hears the Lord or is given a specific direction, that he stays focused and remains keen to identify any distractions the enemy may launch his way to throw him off course.

And praying Daniel 6:4 over my husband would be a confident prayer that thanks the Lord for instilling a heart in him that desires to do the right thing, every time, no matter the cost.

I love including biblical examples in the prayer Bibles I make because I feel like it helps the recipient read between the lines of scripture and see themselves as one of the characters. God's instructions and stories are for us! They're not irrelevant, ancient, or non-applicable to our modern lives.

BUSINESS

Now let's get into some business perspectives when it comes to Honesty and Integrity. The Bible is actually a very business-minded piece of literature. God has a lot to say about how to handle business transactions as well as rules that create a plumb line for from which ethics and justice can be measured. His word sets the standards here.

> **Deuteronomy 25:15** - *A full and fair weight you shall have, a full and fair measure you shall have, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*

What catches my eye in this first verse is the interesting fact that God associates justice with longevity. I

have to ask the question: *does our honest or dishonest social transactions directly affect how many years we live?* I love pondering seemingly unrelated issues that God brings together and assigns direct correlation to. There are several of these throughout the Bible regarding health. You can check more out in *Scripture Book Vol 1* under the topic of Healing.

Leviticus 19:36 talks again about just weights and balances, and it's followed by a reminder that God is *"the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,"* as if to remind the people that they better play fair because, like my momma used to say, "I brought you into this world, I can take you out."

Flip ahead to **Proverbs 11:1.** Dishonesty and unjust weights is not just a bad thing, it's an *"abomination"* to the Lord. While we're talking about "abominations", **Proverbs 12:22** and **20:23** also reference unjust scales, lying lips, and unequal weights as "abominations." You know another time the word "abomination" is used? **Deuteronomy 12:31** when it's describing how God feels about child sacrifice. Yeah. So that's the degree to which God dislikes cheating in the marketplace.

Back in 2 Kings, there's a description of honest workers in chapter 12 verse 15.

> **2 Kings 12:15** - *And they did not ask for an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workmen, for they dealt honestly.*

The guys who were in charge of handling the payroll money were such stand up gentlemen, that their boss didn't even have to micromanage their books. They were completely trustworthy and walked with Integrity.

This next verse reflects the same sentiments.

> **Psalm 101:7 -** *No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.*

David was looking for the humble because he knew they were much better to trust with authority and responsibility.

I might choose one of these verses to highlight in my husband's prayer Bible if he is in charge of making personnel decisions for his job or even if he's choosing friends to keep in his circle. Jethro advised Moses back in **Exodus 18:21** that he needed to find able men, men who were trustworthy and hated bribes, and most of all, men who feared God. Choosing men with qualities like this in the work place is pretty important but so is choosing men like this to do life with. We'll get into chatting about Friendships more in Week 6 but I want you all to look at these scriptures not just as solid business advice—which they are—but also as solid truths for applying to your whole life.

Nehemiah was a pretty stand up guy. In **Nehemiah 5:15**, he's explaining how much better of a leader he is than the previous governors. *"Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God."* Nehemiah had a moral standard that was set high above earthy governor standards. He answered to God alone. His reverence and fear of the Lord is what drove him to treat the people justly and lovingly.

To be honest and to walk with integrity is to be more concerned with eternal life than worldly prosperity.

Finally, in **2 Corinthians 8:21**, Paul is highlighting to the Corinthians that he is going above and beyond to be completely transparent in his financial dealings so that there is no question to his integrity. He is externalizing his good, moral, benevolent qualities so that the people looking on can judge him by his conduct as he sets a higher standard for the people.

If I were going to highlight this verse for a prayer Bible, I might focus on Paul's commitment to not just "do the right thing" but to make it abundantly clear that he is conducting himself above the board. For my husband, who tends to be an extremely honest man, this might be written as a prayer of gratitude, thanking the Lord for giving him a Pauline-like heart and setting in him a higher standard.

For a husband who might struggle with transparency, I would draft my prayer a bit differently. Remember, a prayer Bible ONLY encourages, comforts, or edifies. We do not call out bad behavior, judge, criticize, or try to fix him. I have two choices: I can write a faith-filled prayer of gratitude thanking the Lord for doing a work in his heart *before I see it with my eyes*, or I can write a prayer that uses Paul as the example to strive for. "Lord, thank you for Paul's transparency in all things. Thank you for giving us insight into his heart,

decisions, and actions so that we might strive to imitate his conduct like he tells us to in 1 Corinthians 11:1. Thank you for continually drawing us close to you and conforming us to be more like you."

I use the general term "we" a lot when I write prayers. I do this because I'm in the same boat as the person I'm praying for. We are all on equal playing fields. I'm no higher or better than the recipient of this Bible and I want them to know that also. Sometimes praying for someone else is an opportunity to include yourself so they know they aren't alone and there's solidarity and comfort in knowing we all fall short.

There are many negatively presented scriptures in the Word related to Honesty and Integrity so let's flip through some positively presented ones and talk about how to form a prayer from them.

> **Psalm 51:6** - *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

In the verse just before this, David acknowledges that he was born a sinful human. In this verse, he understands that God does not desire to leave him in that sinful state. He wants to rewrite the sin script for David all the way down to the most inward parts of him. A prayer for my husband might sound something like "God, I thank you for all that you've brought my husband through that has led him to this day. I know your work in us is never done until the day you call us home. Continue Your good work in him and plant Your Truth down in the deepest parts of his heart."

> **Psalm 112:4-5** - *Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;*
> *he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.*
> *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;*
> *who conducts his affairs with justice.*

"Blessed" is what the Psalmist calls the ones who fear the Lord and this Psalm is a laundry list of benefits that come from fearing God more than fearing man. If your husband is walking in darkness, a prayer for this verse could sound like, "Lord, remind him that you are gracious and merciful and you seek any and every opportunity to comfort and guide us. You want more than anything to develop a relationship with us that is like that of a best friend, that we might get to know you and begin to put more and more of our

trust in you. Continue to fill my husband with Your divine integrity that causes him to be generous, lending, thoughtful of others, and a man who conducts his business with justice. May the people watching him bear witness to these godly traits and desire to know what keeps him on the straight and narrow."

Proverbs 2:7 - *he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;*
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

This is an easy one. "Thank you Lord for your promise of protection over us when we exercise godly integrity and for saving all Your divine wisdom for Your children who walk uprightly in Your ways. Thank you for calling my husband your child."

Proverbs 2:21 - *For the upright will inhabit the land,*
and those with integrity will remain in it,

The words "upright" and "integrity" seem to be coming in pairs. When I see repeated words, I like to take a quick peak into the original Hebrew or Greek definitions. Sometimes there are little nuggets that are fun to discover, other times, it confirms what I already assumed about the words. But it's always worth taking a couple minutes to research.

Here in verse 21, the Hebrew word for "upright" means straight, just, right, as in a path but it also means right in an ethical or emotional sense, and upright like God and His ways.

The Hebrew word for "integrity"means blameless or complete, as in the condition of an animal that was worthy of sacrifice. I can use the definitions of words to help me form the prayer so it doesn't sound like I'm just repeating the scripture. For example, "Thank you, Lord, for giving my husband a just heart that desires to stay on the straight and narrow and for allowing him not only the blessing of dwelling in the Promised Land You created for him but for keeping him there. Keep encouraging him to remain steadfast and blameless in everything he does."

Proverbs 10:9 - *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,*
but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.

"I pray my husband stays hungry for Your Word, that it might continually encourage him to stay honest, thus walking confidently knowing that he has Your blessing in his decisions and actions. May he be quick to discern any temptation the enemy might attempt to distract him with and may he rebuke it immediately, as he discerns its evil nature."

Proverbs 12:19 - *Truthful lips endure forever,*
but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

"You have a legacy to give my husband. Morals, character, and virtues that will be passed down through the generations. Lord, guard his mouth in all his days that he may ensure that legacy and all the fruit and blessings that have grown from it, endures forever. Cut off every branch of his life that does not bear fruit. Thank you for making him an honest man who acts with purpose and has a soft heart for You."

Proverbs 19:1 - *Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity*
than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.

Proverbs 28:6 - *Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity*
than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.

"We will all have seasons of scarcity at times in our lives, but I pray that my husband maintains his integrity through it all. Integrity is something You value more than flagrant speech or riches gathered through immorality. Man judges by what he sees (eloquent speech, flattering lips, material prosperity) but You remind us that we take none of that to our grave; it's all vanity. Our conviction to do things Your way, with integrity, is of much more value eternally. Remind my husband to play the long game of staying eternally-minded if he's ever tempted."

CONDUCT

"The world is a very poor critic of my Christianity, but it is a very sufficient one of my conduct." - Alexander Maclaren

While our commitment to Jesus is really only known between ourselves and Jesus, the outside world will notice how believers treat others, handle money, fulfill responsibilities, and react under pressure. We know

the Lord looks at the heart but we do need to be aware that the world sees our actions, and our deepest heart beliefs motivate our actions, so —I'll say this a lot because we humans tend to be behavior fixing creatures by nature—the goal here is not behavior modification, but **heart change**. Heal the heart and the behaviors correct themselves.

Here are a couple scriptures that speak about our physical bodies being the way through which we show the Honesty and Integrity of our heart.

This Isaiah passage talks about all kinds of body parts. Do you remember the **Romans 6:13** verse that tells us to not use the different members of our bodies (our eyes, ears, hands, etc.) for unrighteousness, but to present our whole body to God as someone who has been redeemed from death and allow Him to use our members for good works instead? With that verse in mind, read Isaiah's words:

> **Isaiah 33:15-16** - *He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly,*
> *who despises the gain of oppressions,*
> *who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe,*
> *who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed*
> *and shuts his eyes from looking on evil,*
> *he will dwell on the heights;*
> *his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks;*
> *his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.*

He tells us to use our legs to walk righteously. Our mouths to speak uprightly. Having a heart that is disgusted with extortion. He speaks to shaking out our hands so they can't accept bribes, covering our ears so they can't hear about murderous plots, and closing our eyes so as to not witness anymore evil.

In this world, the more we use our hands to type out rage bait, our eyes to witness the absurdities, and our ears to hear the non-stop negative news cycle, the more normalized evil becomes. We become increasingly more and more desensitized to it. The lines of morality begin to gray. It becomes "normal" to be corrupt. "Everyone else does it," is the belief we begin to live by.

The Lord is telling us here to protect our heart by guarding our members. We're to use our hands to

serve selflessly, our ears to listen and be attentive, and our eyes to see others and make them feel known. We have to preserve our members to protect our Integrity. **Proverbs 6:16-19** reflects very similar instructions on this as well.

A prayer over this scripture might be rooted in giving thanks to the Lord for his preservation of your husbands heart in an evil world. You might also pray for the heart of your husband to be discerning or sensitive to any attempted entries of evil through any of his members. You could even go on to pray over every one of his members and speak life and God's original purpose over them. By guarding himself against all these temptations, God promises to protect and provide for him in verse 16. Therefore there is no need to fear or worry.

This next one is a simple verse that packs a little purpose into it:

> **Malachi 2:6** - *True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity.*

God is speaking through the prophet to remind the people who Levi was and what he stood for. But my favorite part of this is the last phrase. Because of Levi's integrity to walk closely and obediently with God, *"he turned many from iniquity."* I might phrase a prayer around this verse to thank the Lord for Levi's example and to remind my husband that people are watching him and the way he conducts himself. And this isn't a passive watching. People are looking to him for leadership and guidance. It could be our children or it could be a stranger at the grocery store. Either way, the conduct of our husband has the supernatural ability to lead others to repentance, and that's a pretty powerful thing.

Speaking of leading the household, here's a verse that speaks into the Integrity of the steward of the home:

> **1 Corinthians 4:2** - *Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*

The Hebrew word for "stewards" here refers to one who manages a household and the affairs of the family or business. It can also refer to a minister of the Gospel. It's extremely important to the Lord that

our husbands are trustworthy. If you have a husband who does not walk in this type of behavior, you could write a prayer that builds him up in this area. "Heavenly Father, thank you for my husband and his fierce love for our family. He may not always feel equipped to lead us spiritually but You created him perfect for this family. He is exactly who we need. I pray that he finds a new level of confidence in this holy calling. Remind him who he is. Remind him that he is created in the image of a holy God. He is strong, protective, and uniquely positioned to lead this house in a way that nobody else is designed for. What a blessing it is to be under a roof with him."

Let's end with:

> **Hebrews 13:18** - *Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.*

If Paul knew he needed prayer to stay honorable, then you can bet our husbands need it to. This is our job. This is our holy calling. We are to encourage our men to do good, persevere, and act justly. To pray they are strong even when they are scared, to love his wife and family, and to fear God above all else. Remember, when he fears God, everything else will follow.

Act as the persistent widow and pray for your husband because the enemy loves to target the leader of the army. Take out the leader and the house crumbles. This is not a battle against flesh and blood. This is a spiritual war and you, my sister in Christ, are a warrior standing in the gap of his insecurities, fears, and strongholds, enabling Heaven to get involved. Just because you can't see it with your eyes doesn't make it any less real. You were created for such a time as this.

> I know a prayer Bible can seem daunting at first, but remember, we have plenty of time so if we work with **INTEGRITY** and write **2-3 prayers a day** *(use your Polite house 20 minute candle to help you stay focused!)*, the Bible will practically build itself in the form of a Prayer Bible with 140-180 handwritten prayers.

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CLEAN YOUR HEART

Use this on days that feel hard or create a daily rhythm of surrender and begin every prayer session with it.

This is not a moment to perform, produce, or prove anything. Quiet yourself before God and intentionally lay down pride, distraction, control, and any known sin. Confess what Holy Spirit brings to mind. Release your own agendas, assumptions, and expectations. Choose humility. Choose obedience. Ask God to empty you of self so He can fill you with His Spirit. Do not move forward until your heart is surrendered and your spirit is yielded.

Lord, thank your calling me to draw near to You in this way.[1] Your Word says the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working[2] and You hear the prayer of the righteous.[3] I know my sins have made a separation between You and I.[4] If I cherish sin in my heart, You, Lord, will not listen.[5] Therefore, let me test and examine my ways.[6] Lord, weigh my spirit,[7] for even a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.[8] Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting![9] Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.[10]

[Selah - pause, listen, repent, forgive, receive grace]

Thank you for cleansing me from what is dishonorable, that I am a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to You, and ready for every good work.[11]

[1] James 4:8; [2] James 5:16; [3] Proverbs 15:29; [4] Isaiah 59:2; [5] Psalm 66:18; [6] Lamentations 3:40; [7] Proverbs 16:2; [8] 1 Corinthians 5:6; [9] Psalm 139:23-24; [10] Psalm 51:10; [11] 2 Timothy 2:21

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