

# Yes Means Yes

## Rebuilding a Broken Church Culture Part 1

James 5:12 9-20-2015

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Summary: Integrity involves both honesty and faithfulness. The stakes of integrity are heaven or hell (unrepentant liars are lost). The basis of integrity is reverence for the name of God (every word is under oath). This is “above all” in the sense that it has to be the first step in the restoration of a broken church culture.

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**James 5:12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned. 13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.**

## Introduction

### Fraud

According to one criminologist, the #1 crime in America today is fraud. I don’t know how many convictions there are, but it seems to me hardly any of the scammers ever get caught. There are so many scams out there.

- Wholesale furniture or other buyer's club scams
- "You've won a free vacation" scams
- Tech Support scams – they call you and offer to fix your computer.
- Collection Agency scams – they say you missed your court date, or you owe this money, but pay us a few hundred dollars and we'll take care of it.
- Vacation Property Rental scams
- Timeshare Resale scams
- Dating and Relationship scams
- Work from Home scams
- Fraudulent Check scams – someone buys your car with a fraudulent cashier's check, and then when you go to cash it, you are the one committing a crime.
- Investment schemes
- Cemetery scams
- Identity theft

Dishonesty is one of the things in this world that makes life really hard.

But as aggravated as we might be over people like that, very often we have our own forms of dishonesty or unfaithfulness. They aren't as obvious as running a scam to rip people off. But very often lack of integrity can creep into our hearts. We put on masks in church to make it seem like we don't have any embarrassing sins. I give everyone the impression that I have got it all together. I laugh at a joke I didn't even get because I don't want to look dumb. I pretend to know something I don't know. I say things that mean one thing to me, but I don't concern myself with the possibility that it might mean something else to the person I'm talking to.

There are so many subtle forms of dishonesty. How about when we aren't honest with people regarding where they stand with us? Relational dishonesty. We are upset with someone, but we won't go talk to them about it. So that person thinks everything is fine, but it's not. We smile and act like nothing is wrong, but something is wrong. That is lying.

And our struggles with integrity go beyond just dishonesty. We also struggle with unfaithfulness. Lying is when you intentionally deceive someone. Unfaithfulness is when you don't follow through on your word or your responsibility. I might tell you that I am going to do something, and I mean it with all my heart at the time I say it, but then I fail to follow through for one reason or another. You can't count on me. That is unfaithfulness. It is an integrity problem.

You say you'll pray for someone and you don't. You say you'll be there, but you don't show up, or show up late. You sign up for a ministry, but over time you get discouraged or lose interest and let it go by the wayside. (And blame it on whoever discouraged you.) You vow to be faithful to your wife, but then you lust after other women. You vow, "Till death do us part," but then when it gets hard, or someone else shows you the attention you crave, you divorce without biblical grounds.

Whether it is a really big issue like leaving your spouse, or something more common like putting on a mask at church – lapses in integrity are a very serious matter.

## The Stakes of Integrity

Take a look at what is at stake.

**James 5:12 ... Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.**

What is at stake here is nothing less than condemnation. It is not talking about the judgment of believers – this is the word for being condemned to hell. Revelation 21 is a description of that wonderful day when believers will enter the New Jerusalem where we will live forever.

**Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain... 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this ... 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving,**

**the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral ... all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.**

**14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life ... 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.**

All liars will spend eternity in the lake of fire.

“What if I lie but then repent?”

Then you’re not a liar. If we repent of our sin, and we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are not defined by our sin. But a person who lies and refuses to repent – that person is a liar. And all liars will be sent to the lake of fire. So this issue of integrity is a very serious matter. It is a big deal, because God hates lying and unfaithfulness. When Ananias and Sapphira lied about their offering, God struck them dead on the spot right there in church. Proverbs 6:16 boils everything that God hates down to seven things, and two of the seven are lying. #2 a lying tongue and #6 a false witness who pours out lies.

**Psalm 5:6 You destroy those who tell lies; ...deceitful men the LORD abhors.**

You cannot approach God if you are a liar. Many times people feel like they’re distant from God, they don’t feel that closeness, their spiritual life is dried up – and in some cases it is because of a lack of integrity in their life.

**Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? ...4 He ... who does not ...swear deceitfully.**

**Psalm 15:1 LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? ... 2 He ... who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 ... who keeps his oath even when it hurts**

Unrepentant liars cannot approach God and they will be condemned. So honesty and faithfulness are a matter of spiritual life or death.

## **Difficulties**

That part of the verse is very clear and easy to understand - Let your yes be yes in your no-no, otherwise you prove that you are not even saved. But what are we to make of the first half of the verse?

**12 Above all my brothers do not swear...**

There are two questions we need to answer about that. First, why the thing about swearing oaths? Why is that a big deal? And the other question - why does he say **above all**? Are we to believe that the most important thing in the whole book is avoiding oaths? That is more important than putting your faith into practice or following the royal law to love your neighbor as yourself, or to avoid murder and adultery? In what sense is this command about oaths above all?

So there are some difficulties in this passage. But I believe the difficulties disappear when we understand how this verse fits in to the overall message of the book of James. And even more exciting than that is this – I believe that when we see the point that James is making here, not only will we have the answer to those questions, but we will also have the solution to dishonesty. You would think that the solution to dishonesty would be simple – just tell the truth. But it is not that simple when it comes to enslaving sins. When you have told so many lies that they just come out of your mouth before you even think, and the idea of coming clean and telling the whole truth just feels impossible – you become enslaved to the sin of lying, and James is going to teach us how to recover from a situation like that and become a man or woman of integrity again.

## The Basis of Integrity

When James says **do not swear**, he is not talking about obscenity or filthy language. The use of obscenity and dirty words is definitely forbidden for the Christian.

**Ephesians 5:4** Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Coarse language has no place in the mouth of the believer. But this word translated **swear** isn't talking about that. It is talking about swearing an oath - like if you say, "I swear to God," or "I swear on my mother's grave," or "I swear on a stack of Bibles," or even just "I swear," or "I promise." That is what this word is referring to. James says, "Don't swear at all," and that is a difficulty because God Himself swears oaths - that is mentioned many times in Scripture. The great angel in Revelation 10:6 swore an oath: Paul swore oaths under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**Galatians 1:20** I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

**Romans 1:9** God ... is my witness

**Philippians 1:8** God can testify how I long for all of you

Even Jesus testified under oath in Matthew 26:63-64. So what is James talking about when he says do not swear at all?

### Jesus' Teaching on Oaths

Throughout this book, James has assumed that the readers have a thorough familiarity with Jesus' teaching - especially the Sermon on the Mount. And that is never more obvious than in this passage. This is the most direct reference to the Sermon on the Mount in the entire book of James. Look at Matthew 5:33-37.

**Matthew 5:34-37**  
...do not swear at all:

either by heaven... or by the earth

... or by Jerusalem... And do not swear by your head...

let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

**James 5:12**

...do not swear  
not by heaven or by earth

or by any other oath.

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Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no,  
or you will be condemned.

It is obvious that James is quoting Jesus even though he summarizes it in an abbreviated way. So clearly James wants to call our attention to what Jesus was saying in the Sermon on the Mount. And what was that? In that section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was correcting several wrong understandings of Old Testament doctrines. He would start by saying, "You have heard it was said..." and

then He would quote their wrong teaching, then he would say, "But I say to you..." And He would give the correct understanding. And in this case, when He refers to their wrong teaching, it doesn't really sound all that wrong. Look again at verse 33.

**Matthew 5:33** you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.'

Isn't that exactly what the Old Testament says?

**Numbers 30:2** When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath...he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

That is what the Bible says, so what is wrong with their interpretation? Answer – there is nothing wrong with their *interpretation*. Their interpretation is right on the money; the problem was with their *application* - the way that they applied it in life.

## **The Pharisees' Application - Legalized Dishonesty**

Here is what they did: they said, “If you swear by God you have to keep the oath. Therefore, if you don't swear by God, you don't have to keep it.” And that got really complicated, because out of respect for the name of God, the Jews liked to use substitutes. So instead of saying, “I swear by God,” they might say “I swear by heaven,” and that means the same thing. What happened was they came up with this elaborate system of rules for which substitutes counted as an actual reference to God and which ones didn't. There are two entire books of the Mishnah devoted to describing which ones count. Jesus gives us a little sample of that in Matthew.23.

**Matthew 23:16** You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' ... **18** You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.'

Why do you suppose they did that? What is the point of having vow formulas that aren't binding? They did it for the same reason children today do it. In the world of little kids, if you make a promise but you have your fingers crossed, it's not binding. And we do the exact same thing as adults, except instead of promises and finger crossing we have our system of contracts. If someone commits to something, shakes your hand, and signs a contract that seems to require that he follow through – if he does all that but hidden in the contract is some fine print legalese that lets him off the hook, then in our culture he is not bound to follow through on what he promised. There are lawyers whose entire job is to write deceptive contracts like that – that make it sound like something is being promised but really it isn't. For us it is contracts, for them it was various vow formulas, for children it's crossing your fingers, but in each case the purpose is the same - to create a way to deceive people into believing what you say when it is not true. So the purpose of their system of vows was deception. It was essentially a system of legalized dishonesty. Their interpretation of the Old Testament was right on – if you swear by God, you have to keep your oath.

But their application was the exact opposite of the purpose of that law. Their application was, if you are clever, you can lie and not be guilty. The intent of the law was honesty, and their application allowed for dishonesty.

There is a whole lot of heresy in the church that comes from perfectly accurate interpretations of Scripture – but applied in a heretical way. That is what the Pharisees were doing.

## **Phariseeism**

And that gives us some insight into the legalism of the Pharisees by the way. The purpose of all their rules was to accommodate their sin. People always associate legalism with strictness. If you are really strict in following God's law they call you a Pharisee. That is as wrong as it can be. The problem with the Pharisees was not that they were too strict about obeying God's law. The problem with the Pharisees was that they were to loose about obeying the weightier matters of the law, like justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Mt.23:23), and taking care of your elderly parents (Mk.7:11) and honesty (Mt.5:33-37). Phariseeism is not being strict about obeying God's law. Phariseeism is using human reasoning or tradition as an excuse to set aside God's law.

**Mark 7:9** he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

## Promising Is for Liars

And that is exactly what they were doing with their system of oaths. And that is what Jesus and James are forbidding. That is why it is not a contradiction when God makes oaths and Paul swears oaths - there are some solemn occasions where oaths are appropriate. It is fine that on your wedding day you made formal vows – that is appropriate. There is nothing wrong with putting your hand on a Bible in the courtroom and making an oath before God that you will tell the truth. There are certain very solemn, rare, formal occasions when it is a good thing to call special attention to the truthfulness of what you are saying. You should always keep your word, but on your wedding day it is appropriate that you be reminded in a special way of how solemn your word really is. The same goes for testifying in court, when someone’s life or freedom might be at stake. God made oaths in Scripture – not because His Word was unreliable otherwise, but to help us understand the gravity and importance of certain promises that He made, and to help us believe them.

So there is a legitimate place for oaths in formal settings, but in normal, everyday conversation, if you have to constantly swear and promise and assure people that you are telling the truth, that probably means you are a dishonest person. The more someone has to assure you that he is telling the truth the more of a liar he probably is. When everyone knows your word is as good as gold, you don’t have to make oaths to get people to believe you. So in everyday speech, vowing or promising is for liars. It is what liars have to do to be believed. When you are a kid, and you are saying, “I promise! I pinky promise! Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye if I’m lying” – why did we have to try so hard to convince people that we were telling the truth? Because they were not used to hearing us tell the truth, and so we had to let them know that this situation is different than the norm. If you tell your kids you are going to do something, and they ask you, “Do you promise?” that is probably an indication that in the past your word hasn’t been very reliable.

So when Jesus gave His teaching about swearing in the Sermon on the Mount, the point was not to abolish formal oaths. The point was to call them out of their system of legalized dishonesty- using extra verbiage beyond just a simple *yes* or *no* that was designed to enable you to deceive the person without technically being guilty of telling a lie. If you ever find yourself saying, “Technically it wasn’t a lie,” remember that Jesus taught, “If you intentionally deceived the person, then it was a lie - regardless what actual words came out of your mouth.”

## The Third and Ninth Commandments Go Together

But there is more to it than that. Most people would agree that lack of integrity is a bad thing. Even non-Christians would agree with that – everybody likes the idea of integrity. But what is important here is to understand why we fail in that area. What is it that causes us to be untruthful or unfaithful or unreliable? Answer: a lack of reverence for God’s name. The point that Jesus was making in Matthew 5 was that all oaths are ultimately in God’s name - whether you mentioned God or not. Even if you swear by yourself – by your own head, God is the one who determines what happens with your head. So every time we assure someone that we are telling the truth or that what we are saying can be trusted and that we will follow through, any kind of promise or guarantee we offer is ultimately in appeal to God. And that is why breaking our word is so serious - because it profanes God’s name.

**Leviticus 19:12 Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.**

That verse shows us that the third commandment and the ninth commandment go together - do not give false testimony and do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

The whole reason people swear by God is because the idea is that God is so awesome, and so much to be feared, that there is no way in the world you would be telling a lie if you swear by God. So if you use that to persuade someone that you are telling the truth, and you are not telling the truth, that shows that you don’t fear God, you don’t regard Him as awesome – instead you regard Him as something

common and profane. And if you use any kind of oath or promise to persuade someone that you are telling the truth, even if you don't mention God Himself, (even if all you say is, "I promise") you are ultimately bringing God in as a witness. All promises and oaths are ultimately an appeal to God.

In the Old Testament they would many times spell it out. They would say, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I'm not telling the truth..." or "if I don't follow through." That is what every oath is saying, in an abbreviated form. You are calling on God to punish you if you are lying or if you break the promise.

And that is no big deal if you don't take God seriously. If you don't fear God, don't care about God, don't really believe in the holiness of God, then it is no big deal to invoke His name willy-nilly. But if you do believe in the holiness of God, and you tremble before Him like Habakkuk and Job and everyone else in Scripture who was ever confronted with the presence of God, then you realize you would be better off dead than to break that oath. If you stand in the courtroom and put your hand on a Bible and swear to tell the truth, you had better tell the truth. If you stand before the altar and say, "I vow before God and these witnesses to love and to cherish..." – you had better not break that vow. And realize that any promise you ever make counts as a full-blown vow in God's name even if you don't mention God's name.

## Life under Oath

In fact, it even goes further than that. When Jesus required that our *yes* always mean *yes* and our *no* always mean *no*, He was essentially placing us under oath every time we open our mouths.

That means you are on the hook for following through and for being truthful whether you promise or not.

If God requires that your *yes* always mean *yes* and your *no* always mean *no*, that means every word out of your mouth is essentially a vow in God's name. As Christians, we bear the name of Christ, don't we? We call ourselves by His name. And so any kind of dishonesty or unfaithfulness on our part profanes the name of Christ.

Are you familiar with that term, *profane*? It means to take something holy and treat it as common. If I get startled by something and say, "Oh my God," that is profanity because I am taking something holy (the name of God) and treating it as something common (a meaningless epithet). If I say, "I swear to God that I'm telling the truth – may God himself damn me to hell forever if I'm lying," and I am lying, that's profanity. I am taking the holy name of God and profaning it – treating it as something ordinary or common or inconsequential. But now we see that if I just say, "yes," and I don't mean *yes*, there is a sense in which I am profaning God's name. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus Christ placed us under oath, and so as Christians we are under oath 24/7 - every time we open our mouths.

Picture yourself in that awesome heavenly courtroom Daniel 7, in the high court of heaven with God seated as judge, the highest dignitaries of the spiritual realm seated on thrones, thousands of angels in attendance, and you are called before that great court to testify. But first you are placed under oath: "Do you swear by the living God, the Ancient of Days who is seated there on the throne that what you are saying is the truth?" That is the kind of standard you are bound to every single time you open your mouth. Every time your wife asks where you went after work.

When you tell your kids, "Yeah, I'll take you there this Saturday" – you said that under oath. It is a vow to God and the Lord will require it of you. When you are returning something to the store and they ask you a question that may determine whether you'll be able to get your money back or not – you are under oath before God.

When kid's 12 and under are free, and they ask you about your 13 year old. Or when you fill out your taxes, or sell a car – everything you ever say, it is as if you began with, "I swear to God this is true – may the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if what I'm saying isn't true." Kids – your mom or dad asks you what happened – if you don't tell the truth you are lying to God. And mom and dad may never know, but you will have to face whatever punishment God gives you, and it will not be worth it. You would be way better off just to tell mom and dad the truth and get in whatever trouble you are going to get

in. Because being in trouble with God is a lot, lot worse than any trouble you can ever get in with mom and dad, or a teacher at school.

If everyone is sitting around telling stories, and the last story was a really good one and everyone laughed, and you want them to laugh at your story or be impressed with what you are going to say, and so you make something up – or you exaggerate a little bit – you have just lied to God, and you are in trouble.

The same goes for unfaithfulness. You say, “Yeah, I’ll be there,” but then a much better opportunity comes up – what do you do? Do you call and ask if the person will release you from your commitment? Or do you just call and say, “Sorry, I’m not going to be able to make it.” Or you commit to a ministry and then realize it’s not something you want to do. Do you ask to be released from your commitment, or do you just send out an email saying, “I’m not going to do this anymore”?

**Proverbs 25:19 Like a bad tooth or a lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in times of trouble.**

## **The Solution to Dishonesty: Reverence**

And this is a very helpful principle for helping people who struggle with honesty. Lying can be one of the most enslaving sins of all - every bit as enslaving as cocaine or alcohol or pornography. Once you develop a habit of lying, it is incredibly hard to become an honest person again. But one of the most important keys that will help you become honest is to understand this principle. Learning how to overcome a lying problem isn’t just a matter of resolving, “I’m really going to try to be honest from now on.” To really get victory, the key is to gain a greater degree of reverence for the name of God. God will not hold guiltless anyone who profanes His name. He will hold you to your word. And if you tell a lie, and you don’t come clean and tell the truth and repent, that is cosmic perjury and you will face consequences from God that are far worse than whatever it is you are trying to escape by telling the lie. If this is an area you want to work on in your life I would suggest reading the book or going through the sermon series titled *The Holiness of God* by RC Sproul. If that series doesn’t give you reverence for God I don’t know what will.

Ok, so all of that is what James was referring to by quoting Jesus here. And so you can see that the command in this verse has two parts to it. He is calling us to have integrity, but much more than that, he is calling us to an integrity that is founded upon the basis of reverence for God’s name. That is the basis for our integrity.

Josephus said of the people in the Qumran community that “any word of theirs has more force than an oath.”<sup>1</sup> Wouldn’t it be something to have a reputation that if you give a simple *yes* or *no* that is more reliable than any contract – especially if they could see that the reason we had that much integrity was because of how much reverence we have for God?

## **The Primacy of Integrity**

Go back to those first two words – **above all**. To understand the point of those words, **above all**, we need to understand how it fits in the context. And here is where this really gets exciting to me.

## **The Closing Section of James**

### **How to Fix a Broken Church Culture**

Here is what we know about the people James was writing to: The church community was in shambles as a result of their sinful reactions to their suffering. They were suffering in terrible ways, but in response to that suffering, they were neglecting each other’s needs, they were showing favoritism, they were jockeying for positions of prominence in the church, there was envy, selfish ambition, disorder, every evil practice, fights and quarrels, worldliness, pride, slander, gossip, passing judgment on each

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<sup>1</sup> Morris 123.

other, grumbling against each other – it was a mess. All through the book James has been pointing out those sins and rebuking them and calling them to repentance. Each one of the people who were acting this way needed to repent of those sinful responses, and of the heart problems that led to those sinful responses. But then what? When a church has been ripped to shreds by fights and quarrels, how do you put it back together? How do you rebuild a broken church culture? That is the topic of this closing section of the book.

James is going to show us how to rebuild a church culture that has been shattered by selfishness and quarreling and grumbling. He is going to teach us four things that need to be done for the church to be restored to health, and the first one is right here in verse 12: Integrity that is based on deep reverence for God's name. The next one is prayer (vv.13-18), then confession of sin to one another (v.16), then restoration of those who wander away (vv.19, 20). That is how you fix a broken church. To go from a culture of grumbling and quarreling and selfishness to a culture of peacemaking, the church needs to focus on these four things: restoration, confession, prayer, and integrity that arise out of reverence for God's name.

And in order for it all to work, integrity that arises out of reverence for God has to come first. That is the point of **above all**. The most literal translation would be *before all*.<sup>2</sup> The Greek is *pro panton* - *pro* (before) and *panton* (all). The point is not that this is more important than everything else in the book. The point is, for this closing section about how to fix the broken church, this has to come first.

If a disordered, messed up church is going to be restored, the starting place has to be integrity that comes from reverence for God's name. What good will all the instructions about prayer do us if we don't have reverence for God's name? God won't even listen to our prayers if we don't reverence His name. What good will it be for James to tell us to confess our sins to one another so we can be healed if we are not committed to full honesty? If we are not transparent and honest, and we confess our sins in ways that distort the truth and make us look better - that's not confession, which means it won't result in any healing. And how are we going to restore those who are wandering away if we are wandering ourselves by dabbling in dishonesty? If a broken church is going to get on track, it has to begin with everyone having a deep enough reverence for God and fear of God that we have complete honesty and faithfulness with one another. No church can ever recover while the people still have all their masks on. And the masks will never come off until we have such a deep reverence for God that we are more afraid of profaning His name through dishonesty than we are of our true self being exposed to people. The reason the masks are on is we are afraid of exposing our real selves. And so we will wear those masks until a greater fear makes us say, "I would rather be embarrassed before you and risk ridicule than dishonor the name of God by being a phony."

## Conclusion

What a wonderful thing trustworthiness is. It is so nice to be able to sit on a chair with no concern over whether it is structurally sound. It is so great to have a car that always starts, (or a copier that never jams). It's so great to lean on something and know it will hold you. So when you are trustworthy – when you can be trusted, when no one ever has to wonder if you have misled them in any way – you are making life wonderful for them, you are reflecting the very nature of God, and you are exhibiting profound love.

**Proverbs 24:26 An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.**

**Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts.**

It is a cruel thing to lie, because whenever you lie to someone you are stealing a little piece of that person's life. Life is interacting with reality, but when you lie to someone you are separating that person from reality.

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<sup>2</sup> Greek: *pro panton*

## God Is Trustworthy

You want to know the greatest reason of all to strive for integrity – honesty and faithfulness? God is faithful. He is our Father, and we want to be like Him. There is a reason why God tells us over 100 times in the Bible that He is faithful or trustworthy. It is one of the most wonderful things about God, and it is crucial for us to take delight in God's trustworthiness in order to live the Christian life. There is never a question about whether He will do what He said, or whether He is exactly how He portrays Himself to be. God would never tell you He is pleased when really He is angry. He would never tell you something is OK when it is not. He never makes anything a bigger deal than it really is.

Aren't you glad that when God says *yes*, He means *yes*? Aren't you glad He didn't say, "I love you. You are in My Son, and so I forgive all your sins and you are My child and ... oh, you did what? Forget it – I quit."?

**Hebrews 6:13** When God made his promise ... since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ... **16** Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. **17** Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. **18** God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. **19** We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, **20** where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.

**Benediction: 1 Corinthians 1:4** I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ... **8** he will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

## Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Who is the person who has the most integrity of anyone you know? Describe that person.
- 2) When you are tempted with lapses in integrity, is it most often in the area of dishonesty, or lack of faithfulness?
- 3) What are the areas where you find it most difficult to consistently keep your word or be fully transparent?
- 4) Is there any area of your life where you are prone to forget you are under oath before God?