

# The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

## Integrity: What's the Price?

Unedited Transcript

*Luke 16:10-12, Job 2:3, 42:12*

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more guy. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Luke 16:10. Let's begin this morning by giving a shout out to a group of men, Iron Men of First Covenant Church in Salina, KS. 15-20 men who have been meeting at the church for 5 years on Wednesdays at 6:30am using the Video Bible Study. Led by Mike Fabrizio and we are looking for an Area Director for the Salina, KS region. Let's join together and give a rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to Ironmen! One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're really glad to have as part of the Bible Study!

The series that we're in is the Man in the Mirror. What kind of man is it that God blesses? If you are like me, your predisposition would be to say, "A man of faith," but not so fast. If you will stop and think about it, you know lots of men of faith who are not being blessed, at least in this world, and on the opposite end of the spectrum, you know a lot of men who are dishonest and are being blessed enormously in this life. But not so fast when you say it's faith.

I've really personally never found any kind of direct correlation between faith and blessing. Have you? When you stop to think about it, to be blessed by God, if you're Christian, faith is a prerequisite, but it is not a correlated factor. What is the basis of God blessing a man? What is the question that God is asking when He decides whether or not He's going to bless you in this world? You could say it different ways. I'll say it this way: the question God is asking is, "Can I trust you? Can I trust this man?"

We see men in the Bible and they are all over the map. We see Moses kill a man and flee. We see Samson, and all kinds of shenanigans from him, but in the end, he does the right thing. You look at Jonah, who ran away from God, but in the end, he did the right thing. God is not looking for perfect men, but he is looking for men, who at the end of the day, will do the right thing. Men like Peter, who even denied Christ and all these impetuous things that he did. Paul himself, who was a persecutor of Christians, but in the end, he did the right thing. He was trustworthy.

When we look at these men of the Bible, we find very little common characteristics that they share except this one: integrity. The title of the message today: "Integrity, what is the price?"

### **What's really wrong?**

Let's take a look at what's really wrong here. The word 'integrity' from the dictionary, a noun, it can mean a firm adherence to a code of a specially moral or artistic value, incorruptibility. It can mean an

unimpaired condition, so soundness. It can mean the quality or state of being complete or undivided, a completeness.

That's the dictionary definition of integrity, but now, what I want us to do is to look at Luke 16:10. Let's see what Jesus has to say. The problem is that you're tempted to lie, to cheat, to steal. Those are three of the Ten Commandments. You are tempted every day to be a person who is not a man of integrity. Jesus says this: "Whoever can be trusted (this is the Greek word 'pistos' or 'faithful' would be another translation) with very little can also be trusted with much and who is ever dishonest with little will also be dishonest with much."

What's obvious in this text? What's obvious in this text is that God is using little things as a litmus test of your integrity. You may have, you probably have, I'm sure you have, actually, the big chunky pieces of integrity in place, but God is looking at little things. He's looking at: Do you over report your expenses? Do you under report your income? Do you pack towels into your suitcase when you leave the motel? God is very interested in these little things. Let's read it again. "Whoever can be trusted with those little things can also be trusted with much." Watch this: If you're dishonest with little things, then you'll be dishonest with much. The reality is that if you are over reporting your expenses, for example, then there maybe the sense that you have integrity, but there is a very strong likelihood that there will be lapses in other big areas like marital fidelity. In other words, are you leading a secret life of lust? Are you robbing God, as the Bible says, by not tithing? There are these big pieces, these big giant areas of integrity, where often we have kidded, tricked and fooled ourselves into thinking that we actually are men of integrity when in reality, we are not.

I want to read to you a quote from John Ruskin. "The essence of lying is deception, not in words. A lie maybe told in silence." Anybody know this? "By equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded."

How many of you consider yourselves to be men of integrity now? Hold that thought. This is why I pay tithe on my health insurance. Actually, I got the idea from Pastor David Uth. I heard him saying in a sermon one day that he realized that his health insurance benefits didn't come to him in a paycheck. They came to him as a benefit paid by the organization. He did not receive his income so he did not think to put a tithe on it. One day, he realized that actually, that was the same thing as cash, that health insurance benefit, and so he made a commitment that he would begin tithing on that. When I heard that, "Bam!" I did it. I'm doing it. The reason that I do these kinds of things is that I am scrupulous on every little tiny detail. I don't let anything slide. I let nothing slide. In fact, in my business career, for the last four decades, I only have ever done, to my knowledge, one thing that was not completely, scrupulously, filled with integrity. Even the thing that I did, I did to protect someone who I was actually doing it against. The reason I do it is because of the idea I'm getting ready to put on the screen. It's almost the big idea, but it's too long. Here's the almost big idea for the idea for the day: **I have far too much** (and I hope you could say this, too) **at stake.**

In other words, all of the things that I mentioned: all my dreams, all my plans, all my hopes, all my aspirations, all the things I hope to accomplish in and through with my life, with my family, with the ministry, with you, all of the things that I want to do. **I have far too much at stake to risk it by cutting any little corner anywhere, no matter how small, insignificant or inconsequential it may first appear to be.** Are you with me? Absolutely. You know this is true. You and I, we just have way too much going on to risk it by cutting any corner anywhere. Here is the real Big Idea for the day, because of the almost big

idea: **I want to be known for scrupulous integrity.** Say that with me. I want to be known for scrupulous integrity in every little peculiar detail.

### **What's at stake?**

Let's read on in Luke 16:10 and following. We read 10, but let's read it again for the third time. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." What does Jesus say about the relationship between big and little things? He says there is a direct relationship between big and little things. Verse 11: "If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth (this is mammon, the Greek word mammon), who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property (like a rental house in the mountains or a rental car. If you treat the rental car differently than you treat your own car, guess what, you are being dishonest in little things. You get it? You see?), who will give you property of your own?" Jesus is asking here or telling us what the impact is. What is the impact of not doing little things honestly? The impact is that you're not going to get to be rewarded with true riches. Who will trust you with true riches? Also, who will give you property of your own? It's a very specific application. What's at stake? We see the material things being discussed here, but relationships are also at stake.

I remember, and I've had this happen many times in different ways, but one specific example from the book, from a long time ago. I remember a friend of mine, I was opening an office. In the book, I disguised it, but it was me. I was opening my new office, a real estate office and we were having an open house. I invited a guy, who was a very close friend of mine personally, to come. He said, "I'll be there." Well, at the open house, he wasn't there. I later found out that before I had even asked him, he had already set an appointment. He already had an appointment for that time with somebody else, which he kept. But why didn't he just say that? Why did he choose a lie over the honest truth, which would have been perfectly understandable? "I'm sorry I can't make it. I already got an appointment." I have never trusted that guy since. It's always been a wedge in our relationship. That wasn't the only example with that particular friend. It's a pattern, you see. It's doing little things in a dishonest way.

We have finances, very clearly in the text, we have relationships. How many of you would like to be greatly used by God? Everybody here in this room wants to be greatly used by God! How many of you are great men, who can do great things? Probably not so much. Most of us are just average guys. If we were something other than that, we probably wouldn't be here this morning. We're average guys, but, I remember early in my career, a very average real estate broker here in town. He was so average that if he walked in the room, nobody would ever even take notice of him. He was an honest man and he was a hard worker and he just kept plugging away. A few decades later, all of the other guys that walked into the room with flash, a big smile and a lot of charisma had come and gone (some of them have gone to jail!). Some of them have done dishonest things and had to leave town, but this average guy, guess what? He is now one of the most respected and trusted real estate brokers in this town with the highest income in this town. He says the secret of his success is that, "I'm just an average guy, but I'm honest and I'm hard working and that's the secret." That's the secret of him being greatly used. He's being greatly used by God. He's helping so many people with their commercial real estate needs in this city because at the core, he's a man of integrity. He's always done the little things right.

We have money, we have relationships, and we have being used greatly by God. Your testimony. How many of you would like to have a powerful testimony? One of the things that kept my mother from a robust faith was she worked at a real estate company and one of the men at the real estate company,

one of the principles, every day, virtually at lunch, he would take lunch at his desk and read his Bible and then he would cut corners all afternoon. It was such a turn off to my mother that she struggled enormously for decades with her faith. She, on a number of occasions, referred to that incident as being the thing that made her doubt. So if you want to have a powerful testimony, be a man of integrity.

Money, worldly possessions, relationships, doing something great for God, your testimony. Another thing that's at stake is grieving the Holy Spirit, which should be the most important thing of all of these. When we are not honest in little things, we grieve the God who is holy. Without holiness, no one can see the lord. What are your dreams? What are your hopes? What are your aspirations? What do you have at stake? Don't throw them away by being dishonest in little things. You've got far too much at stake to risk cutting any little corner anywhere for any reason anytime, no matter how small inconsequential or insignificant it may at first appear. The Big Idea today, say this in your heart and mean it in your heart: I want to be known for scrupulous integrity. Now, we do have another problem. You don't have the power to do scrupulous integrity. You don't. You just don't.

### **What can we do about it?**

What can we do about it? Turn with me, if you would, to Job chapter 2. Job is right before Psalms, if that helps anybody. Job chapter 2. What can we do about this? Job had this enormous test that God, by the way, gave permission to subject him to. Job had this significant test. We know about losing his family and his business empire. In his second test, Satan came to God and he said in verse 3: Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on Earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

He was given permission to go ahead and test him again and he failed! Down in verse 7, Satan went out, afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. He took a piece of broken pottery, he scraped himself and this is what I want you to see in verse 9. His wife said this to him: "Are you still holding on to your integrity after all that's happened to you? Why don't you just curse God and die?" That's a good woman! Man, I wish I had me one of those! Don't you, guys? I've met women like this. I was at the gym one day and there was a woman like this and something had happened inside the gym. She was up at the front with a little 21-year old person at the front desk, who's totally innocent. She is letting this girl have it. When she was done, I went over to her. I said, "That was pretty rough, wasn't it?" She said, "Yeah." She was shaking. Trust me. I said, "Well, think of it this way. At least, you're not her husband." She brightened up.

Why don't you just curse God and die? Why are you holding on to your integrity? Job said, "You foolish woman. Shall we accept goodness from God and not trouble?" Later, Job says in chapter 13 verse 15, it says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That's clinging to your integrity, brothers. That's clinging to your integrity. We know from chapter 42 that because of this, God blessed the second half of Job's life more than the first half. There's a caveat here, though. You can't do this in your own strength. We can't do this in our own strength. Job didn't do this in his own strength. We can't make up a list of virtues that we're supposed to keep and then, as a matter of our own determination and self-will, go out and do that. We can't do it, but Jesus Christ lived a life of perfect integrity. Because of his integrity and because of his spirit living in us and because of our dependence upon him, we can live this life of integrity. In other words, we can say, "Jesus, I can't do this, but you and me can do this." There's a marriage of faith and integrity that takes place. What can we do about it? We can make this commitment to scrupulous obedience, but we do it by faith in Jesus Christ.

The way I want us to apply this this morning is I want to encourage you to take a pledge, a once for all time pledge that you will lead a life of scrupulous integrity. Many of you have already done this. Hopefully all of you have done this, but I suspect not. Make a pledge today that you're going to be known for scrupulous integrity. Instead of making decisions as they come one by one, "Will I be a man of integrity on this?" There are probably a thousand decisions or hundreds of decisions that you make and I make every day that require integrity. It is exhausting to try to figure out whether or not you're going to do the right thing on every decision. It's exhausting.

When my wife says something that hurt my feelings, "Am I going to betray my integrity and let her have it for something she did two weeks ago?" Yeah, probably, but anyway. Instead of making that decision at that moment, you can make that decision today. When those things come up, you can just say, "Lord, I trust you and Lord, you can trust me." The question God is asking is, "Can I trust you?" That's where the blessing of God comes from. It doesn't come from faith, you see. Faith is prerequisite, but there are lots of people without faith that are being plenty blessed. They're being blessed why? Because they have integrity.

If you're a Christian and you're not being blessed, there are lots of reasons why that might be happening: sovereignty of God, poor work habits, errors in judgment or the environment might have changed on you. There are lots of reasons. One important reason that you don't want to overlook is this area of integrity. This is so important. Make this once and for all pledge that you're going to do that. Do it today. Don't over report your expense. Don't under report your income. When you get a little extra change, give it back. If you have to drive ten miles to do that, well, maybe you drop it in the mail. Use common sense, okay? If somebody offers you something for free that maybe they shouldn't have offered you, don't accept it. This happens quite regularly.

One example, I went to a movie theater and they offered me a senior ticket at a point where I was not eligible for a senior ticket. In other words, I said, "One ticket, please," and they gave me the senior price. I said, "No, no, no. This is not right." I spent, it seemed like five minutes. I'm sure it was less than that, but the line behind made it feel like it was a five-minute deal, but I could not get it through the mind of this young person that this was not acceptable. It was a mistake, we needed to re-do the transaction, that they were giving away their employer's money without their employer's consent. They were cheating their employer at a little thing. At some point, common sense took over and I said, "Oh my gosh. Forget about it." I walked away and took the senior ticket. Okay, you get it? You have to use some common sense in this. To lead a life of integrity, a life of scrupulous integrity in all of these little things.

The Big Idea today is this: I want to be known for scrupulous integrity. Let's pray and let's make this pledge together. Just pray silently to yourself after me.

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, I love you. I have faith in you. I love Jesus. Jesus, you have said that how I am in little things is how I will be in big things and that I need to be honest in little things in order to experience true riches. Whether that's in relationships, in being used greatly, in bringing honor to you in my testimony, in my financial area, I need to be scrupulously honest in little things. Lord, by faith, and by the power of your spirit at work in me, and by utter dependence upon you, I make a pledge right now, once for all time, to be a man of scrupulous integrity. I pray now that you'll be glorified in this decision. In Jesus' name, Amen.