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Restoring Our Integrity

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First Episcopal District Bible Study

The Year of RESTORATION

Key Verse:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

Titus 2:11-12 (ESV)

Study Passage:

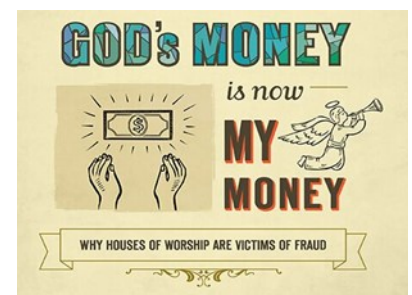
Psalm 15



THE RECKONING



We all may have seen these headlines depicting a culture of fraud and abuse resulting in the real estate and Wall Street bailouts. We have also seen similar headlines of church abuse and fraud which implies that the culture of corruption has crept into our churches. Theologian H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book, *Christ and Culture* proposes that “loyalty to Christ and the church entails a rejection of culture and society”.¹ We have clergy and laity who have misappropriated funds, indulged in sexual harassment and pedophilia, engaged in tax evasion, and mistreated their membership through verbal and emotional abuse. The Church Universal has adopted a culture of silence and coverup to maintain the “integrity” of the church. These actions are in complete contradiction to the



THE RECKONING *(continued)*

meaning of the word integrity, which is defined as, “ the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles and moral uprightness.”²

As Christians, we must understand our acts of dishonesty and immorality compromise our faith in and witness of Christ. In a national culture defined by short cuts, get rich quick schemes, prosperity preaching, and the haves over the have nots, Christians cannot act like the world because we will be subject to condemnation since Christ is coming again to judge the Church.

1. Niebuhr, Richard H. *Christ and Culture*. Harper & Row, New York, NY, 1975.

2. Merriam Webster <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integrity>

Psalm 15 (VOICE) *italics added*

¹ Eternal One, who is invited to stay in Your dwelling?

Who is granted passage to Your holy mountain?

² *Here is the answer:* The one who lives with integrity, does what is right,
and speaks *honestly* with truth from the heart.

³ The one who doesn't speak evil against others
or wrong his neighbor,
or slander his friends.

⁴ The one who loathes the loathsome,
honors those who fear the Eternal,
And keeps all promises no matter the cost.

⁵ The one who does not lend money with gain in mind and cannot be bought to harm an innocent name.

If you live this way, you will not be shaken *and will live together with the Lord.*

RIGHTEOUS
HONORABLE
TRUTHFUL
BLAMELESS
GRACEFUL
UPRIGHT
DISCIPLINED
FAITHFUL
HOLY

RECLAMATION

We are called to witness Christ in an upright, moral, and honest manner before God and before each other.

RECOVERY

The authorship of Psalm 15 is attributed to King David. This psalm is known as an “entrance” liturgy, which was sung by the Jewish people as they made their pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem. Of utmost importance was the manner in which they would approach and enter the sacred space for worship and fellowship. An entrance psalm consisted of three parts: 1) question about who may be permitted entrance into the temple 2) an answer instructing on the ethical requirement to enter the temple and 3) a word of blessing for those qualified to enter the temple. ¹ The major requirement for entrance was one's integrity. Walter Brueggemann outlined that within this psalm, there are several aspects to one's integrity that must be considered upon entering the space of worship and the presence of God:

1. Integrity of speech
2. Integrity of living
3. Integrity of serving
4. Integrity of community and relationship. ²

1. Brueggemann, Walter and Bellinger, William H. Jr. *Psalms*. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2014.

2. Brueggemann and Bellinger, pp.83-84.

RECONSTRUCTION

1. In Psalm 15, the four types of integrity identified by Brueggemann are outlined:
 - a. Which verses discuss integrity of speech?
 - b. Which verses discuss integrity of living?
 - c. Which verses discuss integrity of serving?
 - d. Which verses discuss integrity of community and relationship?
2. What are the positive aspects of integrity found in this psalm?
3. What are the negative aspects that indicate a lack of integrity?
4. What is the blessing given to those who enter the sacred space with integrity?



REVIVAL

When the people of God acknowledged their transgressions, they would go before the Lord with a repentant heart and pray. Please pray this prayer as you close out this bible study:

Gracious and merciful Savior hear our prayer. We come to you corporately seeking your forgiveness. Lord, forgive us when we have fallen short and defiled the witness of your Son, Jesus Christ. Search our hearts, cleanse our Spirit, and renew us to serve and please you. Let us stand on your Word that we your children, we your church must believe that the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. God, we want to walk before you blameless, upright, and humble. We ask for a fresh anointing upon our lives and upon our churches, so we can worship you in Spirit and in Truth. This is our prayer for the restoration of our integrity, in Jesus name, AMEN.

RENEWAL

Restoration of our integrity requires self-reflection and introspection. We must understand that our participation in the sacred spaces we enter requires ethical preparation. We cannot separate our character from our faith and service to God. Proverbs 10:9 instructs us, “whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.”

In his article, “The Character of Integrity”, Dr. Richard J. Krejcir developed several questions we can ask ourselves in order to assess our own character of integrity and its function in the church.¹

Is the Character of Integrity working in you?

1. How do I exhibit Integrity in my daily life?
2. How can I better develop a willingness to possess more Integrity?
3. What blocks Integrity from working and being exhibited in me?
4. How can I make Integrity function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?
5. Think through the steps you need to take to put integrity into action in a specific instance. For example, what can you do to be more consistent and proactive with integrity? What can you do to be a person who is focused on integrity?
6. What can your church do to instill and teach that integrity is essential for the person who claims Christ as Lord of his or her life?

1. www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42531