

Unseen Integrity: Living as a Disciple of Christ

By Adam R. Parchert

For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. - Matthew 23:27-28 (NET)

Imagine standing in front of a mirror, boldly declaring, "I am living a life of integrity as a disciple of Christ, even when no one is watching." This statement cuts to the heart of personal integrity and challenges us to reflect on our true selves. Maybe you present yourself well publicly, but you're disappointed in how you act privately. When eyes are on you, you are one person, and when the lights are low and no one else sees, you get frustrated with how you behave. For many, this has become such a deeply ingrained aspect of who we are that we slip in and out of our various masks and personas with expert ease. Perhaps one reason we get so angry and jaded when we see others exposed for their hidden sinful lifestyles is that we recognize those same tendencies to hide and mask in ourselves. It's like a reflection of what we don't want to admit we have inside.

In 1998, journalist Tom Junod was assigned to do a deep-dive profile on Fred Rogers (aka Mr. Rogers, the much-loved PBS personality). As he tells it, his wife jokingly warned him not to uncover any dark secrets that would ruin her childhood memories. Needless to say, Junod didn't uncover any dark secrets about Mr. Rogers, but his wife's comment speaks to the recognition we all have of the human tendency to hide, mask, and put on false fronts.

Why is this worth taking a look at? It comes down to the foundations of who we are as persons—our personal integrity before God and man. Jesus spoke very harshly to the religious leaders of his day for the false fronts they put up:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

- Matthew 23:27-28 (NET)

The journey of integrity revolves around being someone whose "yes" means yes and "no" means no—someone who is the same in the dark as they are in the light. Whose personal values, morals, actions, inactions, words, silence, and mental

pondering are consistently guided by Christ, whether we stand in the presence of kings or only ourselves. This is the life Jesus calls us to.

So, what is the pathway to living this type of life? What must we do to be able to look at ourselves in the mirror and say, “I am living a life of integrity as a disciple of Christ, even when no one is watching”?

We must understand that the journey to true, Christ-honoring integrity is challenging and often contradicts our culture and the examples we’ve seen in life. It is possible we’ve never known a person who truly lived with integrity. Maybe we’ve been disappointed so often by people in our personal lives and in the public eye that we’ve become jaded. This is also not intended to be a legalistic practice because legalistic adherence can be just another mask or persona—doing all the right things so that we can be seen or self-convinced that we are doing the right thing.

So, let’s look at some practical steps to become this person of integrity.

Be seen and known by other people of integrity.

Find people who know you well—your struggles and your strengths—and who also have self-awareness about themselves. When you regularly connect with these kinds of people, you begin to live at a higher level of integrity. They’ll notice if you stop mentioning a particular struggle and will ask, “How are you doing with that?” That trust creates honesty, openness, and vulnerability, where you can admit your failures and celebrate your victories. Without these relationships, we often isolate, hide, and wear masks.

Avoid isolation.

It’s easy to be isolated—even in a group—because we can hide behind personas, masks, short texts, and impersonal communication. We must make a conscious effort to be truly present with other people. We need accountability and an environment where integrity is the norm. Don’t isolate yourself.

Separate yourself from what trips you up.

Actively turn down the volume of whatever causes you to stumble—a habit, a substance, an activity, a relationship, or even a mindset. Turn up the volume of the things in your life that draw you toward being the person you want to be—artistic expression, reading, serving, family time, conversations, exercising. Train your mind to avoid distractions when you’re alone and steer clear of potential traps. But remember, this is not a process meant to be done alone. You need to be recognized by people of integrity because they can help you identify the obstacles that hold you back.

Be a student of yourself.

Figure out what you need to succeed. Learn how you best connect with God—

through music, reading, service, fasting, prayer, running in nature, and so on—and do those things more. Build your routine around what draws you closer to Him. Study how your mind works, whether it’s through podcasts, books, sermons, or other resources, so your own behavior doesn’t catch you off guard. Actively train yourself to recognize potential pitfalls before they happen, and you’ll be better equipped to live a life of true integrity. Learn how to navigate failures and shortcomings along the way. For assistance along the journey, read the article entitled “A Better Way To Break Bad Habits” at <https://www.lifedefibrillator.com/articles/break-bad-habits>.

I want to leave you with this thought:

If the call to live a life of integrity as a disciple of Christ, even when no one is watching, resonates with you, don’t ignore it. If you feel the Holy Spirit is prompting you to embrace a life of integrity, take action, and don’t delay. Be cautioned that repeatedly ignoring the Spirit’s call can make it increasingly difficult to hear His voice. Remember the warning from the author of Hebrews about the dangers of hardening our hearts toward God:

“But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ that none of you may become hardened by sin’s deception. For we have become partners with Christ, if in fact we hold our initial confidence firm until the end. As it says, ‘Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’”

- Hebrews 1:13-15

May Christ be the heartbeat of the journey...

Are you interested in stepping into a weekend retreat that focuses on igniting Christ-like change in men and women through radical experiences of honesty and grace? The Crucible Project is a global Christian organization dedicated to helping men and women step into lives of integrity.

Learn more and sign up for a weekend retreat at www.TheCrucibleProject.org

About the author:

Adam R. Parchert holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri. He has provided pastoral leadership in various capacities since 1996. From 2012 to 2021, Adam founded and led a suburban Chicago church. In addition, he runs a small business while actively involved in his local church and the Christian non-profit organization, The Crucible Project.