

# 30. Honesty and integrity

## Teacher's Chapter Outline

### 1. God wants honesty to prevail in the market place.

✦ The bible says – Prov. 28:20-21 (NKJV)

*“A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished. To show partiality is not good, because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.”*

✦ When honesty and integrity prevail in the market place, there will be the right conditions for prosperity and harmony in a nation.

- Everybody is playing by the same rules and trust prevails between buyer and supplier.

### 2. Rules and moral codes

✦ Rules and moral codes between people are important.

- They help us to know what is to be expected and what is not to be expected.

✦ *Where do we find these rules?*

Some of these rules are written in the civil law, but many of the rules by which we do business are not.

- They are moral codes of acceptable versus non acceptable.

✦ *Examples – Non acceptable behavior:*

- Lying
- Cheating
- Stealing
- Not keeping one's word
- Changing conditions of an agreement
- Taking bribes, and so on

All these behaviors are usually considered as immoral by most people, even in places where they are commonly practiced.

**Wherever you are** – there are a set of moral codes that everybody expects, or hopes, will be followed when doing business.

You must always at least meet the minimum standard of what is expected.

- You can have a higher moral standard than your environment, but never a lower one.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, our standard should actually not be set by our environment but by the promptings of our heart. This standard is always higher than what the world is accepting, because the world lives in spiritual darkness.

✦ We as God-fearing business men/women are called to bring the elements of honesty and integrity into the market place – as we are called to be the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13).

Salt had a twofold function in biblical times:

- To give a good flavor to food.
- To prevent the decaying process.

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The way we do business should give a pleasant impression to others and hinder dishonest and immoral behavior around us.

When we have this influence on our environment, we are bringing the kingdom of God into the market place, and blessings will follow suit.

✦ **The bible says – Matt. 7:12(NKJV)**

*“Therefore, whatever you want men to do, you do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets”*

If you want to know how Jesus wants you to treat your customers, suppliers or partner, just turn the positions around.

- ✦ • How would you like to be treated as a customer, supplier or partner?
- ✦ • Then you know how you should treat your counterparts.

The golden rule is applicable to all areas of life including business, and is a guideline for honest and honorable behavior.

✦ *The principles by which we are doing our business*

- We don't hide information or product defects that will harm the customer or business partners.
- We don't change prices, conditions or service from one minute to the next.
- We charge a fair price.
- The business image we want to give is genuine to the core.
- We honor business agreements and promises we have given our customers and suppliers.

✦ You can give people better conditions than those you first agreed on, **but never worse.**

✦ If you follow these and similar principles others will see you as a trustworthy business man/woman and you will win credibility.

✦ **Credibility is a key component in getting long term customers and a good market reputation.**

- A trustworthy and honest business man/woman is a person others feel good doing business with.

The next time they want to do business, they probably will go back to the same person to do further business.

✦ *We must always think long term concerning customers*

If you win a customer's trust, the profit you will make by getting continuous business will by far surpass one single business transaction where you charged a higher price than usual or delivered a lower quality product or service than you should.

✦ **The reason for trying to get dishonest gain is usually short term thinking, and short term thinking will never build long term financial success.**

✦ We must understand that honesty is a competitive advantage in business:

- Who wants to do business with a crook?
- Everybody prefers to do business with someone they think they can trust!

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- ✦ So when you have honesty as the core value in your business, people will prefer to do business with you instead of others.

Our actions must reflect the character of Christ, not only in church but in the marketplace as well.

## ✦ *Glorify God as businessmen/women*

Our desire in business must not solely be to make money, but most of all to glorify God through our profession.

## ✦ **The bible says – 1 Cor 10:31 (NKJV)**

*“... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”*

- ✦ • To glorify God is our number one calling as business men/women.

- ✦ When we act according to the principles, values and beliefs we claim to have we are people of integrity and God becomes glorified.

When business is done with a high standard that glorifies God, we can expect his endorsement on what we do.

## ✦ *3. Honor each person*

But we are not only to honor God, but the people who are created in his image as well.

## ✦ **The Bible says – Is. 23:8 (NKJV)**

*“Whose traders are the honorable of the earth.” (NKJV)*

## ✦ **The Bible says – 1 Peter 2:17 (NKJV)**

*“Honor all people”*

- ✦ When we are honest toward our customer/supplier, we are honoring them, showing them respect.

We also need to show honor to our employees by paying them a decent salary.

What is a decent salary? It is a salary that can provide at least half of a family's needs, and it needs to be paid on time (James 5:4, Col 4:1).

- ✦ • When we show honor to others we will receive honor in return.

## ✦ *What does it mean to be an honest person?*

- ✦ • To show our true motives and nature, not being one person on the outside and another on the inside.
- ✦ • To speak and love the truth
- ✦ • Not pretending to be a lawful citizen when the police are watching and then breaking the law when they turn their backs.
- ✦ • Your outwards appearance and your actions should not contradict each other.
- ✦ • To be open and understanding of what is important to our customer.
- ✦ • Exercise careful quality control before selling our products.
- ✦ • Not holding back information that is crucial for our customer/business partner even if it becomes a disadvantage for us.
- ✦ • To take responsibility for ones mistakes and not try to hide them.

Once we become open and take responsibility for our mistakes, fear is knocked out and God's favor will start to work to get us out of the most difficult situations.

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The struggle with fear is one of the biggest challenges that a businessman faces and many organizations are permeated by people who act out of fear.

We are to defeat fear and live by faith! Or fear will lead us into a behavior of lies, one lie leading to the next lie, until we are tangled in a web of lies.

## Discussion

1. What is the most common immoral behavior in the marketplace?
2. Share an experience of a time when you were cheated?



## Discussion



### 4. Dare to go against the stream



#### The bible says – Mat 7:13-14 (NKJV)

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are so many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are so few who find it.”*



When we are doing business in a dishonest environment, we have to be careful that we are not affected by the system around us and start to follow bad examples.



- Many times we have to go against the stream and be different.

You are not called to follow the stream but Christ. This might sometimes create a conflict with the predominant business practice and might even cost you money and loss of business opportunities.

You will pay a price in doing so, but the long term reward is always greater than the present price you pay.



Don't ask yourself



- "What can I get out of this?" but



- **"What is right and pleasing to the lord?"**

You need to settle some core values that your business is based on as a moral compass to be followed by you and your staff.

Sticking to these values even if it costs, shows that you have the fear of the Lord, knowing that the Lord is always watching.



### 5. Consistency in Business

#### The bible says – Prov. 20:10 (NKJV)



*"Diverse weights and diverse measures, they are both alike, an abomination to the lord"*



#### The bible says – Prov. 11:18 (NKJV)

*"The wicked man does deceptive work, but he who sows righteousness will have a sure harvest"*



- We should not manipulate our product so that it looks better or contains more than it actually does.

What we sell should be what it is declared to be and should fairly correspond to what the customer is paying.

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✦ We need to take pride in what we do and present honorable workmanship. If we are a contractor, the building should be solid and reliable and not a jerry building. If you sell liquids you shouldn't dilute to cut costs and pretend it's non-diluted, etc.

- We should not have different prices for different people.

You should not raise the price for someone because he is rich, or belongs to another ethnic group.

✦ 

- Same measure, weight and price for each person you do business with.

Of course you can give a discount to a friend or a partner, or because you want to have mercy on the poor.

- But don't raise the usual price because you meet a richer person.

You must honor the rich as well as the poor. This is righteous behavior.

If you honor the rich, you may get a regular customer and your business will do better.

- God is no respecter of persons. God shows no partiality, nor should we. (Acts 10:34)

## ✦ 6. Your integrity is the most important

✦ **The bible says – Prov. 16:8 (NKJV)**

*"Better is the little with righteousness than vast revenues without justice."*

A good conscience is always worth more than a lot of money.

✦ **True happiness** can never be bought with money but is something that comes out of doing the will of God and walking before him in holiness and love.

*Jesus gave a word of warning*

✦ **The bible says – Mark. 8:36 (NKJV)**

*"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?"*

✦ Having a heart full of peace because we have done the right thing can never be compared with millions won by dishonest gain.

- Those millions will destroy your life! In the end you will wish that you never earned dishonest money.

## ✦ 7. To keep your word

✦ **The Bible says – Ps. 15:1, 4 (NKJV)**

*"Lord who may abide in your tabernacle? Who may dwell on your holy hill?...He who swears by his own hurt and does not change"*

✦ To be a responsible person and keep one's promises and words is a high form of integrity. What we say needs to carry a high level of credibility (Matt 5:37).

What you have said and promised, do all you can to fulfill, even if it is very difficult at times.

✦ God is watching how we act when it is costly and difficult to stand by our words.

✦ 

- If we pass the test, blessings will abound over us.

When both you, your fellow man and God know that your word is worth trusting in at all times, God will let you live on his holy hill.

Prayer:  
Thankyou Jesus, that you have made me a new creation in you!  
The old lying and cowardly nature I once had, is washed away by the blood of Jesus.  
And a new and honest and righteous nature is now in my heart.  
I want to bring your righteousness into the marketplace, and set the standard of the gospel on my environment.  
Give me the power to act in a way that will be a good testimony and a good example for my fellow man.  
Let me never seek short time gain at the cost of other people.  
In Jesus name!  
Amen!