

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

LESSON 8: COURAGE AND INTEGRITY

Courage can come in many forms. Sometimes it means enduring a difficulty while trusting in God's promises. Sometimes courage is quiet; at other times it is bold and impacts the lives of other people in a positive way. Integrity is a related virtue that shows when no one is watching. A person of integrity is consistent in their actions and beliefs. Read on to learn more about these virtues, and how they are expressed in our lives.

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out."

Proverbs 10:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

Courage is walking the middle path in the face of danger between cowardice (which is running away at the first hint of danger) and rashness (which is rushing in without consideration of risk and danger).

Have you ever dreamed of doing something so courageous that it would bring you fame and honour? Perhaps it is saving another's life, or preaching boldly. There are professions that by their nature employ people of courage – soldiers, fire-fighters, doctors, rescue crews and even professional athletes. But where does courage come from?

Like other Christian virtues, what we believe determines how courageous we are. Courage is walking the middle path in the face of danger between cowardice (which is running away at the first hint of danger) and rashness (which is rushing in without consideration of risk and danger). Courage is the ability to act, even when faced with obstacles and difficulties, because of our trust in God and our love for others. When we truly believe that God is with us and that we ought to honour others before ourselves, we can be courageous. We will know in our heart that God is greater than our fears.

Courage is sometimes expressed by physical bravery, like rushing into a burning building to save a life. It can also be displayed by refusing to deny one's faith when being interrogated by anti-Christian persecutors. It might come in the form of telling the truth when there are difficult consequences, owning up to a mistake we have made, accepting responsibility for our actions, or standing up for truth when it is under attack. Related to courage is the virtue of integrity. Someone who always does what they say they will do and who lives what they believe in a consistent fashion, would be a person of integrity. Integrity requires that our private world and our public life are integrated – seamlessly connected. We don't act differently when we are alone than we are in public. We don't do good works to be praised by people.

Hypocrisy and people pleasing would indicate that we lack integrity. Jesus shamed the religious leaders of His day for holding the people to a religious standard they themselves could not attain, and demanding that they keep man-made rituals instead of worshipping God. If we live our life saying one thing and doing another, we will not gain anyone's trust. Consistency proves our character to be trustworthy.

Jesus was the ultimate example of both courage and integrity. He faced His death bravely, fully aware of the shame and pain involved. When you face something that terrifies you, do you focus on your fears, or do you trust God? Like other virtues, courage is not developed overnight. A courageous person makes wise

decisions in small matters day after day. They seek God's will and do it until it becomes natural to do so. Developing integrity can be compared to learning a new language; at first we speak it with difficulty, but eventually we become fluent in it. Integrity defines who we really are. How is it displayed in your life?

Developing integrity can be compared to learning a new language; at first we speak it with difficulty, but eventually we become fluent in it.



IN REVIEW

- Godly courage is the ability to act bravely in the midst of danger and risk. It is actively trusting God when we face obstacles.
- Integrity is acting like Jesus would and in accordance with His values, even when it does not benefit us personally. It allows us to act the same whether we have an audience evaluating us, or no one watching at all. It is a sincere display of character.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- What difficult or frightening thing do you have to face in your life? How can God's promises help you to have courage?
- How is our character proven? How do your actions display your character to others? What happens if you make mistakes?
- Consider how integrity impacts all the other character traits we have looked at so far. What happens if you don't have integrity?
- Spend time in prayer asking God to show you areas of your life you need to work on, and sins that you have been hiding from yourself, from God and/or from others. Commit today to following Jesus' example as you build character.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.