

LIVING WITH INTEGRITY

book nineteen in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

- Day One: Tell the Truth
- Day Two: Do the Right Thing
- Day Three: Guard Your Conscience
- Day Four: Work Wholeheartedly
- Day Five: Review and Test

Living with Integrity: Book nineteen in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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ISBN: 978-1-930153-68-4

Version: TOM1920191030A

Published by LifeTree Books, Sacramento, CA • Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com



The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on “Knowing God”

Twelve books on “Developing a Godly Character”

Twelve books on “Enjoying Healthy Relationships”

Twelve books on “Overcoming Personal Problems”

For

Individuals

Small Groups

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

Knowing God

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

Enjoying Healthy Relationships

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in “The Owner's Manual to the New You” series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: Tell the Truth

The most important ethical guideline for many people is, “If you don’t get caught, it’s okay.” The second is, “If you get caught, deny it.”

God looks at things differently. He wants us to be people of integrity and honesty. Even if no one catches us doing something wrong or being dishonest, God knows the truth.

In today’s lesson, we will look at what God says about telling the truth. As you will see, God’s standards are high.

The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful. (Proverbs 12:22)

For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.” (1 Peter 3:10)



Many of us are comfortable lying

In our culture—even in our Christian culture—lying is often treated as harmless. In fact, many of us lie automatically, without a second thought. Much of the time we aren’t even aware we are being dishonest.

We may exaggerate, change the facts “a little” so we look good, tell a traffic policeman we didn’t know we were speeding, cheat on our income taxes, make up stories about our past, or file a false insurance report.

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think it’s so common for people lie or “stretch the truth”?
2. Are you sometimes tempted to lie or “stretch the truth”? If so, when are you most likely to do this?

The devil is the “father of lies”

The Bible’s first recorded lie was when Satan misquoted God to Eve (Genesis 3:1-5). Jesus may have been referring to that when he confronted a group of Jews and said they belonged to their father, the devil. He then said the devil was the father of lies.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Discussion questions

3. Why is it important to know that the devil is the father of lies?

4. How can knowing the devil is the father of lies motivate you to speak truthfully?

We grow in honesty as we grow in Christ

As we grow closer to God, we become more like him. Telling the truth becomes second nature as his light replaces the darkness in our soul.

Discussion question

5. How important do you think it is to God for you to be honest?
6. Read (out loud) one of the verses on the previous page that speaks to you personally. Explain why this verse has special meaning to you.

Honesty is critical to a deep friendship

You cannot have a deep friendship without honesty.

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. (Proverbs 15:4)

An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. (Proverbs 24:26)

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (Ephesians 4:25)

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)

Discussion question

7. Why is honesty so important to deep friendships?

Do what you say you will do

Follow through on what you say you will do, “even when it hurts” (Psalm 15:4). Of course, if you said you would do something wrong or sinful, don’t follow through with that. Instead, apologize for making the commitment in the first place.

Choose honesty instead of telling “little” lies

It’s easy to think that “little” lies are harmless. However, before you know it, you will become more and more comfortable lying, and it can become a habit.

Discussion question

8. Is it okay to tell “little” lies? Why or why not?

Choose honesty even when others around you are dishonest

Peer pressure can be strong. If people around you are lying, you may feel pressured to lie too. There's a dramatic example of this in the book of Acts. Ananias and Sapphira told everyone they were giving all the money from the sale of their house to God (Acts 5:1-11).

But that wasn't true. They had agreed to secretly hold back some of the money for themselves. God struck them dead—not for keeping some of the money, but for lying about it (Acts 5:4).

Being honest does not mean sharing everything you know

Some people think that since God wants us to be honest, they must fully answer every question people ask. That's not true. If someone asks how much money you make, how heavy you are, or who you voted for, you are under no obligation to share that information. You could simply say, "I prefer not to say."

Discussion question

9. Does being honest mean you never should keep something private? Why or why not?

Being honest does not mean sharing everything you think

Being honest doesn't mean telling someone every thought in your mind. For example, if you are talking with a friend and you don't like his or her shoes, shirt, or another article of clothing, there's no need to say that.

Are there times when it's okay to lie?

The Bible tells us that on a few occasions, it was okay to lie. For example, the king of Egypt told the midwives to kill the Jewish baby boys when they were born, but the midwives feared God and let them live (Exodus 1:15-17). When the king confronted them, they lied about why they had not killed the babies.

The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." (Exodus 1:19)

God was "kind" to the midwives because of their actions (Exodus 1:20-21).

In another situation, Rahab lied to the servants of the King of Jericho, saying two Jewish spies had left the city when they actually were hiding on her roof (Joshua 2:1-6). As you can see later in the Bible, God approved of her actions (Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25).

Let's look at a third example of lying that God apparently approved of: Jonathan lied to his father, King Saul, to see if his father intended to harm or kill David (1 Samuel 20:4-29).

Do these rare exceptions mean sometimes it's okay for you to lie? Probably not. In each case, the lies prevented the killing of people God planned to use for his glory. However, there may be a rare occasion when there are no good options and you should choose the most loving option.

- The Egyptian midwives lied to save babies' lives.
- When Rahab lied, she also did it to save lives. The men she saved were part of God's plan for the Israelites' upcoming victory over Jericho.

- Likewise, Jonathan lied to protect David's life. God had plans for David to be king of Israel.

Discussion question

10. Why do you think lying was okay in these three situations?
11. How likely is it that someday God would want you to lie? Explain your answer.

Confess your lies

If you have lied about something, confess the truth to God and to the person whom you lied to. Then go to work to earn back trust. (You should almost always confess past sins. However, if you think this would cause someone severe pain or cause severely damaging results, ask your pastor or another mature Christian for advice.)

Discussion questions

12. Are there people you need to apologize to for lying? If so, when will you do this?

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)

Homework – Day One

1. Why is it important to remember that the devil is the father of lies?
2. Why do you think honesty is important to God?
3. Is saying “little lies” okay? Why or why not?
4. Why is honesty important to a close friendship?

5. When is it important to do what you said you would do? Explain your answer:

6. When is it important *not* to do what you said you would do? Explain your answer:

7. Does being honest mean sharing everything you know? Why or why not?

8. Are there any people you should apologize to for lying? If so, make a plan:

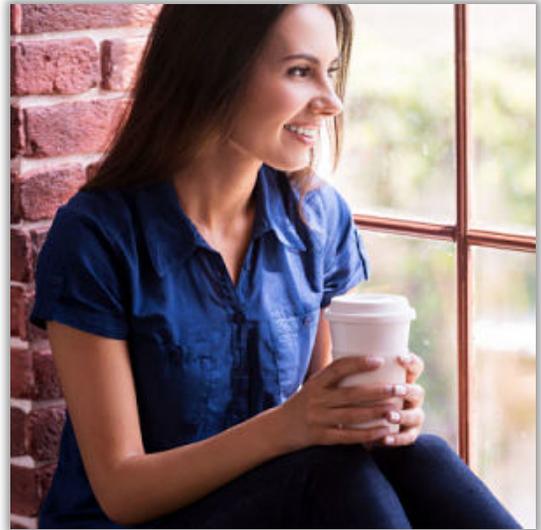
Day Two: Do the Right Thing

I remember my first job as a teenager. I got a job working in the large storeroom of a retail store. The first day I reported to work, the storeroom supervisor took me aside and told me I could steal one item of my choice every week.

He said everyone on his crew was doing this. Then he explained the system they had set up to hide what they were doing. (I didn't join in stealing.)

This might seem like an unusual situation, but we all face many similar decision points in life—times when we can choose to do the right thing or choose to the wrong thing.

We could choose to be rude, cheat on our income taxes, shoplift, cut in front of others in line, file a false insurance report, or do any number of other things that are unloving, inconsiderate, or illegal.



Discussion questions

1. Imagine you returned home from shopping and noticed the clerk did not charge you for some items. How would you respond? Why would you respond that way?
2. How would God want you to respond?

God has called you to live with integrity

The Bible encourages us to be people of integrity. Among other things, that means living with sincerity and honesty. It also means choosing to do good works.

I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. (1 Chronicles 29:17)

The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out. (Proverbs 10:9)

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity. (Proverbs 11:3)

Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner. (Proverbs 13:6)

Discussion questions

3. Why do you think integrity is important to God?
4. Do you want to be a person with integrity? Why or why not?

Choose to do the right thing

What does living with integrity look like? One way to describe integrity is to say it means doing the right thing.

To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. (Proverbs 21:3)

For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. (2 Corinthians 8:21)

Discussion questions

5. Why do you think doing what is right is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice?
6. It's important to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. Why is it also important to do what is right in the eyes of man?

Guidelines to doing the right thing

When you think about doing something, how can you decide if it would be the right thing? Here are some guidelines that can help:

Pray for wisdom and God's guidance.

Listen to your conscience.

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. (Acts 24:16)

Ask yourself:

- What does the Bible say about this?
- Would God be pleased by this?
- Would this draw me closer to God?
- Would this push me further away from God?
- Would this be honest?
- Would this be legal?

If a decision would involve other people, also ask yourself:

- Would this be loving?
- Would this be kind?
- Would this be good for the other person?

Discussion questions

7. Which of these guidelines will help you do the right thing? Explain your answer.
8. Describe one situation in which these guidelines would help you.

Be honest on the job

Whether you work for someone else or are self-employed, you have many opportunities to do the right thing—or to do the wrong thing.

Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the lives of those who get it. (Proverbs 1:19)

Ill-gotten treasures are of no value, but righteousness delivers from death. (Proverbs 10:2)

The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight. (Proverbs 11:1)

A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare. (Proverbs 21:6)

Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool. (Jeremiah 17:11)

Don't steal.

It might be easy to take office supplies home from the office and pretend it wasn't stealing because "everyone does it." Or perhaps you could submit dishonest claims, charging the business for your personal expenses.

Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. (Leviticus 19:11)

If you own a business, don't:

- Sell defective products
- Make false or misleading advertising claims
- Do a poor job when performing services.

If you have been dishonest on the job, make it right. Ask God's forgiveness, then take whatever steps are necessary. Return company property. Talk with your boss if there are issues that need to be resolved. Then work with integrity from this time on.

Discussion questions

9. Have you been dishonest in your own business or as an employee?
10. Are there any steps you should take to make things right? Explain your answer.

Memory verse

For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. (2 Corinthians 8:21)

Notes

Homework – Day Two

1. What is integrity?
2. Why is it important to God that you live with integrity?
3. When is it the hardest for you to live integrity?
4. How can you remind yourself to do the right thing at these times?

Day Three: Guard Your Conscience

You have been reading about honesty and doing the right thing—two aspects of integrity. In today’s lesson, you will read about another aspect of living with integrity—guarding your conscience.

What is your conscience? It is your moral awareness or moral consciousness. It is that part of you that identifies what is right and what is wrong.

Your conscience influences your opinions, and it helps guide your actions. It plays a major part in doing (or not doing) the right thing.



Paul’s instructions

Our conscience is referred to many times in the New Testament. For example, in one letter Paul encouraged Timothy to hold on to a good conscience. In the same letter, he wrote that someone must have a good conscience to be a deacon.

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. (1 Timothy 1:18-19)

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Timothy 3:8-9)

Discussion questions

1. What did Paul mean when he wrote “fight the good fight”?
2. Why is it important to hold on to faith and a good conscience as you fight the good fight?

Peter’s instructions

Peter also wrote about our conscience in many places. For example, he said to keep a clear conscience when you talk with others about Christ.

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Discussion question

3. Why did Peter say to keep a clear conscience when talking with people about the hope you have in Christ?

Paul's example

You can see how important a good (or “clear”) conscience is to God when you read what Paul said about his own conscience:

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” (Acts 23:1)

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. (Acts 24:16)

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. (2 Corinthians 1:12)

I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. (2 Timothy 1:3)

Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. (Hebrews 13:18)

Discussion question

4. Would you like to be guided by a clean conscience? Explain your answer.

Guard yourself against a corrupted conscience

Everyone has a conscience, a voice inside that declares what is right and what is wrong. That voice can be prompted by the Spirit of God, but it also can be corrupted and guide you the wrong way. As Paul wrote:

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. (1 Corinthians 4:4)

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. (Titus 1:15)

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. (1 Timothy 1:18-19)

Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4:2)

Influences that can corrupt your conscience

- Your sin nature
- The “wisdom” of the world
- Your friends
- Your life experience
- Your culture
- False teachers

Guard your conscience by reading the Bible

A key way to guard your conscience is to read the Bible every day, praying that God will bring its words to life inside you. Ask God to line up your conscience with the truth in the Bible.

The Bible is God's Word. It is the only truly dependable source of truth. It has been proven trustworthy and constant throughout history.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:8)

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Discussion question

5. How does turning to God make a difference in what your conscience says?

More ways to guard your conscience

- Pray for wisdom and a clean conscience.
- Be willing to do what God says.
- Be honest with God about your motives and actions.
- Spend time with mature believers.

Discussion questions

6. Has your conscience been corrupted by your friends, life experience, culture, or other influences? Explain your answer.
7. What steps will you take to be sure your conscience lines up with God's Word?

Reject inappropriate guilt or shame

Although some people corrupt their conscience, other people go to the other extreme. They think many things are sinful that in themselves are not sinful. They constantly feel guilty, sure they have done something wrong. Sadly, they often feel guilty when they haven't done anything wrong.

Paul gave an example of this when he wrote:

But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. (1 Corinthians 8:7)

If you think something is sinful, do not do it. However, if you constantly feel guilty, you may need some help. Talk with your pastor or a mature Christian friend who can help you better understand God's grace and what the Bible says.

Discussion questions

8. Do you think you experience inappropriate guilt or shame? Explain your answer.

9. If you think you experience inappropriate guilt or shame, who will you talk with to get godly advice?

Memory verse

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:14)

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Homework – Day Three

1. What is the conscience?
2. Do you pay much attention to your conscience? Explain your answer:
3. Was it important to Paul to have a good conscience in his own life? If so, why was it important?
4. How can someone's conscience get corrupted?

5. In your own life, have any influences corrupted your conscience? Explain your answer.

6. What steps can you take guard your conscience?

7. Write a prayer asking God to help your conscience be formed and guided by him:

Day Four: Work Wholeheartedly

Several years ago, I knew of a man who said he was tired of working for a living. He quit his job and said he was trusting God to provide for all his needs.

How did he do that? He parked his van in the church parking lot and waited for God to send people with groceries. He thought trusting God meant to stop doing anything to support himself and instead be a burden to other people.

Work for God in everything you do

Most of the examples in today's lesson are about working for a living. However, the same guidelines apply to all areas of your life—on the job, with your spouse, with your children, in church.

Wherever you are, you are representing God, and you are working for him.

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.
(Colossians 3:23)*

Discussion question

1. The Bible says to work for the Lord, not for men, in everything you do. What does that mean?

Work is part of God's plan

This man had the wrong idea about work. Work is part of God's purpose for us. God called Adam, the first person he created, to be a gardener (Genesis 2:15).

The Bible tells us to work hard. In fact, it says if a man won't work, he won't eat.

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Of course, this verse refers to people who are able to work. However, even if someone is unable to work to earn a living, he or she should look for ways to help the cause of Christ.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Paul was a tentmaker.

All work is honorable. Paul, an apostle who travelled constantly spreading the Gospel of Jesus—and who wrote much of what became the New Testament—also worked as a tentmaker.

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had



ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. (Acts 18:1-3)

We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it. (1 Corinthians 4:12)

Discussion question

2. Have you thought work was a good thing? Why or why not?

Jane, a woman I knew, cleaned toilets in a government building. Each day she acknowledged to the Lord that she was working for him. She praised him as she went about her work.

Follow Jane's example and work with the right attitude. Instead of gossiping and grumbling about the hours, the job, or your supervisor, be thankful for your tasks. Honor your boss.

This doesn't mean it's wrong to bring up problems with your employer or ask for a raise. But it does mean you should do so respectfully.

Work enthusiastically as unto the Lord. Work to please him, even if your boss doesn't seem to appreciate your efforts. God will see everything you do and be pleased.

Discussion questions

3. Do you need to change your attitude toward your work or your boss? If so, what changes do you need to make?
4. Do you need to throw yourself more into any other part of your life, such as spending time with your family, taking care of your home, or serving your church? What will you do differently?

Don't be lazy

Whether you work for someone else, own a business, volunteer at church, or are a homemaker, throw yourself into your work and do the best you can (Colossians 3:23). Learn how to do your job better. Take advantage of training opportunities. Seek wisdom.

In other words, don't be lazy.

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:6-11)

Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son. (Proverbs 10:4-5)

The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied. (Proverbs 13:4)

All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23)

One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys. (Proverbs 18:9)

Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry. (Proverbs 19:15)

A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing. (Proverbs 20:4)

The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. (Proverbs 21:25)

Discussion questions

5. Are you a lazy or hard worker? Score yourself from 0-10, with 0 meaning you are lazy and 10 meaning you are a hard worker. Explain your answer.
6. If you scored yourself under 7, what is one way in which you will work harder in the coming week?

Be a good example to non-believers

When you work hard, you win the respect of unbelievers and are a positive example to those around you. When you are lazy, you are a bad example and hurt the cause of Christ.

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

Avoid get-rich-quick schemes

The Bible encourages us to work hard instead of wasting time, effort, and finances on get-rich-quick schemes. In fact, two separate Proverbs warn against “chasing fantasies.”

He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment. (Proverbs 12:11)

He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. (Proverbs 28:19)

It's okay to make investments. Jesus used an example of wise investing when he taught the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). However, be sensible when you invest. Pray for wisdom.

Discussion questions

7. What's wrong with chasing fantasies?
8. Are you ever tempted to chase fantasies? If your answer is “yes,” do you think God would want you to do anything differently? Explain your answer.

Overcome fear

Do not hold back from looking for a job, or trying to improve your situation, because of fear of failure. It may look as if your path is blocked with thorns, but God can guide you through the thorns.

I'd like to add that failure isn't always a bad thing. We can learn from our failures and do better in the future.

*The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.
(Proverbs 15:19)*

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!" (Proverbs 22:13)

Discussion questions

9. Has fear held you back? If so, briefly describe how this worked.
10. Now take a few minutes to ask God to help you overcome your fear.

Stay balanced

Are you a perfectionist? Do you try to do everything exactly right? If so, you are in danger of wearing yourself out. You also are in danger of doing a great job on a few relatively unimportant things and doing a poor job on important things.

Ask God for wisdom and balance. Identify your most important responsibilities, and work on them. Do the best you can on your remaining tasks, knowing it's impossible to do a perfect job on everything you do.

Discussion question

11. What are your most important responsibilities? How can you discipline yourself to work wholeheartedly on these areas and put less effort into other tasks?

Memory verse

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.
(Colossians 3:23)*

Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

- T 1. God says it's important to be honest.
- F 2. If you keep a secret from someone, you aren't being honest.
- F 3. It's okay to lie if it keeps you from being fired.
- T 4. To be a person of integrity, you should do what you say you will do.
- F 5. God doesn't mind if you steal as long as you give some of it to the church.
- T 6. Paul said it was important to have a clean conscience.
- T 7. It's possible to do the wrong thing even if doing it does not violate your conscience.
- T 8. If doing something would violate your conscience, you shouldn't do it.
- F 9. If you work for a fellow Christian, it's okay to be lazy.
- F 10. Chasing fantasies is a great way to earn money.

Memory verses

- 1. Proverbs 21:3
To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

- 2. Colossians 3:23
Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.



About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

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Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

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