

## INTEGRITY - The Hallmark of Living as a Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The truth is, our western culture is in big trouble. **The colossal slide of integrity has grim spiritual, domestic and political implications that threaten the survival of society, as we know it.** For Christians, the most chilling fact is that there is little statistical difference between the ethical practices of the religious and the non-religious.

1. *In what ways do you see a drought of truth and integrity in our culture? What are the effects, practically and specifically, in the nation, the family, the workplace, the church? How do these results affect you personally?*

**Read the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11.** Ananias means “God is gracious”, but he learned that God is also holy; and Sapphira means “beautiful”, but her heart was ugly with sin.

2. *Do you think their punishment was too severe...too lenient? (Be honest!) What does this early-church account teach you today?*

It is worth noting that through the Bible, the LORD judges sin severely at the beginning of a new period in salvation history See what happened to:

- a. Nadab and Abihu, just after the Tabernacle was built in Leviticus 10
- b. Achan, just after Israel had entered the Promised Land in Joshua 7
- c. Ananias and Sapphira, when the Church was first emerging in Acts 5

It's easy for us to condemn Ananias and Sapphira for their dishonesty, but **we need to examine our own lives to see if our profession of faith is backed up by our practice.** God's swift judgment of Ananias and Sapphira tells us that our integrity matters to Him.

3. *Do you share Job's determination on this matter in Job 27:5 "Till I die, I will not deny my integrity? Why or why not?"*

The word “integrity” comes from the Latin *integritas*, meaning ‘*intact*’ not damaged or impaired in any way, or complete.

4. *Considering the connection between integrity and wholeness, what is really at stake in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century quest for wholeness? What does it mean to you to be “whole”?*

Integrity may cost you a relationship, a reputation, a promotion, a job, or even your life. Consider the stand made by Carrie Prejean, the runner-up in the 2009 Miss America pageant who stood up for God's standards over the question of Gay Marriage.

5. *Are you willing to pay God's price for integrity? Which benefits of integrity mean the most to you personally? What are you willing to do to make these traits real in your life? What part does God play in this?*