



PRETEEN

OCTOBER 2023

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INTEGRITY AND GOD'S CHARACTER, SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

God is always good. Since the very beginning, God has been faithful and true. If God makes a promise, God keeps that promise. We are created in God's image . . . and when we live with integrity, we reflect God's integrity. When Jesus lived on earth, He lived a perfect life and showed integrity in ways we can't because of our sin. Jesus makes it possible for us to live as new creations. Through the Holy Spirit, we are being transformed into people of integrity. Who we are in private should match who we are in public. When we trust in God, we can make the wise choice and be truthful in whatever we say and do.

INTEGRITY is choosing to be truthful in whatever you say and do.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT INTEGRITY WITH KIDS

Integrity might sound like a big word to talk about with kids. After all, adults are still learning what it means to live life with honesty and wisdom. However, integrity is an important part of character development that kids can start to understand around five or six years old.

When Parent Cue surveyed parents inside and outside of the church, integrity was one of the most important virtues that parents cared about seeing in their kids. We think this could be a powerful month for families to learn about the power of being truthful with everything in their lives.

Anytime you introduce a concept like integrity, kids may start to identify people they know who might not live with integrity. These insights might lead to some tricky conversations in Small Group. Be sure to give your leaders a heads-up for how you'd like them to navigate these sorts of moments, especially if they reveal that someone is being hurt in the process. The goal should always be to help kids feel safe whenever they share sensitive information.

WEEK 1

Key Question: **How do you want people to describe you?** For preteens who are just becoming aware of how they relate to other people, it's important for them to understand how their actions impact others. We hope this question will lead to a discussion about how being a person of integrity can affect the way others relate to us.

We kick off this series in **Luke 6:43-45**, where Jesus used the example of a tree to teach His followers a lesson about integrity. Jesus said, "A good tree doesn't bear bad fruit. And a bad tree doesn't bear good fruit." Jesus was saying that what's on the inside matters most and influences who you are on the outside. The best way to live a life of integrity is to stay connected to Jesus.

Bottom Line: **Be truthful with your whole life.** Integrity means doing what's right, even when no one is looking. When we're truthful with our whole life, we're not just honest with our words. We also make sure our actions—in front of people or by ourselves—match the life God wants us to live.

WEEK 2

Key Question: **Why is it important for people to trust you?** Our words and actions have consequences, including whether or not people are able to trust us. Kids might not quite yet understand why this is important. We hope that through this question, kids will discover how integrity and trust are connected. We pray that they'll become trustworthy with their own words and actions.

In week 2, we head to **2 Kings 5**, where we find the prophet Elisha and his servant named Gehazi. Gehazi seized the chance to use dishonesty to take advantage of Naaman's gratitude and get riches for himself. Gehazi went behind Elisha's back, denied his actions, and inevitably lost Elisha's trust.

Bottom Line: **When you're not truthful, you lose trust.** Being truthful is not just about the lie you tell and the consequence you might receive. When you don't have integrity, people will start to see that you're not really who you say you are.



FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

WEEK 3

Key Question: When is it hard to do what's right? It can be important for preteens to think through when difficult moments might happen, so that they can plan how they'll respond. We open up with this question for kids to think generally about times when it might be more difficult to make the wise choice and demonstrate integrity. We pray that the discussion that follows will lead to some great ideas for kids to put into practice when those difficult moments arise.

In week three, we head to **Daniel 1**. When Daniel and his friends were captured by Babylonian officials, no one would have known (or possibly even cared) if they continued following God's laws while they were in captivity. However, in their hearts, Daniel and his friends knew what was right. They decided to stay true to their faith by asking not to eat the king's food, and God rewarded them for it.

Bottom Line: Do what's right wherever you are. It's one thing to make the wise choice when you're with people who are in charge—like a teacher, coach, or parent. But a kid might start to wonder if they still need to make the wise choice if they're just with their friends . . . away at camp . . . or even by themselves. We hope that this week will remind kids why it's important to make the wise choice wherever they might be.

WEEK 4

Key Question: When has someone helped you see God? Kids can find it frustrating when they're unable to see God like they see other people in their lives. They may even start to question if God is real. But we hope that preteens will start to understand how they can see God through other people. As the people in our life care for us, encourage us, or help us, they can show us how God is working in our lives. We hope that kids will learn how they can do the same thing for other people too.

In week four, we continue the story with Daniel's friends in **Daniel 3**. No one would have thought differently about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego if they had bowed down to Nebuchadnezzar's statue to escape the fiery

furnace. But they decided to obey God, even though it might have cost them. God came through and rescued them from the furnace. Because of the integrity these men showed, others were able to see God's power too.

Bottom Line: When you do what's right, others can see God. Almost every single day, kids will face a moment when they'll need to think about making some sort of wise choice—from how much effort to give a project at school, to the way they play at soccer practice, to the way they treat peers they may not always get along with. And as easy as some of these choices might seem to us, kids are thinking about lots of variables, like friends and how people might respond to them. We pray that as kids learn about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they'll realize the importance of doing the right thing . . . and that if they do what's right, they can even help others see what God is like.

WEEK 5

Key Question: What do you spend the most time thinking about? As preteens are growing up, they become more self-aware. We hope that this question will prompt them to discover some things about themselves and how they might trust God to help them live with integrity. We pray that they'll figure out a plan to focus on what's true.

We finish up the month with **Philippians 4:8**, where Paul writes: *"Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things."* If we want to have integrity with our entire lives, we have to fill our minds with good things in the first place.

Bottom Line: Focus on what's true. Being a person of integrity takes work. We hope that this week, kids will discover how they can fill their minds with what is true and good and worth thinking about. If we fill our minds with what's true, that will help us live our lives with honesty and integrity.