

Integrity—UUFVB Covenant Groups—October 2017

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

Opening Readings

In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if they don't have the first, the other two will kill you." (*Warren Buffet, CEO, Berkshire Hathaway*)

If everyone were clothed with integrity, if every heart were just, frank, kindly, the other virtues would be well-nigh useless." (*Moliere [Jean Baptiste Poquelin, Tartuffe, V, i 1622-1673]*)

Every time we speak, we create a road of some sort. The quality of that road, and how far it goes, will be directly related to the integrity of our word. (Thompson)

Topic Exploration

Integrity is the inner sense of "wholeness" of character. One may judge that others "have integrity" to the extent that they act according to the values, beliefs and principles they claim to hold. The concept of integrity implies a comprehensive corpus of beliefs, often referred to as a worldview, which emphasizes honesty, authenticity, and consistency, requiring that one act at all times in accordance with that worldview. (*Wikipedia*)

Persons of integrity adhere to high moral principles and do what they think is right regardless of the consequences attached to their decisions. This orientation applies to all aspects of their lives, so their character is integrated, or whole.

Persons who lack integrity come across differently to different people. Depending on time and circumstance, they may be viewed as generous and kind, or vindictive and ruthless; in favor of or against a project; truthful or a liar. Their self-interest, or desire for a certain reaction or outcome, governs their behavior, not an underlying set of principles.

Practical Ways to Demonstrate Integrity

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Keep promises. Accept responsibility and perform as best you can in any endeavor. Be transparent. Admit mistakes, use them as an opportunity for improvement—do not shift blame. Do not speak ill of others or be self-deprecating. Practice self-discipline. Be loyal and faithful. Be honest.

Questions / Sharing

1. When we are "in integrity," we speak from a place of wholeness. Our words match our actions. When we break from this pattern and say things we don't really mean, or expound on things with which we have no experience, we move "out of integrity." Can you identify someone who verbally agrees with a statement or position, but doesn't act consistent with that position? Someone who promises to do something and then doesn't follow through, or is always late? Do you feel it's easier to identify these behaviors in others than in yourself?

2. What is your definition of integrity? Do you think it requires a moral code, and if so, what kind of moral code? One culturally-based, or based on religion, or both?
3. Is it possible for a terrorist to have integrity, if they have a specific world view, have a code of beliefs that reflect that world view, and behave consistently with that code? Explain your reasoning.
4. Identify an individual whom you believe has integrity. On what basis have you made that judgment?

Why do good people lie?

Most of us consider ourselves good people—yet we regularly lie. We may think our lying is for a good reason: to keep from hurting someone’s feelings, to smooth over conflict or to make someone happy. By lying, you avoided feeling bad, disappointing others, or being the bearer of bad news. The harm in lying is that, as a rule, it creates multiple realities. When you lie, reality splits – it “dis-integrates.” You now have one reality that you know and live in, knowing the “truth” about a particular issue, and the reality that the people to whom you’ve lied live in, which is designed around somewhat or totally different information. The people to whom you have lied make decisions and choices based on the reality they inhabit, but it’s a different reality than the one you inhabit, so that split will now influence your relationship and your common future. By lying, you’ve taken charge, if even in a small way, of designing someone else’s reality. (Thompson)

5. Have you ever thought of the effects of lying in this context? Have you had an experience in which lying caused long-term harm? Why do you think society condones telling “white lies”? What are some strategies for being truthful (or avoiding lies) no matter what the consequences?

Closing Reading

Everyone makes mistakes, so being a person of integrity does not mean you haven’t committed a moral or ethical violation, ever. It means having the strength of character to learn from those “misbehaviors” and seek continual self-improvement. (Eric Kail)

Check-out and reflections on today’s session

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
these we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping