

"A Matter of Integrity"

Exodus 20:15-16

June 15, 2014 - 11:00 AM - Father's Day - Dr. Jack Graham

Wonderful! What a great truth that in Christ we are made brand new. He's given us a new name and a new destiny and we are alive in Him. Adopted in Him... into His forever family. And welcome, all of you, to God's family.

We're in a series of messages taken from the Ten Commandments. We're working our way through bottom to top. Ten, nine, eight... all the way to number one. This is God's top ten, His list. And today we're going to be looking at Exodus, chapter 20, verses 15 and 16. **And talking about "A Matter of Integrity."**

Outside of my relationship with Jesus and my burning desire to love and follow Him, I have another burning ambition and that is my family: that my family... my wife, our children, our grandchildren will love God, love one another, love God's church, and serve Him faithfully all the days of our lives.

Psalm 78, verses 5 through 7 says this: *"He has established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach their children, (why?) that the next generation might know them (these commandments—the word, the way, the will of God), the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."* These words reflect my prayer for our own children, and I'm reminded on this Father's Day that as 3 John 4 says, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."*

I love being a pastor, I'm called to serve God's church, and for these forty plus years I have been a preacher and a pastor, twenty-five years here. I've pastored small churches where 19 or 20 would have been a great day, and of course, this magnificent church, Prestonwood. But I can tell you that the greatest joy of my life is that I am a grateful husband to my college sweetheart, that I still love her passionately with all my heart, that we have three happily married children and three grandchildren, and one that is due any second now, literally. We're waiting on our fourth, Piper Jane Graham, and she's a little late... fashionably late, I'm sure. I'm not bragging... I'm really not. But I'm praising God for His goodness, His grace in our lives, and the privilege of being a husband and a father.

The Ten Commandments, God's Law, God's word will bless our families as we live and obey the commandments. These laws are for living. They are principles that are both corrective-getting us on the right path, and protective-keeping us off the wrong path. And I can tell you not only do I

love God's word but I love all of the Word of God and that includes the commandments. The commandments of God are not a burden according to the Scripture, but they are a blessing, a benefit to all of us who choose to obey them. Jesus said, [John 14:15] *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."* We are to live by a new standard, a higher standard. It is the call of the command of God to obey Him in all ways all of our days. These are God's commandments.

There is a parallel passage in Ephesians, chapter 4. Let's read first: Exodus chapter 20 these two commandments that we're looking at today.

15) *"You shall not steal. 16) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."*

Lay that along side of Ephesians 4:28:

28) *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

The Ten Commandments - You shall not steal; you shall not lie—commandments number 8 and 9.

Now before we take a look... an intense look at these commandments, most Americans, you know, really don't believe in the Ten Commandments these days, much less practice them. Upwards to 75 percent of our fellow citizens in this great country no longer believe that there is authoritative truth in our lives, that there's no clear cut right and wrong, that we live now by situational ethics... preferences. You have a truth, I have a truth. There's no black and white, it's just many shades of gray. And therefore, we are never to say "This is right and this is wrong."

And it's a problem. It's a terrifying problem in America because it's time now that the word of God be declared, that the commandments of God be taught, starting with our own families. Because remember, God is not mocked. He will not be mocked! And just as there are laws that govern the universe... gravity, physics, and so on... there are moral laws that govern humanity. And we will either obey those laws or be broken on those laws. You really don't break the Ten Commandments. You are broken on the commandments of God if you choose to disobey them.

The Ten Commandments are more real, more relevant than ever! And what I like about the commandments of God, the ten... just ten... is they are teachable and transferable. Deuteronomy 5:29: *"Oh, that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and keep my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!"*

God says, "Dads, this is our legacy to live, that we are to pass the faith, including the commandments of God to our sons and our daughters, from generation to generation, to generations yet unborn." Talk about the

ultimate winning streak as we give our faith forward generation to generation.

But unfortunately our children today are not being led by the laws of God. Even in many churches where worship is superficial and the Word of God is not clearly taught, the Gospel is not openly given. Soft talks about whatever subject. There's no clear call to follow the ways and the will of God. So what's happening? Our children are listening to lies and believing them. A new breed of atheists attacking the faith, attacking our families. Or on a much more common level, a media... a celebrity driven culture that denies God and the Word of God, anti-God and anti-Christ system. And therefore, the lies of Satan who slithered into humanity in the Garden of Eden and raised a question: "Has God really said?" Same old lie!

And a war is being raged against the family, and all the weapons of hell are being aimed at your family and mine, and the chief weapon is deception and the battle is for truth! Satan is a liar; Jesus said he is a liar from the beginning and [John 8:44] "*the father of lies*". He is the source of all lies! He is a thief, Jesus said, [John 10:10] "*who comes to steal, kill and destroy!*" And he's killing and thieving and cheating and lying and destroying our nation!

Our nation, America, is now divided by lies... lies the enemy tells! Again, most Americans do not believe in moral absolutes, and this includes many Christians and kids that are growing up in church who are not being taught the moral, ethical demands of a holy God! No wonder this generation has lost its direction! The foundation is cracking and quaking. And the Scriptures says, [Psalms 11:3] "*If the foundations be destroyed, what will the righteous do?*" If you destroy the foundation, it all comes tumbling down!

PowerPoint, the ministry mission outreach of our church to the world is seen in over eighty countries, and I would say to those of you who are watching this PowerPoint presentation from Prestonwood church in Dallas, Texas, America, we would ask that you pray for America because our country is in trouble. Like most of the western world, our country is turning their backs upon God, and we need a spiritual awakening. Morality, those subjects regarding right and wrong, are now subject to political debate and decision... What is marriage-what is not marriage... and all the rest! There is no longer in the culture an objective standard for truth!

When our forefathers established this nation, it was built upon the rock, rib, revelation of God's Word and God's commandments! But now man's opinion prevails. You have a version of truth and I have a version of truth, and if you dare to disagree... if you dare to say the Bible says, or the commandments say, you're viewed as intolerant or insensitive or a bigot or narrow-minded! And even in the church, if you dare to proclaim the inerrant, infallible word of God, there are some who will say you are pharisaical or you are legalistic or you're too pious or even worse. If

really want to gets you, just say you are a fringe, fanatical, fundamentalist!

If these truths are not proclaimed... if the Ten Commandments are not taught, starting with dads in our own families, the future of our homes and of this great nation will be an epic fail.

Commandments 8 and 9 are simple and clear. You don't need a Hebrew lexicon; you don't need a seminary degree. Simple, straight up! "Do not steal." "Do not lie." Teach yourself, train yourself and your family to love the truth and to live the truth.

As we obey God's commandments we need to ask ourselves this question: Am I a trustworthy person? Am I a man... a dad who keeps his promises? Am I someone who can be trusted? Is my character and my reputation reputable, credible? If you go to get a loan... if you go to a bank or a lending institution they're going to check your credit. They're going to do a thorough review of whether or not you are honest, if you are trustworthy, if you pay your bills, if you pay back your loans. And your credit report is essential... a good credit report is essential if you're going to get that loan. Well, I promise you, people are all around us, starting with own children, are checking out our credit... our credibility. Whether we are who we say we are.

The word integrity... it's **a matter of integrity**... integer is in that word. Integrated is in that word. Integrity means that we are the same person on the inside and on the outside. It's akin to the word character: that our character is consistent, and that we are faithful in what we profess both privately and publicly. Someone has said character is what you are in the dark. Character is who you are when no one is watching. But, of course, someone is always watching, starting with God Almighty, and including those little eyes, our children and our grandchildren. They're looking up and wondering, "Are you, dad... are you, mom, a person of integrity? Can I trust you?"

Now Jesus is the truth. He said, [John 14:6] "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*" God is the One true God, as compared to all the false gods and all the false religions. There is a one true God! And God says, "I can never lie." It is impossible for God to lie. If we are the people of God, we're to be people of truth. If we want to follow Christ, it means that we want to be like Him.

Now, let me be clear, that we know that none of us keeps these commandments perfectly. [Romans 3:23] "*We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" It's the commandments of God that drive us to the grace of God! It is our broken lives on the commandments, when we disobey God, that drive us to Jesus, into the arms of Jesus. But the fact is that in Christ we are made brand new. We are to be different. [2 Corinthians 5:17] "*If anyone is in Christ he's a new creation.*" Therefore while we do not keep these commandments perfectly, we should keep them progressively, growing and

developing in our lives, and teach them to our children. Do not lie. Always live and speak truthfully, straight up. Do not steal.

Now you could be thinking, "Well, you know what, I'm pretty good on this one. I've got these two commandments pretty much down. I really don't steal that much. I don't tell a lot of lies... a few white lies." With God a lie is a lie, whether it's white or black or Technicolor. A lie is a lie. But you know you're thinking, "At least I haven't murdered anybody. I'm not an adulterer. And so God really doesn't care if I lie a little bit." Oh, really?

Proverbs 6: 16-19 tells us what God thinks about lying and stealing. "*There are six things that the Lord hates... (Now that has my attention. If God hates something, I want to know about it. So...) these six things [He] hates...*" (and then as though He had forgotten one,) *Oh, there's seven which are an abomination.*" (An abomination? This has got to be something really depraved, debauched.) Well, "*haughty eyes (that's pride, arrogance), a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans (that is fraud), feet that make hast to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers (slander).*" Of the seven things that God hates, four of them have to do with deception and dishonesty! It's a big deal to God! Satan stole the innocence from mankind with a lie and he's still telling them today.

But Jesus said, [John 8:32] "*You shall know the truth* ([John 14:6] and "*I am the truth*") *and the truth shall set you free.*" Truth sets us free to live fully and completely. A lie is wrong! Stealing is wrong! Because it not only hurts those around us, but it hurts our own lives. We are broken by our own sin.

You know, there's more than one way to tell a lie or to steal something. I just started making a list. Obviously you can steal something by force or by stealth. Or you can steal something when you borrow and do not return what you borrow. Some of you need to bring back those hymnbooks you took from the church years ago. You just borrowed them for the last twenty years.

When you have debts that you do not pay. The Scripture says we're to [Romans 13:8] "*Owe no man anything except to love.*" So when the bill comes due we're to pay it. And to do otherwise... not to pay our debts... breaks this commandment. What about lying on our expense accounts? Or padding a resume? Or exaggerating about ourselves on social media... twitter and Facebook? Make ourselves look better than we really are if we tell it big enough.

Or how about this: Fooling around at work on the computer? Hours and hours spent on Facebook or playing games on the computer. That's stealing from your company. That's stealing from those who employ you. On the other side, if you are an employer and you do not pay a fair wage to the people who are working and doing a good job for you, write that down as theft. Whether

it's stealing pencils, pens, at the office or at school cheating on an examination. Shoplifting.

Shoplifting is sport in America these days. The American Retail Association did a study and determined that one out of fifty-two people in a store at any one time... one of them is shoplifting. That means you go into a store, look around, there's fifty people. One of them is stealing. Just for the fun of it sometimes. Just for the thrill of it, just for the high of doing something wrong. Make sure you're not one... the one doing the stealing. But all of us are affected because the prices go up because businesses have to cover their losses, right?

You become a taker instead of a giver. You come home and somebody gave you too much change or too much money back. What are you going to do? I heard about a girl, a teenage girl who came home and her father was shaving and she was jumping up and down. She says, "You're not going to believe what happened, Dad. I went to the store. I paid this, they gave me the change. They gave me twenty dollars extra." And she's got that twenty dollar bill. She's so excited. The dad was so frustrated, upset, he turned around and said, "What kind of daughter are you? What kind of daughter am I raising? You take that money back. You give it back. We don't take things that don't belong to us." And when he turned around the towel around his neck said Holiday Inn. Falsifying insurance claims, up-charging... all of this.

Slander and gossip! When you gossip... when you slander someone... when you pass along an untruth or a half truth, or part of the truth or a rumor... I heard about a woman in a church. She was known to be a gossip. She went to the hospital and on the prayer list it said Mrs. So-and-so went to the hospital for the removal of a rumor." Supposed to have said tumor! The removal of a rumor! And if you've got a rumor caught in your throat somewhere, you need to get it out! Rumors and lies and slanders, insinuations have destroyed so many lives! And often we pass this stuff along. Either we say it or we allow somebody to use our ears as garbage cans. "I don't know. People just tell me stuff."

"They said". I always want to know who "they" are. And usually if you come to me and say, "Well, they said..." I'm going to ask you who "they" is. Cause we want to nip rumors in the bud. We want to stop lies from being spread about people. [1 Peter 1:8] "*Love covers a multitude of sin.*" And sometimes we even categorize our gossip as a prayer request. "Oh, we need to pray for so-and-so because boom, boom, boom, boom, boom." You don't have to tell everything you know. You don't have to listen to everything or anything somebody brings you.

Now I know that sometimes it's hard to always tell the truth. Like when your wife buys a new dress and says to you, "Does this make me look fat?" You are now on the horns of an ethical dilemma. And you have to make a wise decision as to how you're going to respond kindly. Or you go to somebody's house and they've prepared a meal and served it and really it tasted like dog meat, and they ask you, "How'd you like that?" Lie or tell the truth.

When we were in our first church in Oklahoma... our second church actually; our first fulltime church... Hobart, Oklahoma, there was a lady... very kind lady but couldn't cook. And she brought us a cake and we tried to eat the cake but it was inedible. It could not be eaten. So we took the cake and we wrapped it up and we put it in the garbage can. And, of course, the next Sunday Mrs. So-and-so... I have to be careful because people watch in Hobart and in Oklahoma. But she walked up to me and said, "How did you like my cake?"

Now we pastors have to learn how to finesse such situations to tell the truth and not lie, but at the same time, you know, we do like to keep our jobs, right? Well, she said, "How'd you like the cake?" And I said... I'm just 24 years old but I'm growing in wisdom and stature right there. I said, "That cake didn't last long around our house!" And she was so happy about that! The only problem is she kept bringing cakes!

Look, I know it's difficult sometimes to tell the truth. Sometimes it's easier to tell a lie than to tell the truth. But as we taught our children through the years, through the commandments of God, it's never right to do wrong. Never right to do wrong. Never wrong to do right. It is always right to do right.

And sometimes you... Really all the time you need to think before you speak. T-H-I-N-K. Think before you speak. Ask yourself. Is it 'T' true. Is what I'm hearing, is it true? 'H' - Is it helpful? Our purpose is to build people up, not tear them down; to be a positive influence, not a negative one. 'I' Is it inspiring? Is it uplifting? Encouraging? 'N' Is it necessary? Not everything we hear or say or think is necessary. It's not necessary to repeat everything we hear or to say everything we think. And 'K' - Is it kind? Is it kind?

So there are many ways that we can break this commandment, and not only in substance but in spirit. When I am silent in the face of false accusations. Someone says something about a friend of yours or a church member, and you don't know whether it's right or wrong, but you don't defend your friend. You're just silent. You don't stand up. You don't raise your hand and say, "Well, I know that person and that person would have never said this. Let's don't talk about that." You know, this is the way a Christian responds because we are people of truth and honesty and we want to give and not take away through lies.

There's no excuse. So if someone blasphemes God are you going to stand up and stand out as a follower of Jesus, or are you just going to slink away and let the name-calling of our dear God go on? Will you stand up for truth? Will you stand up for what is right? Not to do it is to deny Jesus. It is a deception!

What about work? I've already mentioned working hard. The Bible says if a man doesn't work he shouldn't eat, and if you're not working when you are

capable of working, that's thievery because you're on the take. You're cheating the government and this welfare system is broken. Now I hope you don't take what I'm about to say as a political statement. It's not a political statement. It is a biblical statement that we are to work and to work hard, we are to help the poor and minister to the poor and serve the poor and take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. That is our calling as Christians, but we are to work and work hard. And if you're not working when you can work, that is wrong and it breaks this commandment.

Adrian Rogers said this about our current welfare state or system:

"You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the industrious out of it. You don't multiply wealth by dividing it. Government cannot give anything to anybody that it doesn't first take from somebody else. And whenever somebody receives something without working for it, somebody else has to work for it without receiving. The worse thing that can happen to a nation is for half of the people to get the idea that they don't have to work because somebody else will work for them and the other half to get the idea that it does no good to work because they don't get to enjoy the fruit of their labor."

And I say Amen to that! We are to pursue integrity at home and at work. Paul said, [Colossians 3:23] *"Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord, and not for men."*

Don't lie! Don't cheat! Don't steal! Don't take those long, long lunchbreaks, and arrive late and leave early. All these things break the commandments of God. Calling in sick when you're not really sick. We're to be people who are faithful! Faithful to God, faithful to our churches, faithful to our friends, faithful to our family, faithful to our co-workers. **It's a matter of integrity!** Of us being who we say we are!

We all know that little lies lead to big lies. All of these commandments are interrelated; they're connected and... and when you start lying and cheating in just a little way, ultimately you're caught in a web of deceit that will destroy your life and those around you. Typically it just starts with something so small and seemingly insignificant that becomes a monster in our lives.

Every day our integrity is being tested, checked out. Let's be faithful. Let me be clear, as Jesus said, [Matthew 5:37] *"Let your yes be yes, and your no be no."* Speak the truth in love.

One other way that we can steal and lie relates to our talent, our time and our treasure. First Corinthians 6:19 and 20 says, *"Do you not know that you are bought with a price... (that you belong to God)... you are bought with a price, therefore, glorify God with your body, with your life which belongs to Him."* If I take what belongs to God and abuse it and misuse it, that breaks this commandment... these commandments in a big way. God has given us,

every one of us talents and gifts and abilities, and air to breathe and opportunities. Don't waste your life; invest your life, give your life. You belong to Him, you are purchased by Him, you are possessed by Him. Your time is His, your talents are His, and yes, your treasure... your tithes and your offerings.

Did you know in our bookstore, we have theft in the Prestonwood bookstore all the time. Yeah, people steal stuff, they steal Bibles in the bookstore. Now if you need a Bible, go by, we'll give you a Bible. If you stole one, bring it back. Books and cards and CD's get stolen all the time. You say, what kind of depraved, degenerate would steal from a church?

But you know, according to the Scriptures it happens in worship services. You say, how have we stolen from God? Malachi 3. You have robbed God.. Look at Malachi chapter 3, beginning in verse 8: *"Will a man robbed God? (Who robs from God? Who rips off God?) You are robbing me but you say how we robbed you (same question) in your tithes and offerings (contributions) You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house and thereby put me to test... to the test."* [The] Only time in all the Bible this phrase is used. God invites us to put Him to the test. He said, *"Prove Me. If I'm not telling you the truth or not,"* says the Lord. *"if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down blessings for you until there is no more need, and I will rebuke the devourer those things that are taken from you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soul and your vine in the field but you shall not fail to bear,"* says the Lord of hosts." Well, you say, that's all Old Testament stuff, all that tithing business.

Look, if any Jew under the law would give more under the law than a Christian would give to Christ under grace then that Christian is a disgrace to grace. Look, tithing, which is the first tenth of our income, is not the finishing place it's not the ultimate; it's the starting place. It's abc's; it's kindergarten stuff. It's the beginning of Christian stewardship.

And don't get the idea that ten percent of what you own belongs to God. All of what we own belongs to God! He owns all the donuts! We are managers and we will give an account of how well we managed. Don't be guilty of robbing God. Not because God needs your money. [Psalms 50:10] *"He owns the cattle on a thousand hills."* He says [Haggai 2:8] *"the silver and gold is mine."* If God wanted your money he could take it any time. It's not because God needs your money, but we desperately need God and the blessing and the favor of God upon our lives. We desperately need to obey God.

I'm so glad that I had a dad and a granddad who taught me to tithe as a little boy. I got a dollar allowance. I worked up from fifty cents. I don't know what I did for that other than being, well, just me. But, I got a dollar a week and they taught me to take a dime and to put that in that little white envelope that we took to our little Baptist Sunday schools in

those days, and I learned a lesson for a lifetime... to tithe my income. And sometime it was particularly hard because I loved to take my dollar and buy twenty packages of baseball cards, a nickel a piece. So that cost me in my little greedy mind, two packs of baseball cards. But isn't that silly when you think about it? It's so silly when we hold out on God for some little something we think we want or need.

I'm so thankful for my dad who was a faithful man. I never saw my dad leaving a bar. I saw him leaving church time and time again. Unfortunately we live in a day when many men would rather be seen leaving a bar than leaving the church! But my dad, good man, was faithful.

Look, men, God is looking for faithful men and women who will be men and women of integrity. There are men who are more talented than us, men, more handsome, wealthier; men who are more educated, but there doesn't have to be a man alive that is more faithful than you. You can be faithful to God and faithful to be a person of integrity.

Would you bow your heads with me, everyone praying together?

Convicting when we look at the Ten Commandments because we've all broken them and we all fall short, but as I said, it's the breaking of the commandments when we know we have failed, when we know that we have sinned, that drive us to His grace.

Our lies and our thievery put Jesus on the cross. He took our lies, He took our thefts, He took all of our sins and died for us on the cross. He paid the price. He even died between two lying thieves just to show us how much He loves everyone. And one of those thieves said, [Luke 23:42] "*Remember me when you come into Your kingdom.*" And Jesus took that repentant believing thief and changed his heart and took him with Him to heaven.

You can be changed; you can be cleansed by the power of Jesus Christ. [music begins] You don't have to be the old person you used to be. You don't have to live with the shame and the guilt and the regrets. Maybe you're wondering, I don't even know if I am a Christian. I tell so many lies, I've done so many wrong things.

Why don't you settle that today? Be a real Christian by inviting Jesus into your life. Say, "Lord Jesus, come into my life. I believe and trust in You. I turn from my sin. I receive you as my Lord and Savior." Invite Jesus into your life.

And then stand for Him. Stand in this congregation in just a moment and come forward and openly confess Him. Don't deny Him. Don't be ashamed of Him. Don't... don't stay back. Stand up in front of your kids... in front of your family and say, "Jesus, I need You." Come to Him. Let your sin drive you into the arms of Jesus, to the heavenly Father who's arms are open wide to every prodigal who will come home.

Others need a church family. It's appropriate for you to visit a church and check things out; see if that's the church for you... God's choice for you, but at some point you need to make a decision. You don't need to be just taking and taking and taking and taking and taking and taking. You need to come and give your time, your talent, your treasure, [pastor clears throat] your tithes for the work of Christ in the church. Why don't you come and make that decision today.

Men, lead the way. Lead your families into the fellowship of this church. Your family needs you to step up and love them and lead them. This country needs character. Our wives need loving leaders. Our kids need dads who don't just make promises but keep promises. Come to Jesus today.

Lord, thank You for this moment, this tender moment of decision. And I pray that You will by Your Spirit draw men and women and their families to You today, to Your church this hour. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen