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SERMON TITLE

Integrity Over Impulse

SERIES

Truth or Trend

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Various scriptures

SYNOPSIS

There are many popular ideas that often appeal to our natural desires. But, we are called to choose God's truth over impulsive, self-centered behaviors.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Sermon Series: Truth or Trend

Today, we're continuing our "Truth or Trend" series, looking at catchy cultural slogans that promise freedom and a feel-good message, but often deliver chaos. We've tackled "Follow your heart," "The universe has your back," and more - phrases plastered on social media, self-help books, and even coffee mugs. They sound and feel good, but they're flimsy compared to the rock-solid truth of God's Word. The Gospel doesn't just make us feel good; it makes us new. Today, we're exposing four more trendy sayings, holding them up to the light of Scripture to see what's true and what's just hype. Let's start with ☞ our "Bible or Not?" quiz to sharpen our discernment.

☞ "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." Answer: Not Biblical. Likely from Chaucer or later proverbs. Proverbs 19:15 warns against laziness but not with this phrase.

☞ "The poor will always be with you." Answer: Biblical. From Matthew 26:11.

☞ "God works in mysterious ways." Answer: Not Biblical. From William Cowper's 1774 hymn. Isaiah 55:8-9 is similar but not exact.

☞ "Spare the rod, spoil the child." Answer: Not Biblical. From Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1664). Proverbs 13:24 is similar but not exact.

☞ "No one can serve two masters." Answer: Biblical. From Matthew 6:24.

Now, let's dive into today's pop-culture trends and test them against God's Word.

☞ Sermon 3: Integrity Over Impulse

1. "The Ends Justify the Means"

The world loves this one and it's a lot like "Win at all costs." You hear this concept in movies, amongst corporate climbers, and even self-help gurus. This one suggests that morally questionable actions can be acceptable if they lead to a desirable or beneficial outcome. We are seeing a lot of this in our current culture. People are justifying all kinds of wrongdoing, supposedly "for the greater good."

☞ But God's standard isn't results - it's righteousness.



Scripture consistently shows that *how* something is done matters as much as *what* is accomplished. For example: Romans 3:8 ESV... "And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'?—as some slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just." Here, Paul outright rejects the idea of doing evil for a good result. Even if a good result could come, using sinful methods is condemned. Here's another: Micah 6:8 ESV... "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Clearly, the biblical emphasis is on walking rightly, not merely achieving results.

☞ **God judges not only actions, but the motives behind them.** If the means are selfish, unjust, or harmful, even for a "good" outcome, they are still wrong before God. Proverbs 21:2 says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart." Charles Spurgeon said, "God's path is righteousness, not expediency; His way endures where shortcuts crumble."

King Saul spared Agag and the best livestock under the pretense of offering sacrifices to God. The prophet Samuel responded, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). Saul's self-justifying reasoning was rejected. Here's another that's even tougher: In 2 Samuel 6 Uzzah touched the Ark of the Covenant to steady it, seemingly for a good purpose, but he died because God had commanded that no one touch it. The method violated God's law, regardless of the good intent.

☞ From a biblical standpoint, the principle "the ends justify the means" is not valid. **God calls His people to live with integrity, trusting Him with the results.** Righteous goals do not excuse unrighteous behavior. In biblical ethics, both the ends and the means must align with God's character and commands.

So, where's the world nudging you to bend the rules? This week, maybe you'll be tempted to tell a white lie at work or to take a shortcut on a project. Instead, choose honesty, even if it's risky. Pray for God's guidance and trust His better plan.

☞ 2. "If It Feels Good, Do It"

This phrase promotes the idea that pleasure, desire, or emotional satisfaction is the ultimate guide for behavior. It's a cultural favorite, and influencers might say, "Your vibe is your guide." But Scripture warns that feelings are unreliable, while God's Spirit is our true guide.

In previous sermons we've already talked about the warning of the heart's unreliable nature in Jeremiah 17:9... "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." What feels right isn't



necessarily right. Your feelings will lie to you. The simple truth is this – your feelings can contradict God’s will.

☞ **Scripture calls for self-control, not self-indulgence.** Galatians 5:22–23 talks about the fruit of the Spirit, which includes self-control, not unrestrained pursuit of pleasure. Titus 2:11–12 says, “For the grace of God has appeared... training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.” God’s grace is not so that we can indulge in every impulse, rather, it is there to help us to resist it. James 1 actually says that desire tends to lead us right into sin. Romans 1 is relevant today because it describes what happens when people reject godliness by indulging their every whim - all kinds of wickedness, evil and depravity.

Now, the Bible does not condemn pleasure in and of itself... God created us with the capacity to enjoy life. But **He sets boundaries** for that pleasure to align with holiness: 1 Corinthians 6:12 says, “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful... I will not be dominated by anything.” Paul recognizes that **not everything that feels good is wise or godly.** Psalm 16:11 says, “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” True and lasting pleasure is found in relationship with God, not in chasing feelings.

C.S. Lewis... “The pleasures of sin are real but short; God’s joy is deeper and lasts forever.” According to Hebrews 11:25 Moses could have enjoyed all the pleasures the Egyptian palace had to offer, but he “chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”

Don’t fall for the lure of instant gratification. Let God’s guidance lead you to what lasts.

☞ **3. “If It Doesn’t Hurt Anyone, It’s Okay”**

The world shrugs and says, “If it’s private, it’s fine.” This phrase suggests that the only moral boundary is whether an action causes harm to others. On the surface, this seems reasonable, but it doesn’t hold up to biblical scrutiny.

The Bible teaches that sin is not simply about harming others - it's primarily a violation of God's will: 1 John 3:4... “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” ☞ **Sin is defined as breaking God’s law, not just hurting someone else.** Psalm 51:4 says, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” David says this after committing adultery and murder. He understands that even when people are hurt, the deepest offense is against God.



People might justify their behavior because "no one gets hurt," but God judges our motives and inward thoughts: Proverbs 16:2 says, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit." We can deceive ourselves into thinking an act is harmless, but God sees what lies beneath.

☞ Not only that, but **our choices affect our relationship with the Lord**. Charles Spurgeon said, "No sin is too small to dim your walk with God—every choice either magnifies His glory or muffles it." Elisabeth Elliot added, "Holiness isn't just avoiding harm; it's living every moment for God's honor."

The idea that "if it doesn't hurt anyone, it's okay" is shallow and human-centered. Now, it's true that God wants us to be respectful of others, but the Bible goes much further: sin is ultimately about rebellion against God. God calls us to a higher standard—not just to avoid hurting others, but to pursue ☞ righteousness in every area of life. **God's standard is holiness, not just harmlessness**. You might examine your choices and ask yourself, "Does this glorify God, or is it pulling me away?"

☞ 4. "Seize the Day" (Carpe Diem)

This one was made enormously popular in the movie starring Robin Williams, called *The Dead Poet's Society*. This saying encourages people to make the most of the present moment. Now, this one is a bit ☞ different than the others we've looked at today. It is not inherently wrong... **it depends on what someone is seizing the day for**.

Scripture does affirm the urgency of life and the value of each day: Psalm 90:12... "Teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom." This verse encourages us to live each day wisely, because life is short. Ephesians 5:15–16 says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Paul essentially says: don't waste your life—use ☞ your time for good and godly purposes. So yes, in one sense, **Christians are called to "seize the day," but with eternal perspective, not fleeting pleasure**.

In popular culture, *carpe diem* is often used to justify self-indulgence, risk-taking, and ungodly behavior: "Life is short, so do what feels good while you can." The Bible critiques this worldview: Isaiah 22:13 says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But, this was the motto of people who were under judgment, and their short-sighted partying is condemned. In 1 Corinthians 15:32 Paul quotes that same phrase when writing about the afterlife, sarcastically saying, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" Without resurrection and judgment in eternity, "seize the day" becomes empty and dangerous.



Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus..." The goal isn't just to fill the day with vivid experiences, but to live in a way that honors Christ. The real question is: are you seizing the day to chase comfort, thrill, and pleasure? Or to serve God, love others, and bear fruit that lasts? Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33 to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." **Biblical *carpe diem* means investing each day in things that matter forever.**

John Piper said, "Seize the day for God, and eternity gives your 'now' eternal purpose." Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted, "Living for the moment is slavery; living for Christ is freedom." "Seize the day" can be a biblical call if it means living each moment purposefully, gratefully, and in light of eternity. But when it becomes a license for self-centered living or short-term pleasure, it contradicts the gospel's call to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Christ.

So yes, seize the day, but do it with your eyes fixed on Jesus and eternity in view. Focus on God's eternal purpose, not just today's latest buzz.

The world's trends are like modern fads - flashy but fleeting. God's truth is our unshakeable foundation. 1 Peter 1:16 calls us to action: "Be holy, because I am holy." Let's ditch the hype, reject shortcuts, and live for His glory. Let's **choose Integrity Over Impulse.**



Four-Day Devotional: Integrity Over Impulse

This four-day devotional is based on the sermon *Integrity Over Impulse*, exploring how to live with righteousness and align our actions with God's will, resisting worldly temptations to prioritize results, feelings, or fleeting pleasures. Each day includes a scripture focus, additional verses to explore, reflection, prayer, and an action step to help you grow in faith and integrity.

Day 1: Rejecting "The Ends Justify the Means"

Scripture Focus: Romans 3:8 (ESV) – “And why not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’?—as some slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.”

Additional Verses to Explore:

- Micah 6:8 (ESV) – “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
- Proverbs 21:2 (ESV) – “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.”
- 1 Samuel 15:22 (ESV) – “And Samuel said, ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.’”

Reflection: The world often justifies wrong actions if they lead to a good outcome, but God's standard is righteousness in both the ends and the means. King Saul's story in 1 Samuel 15 shows that even good intentions don't excuse disobedience. God cares about your motives and methods as much as the results. Where are you tempted to take shortcuts or bend the truth to achieve a goal? Trust God's plan and choose integrity, even when it's costly.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to walk in righteousness and trust Your ways over worldly shortcuts. Reveal any areas where I'm tempted to compromise my integrity for results. Give me courage to obey You fully, knowing Your plan is better than mine. Amen.

Action Step: Reflect on a situation this week where you're tempted to compromise for a “good” outcome (e.g., a white lie at work or cutting corners on a task). Choose honesty and pray for God's guidance to do what's right.



Four-Day Devotional: Integrity Over Impulse

Day 2: Resisting "If It Feels Good, Do It"

Scripture Focus: Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV) – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Additional Verses to Explore:

- Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV) – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”
- Proverbs 14:12 (ESV) – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”
- Psalm 16:11 (ESV) – “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Reflection: Culture tells us to follow our feelings, but Scripture warns that the heart is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). True joy comes from living by the Spirit, not chasing fleeting pleasures. Moses, in Hebrews 11:25, chose God’s path over Egypt’s pleasures because he valued eternal rewards. When feelings urge you to act impulsively, pause and seek God’s guidance. His Spirit produces self-control and lasting joy.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Spirit to guide me. Help me resist the lure of instant gratification and seek the joy found in Your presence. Grant me self-control to align my desires with Your will. Amen.

Action Step: Identify one area where you’re tempted to act on impulse (e.g., indulging in unhealthy habits or reacting emotionally). Practice self-control today by pausing to pray before acting, asking God to guide your choices.



Four-Day Devotional: Integrity Over Impulse

Day 3: Beyond "If It Doesn't Hurt Anyone, It's Okay"

Scripture Focus: Psalm 51:4 (ESV) – “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.”

Additional Verses to Explore:

- 1 John 3:4 (ESV) – “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”
- Proverbs 16:2 (ESV) – “All a man’s ways seem pure to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord.”
- 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV) – “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Reflection: The world says private actions are fine if no one is harmed, but sin is ultimately against God, not just others. David’s confession in Psalm 51 shows that even “hidden” sins offend God’s holiness. Your choices, even in private, affect your walk with God. Examine your heart today: are your actions glorifying God or pulling you away from Him? Pursue holiness, not just harmlessness.

Prayer: Father, forgive me for the times I’ve justified my actions because they seemed harmless. Help me see my choices through Your eyes and pursue holiness in every area of my life. May my thoughts and actions honor You. Amen.

Action Step: Reflect on a “private” habit or thought pattern you’ve justified because it doesn’t hurt others (e.g., entertainment choices or unspoken grudges). Confess it to God and take one step to align it with His holiness.



Four-Day Devotional: Integrity Over Impulse

Day 4: Seizing the Day for God's Glory

Scripture Focus: Colossians 3:17 (ESV) – “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Additional Verses to Explore:

- Psalm 90:12 (ESV) – “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”
- Ephesians 5:15–16 (ESV) – “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”
- Matthew 6:33 (ESV) – “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Reflection: “Seize the day” can be a godly call if it means living purposefully for Christ. Psalm 90:12 urges us to number our days wisely, and Ephesians 5:15–16 calls us to make the best use of our time. Unlike the world’s self-focused version of carpe diem, biblical living prioritizes eternal purpose over temporary thrills. How can you use today to serve God, love others, and bear lasting fruit?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for the gift of today. Help me seize this day for Your glory, living with wisdom and an eternal perspective. Show me how to use my time to honor You and bless others. Amen.

Action Step: Choose one intentional act today to “seize the day” for God—whether it’s serving someone, sharing your faith, or spending time in prayer and worship. Write down how it impacts your perspective.

Closing Thought: God calls us to live with integrity, rejecting the world’s fleeting philosophies. As 1 Peter 1:16 says, “Be holy, because I am holy.” Let’s choose integrity over impulse, trusting God’s truth to guide us into a life that glorifies Him.