

## **Integrity: Stay in Bounds**

### **Ready:**

“Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord.” -- Psalm 119:1

### **Set**

It's happening now, it's happened before, and it may happen again. A rule is broken, a law is ignored, and integrity is lost. From a youth sports team to the professional level, athletes and coaches have crossed the line, broken the rules, and defied the laws in place.

I'm sure each of us can name an athlete, a coach, or even a team that faced controversy and criticism after deciding to break the rules! Pete Rose, Mark McGwire, NFL Bountygate, and Olympian Marian Jones all broke the rules. As a professional cyclist, Lance Armstrong won the Tour De France an unbelievable seven times! But as we learned in his interviews, driven by a lust for money and fame, he used performance-enhancing drugs to win at all costs. He broke the rules. He cheated, just to win.

We have laws and boundaries for a reason. Rules provide order and maintain peace. It seems that today we are seeing a decline of integrity, which directly conflicts with the rules and laws in place. Some see these rules as binding or restrictive, but they are life-giving! Just consider a steep winding road in the mountains without guardrails, that is dangerous! Guardrails, like rules, keep us from perilous moments. A fish tank with no walls, leaves a fish floundering in an evaporating puddle until it no longer lives. A sport without a set of rules leads to arguing, fighting, and chaos.

In Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, we discover a psalm focusing on the Words (precepts) of God! Specific words like, "commands, instructions, laws, and decrees" are mentioned over a hundred times! Verse one tells us, "*Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord!*" It's obvious as you read and examine this world, that those who stay in bounds, on track, doing it God's way avoid shame and guilt. Instead of shame, they are filled with joy!

The Psalmist continues, "*O that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees!*" It's as if he is on a daily journey to follow God's commands. He desires that his actions reflect or imitate God. The disciple John tells us to imitate God because He is good (3 John 1:11). The apostle Paul says, "*Imitate God in all that we do...*" (Ephesians 5:1). How do we reflect and imitate God and His goodness? We must walk in His commands and decrees. And these instructions are life-giving and joy producing in our life!

### **Go**

- Do your actions and obedience to God's laws reflect the faith you proclaim?
- When is it hard to spiritually stay in bounds?
- Just as a referee helps us stay in line, who will help hold you accountable?

## **Workout**

Hebrews 13:7; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

## **Overtime**

“Heavenly Father, I want to be successful in all I do. But Father, sometimes I step out of bounds. Forgive me for when I have not been a person of integrity, living out Your commands. With the power of Your Holy Spirit working in me, help me to imitate You, and reflect You by being a person of integrity. Amen.”

## **Bible Reference:**

Psalms 119:1

Hebrews 13:7

2 Timothy 3:14-17



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