

# A Life Of Integrity | Psalm 26

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hello, Vision Baptist Church. It's me, Ben Johnson, your missionary to New York City. Please pray for us. We've been, of course, this week contacting our supporters and working through that list, trying to let them know of the field change of us going from China to New York City.

So we've had a good response so far. So please continue to pray for us as we're doing that. And as we go forward, that we have to keep as much support as we can. That way we can get to New York as quickly as possible. And I just wanted to thank you, of course, for letting us preach tonight, letting me preach to you tonight. I'm honored to be able to open up God's Word.

So tonight we're going to be in Psalm 26, be in the 26th Psalm. So if you have your Bible, and I hope you do, please get your Bible and open it up to Psalm 26. That's where we'll be tonight. So Psalm 26, I'll give you a minute. I'll keep talking because that's what I do. You got to wait.

I can't hear any rustling of pages. So Psalm 26 is where we'll be tonight. So let's look at that. We're going to look at the whole of the Psalm. There's only 12 verses here. So let's read it. It says, That's our reading for tonight for Psalm 26. Let's go ahead and have a word of prayer, and we'll get right into this. Lord, I thank you for today. I thank you that you are a God who cares.

You're a God who cares about all our hurts, all our problems, and everything that goes on in our lives. And we thank you for that. And God, I ask you tonight that you would be with us as we meet together, not physically that we wish we could, but God, I ask that you would meet with each one of us because you are not limited to location. You are not limited to anything. And God, I ask that you would use your word tonight, that you would speak to hearts, help us to be more like you. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, I don't know about you, but have you ever been falsely accused of something? I heard this story. Perhaps you've heard it as well. But it's a story about a lady. She went to the airport. She'd been flying all day. She was heading back home, had a lot of connections. It had been a very, very long day. She probably got the cheap flights. And so she was flying around. She finally got to her last airport. Only one more flight, only one more, you know, quick flight. She'd be home. And as she was there, all she wanted to do, she wanted to read something and she wanted a snack. So she went to the store there at the airport. I don't know why, because those things are so expensive. And she bought a book and she bought some cookies. And so she bought these things and then she went into, you know, where her gate was. She walked there, she sat down, opened up her book and began to read. Well, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed this man come and sit down, not directly beside her, but one seat over. And all of a sudden she was reading there, kind of minding her own business. And once again, out of the corner of her eye, just in her peripheral vision, she noticed that he reached his hand into the bag of cookies that was right between them and pulled out a cookie and ate it. And of course, she was shocked that someone would just look at some bag of cookies, not obviously they weren't his, and just reach in and grab one and eat it and didn't even ask her if they were hers. Well, she was mad, but she had been had such a long day.

[ 3 : 41 ] She didn't feel like fighting him, didn't feel like doing anything. So she thought I'll just be, you know, I'll be nice, kind of be passive aggressive. But she looked over, she smiled at the man, she reached her hand over and she grabbed a cookie and she ate it. And the man just smiled back at her and she couldn't believe it. When once again, this man reached his hand in and grabbed a cookie and ate it. And so this went back and forth a little bit till finally there was the last cookie.

And she's like, what's he going to do now? She's eaten at least half my bag of cookies. So now what's he going to do? He hasn't even asked, hasn't said thank you, nothing. Well, he reached in the bag, he grabbed that last cookie, he broke it in half and handed her the other half. At this point, she was furious on the inside. She smiled. She must've been a good Southerner. She smiled on the outside.

She took that last half a cookie. She stuck it in her mouth and ate it. But of course it was time for her to board her plane and she was fuming on the inside. So she got on the plane, she sat in her seat, still thinking about this man and the boldness this man had to do such a thing. Till finally, she's like, fine, I'm not going to mess with this anymore. I don't want to think about it. You know what? Sure, whatever. I'm just going to sit here. I'm going to get my book and get home. So she opened up her bag. She pulled out her book. And as she pulled out her book, she noticed in her bag, a bag of cookies that she had bought at the store. I don't know. I would be horrified if that was made.

And certainly she was. If this is a true story, she couldn't get off the plane. She couldn't tell the guy. Sorry, but certainly she had falsely accused this guy in her mind. And I don't know if you've ever been on the other side of that where you were that man who was falsely accused of eating the cookies. But certainly in times in our lives, we all get falsely accused of something. We all get accused of doing something maybe, or as a kid, getting in a fight with your brother or your sister. It was always my sister's fault. I don't know why I got blamed for so much. But you know what? That's what happens in our lives is we get accused. And even as adults, it just keeps going.

Maybe you've had a coworker or a boss who just, it seems like they're out to get you. And they think of every reason under the sun that they're trying to just get you fired or get you in trouble in some way. And it is very difficult to deal with that kind of thing. It's very difficult to deal with that kind of pressure. Now here in Psalm 26, we don't know exactly what's going on with David.

[ 5 : 53 ] We don't know exactly why he is writing this psalm. We don't have the circumstances around it. But it seems to us, as you read it and you read the context of this psalm, it seems David's going through a trying time. It seems there's a time where he's being fought against, perhaps being lied about, and he doesn't like it. And he writes this psalm. Much like Job, David is here and he seems to be laying out his case as why he doesn't deserve this, why he shouldn't be judged, why he shouldn't be accused of whatever it is that's going on. And when we look at the psalm, we see that he leans on his own integrity. He leans on his own integrity. And we see that here in Psalm 26, because that's kind of what the subject, the theme of the whole psalm is dealing with David's integrity. Let's look again at Psalm 26, 1. And we're in verse 11. You can't call it a sandwich because you call it a sandwich. You know, if it's ham sandwich, the ham sandwich is in between the bread. So this is kind of the bread of the psalm is integrity on each side. And so that's what we see here is that David here is busy and he is trying his best to explain his integrity. And so he says, judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity. I have trusted also in the Lord, therefore I shall not slide. And then verse 11 at the end of this psalm, but as for me, I will walk in mine integrity, redeem me and be merciful unto me. So Psalm 26, we see kind of the bread of this psalm, the pieces of this psalm. We have integrity at the beginning and at the very end.

And I do believe Psalm 25 and 26, perhaps they were somehow related, not in structure or anything like that. But it seems if you look at Psalm 25, 4 and 5, it says, show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth and teach me for thou art the God of my salvation. On thee do I wait all the day. In Psalm 25, we see here that David is saying that he wants to do what's right. He wants to follow God's word. He wants to do exactly what God wants. He wants to see God's path. He wants to follow God's truth. And over here in Psalm 26, it seems that David's saying, God, I have followed your truth. I have done right. Now look what's going on. God be with me. So in doing this, verse 1 tells us that he doesn't, of course, because of his integrity, he says he doesn't expect to slide.

Verse 12 tells us that he is standing on an even place or level ground. Why? Because he trusted in God. You see, David had a confidence about him. Now what was his confidence? Well, it was two things. The first one was his integrity. We've mentioned that several times. The other one was that he trusted God. So his integrity and he trusted God. Those things sound very simple, but in life and in really where the rubber meets the road, those things can be very, very difficult to keep at, very, very difficult to hold on to in the midst of troubles and in the midst of things that are going wrong. So how then we do we as Christians deal or live this kind of life and deal with this kind of accusation or difficult times where it seems like everyone's against us, everyone is falsely accusing us, or we have somebody that's against us. How do we do that? How do we, you could say, how do we lean on not just trusting on God? That's a big part of it, but also what about our integrity? What about our integrity? How do we live a life as Christians in integrity? Now what is integrity? Of course, that's a good question. I heard it this way many years ago and it's always stuck and I've always loved this definition because you have your character. That's who you are when no one else is around. That's who you really are. And then you have your ethics. That's who you say you are. So you have your character and you have your ethics. Well, when you put those together and they match, that is your integrity. And so that's what we see here, that we want to live a life as integrity because we know as Christians, we should live that way. We should live a different kind of life. Our homes should be different. Our marriages should be different. Our emphasis on life should be different. But how does that work in our lives? And that's what we're going to see in this Psalm as we go through. Three things here, just three quick things that I want to go through about a life of integrity. So let's look at those. The first one is this. A life of integrity is a life of openness. A life of integrity is a life of openness. Now, if you look here in Psalm 26, 1 to 3, it says, Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity. I have trusted also in the Lord. Therefore, I shall not slide. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. Try my reins in my heart.

For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth. You know, back about six months ago, in October, November last year, of course, when we were in China, before this whole virus thing happened, I was in university. And the reason was during our first year, we were on a student visa, just to kind of, it was on Tolson's advice, you know, go to the community. It's a new place. It's a new city. So what you need to do is make sure you kind of establish yourself while you're there. And so for us, we went and I said, I'm studying Chinese. So we did one year classes, just the easiest visa to get, not a whole bunch to do there. But of course, with university, you have tests. Now, with Chinese tests, we kind of learned this along the way. Well, it's not so much how well you know the material, but how well you can memorize the textbook. And so I've learned that.

[11:03] And so as we are going through, of course, making sure we know the material and could actually use it. But in order to pass the test, we also want to make sure we knew the exact sentences. It makes it a lot easier to pass those tests. So one time back in, you know, October, November was midterm time. So I'm like, okay, I've got these days. And what I need to do is as I go through these days, I need to, you know, this is the day of the test. And this day I will study and look at all these things. And I've got a couple of days. I'm a bit of a procrastinator when it comes to studying for test. But anyways, so I was going through that and I showed up for class, I believe it was Wednesday.

My teacher gets up there and says, hello, everybody, put your books away. It's test time. I was not ready for that test. But here we see in these verses here, you see, David here, he is ready for God's examination. He is ready for that test. Here we see in these verses, judge me, O Lord, examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins. That's the innermost being of us in my heart. David says, God, I am ready for your exam. You see, God's not, or David here is not just saying, God, I want you to judge me. He's saying, God, I want you to vindicate me. I want you to prove that I am doing right. God, judge me and show that I'm doing right. Now, to whom is he trying to prove this? Because that's really important, because we tend to think, you know, if we're in that situation like David and we've got people falsely accusing us over here, or we've got people over here saying wrong things about us, then we're going to do right because we want to prove them wrong, right?

That's kind of our pride. Then we say, I'm going to do right because I'm going to show all those people they are wrong. Well, David's not doing that here. David here is he saying, I'm not trying to prove this to man. I'm trying to prove this to God. You see, David's concern is not, God, show all these people I'm doing right. No, David's concern is that God knows that David is doing right. And that is what openness is. You see, we might want to, you know, live our lives in such a way that we can have confidence to come to God. That's really how we should live, that we should be able to come to God and say, God, judge me, examine me, prove me, try my reins, try my heart. So often we do things and are doing things that either we shouldn't be doing, or maybe they're things that we know we should be doing and we're not. And it causes us to kind of stray away from God. We read these verses and they terrify us. We read these verses and it makes us uncomfortable because the Holy Spirit is showing to us that, hey, I don't have that kind of relationship. I do not have that kind of openness with God that I should have. No, we're not out there murdering people on the weekends for fun. That's not what we do, but we do things that we know aren't pleasing to God. We do things that maybe they are, you know, they're considered unethical. Maybe there's kind of a gray area, but our conscience is bothering us about it. The Holy Spirit is bothering us about it. And it's not about doing right for the sake of doing right, but it's about doing, you know, it's about doing right. It's not even doing right to prove others wrong. What it is, is to do right before God so we can stand before him with confidence. Just like David, we can say, God, judge me, prove me. These verses can be very hard because again, we don't have that kind of boldness so often. We don't have that kind of confidence like David writes here. We think, how on earth could David write that?

But of course we know David wasn't the one writing this. Yes, David's hand was the one writing it, but it was God by the Holy Spirit inspiring him to write these words. And so he had us in mind as he penned these words. God knew we would be reading this some thousands of years later. And he says that kind of, we see it more so in verse three, because he says, for thy loving kindness is before mine eyes.

And I've walked in thy truth. You know, we serve a very, very good God, a God who loves us, a God that we know that we can through Christ approach boldly. But there may be things that we may need to get right. There may be things in our lives that we need to do right. You know, with our kids, as they're getting older, we're trying to emphasize very often with them that when you do wrong, come to us. We know as you go through life, you're probably going to make mistakes.

[ 15 : 08 ] You're going to mess up. You might even make huge mistakes and do really bad things. And we hate that you would do these things and it will break our heart for you to do them. But we want to make sure you know that you can always come to us, that we will always love you and we will always care for you and we will always be there for you. And yes, we can't promise that there won't be consequences, but we know that we will always love you. And the reason we can say that and the reason we say that to them is because we know that's how God loves. That's how God deals with us. That's how God is.

That when his loving kindness is before us, it makes it a lot easier to say like David, God, judge me. God, I know you love me. I know you know me better than I know me. And God can't, and we can't say that.

And we can't have a life of openness. But not only that, we need to have a life of separation. That is what a life of integrity is, a life of openness and a life of separation. We know from John 17, we are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are commanded in 1 John to love not the world, neither the things in the world, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. We're not supposed to love these things. We're supposed to be separated from them, above them. But you see, separation, of course, is both negative and positive. And we see that here in Psalm 26.

And we see, first of all, in Psalm 26, 4 and 5, that we are to be separated from evil and wicked people. Let's look at verses 4 and 5. It says, I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evildoers and will not sit with the wicked. Now, this passage, of course, seems very similar to Psalm 1. If you're reading through the book of Psalms, it seems very similar because in Psalm 1, 1, it says, Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. This seems very similar. So here are these verses, aren't just talking about sinners in general, but it's very specific. He's talking about vain persons, people who have faults or worthless character, idolaters, dissemblers. It's not a word we use a lot, but pretenders, hypocrites, evildoers, wicked people. And so we see that we should not associate ourselves with those kinds of people because when we are associated with those kinds of people, well, they mar our testimony. They change how people view us. Now think about David as he's writing this. Think about David. He is the king of Israel. And David at many, many times in his life, he needed help. David at many, many times in his life, he needed someone with him. And he had many, many enemies, but he also had many, many enemies of his enemies. And the enemy of my enemy is my friend. But David says, no, I'm not going to use those kinds of people to try and get my goals. I'm not going to use those kinds of people to achieve my ends. He said, I have hated that kind of people. I have not wanted to be with those kinds of people. And we know there are people who are out there looking to cheat the system, trying to lie to get ahead politically, trying to lie to get ahead in business, people who openly flaunt their sexual immorality and they celebrate it. And we should not want to associate with those kinds of people. It is why we as Christians must be careful who we call our heroes and who we endorse and who we're associated with, because it mars the name of

Christ. It shows us that it ruins our integrity when we endorse somebody who is known as some kind of wicked man or some kind of moral fault. But here, David, he says, I wasn't with those people.

[18:35] And I know you're thinking perhaps, you're thinking, hey, Ben, that just, you just want to be a Pharisee and just say you're too good for them. That's not true. Because the truth is, it's not that we're too good for them, but we know deep down we're not good enough. We can't cope with the temptations.

We can't cope with the problems that come with those close relationships and those close associations that we realize are weaknesses, that we should never feel better than anybody else. But the truth is that we know we can't stand it. We can't handle it. And that's why we see here as well, it's a very fine line and we have to be very careful about it. But you see, that's kind of the negative side of it. And we don't want to spend too much time there. So let's look at the positive side.

And that is that we are separated unto God. Psalm 26, 6 to 8. It says, I will wash mine hands in innocency. So I will come past thine altar, O Lord, that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thine honor dwelleth. You see, the Christian life is not about just saying no to the world and no to the wrong kind of people. The Christian life is about saying yes to Jesus Christ. It's about saying yes to what he wants for us because we know what he wants for us is that much better. You see, our lives should be lives that pursue God, lives that pursue God. You know, if you look at King Saul and King David, you see two very different stories. On the one hand over here, you have King Saul. You know, King Saul, when you looked at him, this guy was a king. This guy, he looked like a king. He could get a crowd around him. When people saw him, they said, there goes King Saul because they knew that guy's a king. That guy's a leader. He had the charisma. He had the ability. He had everything that people would love him as their leader, that people would look at him and say, I want that guy to be king because that's exactly what happened in the book of 1 Samuel. Of course, as we know, his story went on, he failed drastically and ended up losing the kingdom and David took it over. But what made David so different? Well, of course, he was a man after God's own heart. But why was he a man after God's own heart? And I believe it's very simple, but again, very difficult. It's the fact that

David had a relationship with God that Saul didn't. So the truth is, it's not really super difficult, but David had a true relationship with God. David loved God. David pursued God. I mean, how else do we have this book before us? A book that is all just Psalms praising God, reaching out to God in his good times and his bad times and all these different things because David loved God and wanted to do what God wanted. That David loved him, that our lives should reflect that, that we should pursue God. And in doing so, it will make a life of praise and preaching.

He says here in Psalm 26, that I may publish with voice of thanksgiving. You see, we should be praise filled people. God has done so much for us. He's died on the cross for us. He has given us so much, blessed us beyond anything you could imagine. And even more so that we can't imagine exactly because there's even more blessings already in store when we die and we go and spend forever with him, that we need to be vocal about what God has done. We need to be vocal about how God has taken care of us and changed our lives. And that's what a life of integrity that it's trusting in God because it's based on God and loving him and pursuing him and wanting to please him. See, when we get saved, our desires should change. When we get saved, it should make us into people who want to serve him and want to be close to him and want to have a relationship. You know, we often say, you know, Christianity, it's not a religion, it's a relationship. But can you imagine tonight if you were to start treating your spouse like you do with God? Can you imagine tonight if you began to treat your marriage relationship like you do with God? I mean, how different would your marriage be?

[ 22 : 29 ] Would it be better? Would it be worse? Would it be non-existent? Because that's so often we don't pursue God like we should. And that is a life of integrity, that it is separated from those evil people. Well, not just that, but a life separated unto God. So that's what we see the second thing.

And finally, we see here that a life of integrity is a life of redemption. A life of integrity is a life of redemption. You know, when you read these verses, it's very easy to think to ourselves, well, David is a very self-righteous kind of guy. David is a kind of guy that, you know, how can you stand there and say, judge me, oh God, I haven't been with those evil people. I've gone after you. And we think that because you can read that. And as you read through this Psalm, it's very easy to kind of come across or infer that from the text. But as you read the end of it, well, the Psalm kind of shreds that notion. Because in Psalm 26, 9 to 12, it says, gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men, and whose hands is mischief and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity, redeem me, and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth in an even place in the congregation. Will I bless the Lord? Think about what's being said here. Think about what's being said here. David said in the beginning, God, judge me because you know I've done right.

God, judge me because you know I've trusted in you and my feet will not slide. And sometimes people get stuck there. They think, I can do what I want because I know I'm doing right. And I'm serving Jesus. And so it creates in our hearts, in our lives, it does create self-righteousness.

It does create pride that we think, here's my card. I can do whatever I want. And that's what many people think. And I'm serving Jesus. I'm doing the right thing. So it doesn't matter what I do. It doesn't matter how people think about it. It doesn't matter. I'm serving Jesus.

I'm doing something for him. But that's not what we see here in these verses. Jesus. Because David could easily say, you know, I haven't been with those evil, wicked men. Some people, they get stuck there. They say, God, my company is not with evil, wicked men. My company is not those kinds of people. And I know as a younger man, myself as a teenager, that was very much my pride and being so much of having a pharisaical attitude. And it's so easy to have that because we think it's all about doing good and being right and being the right kind of person. But you see, this psalm shifts. This psalm shifts as you get into the second half that the focus is no longer what David is doing, but it's about what God has done and will do. Because here, he says, gather not my soul with sinners nor my life with bloody men. Of course, we know this is the judgment.

[ 25 : 10 ] This is judgment here. So I believe these verses show us, of course, David's heart. Because it's about what God has for David, but not just that, but what God will do. And these verses show his heart because he remembers who God is and how much he loved God, how much David loved God.

So David goes, I love praising you. I love being where you are. And then at the very end, what does he say? He says, God, don't gather me with those sinners. Why? Because that's not where you are.

And I want to be with you. That here in this psalm, there's a tension, especially as it gets into verse number 11, that's Psalm 26, 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity. But then he keeps going. He says, redeem me and be merciful unto me. See, there is no room, no room in the Christian life for pride. Because this verse really shows that tension on the one hand, doing right and doing what is right. But on the other hand, we see our need for grace and mercy and redemption.

That though we may live right, as David did, we can say, God, judge me. Though we may think, God, I'm not associating with those wrong kind of people. And God, I love you so much. I want to be where you are. We should never forget that we are always in need of his grace and his mercy. So yes, let's do right. We need to do that. That is integrity, doing the right thing. But let's not forget our need of God and his mercy. We can never forget where we came from. Paul certainly never did as you look at the New Testament. As he reminds himself, it seems over and over in his epistles, how it was by the grace of God he was who he was. That he said later on, he was still the chief of sinners and God saved him. That he never forgot how amazing it was that the God of heaven would save even him. And we should never lose that as well. We should never lose that wonderment, that amazement, because that is what's going to keep us humble. That is what a life of redemption, because nobody likes prideful people. And the grace of God and his gospel is what kills all pride, because it shows us how helpless we were. That we couldn't earn our way to heaven. We couldn't do anything to make ourselves better. We couldn't earn our way. We couldn't be good enough to get to heaven. But God sent his son to die for us. And so because of his sacrifice, by putting our faith in him, and the fact he did die for us and rose again victoriously, because of that, not anything we've ever done, but all because of his grace and mercy, we can have a right relationship with him and spend eternity with him.

And that is amazing. We are never too good to not need God's grace. We are never too good to not need his mercy. That yes, we should say, as David says, God, I will walk in mine integrity, but we should right after it, just as he did say, God, redeem me and be merciful unto me, because we know our past.

[ 28 : 06 ] We know who we are. And we know that God saved us when we couldn't. And we are always in need of his grace. So tonight, I want to simply ask you this. Are you living a life of integrity?

How have you responded if you've been falsely accused? Maybe you're going through that right now. Maybe not. But there's probably going to be a chance that you will. And no matter if you have gone through that, or will go through that, or going through it right now, we should all as Christians be living this kind of life. That's what we see in Psalm 26. Are we doing right not to be proven right, but because we want to please God? Are we doing right because we don't just want to be shown as right, but because we want to make sure God is pleased with us? Yes, we know he is always pleased with us. But at the same time, we want to please him. Are we careful of our associations? Are we careful of who we're around and who we're associated with? But not only that, even more importantly, are you seeking and pursuing God? Are you trying to have that relationship? What is your relationship to him? And finally, do you remember your need for redemption? Do you remember your need, or have you forgotten how helpless you are? It's so easy as we grow in grace, and as we begin to, you know, the Holy Spirit begins to work in our hearts and remove sin. And the truth is, sanctification as we're going, we do slowly get better about different attitudes and different actions. But sometimes it turns sour because that attitude of growth begins to make it where we have pride, and we forget how helpless we were, and we forget that we need God's grace each and every day. Have you forgotten that? So let's honor God. Let's honor him, and let's live lives that reflect him, lives of integrity. Let's have a word of prayer, and we'll be done. Lord, I thank you for tonight. God, I thank you for your word.



I thank you that we're able to open it. I thank you that you are a God who loves us. And God, I ask that you would help each and every one of us who have been watching this, each and every one of this who tuned in to hear your word preached, that you would work in their hearts, help them grow in grace, help them grow in mercy, help them grow to love you more, because that's what you want. You want a relationship with us. Help us to live lives of integrity, that we would live differently, just as David did here, that we can openly and boldly say, God, judge me, examine me, try my heart, because your loving kindness is always before me. God, we ask that you would do these things for your honor and your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.