



Soul Matters

**What does it mean to be
a people of INTEGRITY?**

What Does It Mean To Be A People of Integrity?

Wholeness is never lost; it is only forgotten. Integrity rarely means that we need to add something to ourselves: it is more an undoing than a doing, a freeing ourselves from beliefs we have about who we are and ways we have been persuaded to “fix” ourselves... Often in reclaiming the freedom to be who we are, we remember some basic human quality, what we find is almost always a surprise but it is also familiar; like something we have put in the back of a drawer long ago...

- Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom

We know the usual “integrity advice”: Build your character! Get better at being honest, with others and yourself!

It’s about addition, we’re told. Being better. Becoming more.

But our faith, like Rachel Naomi Remen, says it’s more complicated than that. Some subtraction is also needed. Removal needs to occur. The path needs cleared.

And why? Well because integrity isn’t simply something we build; it’s something already there. We UUs talk mostly about inherent worth, but we also believe in inherent integrity. All the building blocks are sitting there, waiting. They are, as Remen says, hidden like something we have put in the back of the drawer long ago.

It’s all a reminder that our integrity is much more closely tied to memory than we acknowledge. Those moments from our youth when we felt most truly ourselves. Those mentors and models that departed wisdom about what really matters. It’s all there. Just forgotten. As the poet, Charles Bukowski says, “Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?”

So friends, please don’t make this month just about “being better.” Make some time to also be quiet. Think of the hunt for integrity more like getting away from all the noise of the traffic so the song of the birds can be heard. Or like when we wandered off a bit too far into the woods as a kid. It could have been scary, but somehow we knew that all we had to do was stand still and listen. We knew the call of our parents would soon come, leading us back home. It’s the same with our memories and our deepest selves: They are calling to us from the edge of the woods.

All we have to do is stop and listen.

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A

Counting Your Values on Your Hand

Integrity and value-clarity go hand in hand. But do we really take the time to name and bring our core values into awareness? And do our self-proclaimed values match how others see us? This exercise invites you to wrestle with both of these questions.

To keep it simple, we've created [a list of values](#). Here's how to engage it:

1. Pick your five core values from the list.
2. Give a blank copy of [the list](#) to someone close to you and ask them to pick the five they think are your core values, without letting them know which you picked earlier.
3. Compare lists and discuss the differences, as well as why each of you picked what you did.
4. Come to your group ready to share insights.

Taking it Deeper

Here are some additional questions and an activity to explore more:

- From your selected five values, which one would like to live into more fully?
- What were your parent(s) five core values? In what way are your core values and theirs the most same and the most different?
- Which of your core values are most directly and deeply related to your UU faith? i.e. which value would not be on the list if it wasn't for your faith?
- What's the newest value to make it on to your list of top five? Which value did it "replace"? Did that happen consciously? Or did the shift sneak up on you?
- Take this online values test and see if it reveals anything new: <https://www.valuescentre.com/tools-assessments/pva/>

Option B:

Remembering Our Way into Integrity

We know that integrity is about the way we act: acting in alignment with our values, acting honestly, acting faithfully. In this sense, it is forward-looking. But it's easy to forget that integrity also is about looking backward. In other words, it's not just about how well we act; it's about how well we remember. Important life lessons come our way. Some of them stick and some slip away. Our integrity is determined by whether we remember them or forget, whether we hold our life lessons close or let them evaporate.

So this exercise asks: What life lessons do you want to make an extra effort to remember?

Spend some time this month creating a list of "5 life lessons I want to remember." Think of it as self-talk. As your better self-helping your forgetful self-return to your center. Pull out a sheet of paper or pull up a document on

your computer or phone and type out a list numbered 1-5. Then spend the month filling it in with the pieces of wisdom or advice that are important to you *but that you also often forget*.

Bring this with you to your group and be ready to share 2 items on the list that were most surprising or engaging.

Here are some example reminders to get you thinking:

1. Remember that failure stings but regret haunts.
2. Remember that masks that stay on too long will stick to my skin.
3. Remember that assuming good intentions is not only kind-hearted but also creates those good intentions in others.
4. Remember that the only audience I am really trying to please is myself.
6. Remember I always have a choice.
7. Remember I am different not less.
8. Remember that everyone is carrying pain, even if I can't see it, so be kind.
9. Remember I'm not the only one that feels like an imposter. They only look like they have it all together.
10. Remember if they ask me to keep a piece of me hidden, this is not where I belong.
12. Remember I've already "made it" and I'm already enough. So I can put the striving and the proving down whenever you want.
13. Remember that they will likely laugh or leave but do it anyway.

Option C: Name Your Many Names

This exercise also asks us to explore the connection between integrity and memory. Instead of asking us to remember a specific value or life lesson, it asks us to remember all of who we are. It's a reminder that integrity is about finding and holding on to our wholeness.

We turn to Israeli poet, [Zelda](#), to lead us on our way. In her poem, [Each of Us Has A Name](#), she makes it clear that integrity is a matter not so much of holding tight to your one true name, but remembering and embracing the many names given to us by the experiences of our lives. The full poem can be found at [this link](#), but here's a taste:

Each of us has a name given by God
and given by our parents...
Each of us has a name given by the mountains
and given by our walls...
Each of us has a name given by our sins
and given by our longing...

So, this month, reflect on how these universal human experiences have "named you" and how those names call you back to integrity. Spend a few hours or a few days going through Zelda's poem line by line, stopping after each one to think about how that experience imprinted itself on you and added a dimension to the wholeness and integrity of who you are.

It helps to think of each of these experiences as saying to you: “You are...” or “I name you...” Here’s an example of what you might ask yourself as you work with each line:

- What name was I given by “God”(or Love)? How did my first God experience say to me: “You are ...”?
- What name was I given by my parents? How has my relationship with them said to me: “You are ...”?
- What name was I given by the mountains? How has my experience with nature said to me: “You are ...”?
- What name was I given by my “sins”? How has my experience with my shadow side or mistakes said to me: “You are ...”?

To help, we’ve created [a fill in the blank form](#) related to the lines of the poem. Find it [here](#).

After answering the questions, consider assembling all the sentences or all of your names into a list that functions as a poem of sorts. Read your many names aloud one by one or ask someone close to you to read them as you listen.

Come to your group ready to share your “poem of names” as well as what surprised you about the exercise and the 1 or 2 most significant insights that came from it.

Option D: Find Integrity in Our Recommended Resources

Our recommended resources are full of wisdom about what it means to be a people of and a person of integrity. Engaging these resources and finding the one that especially speaks to you is a spiritual practice in and of itself.

So, if none of the above exercises call to you, engage the recommended resources section of this packet as your spiritual exercise for the month.

Set aside some regular time throughout a week to go through them and meditate on them until you find the one that most expands or deepens your understanding of integrity. After you’ve found it, consider printing it out and carrying it with you or pinning it up so you can continue to reflect on it throughout the weeks leading up to your group meeting. Come to your group ready to share where the journey led you.

Your Question

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer every single one. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question is "yours." Which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? What is that question trying to get you to notice or acknowledge?

Often it helps to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the question you need to wrestle with!

1. What's your "integrity path"? Is integrity for you about staying faithful, allowing yourself to unfold, putting the pieces back together, matching your insides with your outsides or refusing to hide?
2. Is integrity harder or easier for you than it was when you were young?
3. What did your family of origin teach you about telling the truth? How about telling the truth *of yourself*?
4. Is it time to remember what your 20-year old self hoped you'd be?
5. Who is most likely to walk away if you stop hiding?
6. Could it be that integrity actually wants you *to break* that promise?
7. That thing about yourself you're trying to fix... Is it really *you* that wants it fixed? Or them? Who are you fixing it for?
8. Which of society's lies was the hardest for you to shake off: "You are what you have," "You are what you do" or "You are what other people say or think about you"?
9. What's so scary to you about saying, "I'm sorry"?
10. Can you imagine a workplace where you don't have to wear a mask?
11. Whose voice is making it hard to hear your own?
12. What if you told yourself that you are different not less?
13. Are you tired of accepting their apology?
14. Do you *feel* authentic?
15. Which is easier for you? Telling the truth to others or telling the truth to yourself?
16. Do your friendships have integrity?
17. Does your spiritual life have integrity?
18. Are you tired of being so good at pretending?
19. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it. Or maybe the question or call you need to hear is waiting in one of the quotes listed below. Consider looking there!

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of integrity.

Word Roots & Definitions

Integrity stems from the Latin word 'integer' which means whole and complete. So integrity requires an inner sense of 'wholeness' and consistency of character. When you are in integrity, people should be able to visibly see it through your actions, words, decisions, methods, and outcomes. When you are 'whole' and consistent, there is only one you. You bring that same you wherever you are, regardless of the circumstance. You don't leave parts of yourself behind.

- [source](#)

Integrity. Basically, the word means wholeness. In mathematics, an integer is a number that isn't divided into fractions. Just so, a person of integrity isn't divided against him or herself.

[Authur Gordon](#)

Integrity: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.

New Oxford American Dictionary

Integrity goes beyond speaking the truth to include taking responsibility for how one thinks and feels and what one does.

[Ben Dean](#)

Wise Words

Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?

Charles Bukowski

You entered form to give a holy message. An envoy from the inconceivable is each of us.

When you have completed that courageous task

you will be able to return to a world that does not know sadness.

But so difficult your divine errand, it will take a lifetime to accomplish, love along the way.

[Hafiz](#)

Be yourself, everyone else is taken.

Oscar Wilde

I now know myself to be a person of weakness and strength, liability and giftedness, darkness and light. I now know that to be whole means to reject none of it but to embrace all of it.

Parker Palmer

Integrity rarely means that we need to add something to ourselves: it is more an undoing than a doing, a freeing ourselves from beliefs we have about who we are and ways we have been persuaded to "fix" ourselves

Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom

The Artist is no other than someone who unlearns what they have learned, in order to know themselves.

e.e. cummings

We all find ourselves bouncing around three very human lies that we believe about our identity: I am what I have, I am what I do, and I am what other people say or think about me.

[Christopher L. Heuertz](#)

We saw everyone around us smiling and repeating “I’m fine! I’m fine!” and we found ourselves unable to join them in all the pretending. We had to tell the truth, which was: “Actually, I’m not fine.”

[Glennon Doyle](#)

Your representative is a version of you that’s sent into the world in your place. It’s a blander, less authentic person who stands in for you when it doesn’t feel safe to expose the real you. Your representative is the one who ...

- Plasters on a fake smile when you’d rather be anywhere else than the meeting you’re sitting in.
- Doesn’t speak up, even when you’ve got an opinion, for fear of being judged.
- Knows exactly what to say to keep being liked and praised.
- Keeps you jumping through hoops, constantly trying to prove your worth.
- Has a bunch of acquaintances, but very few real connections.
- Most of us have been sending out representatives for so long that we can’t remember not having one.

[Rachel East](#)

We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.

Kurt Vonnegut

May what I do flow from me like a river, no forcing and no holding back, the way it is with children.

Rainer Maria Rilke

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all, — that is genius... In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty... Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.

[Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure.

[Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

Better to be a nerd than one of the herd!

Mandy Hale

I am different not less.

[Temple Grandin](#)

There’s never been more pressure to kind of parcel yourself... It’s never been more asked of us to show up as only slices of ourselves in different places. Even just to feel like you’re showing up as your whole self in different settings is a pretty rebellious act.

[Courtney Martin](#)

The English word personality is derived from the Latin word for “mask.” Simply put, our personality is the mask we wear. A mark of spiritual growth is when we stop polishing the mask and instead start working on our character.

[Christopher L. Heuertz](#)

Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without but that we know we cannot live within.

James Baldwin

The Journey

Mary Oliver

Full poem at

<https://emilyspoetryblog.com/2013/04/09/the-journey-by-mary-oliver/>

“But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice,
which you slowly
recognized as your own...”

The Way It

William Stafford

Full poem at

<https://readalittlepoetry.wordpress.com/2011/03/24/the-way-it-is-by-william-stafford/>

“There’s a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn’t change.
People wonder about what you are
pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread...
While you hold it you can’t get lost...”

Someday, sometime, you will be sitting
somewhere. A berm overlooking a pond in
Vermont. The lip of the Grand Canyon at
sunset. A seat on the subway. And
something bad will have happened: You will
have lost someone you loved or failed at
something at which you badly wanted to
succeed. And sitting there, you will fall into
the center of yourself. You will look for
some core to sustain you. And if you have
been perfect all your life and have managed
to meet all the expectations of your family,
your friends, your community, your society,
chances are excellent that there will be a
black hole where that core ought to be. I
don’t want anyone I know to take that
terrible chance. And the only way to avoid it
is to listen to that small voice inside you
that tells you to make mischief, to have fun,
to be contrarian, to go another way. George
Eliot wrote, ‘It is never too late to be what
you might have been.’ It is never too early,
either.

Anna Quindlen, Being Perfect

The Formula for Forgiveness

Jae Escoto

Full poem [here](#)

“If I am she 34 times in a day
And I am only he twice
What is the difference between me and
her?
How do we add up?...”

‘Real isn’t how you are made,’ said the Skin
Horse. ‘It’s a thing that happens to you.
When a child loves you for a long, long
time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves
you, then you become Real.’

Margery Bianco, The Velveteen Rabbit

May your life preach more loudly than
your lips.

William Ellery Channing

Integrity is telling myself the truth. Honesty
is telling the truth to other people.

Spencer Johnson

On some questions, Cowardice asks the
question, “Is it safe?” Expediency asks the
question, “Is it polite?” And Vanity comes
along and asks the question, “Is it popular?”
But Conscience asks the question, “Is it
right?” And there comes a time when we
must take a position that is neither safe, nor
politic, nor popular, but we must do it
because Conscience tells us it is right.

Martin Luther King Jr

If you have an inner voice telling you that
how this country is now is not right. That
these shootings aren’t right. That racism
isn’t right. That treating immigrants as they
are isn’t right. Honor that voice. It’s your
heart reminding you that love is real, that
there is a more beautiful way to live.
Nurture this voice and link it to others.

Omid Safi

We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary.

Malcolm X

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.

Angela Y. Davis

I would like you to know
That we were not all like that.
That some of us spent our lives
Working for peace
Speaking for animals
Tending the earth.
And that when you find
The mass graves
The abattoirs
And the laboratories
Please understand
That we were not all like that.

[Mary de LaValette](#)

Music

We create two different playlists one the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. Music connects us to the themes in a way like nothing else. Follow the links below to connect with our "[integrity songs](#)" and much more!

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month.

Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).

Videos & Podcasts

Cornel West, from his speech at UUA GA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZirJUK_Xfw

“How shall integrity face oppression? That is one of the most fundamental challenges of today because we live in an age of mendacity. It’s an age in which lies are ubiquitous. [And so] integrity has to do with what is the quality of your courage and your willingness to bear witness radically against the grain even if you have to sacrifice something...”

The 7 Deadly American Sins - FreeQuency

An indictment of American’s Integrity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLthZDCO6Ww>

When to Take a Stand... And When To Let it Go - Ted Talk, Ash Beckham

https://www.ted.com/talks/ash_beckham_when_to_take_a_stand_and_when_to_let_it_go#t-718102

A powerful call to embrace the “integrity of duality” and resist cowardly and unnecessary path of either/or and choosing sides.

Show Me the Way - Topic Video

<https://www.topic.com/show-me-the-way?playing=true>

The battle for LGBTQ rights hasn’t only been fought on the streets of coastal cities; it has also taken place on the dirt roads, campuses, and in the homes of rural America. In this new short documentary gay men living in central Tennessee, and their families, share stories of struggle and self-acceptance. “I was an actor too long and I’m not going to do it again...”

My Identity is a Superpower, not an Obstacle - Ted Talk, America Ferrera

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjquHTj4HlY&fbclid=IwAR3gyIBD1CjFMuLU3IfN9xgIWJhCC86S0_eqa08kb9UR6tf4Qgoz7ph3xcg

“Change will come when each of us has the courage to question our own fundamental values and beliefs. And then see to it that our actions lead to our best intentions.” America Ferrera says that in order to create the presence needed for possibility and change, we need to stop resisting the truth of who we are and to start existing authentically in the reality we live in.

Little Clay Thing (explicit)

Jae Nichelle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFYqjMjKcIO>

On surviving relationships that strip us of our integrity

True You - Invisibilia Podcast

<https://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/533946953/true-you>

What happens when you discover a part of yourself that is so different from who you think you are? Do you hold on to your original self tightly? Do you explore this other self? Or do you just panic?

“She Told Me To!”

On how all of us struggle with the integrity of telling the truth and the temptation to pass the blame... with a humorous twist.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=697887000544897>

<https://www.facebook.com/JungleFourNine/videos/697887000544897/>

Articles

Designing Your Life

Anthony Ongaro

<https://www.breakthetwitch.com/intentional-living-values/>

"If the small ways we show up each day align with the vision of the life we want, we're much more likely to look back on a life encompassing our vision over the years."

Why It Doesn't Pay to be a People-Pleaser

Christine Carter

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_it_doesnt_pay_to_be_a_people_pleaser

“Pretending takes a huge conscious effort—it’s an act of self-control that drains your brain of its power to focus and do deep work. That’s because performing or pretending to be or feel something you’re not requires tremendous willpower... pretending always backfires in the end. Living inauthentically makes life hard and cuts us off from our sweet spot—that place where we have both ease and power.”

by any means necessary

adrienne maree brown

<http://adriennemareebrown.net/2010/05/19/by-any-means-necessary/>

“there are a plethora of internal and external dangers to the soul – it is so hard to keep your integrity intact, especially if you long for change, if the current world disappoints you or makes you furious... what if what’s needed isn’t sexy, intimidating, violent...what if what is needed is forgiveness?...are we able to be that militant?...”

Books

A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life

Parker Palmer

The Examined Life: How We Lose and Find Ourselves

Stephen Grosz

Excerpt [here](#)

Review [here](#)

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

This is the UUA's 2019-2020 [Common Read](#).

A powerful book that speaks to communal integrity and how there can be no collective integrity until a community is honest about and aware of its history. More [here](#).

Movies

[To Kill A Mockingbird](#)

[Milk](#)

[The Insider](#)

[Quiz Show](#)

[King In The Wilderness](#)

[Lincoln](#)

Get more inspiration on the monthly theme
by following our social media and music lists:

Soul Matters Facebook inspiration Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Spotify Lists:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

Instagram:

Find us as “soul_matters_circle”

Find support for bringing the
monthly themes home and into your family life with

Soulful Home: A Guide for Families:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home.html>

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