

## II. Honesty And Lying

A serious moral issue that touches every aspect of a Christian's life is the great need for honesty. This affects us in every way - in school, at work, in the church, in the family.

*2 Corinthians 8:21; 13:7*

We have all heard the familiar phrase - "honesty is the best policy." We want to notice from the Bible that this adage is not so trite but divinely true. Admittedly, honesty is not always the easiest road to take, but it's the right course in the long run. Let's compare honest and dishonest behavior.

### A. Lying

What is lying? It's more than simply saying that which is not true. I might be ignorant of certain things unaware and say something false, though I sincerely believe it to be true. This is not a lie. A lie is when I know what is true yet speak to the contrary. It therefore involves our will; it is a deliberate action.

Small children seem to instinctively learn to lie from almost the time they know how to speak, even without the bad example of lying parents. It's even worse with siblings in the house: both brother and sister conveniently deny making the mess on the floor. Nevertheless, they also instinctively know it is wrong. Consider these Bible passages that teach lying is sinful:

*Ephesians 4:25*

*Colossians 3:9*

*John 8:44*

Know this: if lying is wrong and sinful, we can lose our soul for doing it.

*Revelation 21:8*

Liars are listed along with murderers as hell's inhabitants.

Why do people lie even though they know it's wrong? Let's explore some possible reasons:

#### 1. People lie to stay out of trouble.

This never works; lying is entrapment. If you lie once, you will have to lie again to conceal your lie. Perhaps the reason we lie again is because, oddly enough, since we know it's wrong, we want to hide that we have done it. It's better to never lie in the first place. If you do something bad, don't lie to cover it up. The punishment for the deed alone will be easier than the punishment for both the deed and the lie.

*Proverbs 28:13*

So let's say you're lucky enough that you never had to lie again to cover up a lie. You're still not out of trouble. Once you tell a lie, it does not go away on its own. The people to whom you have lied can go on for the rest of their lives believing it, and the fault remains upon you. God doesn't just forget about it; the lie goes on unforgiven until you do something about it:

- Forgiveness requires repentance - *Acts 3:19*
- Repentance involves correcting the wrong - *Philemon 18*
- Correction calls for confessing to those you offended - *James 5:16*

Do not deceive yourself into thinking this sin can be forgiven without divulging it; you can't sin without consequence.

*1 John 1:9*

#### 2. People lie to obtain an advantage.

The heart of this problem is pride and selfishness. To do this, we sell ourselves over to Satan.

*Proverbs 23:23*

*James 3:14*

Taking the credit for something we do to which we have no right is the same as cheating, more on that later.

*Acts 4:36 – 5:5*

Saving money is one of the strongest motives for lying. It's especially tempting at tax time.

### **3. People lie because it's easy to do and often difficult to detect.**

What a small part of the body the mouth is, and how easy it is to open it and let words come out.

*James 1:26; 2:2-8*

bridle = hold in check, restrain

Ananias and Sapphira learned the hard way that, though you may be able to fool men, God knows your true deeds.

*Hebrews 4:13*

### **4. People lie to avoid confrontation.**

Whatever our circumstance, we can always find a way of speaking truthfully without needlessly hurting someone. Remember, also, that telling the truth does not necessarily require speaking everything that is on our mind.

*Proverbs 29:11*

Literally: "A fool brings out all his mind..."

Observe how Samuel in a delicate situation is instructed by the Lord to be prepared to answer King Saul's question truthfully but avoid divulging things that could anger him, which were none of his business anyway:

*1 Samuel 16:1*

Samuel's example teaches us we need to think before we speak. Sometimes in a difficult situation, the first thing we might think to say is a lie. Make the determination ahead of time that, no matter what, lying is not an option.

The world's standard of morality is different from God's. Situation ethics suggests that there are certain circumstances in which it is okay to lie. This contradicts the law of God.

## **B. Honesty**

### **1. Honesty With God**

Mark Twain once said "you can't pray a lie." It's absurd to think that we could deceive the all powerful, all knowing God who created all things. He knows what is in our heart before we begin to put it into words.

*Luke 16:15*

### **2. Honesty With Others**

Honesty begins with the attitude: we must "think honest" to "be honest." Dishonesty shows itself through deceit, hypocrisy, cheating and even stealing.

- Deceit

Deceit involves trickery and craftiness. For example, a deceiver might act sad or disappointed for the purpose of winning attention or favors from others.

*1 Peter 3:8-10*

- Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is play acting, pretending to be something you're not. There are two ways to show hypocrisy: trying to appear better than we really are and trying to appear worse than we really are. The root of hypocrisy is a lack of sincerity.

*1 Peter 2:1-2*

*James 3:17*

- Cheating

*Proverbs 11:1; 13:11*

Cheaters on classroom tests only hurt themselves because they sidestep learning. We are effectively stealing when we cheat, and it's wrong.

- Stealing

For examples: accepting too much change at a store and not paying your debts.

*Romans 13:7, 8*

### **3. Honesty With Self**

To be honest with others and with God, we must be honest with ourselves.

- Self deception

*Galatians 6:3-7*

- Hardness of heart

*Luke 8:15*

The word of God only produces results when it falls on an honest heart.

## **C. The Results**

### **1. Of Dishonesty:**

- Friendships are broken.
- Reputations are ruined.
- Families are destroyed.
- Souls are lost.

### **2. Of Honesty:**

- A clear conscience
- An honorable life

*Hebrews 13:18*

## **D. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion**

1. Are some lies worse than others?
2. What is a "half truth?"
3. List some conditions under which it would be okay to lie.
4. What effect does lying have on trust?
5. Is it possible to lie without saying anything?
6. Name various ways we can deceive ourselves.
7. Define "hypocrisy" in your own words.