
Exodus 20:16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor"...meaning, "Don't lie." God values Honesty. Pop quiz: Jesus came..." **full of grace and _____**" (John 1:14) **"True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and _____"** (John 4:23) Jesus said, **"I AM the way, the _____, and the life"** (John 14:6) **"Father, Sanctify them by the _____; your word is _____"** (John 17:17) **"When the spirit of _____ comes, he will guide you into all _____"**(John 16:13) **"You will know the _____, and the _____ will set you free"** (John 8:32) Did you pass?

Parents polled said the #1 quality they want in their children is honesty. The same survey revealed 91% of Americans lie regularly. How do you trust a survey if 9 out of 10 lie? Sociologists say we either hear or see 300 lies every day...actually 200, I just wanted to show you how easy it was to lie! Tell me you haven't heard these: The check is in the mail. The doctor will call you right back. It was good to see you. One size fits all. This hurts me more than it hurts you. Your table will be ready in just a minute. 4 out of 5 Doctors... Lose 10 lbs in 10 days. Of course, I love your casserole/hair/etc. Dr. Leonard Keeler, who invented the lie detector test, interviewed 25,000 people and he came to the conclusion that people are basically dishonest. At the core of humanity there is dishonesty.

Starting with Adam and Eve, dishonesty has plunged this world into the mess that it is in. The Bible says that the heart is deceitful. Dishonesty has many different faces, but one common result: it strangles life out of us. The Bible tells us that God is the father of truth and Satan (as God's adversary) is the father of falsehood. John 8:44 **"...there is no truth in (Satan). When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."** The Bible doesn't candy coat it...dishonesty is repulsive to God. Why? Because God is truth and dishonesty is a perversion of His character. God places a high value on truthfulness and God wants us too as well. Why?

1. **Dishonesty makes us skeptical.** Because we've been lied to over and over.
2. **Dishonesty breaks down trust.** We are in a culture where we don't – and can't - trust.
3. **Dishonesty makes us insecure.** Are you really being honest? Trust involves risk.
4. **Dishonesty wounds our soul.** The experience of being betrayed cuts to our core.

STEPS TOWARD AN HONEST LIFE - Proverbs 23:23 "Buy the truth and do not sell it."

Whatever it costs to have your life characterized by truth it's worth it...hold on to it.

1st STEP) TAKE AN HONEST INVENTORY OF YOUR TRUTHFULNESS. 1 Chronicles 29:17 "I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity."

Here is a test. Do it now or later, but do it. It may be tough for some to be totally honest.

Where am I being dishonest? ___family ___friends ___work ___God ___myself ___lifestyle ___other

How am I being dishonest? ___protecting others ___silence ___cheating ___slander ___deceit

___motive ___exaggeration ___shading the truth ___compromise ___flattery ___justifying

Why am I being dishonest? ___fear ___greed ___convenience ___anger ___insecurity ___pride

___expediency ___insecurity ___personal gain ___outside pressure ___selfishness ___jealousy

2nd STEP) MAKE AN HONEST EVALUATION OF THE GAINS AND LOSSES. Proverbs 13:21 "Trouble chases sinners, while blessings chase the righteous!"

If I'm going to be really honest with you, I've got to say that when we are dishonest there are some gains. We can gain things. I can cheat on my taxes and gain more money. I can lie about something and gain more time, more influence, a better reputation. There are some gains. But when we look at those gains...are they more appealing than the truth? The Bible says those gains will be temporary... like the Olympian who wins only to have the medal taken away for use of steroids. Even if they win, those who cheat lose.

1) **Dishonest people lose character because honesty develops character. Proverbs 20:7 "Good people who live honest lives will be a blessing to their children."** There's a difference between character and reputation. Reputation is what you think about me or what I think about you. Character is what I really am when no one's looking. Honesty and integrity is when reputation and character come together and are consistent. My character blesses those that I love.

2) **Dishonest people lose spiritual maturity because honesty develops spiritual maturity. Ephesians 4:15 "Instead we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ who is the head of the body."** When I'm dishonest I'm not facing the sin that's keeping me from growing. When I'm honest I do...and it propels me toward spiritual maturity.

3) **Dishonest people lose security because honesty develops security. Proverbs 11:6 "Doing right brings freedom to honest people...but those who are not trustworthy will be caught by their own desires."** Security in me. I'm secure with who I am. I provide security in my relationships. They can trust me -- my kids and family and everyone around. There's security. We lose that when we're dishonest. Mark Twain said, "It's easier to tell the truth; that way you don't have to keep track of everything you say." That is freedom...and security!

3rd STEP) LOVE GOD AND PURSUE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. Psalm 140:13 "...honest people will live in God's presence."

The more intimate we are with God, the more compelled we are to be honest. If God is invading my life, it is very difficult to be dishonest. If the Holy Spirit is residing in my life, then the Holy Spirit will send an internal signal to me when I'm being dishonest. When I don't have an intimate relationship with God, I don't hear those signals...which leads toward being a chronic deceiver. When I live in the presence of God, I'm compelled to be honest. It is not enough to just say "I love God". If you love God, then you are going to go after God and the things of God - **"whatever is TRUE...noble...right... pure... lovely...admirable...excellent or praiseworthy"** (Philippians 4:8)

4th STEP) PRACTICE HONESTY. James 1:22-23 Remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance."

Just do it. Practice it in all areas of your life. Take the inventory. Do the evaluation. Draw the line. **Starting now: don't tell a lie, don't spread a lie, don't live a lie. Starting right now: face the truth, be filled with the Spirit of Truth, break the habit of untruth, learn to love truth.**

We close with considering **the rewards and blessings of being honest.**

1) **God guards us. Proverbs 2:7 "(God) is their shield, protecting those who walk with integrity."** That word means to be a bodyguard whose sole purpose is to protect you.

2) **God directs us. Proverbs 11:5 "The godly are directed by their honesty."** When we're honest we see God's way. The direction becomes very clear. That's a reward.

3) **God sustains us. Proverbs 12:19 "Truth stands the test of time but lies are soon exposed."** Honesty will outlast dishonesty. That is a blessing and a promise.

Honesty is not only the best policy...it is God's policy. Honesty is living in the light. Honesty will set you free...free from deceit, free from injuring others through lying, free from conscience, free to truly live through the One who is **"...the way, the truth, and the life"**.