

Honesty

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There are a number of sayings or proverbs concerning honesty. Of course we've all heard, "Honesty is the best policy." But then there is also, "Honesty is the best policy but Insanity is a better defense." Years ago there was a song called, "Honesty" by Billy Joel. One part of the song was, "Honesty is hardly ever heard."

Many, if asked, would state that they believe we should be honest at all times but judging by our actions, do we truly believe it? In today's world we often joke about those that we believe to be dishonest: Politicians, lawyers, automobile salesmen, fishermen (the one that got away) and yes even preachers. We many times excuse the lack of honesty or perhaps rationalize it. However we need to realize as Christians, we are called to a higher standard.

Today I hope to examine the Bible teaching concerning honesty. First let's see what the word means: implies a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way.

As we look first in the Old Testament, we see the initial lie being told by Satan. Genesis 3:4 "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:" Satan changed but one word. He was dishonest! Until this lie, we have no knowledge of anything less than the truth, no knowledge of anyone being less than honest. But since that time we realize that honesty is not necessarily the norm anymore. Just look at Adam. He immediately places the blame of sin on Eve even though from the scriptures it shows that he was there with her when she took the fruit, Genesis 3:6. In Genesis 3:12 "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Then of course we have the dishonesty of Cain in Genesis 4:9.

In Leviticus 6:1ff...we see that we sin against the Lord when we lie. Then in Leviticus 19:11 "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another." We see stealing, dealing falsely and lying all tied together. They are all wrong and should not be something that we are involved in. Indeed the New Testament also tells us not to lie but that lying should not be a part of the Christians life. Colossians 3:8 "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

John 8:44 tells us who our Father is if we lie. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

We need to understand that if we speak the truth in order to deceive, it too is a lie. Abraham was guilty of such. Genesis 12:10 "And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. 11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee." Was Sarai his sister? Yes she was but she was also his wife. Did he tell the truth? Only partially. In so doing not only did Abraham sin but his lie caused great plagues on Pharaoh and his house. Yes our lies can quite often not only hurt us but others as well. Now did Abraham learn from this? Probably not as we see in Genesis 20:1-7 that Abraham repeats the same sin and this time almost causes a king to die. Our sinning, our lying can cause others to sin and such should not be charged against a Christian. In Genesis 26:6-11 we see like Father like son as Isaac commits a similar lie concerning Rebekah. Yes the sin of lying can be contagious.

Honesty is something that needs to be practiced daily. It shouldn't be one of those things that happens only when we are around other Christians. We cannot say something while among Christians and then change our tune when around those who are not. Romans 12:17 "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men." All should know that we are honest to perhaps a fault. 2Corinthians 8:21 "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." We have no choice if we are going to follow God but to be honest.

We as Christians need to be honest to those we work for. In other words give 8 hours work for 8 hours pay. So many times we forget about the preacher. Yes we sometimes say they only work maybe 4 or 5 hours a week. But I would suggest you walk in their shoes. However the rise of the internet has taken many preachers away from their work. Many will spend hours on end in chat groups. They'll spend hours discussing the Bible with other members throughout the world but not lift a finger to call on a member of the congregation they work with, set up a study, etc. Brethren we need to spend time in study but we need to put that study to work. We indeed need to lift up the hands of those who truly work honestly amongst us, but we also need to correct those who walk dishonestly.

We need to be honest when we teach and preach. We need to be honest with those we teach concerning their salvation. To do otherwise is to fall short. Yet those who seek God also need to be honest. In Luke 8, the parable of the sower is told. Then in verse 15 we are told, "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Those who seek the truth must indeed have an honest and good heart.

God's truth has been revealed in His Word and given by the Holy Spirit, John 16:13. We need to be honest in presenting the whole truth because it is the Word of God that will judge us, John 12:48.

God's Word is pure and we need to make certain that we do not make a law or command where God has not, Proverbs 30:5,6. We should not shirk our duties as Christians by letting the world keep us from serving as we should.

Honesty is not something we should not have but rather it is a requirement. If we are not honest, we will end up lost. Revelation 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

And as we close the study we turn to Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.