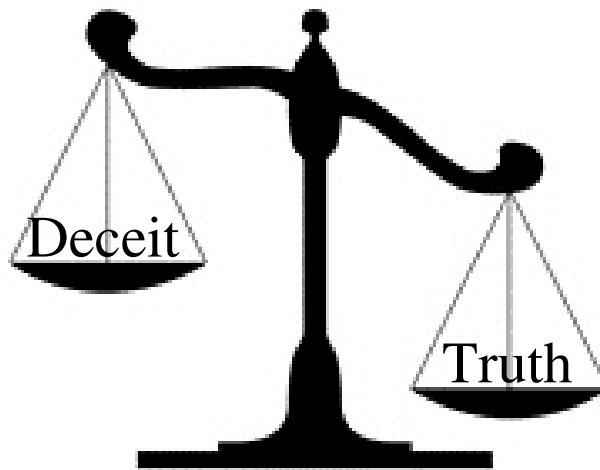


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Honesty, A Dying Virtue



*.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith
that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV*

Honesty, A Dying Virtue

Colossians 3:9 (NIV), *“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.”*

Matthew 5:37 (NIV), *“Simply let your yes be your yes and your no, no; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*

Proverbs 6:16-17 (NIV), *“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, **a lying tongue**, hands that shed innocent blood,”*

In **Philippians 2:15**, the apostle Paul refers to his generation as a *“crooked and depraved generation.”* The question that comes to mind is this: “Is our generation any better when it comes to honesty and integrity?” Probably not, in fact our generation may be worse than Paul’s.

Consider the book, *“When America Told the Truth.”* This book claims that 30% of those consulted admitted that they would **“cheat on their taxes – to a point.”** In addition, 64% of those consulted agreed with the statement **“I will lie when it suits me, so long as it doesn’t cause any real damage.”** USA Today cited a report that said 58.4% of Americans have called in sick to get a day off from work when they were not sick at all. Have you ever called in sick when you were not sick so you can have a day off?

Lying for some comes natural; they will spit out a lie just as fast and as easy as the truth. Although lying is sin and God deals with the liar, I must admit, I do get a chuckle when a liar is caught in a bold faced lie and has no way out. I know this is not right but I’m being honest.

Consider for example, the story of the woman coming home from work that stops by the local butcher shop to buy a chicken for dinner. She goes to the counter and asks the butcher for a chicken. The butcher reached into a barrel and grabbed the last chicken he had and put it on the scale that was behind the counter. He then told the woman the chicken’s weight. She thought about the weight for a moment and said to the butcher, “I really need a bit more chicken than that. Do you have any larger ones?” Without a word, the butcher put the chicken back into the barrel, groped around in the barrel a bit to give the lady the impression he was looking for another chicken. Unbeknownst to this woman, he pulled out the same chicken and put it on the scale. In his attempt to deceive the woman, the butcher told the woman that the same chicken now weighed a pound more. The woman thought for a moment and said, “Ok, I’ll take them both.” Now caught lying, how could the butcher get out of this one without losing the trust and

respect from this woman? Unfortunately, the butcher in this story is no different than most people we work with, go fishing with, sit next to in the beauty salon or share a pew with in church every week. They can be just plain dishonest under the right set of circumstances. The sad truth is that the average person tells about 13 lies a week, Christians included. Most pastors would agree with me when I say that most of the lies by their parishioners are told by those making excuses for not coming to church on Sunday. It's strange how Sunday's seem to be the sickest day of the week for some Christians, and due to their sickness they can't make it to church. Strangely, they seem to get well overnight and make it to work or school on Monday morning and even to the gym in the evening. Ain't God good (smile)! To solidify my point, I ask my Christian readers to consider the following:

1. How many times have you made excuses not to come to church on Sunday or a weeknight service that was not completely true?
2. How many times has the offering plate been passed to collect money for a special purpose and you said you didn't have it when you did and just didn't want to give it?
3. How many times have you told someone their dress or suit looks good when you thought it was hideous?
4. How many times have you said a new hair do looked good on someone when you were asking yourself, what were they thinking?
5. How many times have you told a preacher you enjoyed the sermon when you didn't?

This list could go on, but I think I've made my point; we all need to improve in the honesty department.

For many, the definition of lying is unclear, so without hesitation they continue to lie without realizing they are in fact lying. A lie, as defined by Webster's is:

1. *"To make an untrue statement with intent to deceive"*
2. *"To make a statement that one knows is false, especially with the intent to deceive"*
3. *"To make a false statement in order to evade the truth"*

There are two (2) things that usually cause us to lie, they are: **1) fear** and **2) pride**. When we lie out of fear it is because we are afraid of the consequences associated with telling the truth.

When we lie out of pride, we do so because we are concerned about what folks will think of us when they hear the truth about what we did, said, etc.

However, for the Christian, honesty is not the best policy as some say, it is to be our only policy. Christians with a reputation for exaggerating or lying usually can't get anyone to believe them on their word alone. We should always be totally honest so that others will accept our simple **"yes"** or **"no" without** question. When we avoid telling lies, half-truths and omissions of truth, we become known as a trustworthy person that accurately represents Christ. It's a sad state of affairs when what comes out of the mouth of a Christian has to be second guessed or checked to see if it's true. The Christian's word should be like that of the seven year old first baseman I read about. In this story, a seven year old first baseman fielded a ground ball and tried his best to tag the runner going from first to second base but with no success. However, the umpire saw things differently and called the runner out. Troubled by the umpire's inaccurate call, this seven year old first baseman immediately ran over to the umpire and said, ***"Hey umpire, I didn't tag the runner, you're making a mistake."*** The umpire impressed with this kid's honesty, gladly reversed his decision and sent the runner on to second base.

Two weeks later, this same umpire was in another game with this same seven year old first baseman. This time the first baseman was playing shortstop when a runner came into third base and he tagged him out. The umpire again saw things differently and ruled that the shortstop (the same seven year old first baseman) had missed the tag and called the runner safe. The shortstop looked at the umpire and, without saying a word, tossed the ball to the catcher and returned to his position.

The umpire sensed that there was something wrong and asked the shortstop (the same seven year old first baseman) if he had tagged the runner out, he said, **"Yes."** The umpire, without hesitation, reversed his decision and called the runner out. Needless to say, the opposing coaches protested until the umpire explained what happened two weeks earlier. The umpire said to them, ***"If the shortstop can be as honest as he was two weeks ago when lying would have worked in his favor, I can certainly take his word on this one."*** Can people take your word?

In the opening scriptures, we are told three (3) things:

Firstly, we are told ***"Do not lie to each other..."*** (Colossians 3:9), which means whatever we say to each other must always be the truth. There is no such thing as telling a ***"little lie"*** or a ***"white lie,"*** a lie is a lie!! There are at least two (2) benefits to telling each other the truth:

1. It pleases God.
2. It helps us avoid unnecessary damage to our lives.

Consider the brother or sister in Christ about to marry a person that you know is no good. Do we, for the sake of keeping in good standing with them refuse to tell them what we know about their potential spouse when they ask us? Certainly not (notice I said when they ask us). Lying here could cause untold damage to our brother or sister in Christ.

Secondly, we are told to ***“Let your yes be yes and your no, no...”*** (Matthew 5:37), which means the Christian need not swear or take oaths. Our “yes” should be enough for anyone to rest assured in our “yes” alone, and that we meant what we said “yes” to. The same should hold true for our “no.” There should never be any doubts or second thoughts when we say “yes” or “no” (See Proverbs 22:1). How good is your “yes” or “no” with those around you?

Thirdly, we are told the Lord ***“hates a lying tongue”*** which simply put, means God does not like lying. One of the worst possible things a Christian can be called is a liar. Lying dishonors the Lord who bought us with His own blood, Jesus Christ.

Finally, John’s Gospel makes it crystal clear where all lies find their origin. **John 8:44** (NIV) says, *“You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, **for he is a liar and the father of lies.**”*

So the next time we open our mouths to say “yes” or “no,” we “will” or we “won’t,” we “like” or “dislike,” we “know” or “don’t know,” remember, honesty is the Christian’s only policy. Not only that, but all lies come from the devil, no matter how big or how small we consider them to be. Always remember that we represent our Lord and Master in our words and actions. When the world sees us, they should see Christ-likeness in and through us.

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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