

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide.

LIAR, BEWARE!

(Narrative from the account recorded in Acts 5:1-11)

Soon after the day of Pentecost, many of the newly converted Christians sold their houses and lands. They brought the funds to the apostles and “distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:35). For a short while, these saints in Jerusalem shared all things in common as they daily fellowshiped and continued in the apostles’ doctrine. This practice was not ongoing in Jerusalem for long nor was it observed by Christians in other locations. It was not incumbent upon the Christians at Jerusalem to sell all of their possessions, but it was rather a voluntary act of communion and fellowship.

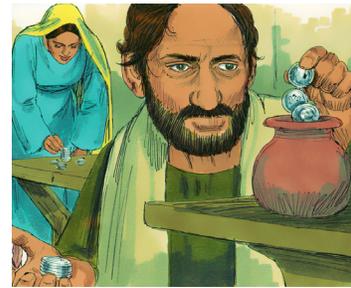
Imagine a group of Christians, happy in their new faith, bringing money to the apostles from the sale of their earthly goods. They were focused on heavenly things and were literally “selling out” in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ. During this special time of worship, a husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira also sold their land. Unlike others, who with joy had sold their property and given all of it to the church, Ananias and Sapphira discussed it and decided to keep some of the money back for themselves. It was their money, and they were under no obligation to give any of it; however, they agreed to act as if they were giving all of the money when they made the donation.

Perhaps Ananias entered the dwelling where the saints were meeting with a satisfied smile on his face as he began to tell others about how he had sold his property and was donating all the funds to the church. With pride and a pretense of humility, he gave the money to the apostles. The apostle Peter, observing what was happening, asked him, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? When you owned the land, was it not your own? After you sold it, was it not still in your power to do with the funds as you wanted? Why then did you try to deceive us? You have not only lied to men, but you have lied to God.”

Without warning, Ananias fell over dead. The day did not end as Ananias had expected; his eternity had begun, and his heart was in a state of sin and hypocrisy. Ananias did not have to give anything to the church. He could have even given twenty percent and kept the rest. His sin was that he lied. He told an untruth in trying to deceive others into thinking he was giving a hundred percent. Yet, the greater sin, as expounded by Peter, was that Ananias had lied in his heart to God. In the presence of God and man, his sin of lying and deceit was revealed and in judgment, God sentenced Ananias to death.

Great fear came upon everyone that observed or heard about what happened. The awful judgment of God against the sin of deceitfulness

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“Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? ...You have not only lied to men, but you have lied to God.”

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
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Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
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Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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and hypocrisy was manifested to all. As the crowd was moved with awe and self-examination, young men wrapped the body of Ananias and took him out to bury him that same day, according to ancient Jewish custom.

Three hours later, Sapphira, not knowing what had occurred, came into



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would remain standing?

the meeting place. Peter approached her and asked, "Tell me, did you sell the land for so much?" Sapphira answered affirmatively. Peter replied, "Why is it that you have agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? The feet of them which have buried your husband are at the door and will carry you out also."

Straightway, Sapphira fell down and died. The same young men came in and took her body to bury her by her husband. The judgment of God was the same for Sapphira as it was for her husband. She was complicit in the sin to deceive, and the judgment of God was no less.

The scripture reiterates that fear spread among the people because of this event. "Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." May the same fear of God come upon all people within and without the church. Surely, people began to examine their lives and were fearful of speaking, acting, or living deceitfully. While emotions run high at the moment of such an occurrence, they usually do not last for long, and people fall back into their normal patterns of behavior.

If the judgment of God were to fall on all liars and hypocrites in congregations today, who would remain standing? Many professing Christians are living deceitfully and are not honest with God, themselves, or others. It is true that Ananias and Sapphira may have made a great sacrifice, but their sacrifice did not outweigh their dishonesty. Right doctrine and good works will not excuse or justify a lying tongue.

The judgment of God will eventually come; eternal death awaits those who have lied and not repented of their sins. Will you be left standing? Liar, beware! ■

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Editorial



Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. —Hebrews 13:18

The prayer request of the apostle Paul was that they would have a clear conscience and in everything to live honestly. May the Lord impress upon all people who have a desire to serve Him the importance of practical, daily honesty. We have been called to live a life of holiness without deceit.

The subject this quarter is on the topic of honesty. While basic, it is needful. It is the unfortunate reality that there are too many people who call themselves Christians that cheat, steal, lie, and deceive. Dishonesty is prevalent in the news, in the political system, in sports, in business, etc., and it is this corruption that has torn the social fabric of many societies. While it is expected in a sinful world, it should never be among God's people. Honesty in "all things" is fundamental to being a follower of Jesus Christ.

It is amazing how people can try to justify or make allowance for deceit and dishonesty when it serves their purpose—from words spoken to children, to business dealings, to conversations in marriage, to children with their parents, to people filling out their taxes. One lie is all it takes to miss Heaven. It does not take habitual lying, it takes one lie. It is much better to acknowledge a fault, shortcoming, or lack of wisdom, than to tell a lie in order to escape responsibility. Indeed, most of us have made a commitment and forgotten about it. While that is not a lie, as it was unintentional, we need to be careful with our words. When a child of God tells you they will do something at a specific time, you should expect it to be so. Too many Christians are getting casual and irresponsible with their words, and it is not a good testimony to the world.

It is a blessing to live a life of honesty. While we make mistakes, fall short of human perfection, and forget things sometimes, there is great peace in living an honest life. May each reader be challenged to continue to live a life of honesty and integrity.

Michael W. Smith

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TALE OF A COW SHED

I knew a man who was working to take care of poor orphans. The children slept in the dirt and needed many of the basic things of life. My heart was to help these children, but wisdom dictated that I first establish that the man was trustworthy with a little. One day, I was able to get funds to buy the man a milk cow so the children would have milk to drink. The cow needed a shed for protection from inclement weather and from the hot sun. So, per the man's request, I left plenty of money for a good cow

shed to be built. When I returned for a visit, I looked for the cow shed. It was not there.

"Why don't you assist me?" is a question asked by many people. Answer: "Where is the cow shed?"

As Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."



Bible Study Guide

Subject: Honesty

Scripture Reading: *Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.* —Proverbs 12:22

Definition: Honest is defined as, “Free of deceit; truthful and sincere...morally correct or virtuous” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Honesty is the quality of being honest. “A refraining from lying, cheating, or stealing” (*Collins English Dictionary*).

Summary: God’s very nature is holy and true; He hates dishonesty of any kind. Christians are to be honest in every aspect of life—in word and in deed. Dishonesty is a moral violation and will result in eternal damnation.

I. A God of Truth

- A. Deuteronomy 32:4 A God of truth.
- B. Hebrews 6:18 Impossible for God to lie.
- C. Titus 1:2 God cannot lie.

II. Origin of Dishonesty

- A. John 8:44 Devil is the father of lies.
- B. Jeremiah 9:5-6 People teach their tongue to lie.

III. God Hates Dishonesty

- A. Proverbs 6:16-17 The Lord hates a lying tongue.
- B. Psalm 101:7 Will not dwell in God’s house.
- C. Proverbs 21:3 Justice is better than sacrifice.

IV. Command to Lie Not

- A. Leviticus 19:11-13 Do not steal, lie, or defraud.
- B. Colossians 3:9 Lie not.

V. A False Witness

- A. Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness.
- B. Proverbs 12:17 Speaking truth is righteousness.

VI. Speak the Truth

- A. Psalm 34:13 Lips should speak no guile.
- B. Ephesians 4:25 Put away lying, speak truth.

VII. Swear Not, Promise Not

- A. Matthew 5:37 Let your communication be, Yea.
- B. James 5:12 Swear not.

VIII. Honesty with God and Oneself

- A. Psalm 15:1-3 Speak the truth in his heart.
- B. 1 John 1:6 A false profession is a lie.
- C. Philippians 4:8-9 Think on true and honest things.

IX. Instruction in Honesty

- A. 2 Corinthians 8:21 Providing for honest things.
- B. 2 Corinthians 4:2 Renounce dishonesty/craftiness.
- C. Acts 24:16 Have a conscience void of offence.
- D. 1 Peter 2:21-22 Christ’s example—no guile.

X. Required in Leaders

- A. Exodus 18:21 Choose men of truth.
- B. Acts 6:3 Appoint men of honest report.

XI. Cheating/Business/Taxes

- A. Proverbs 11:1 A false balance is abomination.
- B. Jeremiah 22:13 A house built by unrighteousness.
- C. Ezekiel 22:13 Dishonest gain.
- D. Romans 13:7-8 Pay taxes. Owe no man.

XII. The Cost of Honesty

- A. Proverbs 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness.
- B. 1 Peter 3:17 Suffer for well doing.
- C. Psalm 15:4 Sweareth to his own hurt.

XIII. Benefits and Blessings

- A. John 8:32 Truth sets free.
- B. Proverbs 12:19 Established for ever.
- C. 1 Peter 3:10 See good days.
- D. Proverbs 16:13 The delight of kings.
- E. Psalm 145:18 The Lord is nigh.

XIV. Consequences of Dishonesty

- A. Luke 12:2 All shall be revealed.
- B. Proverbs 19:5 He that speaketh lies shall not escape.
- C. Revelation 21:8 All liars shall have their part in the lake of fire.

Conclusion

Let us walk honestly, as in the day. —Romans 13:13

Law of Honesty

Society is working hard to redefine right and wrong and to negate any standard of absolute morality as mandated by the creator of the universe. Regardless of prevalent unrighteousness and the pseudo-intellectual approach to morality, God has a moral law by which the world will be judged.



“Lying—intentionally saying something that is not true with the intent to deceive—is the fruit of sin.”

A God of Truth

Sin was not only defined and exposed through the Mosaic Law but was written in the heart of mankind at creation, so that the conscience would bear witness to the natural law of God. Honesty and truthfulness are fundamental ingredients to the moral framework designed by God. Dishonesty of any kind (lying, cheating, stealing) is completely contrary to the plan and requirements of God for Christian living.

God is holy, pure, honest, and “a God of truth and without iniquity” (Deuteronomy 32:4). It is “impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18). Dishonesty is contrary to the very essence of His nature, for He is perfect and the epitome of truth.

Origin of Dishonesty

Lying and cheating are common practices. According to Christ, Satan is the father of this moral corruption and degradation. “Ye are of your father the devil....there is no truth in him.... for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). All lying and dishonesty is of the devil. Jeremiah 9:5-6 speaks of those who turned away from God, deceived their neighbors, and “taught their tongue to speak lies.” It is the impure heart and the power of the flesh under the influence of Satan that causes one to tell an untruth.

Commands Against Lying

A lying tongue is one of the six things that God hates as stated in Proverbs 6:16. There is no justification for a Christian to tell a lie, no matter how insignificant. “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight” (Psalm 101:7). No degree of theological understanding, doctrinal purity, or good works will excuse dishonesty, for “to do justice...is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice” (Proverbs 21:3).

Old Testament commands are clear: “Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.... Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour” (Leviticus 19:11-13). Similarly, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9). Lying—intentionally saying something that is not true with the intent to deceive—is the fruit of sin. The child of God is to no longer walk or speak with a deceitful heart or tongue.

Speak the Truth

One of the Ten Commandments is, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20:16). Telling things about someone that are not true is breaking a basic command of God. It is a moral violation. The actions and words of a Christian are to be truthful and honest. “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile” (Psalm 34:13). Paul told the Ephesians to put away lying and to speak truth (Ephesians 4:25).

Swear Not, Promise Not

Many people use the expressions, “I swear that...” or “I promise that...” If Christians do not swear or promise, does that mean that they are not sincere or that what they state may not be truthful? The Scripture instructs the saints to “swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth...but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay” (James 5:12). Jesus taught the people to “let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37). Restated, a Christian need not and should not swear or promise something. If a Christian says something, it should be true, honest, and without deceit. Making a promise minimizes the truthfulness of those things which are said but not promised.

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It is incumbent upon a Christian to deal honestly with everyone, regardless of age or status. "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:21). Paul spoke of the saints in 2 Corinthians 4:2 as having "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness." It is not just actions and words but the very intent and purpose that should be truthful. Christ left an example that we are to follow. There was no guile or deceit found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:21-22). He was honest, truthful, and sincere. Every Christian should exercise themselves as did Paul, to have a "conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

Honest Before God and Oneself

It is also of utmost importance to be honest with God and with oneself. David asked a question of God, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" One of the answers: He that "speaketh the truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:1-3). Some people lie to themselves so much they start believing their own lies and live in an alternate reality. It is not only unhealthy but also wrong. A Christian should meditate and think upon those things that are true, honest, and of good report (Philippians 4:8-9). Furthermore, 1 John 1:6 states, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." God hates hypocrisy of any kind, and everyone should be intellectually and spiritually honest with themselves. Honesty with oneself and with God is the only way to grow spiritually and to be prepared for the judgment.

Honesty in Leaders

As honesty is a requirement for a Christian, it is an absolute qualification for those who are leaders in the church. The leaders chosen of Israel were to be "men of truth" (Exodus 18:21), and the deacons that were chosen in Acts 6:3 were to be "men of honest report."

Cheating/Business/Taxes

Christians are to be honest in all things; this includes at home, school, work, in business dealings, with governmental requirements, etc. Cheating is where stealing and lying merge. Jeremiah spoke about the one who built his house by unrighteousness and did not pay the

laborers for their help (Jeremiah 22:13). "A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight" (Proverbs 11:1). True Christians will pay their debts, do their own work, be honest in every business dealing, and will never intentionally cheat anyone by much or little. In living an honest life, a saint will report and pay all taxes to the government that are due (Romans 13:7-8). When Christians say something, it should be regarded as true and right, and their actions should follow it up. Anything intentionally less than honesty is sin.

Costs of Honesty

There will be occasions that will cost time and money to maintain honesty, but it is pleasing to God. Psalm 15:4 speaks of the one that "swaereth to his own hurt and changeth not." When you say you will do something, even if it hurts, follow through. The world changes and backtracks, but the child of God walks with integrity. It is better to have a little with righteousness (Proverbs 16:8) and have the blessings of God.

Rewards of Honesty

Honesty and truthfulness are liberating for "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Lies come and go but truth is established (Proverbs 12:19), and the honest one never needs to fear getting caught in a lie. Those who speak the truth are respected and honored (Proverbs 16:13). Good days come to those who speak without falsehood and deceit (1 Peter 3:10). Most importantly, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that...call upon him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).

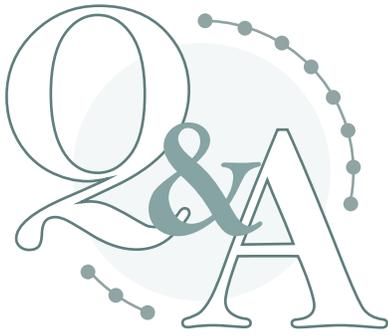
Consequences of Dishonesty

Nothing that happens or is said in this life will remain hidden, even if people are deceived for a while. All things will be revealed (Luke 12:2), and no false witness or liar shall escape the judgment of God (Proverbs 19:5). Honesty is not an option for a child of God, it is an absolute requirement. Those who tell lies will have the same punishment as the unbelievers and the murderers. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8).

Let us live, think, speak, and act with honesty as commanded by the Word of God, without any type of lying, deceitfulness, or dishonesty. ■



"Honesty with oneself and with God is the only way to grow spiritually and to be prepared for the judgment."



“The Bible does not espouse a doctrine of moral relativism. God’s truth is absolute, and a lie is indicative of a flawed character and nature.”

Is it ever permissible to tell a lie for a greater good?

From a secular standpoint, there are probably scenarios that could be discussed in which it would seem reasonable to tell a lie. However, the Bible is clear. 1 Peter 3:10 teaches without ambiguity that our lips should speak no guile. This means that whatever we say should be truthful, and we are to avoid all slander, falsehood, lying, and deceitfulness. This command was not contingent upon circumstance.

The Bible does not espouse a doctrine of moral relativism. God’s truth is absolute, and a lie is indicative of a flawed character and nature. My daughter asked me if I could lie if I were smuggling Bibles into a country that forbade them. I could break man’s law to obey God’s law in giving out Bibles. I would not volunteer what I was doing; however, if directly confronted with the question by authorities, in no way could I deny the truth, even at the expense of imprisonment.

Lying and cheating is a violation of all that is good and right. For the moment, it may seem that lying would serve a greater good, but long term it would bring destruction. Part of the beauty of salvation in a life is the purity it brings—the sameness throughout. Put a lie in the mix, and you have something that is defiled and no longer pure.

What advice do you have for parents about honesty?

First, parents should always be honest with their children. While a parent is not wise to disclose everything a child might want to know, it does even more damage to lie. Some parents make commitments to their children and then do not follow through. This teaches a child that it is all right to say something for the moment and not have an obligation to do it. If a parent tells a child that they will go somewhere or do something, they need to be

sure they keep the commitment. Children learn more by observation and experience than by what we tell them verbally.

Second, parents need to teach their children the value of honesty at a young age. Around two to three years of age, children develop the capacity to lie, often by denying misbehavior. Around age four, children typically know the difference between truth and lying and often seek to cover up wrongdoing. Lying can progress as a child ages if left unchecked. One study said that 96 percent of young children lie at some point. Many of them lie multiple times a day.

It is important that parents teach honesty and require it when there is knowledge of dishonesty from their child. When a young child lies, it is not cute. They need discipline and their behavior should be corrected immediately with both negative and positive consequences so that they learn the value and importance of honesty.

Someone asked me a question and I immediately told them something that was not true. Have I sinned?

True dishonesty is when something is intentionally said for the purpose of deceiving someone. If you did not have time to process, and the first thing that came out of your mouth was something to ‘protect yourself’ and later you realized it, that is not sin. However, it is important that you go back to the person and correct what you said, as embarrassing as it might seem. There are lessons to be learned and caution exercised when you find yourself having to go back and make corrections like that. When someone speaks to deceive with forethought, they will not be so ready to fix it, because the heart is deceitful. In that case, there is an additional need of repentance, or they cannot be saved.



DID YOU KNOW?

76% of people believe lying is acceptable in some cases.
 24.1% of men have lied on their Facebook profile vs. 16.6% of women.
 21.7% of men have lied on a resume vs. 16.3% of women.
 51.7% of women have lied about their weight vs. 28% of men.
 3% (of 1,254 Americans polled) said they lie often.
 66% said they are seldom or never dishonest.
 Females are more likely to lie to their parents and males are more likely to lie to their friends.

(2014 American survey by CreditDonkey.com)



A Word
in Season

THE EMPTY POT

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(Summary of an ancient Chinese tale. Originally recorded by Demi.)

A story is told in China of a young boy named Ping. He loved flowers and whatever he grew would always blossom into a beautiful flower. In the kingdom where Ping lived, the emperor had no son, and he needed a successor. The emperor, who also loved gardening, distributed flower seeds to boys throughout the kingdom. Whoever grew the most beautiful flower from his seeds would become the next emperor. Ping carefully planted the seed from the emperor in a pot with rich soil. He watered and cared for the seed, but nothing happened.



Other boys planted their seeds and had blooming flowers in their pots. They laughed and taunted Ping who still had just an empty pot. Ping changed the soil and fertilized it with dried fish, but to no avail. Finally, the day arrived when the plants were to be taken to the emperor. Amidst the excitement, Ping was despondent, for he still had an empty pot. His father reminded him that he had done his best and he needed to present it to the emperor.

The children of the kingdom arrived at the palace with all their beautiful flowers. The emperor examined the boys' plants with a scowl on his face. He frowned even more deeply when he saw Ping's empty pot. "You brought me an empty pot!" he exclaimed. Ping hung his head and said, "I'm sorry, Emperor. I tried to grow the seed you gave me, but nothing came up."

The emperor stroked his chin and smiled. Then he said to the people, "May I introduce you to the new emperor. You see, the seeds were cooked so they would not grow. I'm not sure how the rest of you grew plants, but they didn't grow from my seeds. He has been honest and noble."

The moral is clear. When we are honest, we will sometimes stand alone amidst pressure from those around us. It may seem that honesty will cause problems, and there may appear to be a better route. However, when the pot is empty, maintain your integrity, for our heavenly Father will reward you in due time. ■

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD