

## Being Honest in a Dishonest World

Acts 5:1-11

We have been doing a series called *Life's on Values*. We are taking a look at ten values that we might characterize our life after and embrace that would give some real value to our lives. Tonight the value we are talking about is *Being Honest in a Dishonest World*.

The Bible has a lot of significant instruction on honesty, examples of men and women that were honest, examples of men and were not honest and things that happened to those that were and those that were not. The most radical example is found in Acts 5 of Ananias and Sapphira. They were struck down and died.

The irony of honesty is that all of us make a big deal about it, but most people put little value on it. When parents are asked to describe the number one quality they want in their children, it is *honesty*.

A recent survey said 91% of all Americans lie regularly. How do you trust a survey like that if everybody's lying or even trusting the 9% that said they didn't?

One of the things I have been thinking about the last couple of weeks, knowing I was going to speak on this, is realizing how many opportunities there are in our day to be dishonest. Every conversation, every phone call, and every interaction - we have dozens and dozens of opportunities to be dishonest. Sociologists tell us that we either hear or see 300 lies every day. (Actually 200 - I just wanted to show you how easy it was to lie!)

Dishonesty has many different faces in our life but it has one common result. Dishonesty strangles life out of us. I want to take a

look at the problem of dishonesty and then focus on some practical steps that we can take to be men and women that move toward an honest life.

**Dishonesty is promoted in our culture.** Our culture endorses untruth, embraces untruth and practices untruth consistently. The residue of dishonesty is flying around everywhere. **We have come to expect people to be dishonest.** Isn't that sad? We expect a degree of untruthfulness in our political system. We expect that. We expect a degree of untruthfulness in advertising. We expect a degree of untruthfulness in business. We expect a degree of dishonesty or untruthfulness from students. **From the White House to the schoolhouse, truth is in trouble.** It is not reserved for any age category. It affects all of us.

**Recently the T.V. program "60 Minutes" did an entire hour titled "Fake News."** People are making millions of dollars by posting "Fake News" on the Internet.

**Dishonesty is everywhere!** One of the main reasons it runs so fast through our culture is because dishonesty is present in our nature. It is deeper than just our *culture*; it's a vital part of the pull of our "flesh." There is something about you and I that is so *warped and flawed* that we are drawn to untruth. The Bible also tells us in John 8:44 that Satan is the father of falsehood, "He (Satan) has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character for he is a liar and the father of lies." **The Bible does not candy coat it.** Basically it is saying, God is on one side and Satan is on the other and they are opposed to one another and you and I have a choice, do we follow the *culture* or do we follow the *Creator*?

**Why are there so many warnings in the Bible about dishonesty?**  
Let's take a look:

1. **We are skeptical.** Why? Because we have been lied to over and over. When we have a conversation with somebody, in the back of

our mind, we are wondering whether they are telling the truth or not.

**2. Trust has broken down.** We are a culture of people, a nation where we do not trust anybody any more because of over and over dishonesty.

**3. Dishonesty has made us insecure people.** Why do little kids say, "Cross your heart and hope to die, stick a needle in your eye." They are saying, "When you tell me something I want to know, are you really honest because I want to get my arms around honesty." Honesty is something children long for. The same is true in Adults!

Listen to the advice given in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth and do not sell it." **Whatever the cost, it is worth it.** Therefore, I want to give you some steps to lead toward truth.

**First, take an honest inventory of your truthfulness.** This is going to be tough for some because deception has been such a part of your life you are not even going to realize that you were deceitful until you do a little bit of work.

**I had a mole on my forehead for years.** I had it taken off a few years ago. It was with me for the greater part of my life. **I saw it every single day and never thought much about it, until we went to Florida and our daughter said something about it.** I went to the Doctor and it was cancer. I had never thought about it.

We have to ask ourselves three questions: **Where am I being dishonest?** **How am I being dishonest?** **Why am I being dishonest?** These are hard questions.

**The bottom line is this: You and I choose to be dishonest.** We choose dishonesty. I encourage you at the end of each night to say,

"How honest was I today?" That may be tough but it is far better than the disease of lying.

**2. Make an honest evaluation of your gains and losses.** If I am going to be really honest with you, I have 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, and a better reputation. **There are some gains.**

The Bible is very clear that those gains will be *temporary*, as seen in Proverbs 13:21 reads like this in the Hebrew, "Trouble chases sinners, while blessings chase the righteous!"

We may gain some things but what do we lose?

**1) We lose character because honesty develops character.** There is a difference between *character* and *reputation*. It is very important that we understand that difference. **Reputation is what you think about me or what I think about you.** **Character** is what I really am when no one is looking.

**I believe character is the one thing we can take with us to eternity.** You know what else we can do with it? We can pass it on to our kids, as seen in Proverbs 20:7 puts it this way, "Good people who live honest lives will be a blessing to their children." **Home is where character is tough.** The greatest test of character is what your kids have to say about you behind your back! That is the real test of character. **At home.** With people who know you. We lose that when we are dishonest.

**2) We lose spiritual maturity because honesty develops spiritual maturity.** Ephesians 4:15 reads like this in the Greek, "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 am dishonest I am not facing the sin that is keeping me from growing. When I am honest I

deal with the sin that is keeping me from growing. When I am honest it propels me toward spiritual maturity.

**3) I lose security when I am dishonest because honesty develops security.** Security is when I begin to get comfortable with the truth. I don't have to look over my shoulder; I am secure with who I am. **I provide security in my relationships.** My wife, my children, my family, and everyone around can trust me. Proverbs 11:6 reads like this in the Hebrew, "Doing right brings freedom to honest people, but those who are not trustworthy will be caught by their own desires." After you do this evaluation of your gains and losses you need to ask, "What is the cost?"

**3. Love God and pursue a relationship with Him.** 1 Chronicles says, "I know my God that you examine our heart and rejoice when you find integrity there." What does this have to do with honesty? The more intimate I am with God, the more compelled I am to be honest, as seen in Psalm 51 & 140 put it this way, "But you desire honesty from the heart... honest people will live in his presence." When I live in the presence of God, I am compelled to be honest.

**4. Practice honesty.** Just do it. James 1 says, "Remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you do not obey you are only fooling yourself." The King James says, "You are deceiving yourself" The Greek says, "You're lying to yourself." Make it a habit of telling the truth.

**I want to end on a positive.** The Bible makes this promise; "Trouble chases sinners, while blessings chase the righteous." God really does want to bless our lives in very way!