

Truth . . . or Consequences

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It was the moment of decision for my three-year-old son. He had been misbehaving and the matter had been brought to my attention by one of his older sisters. Sitting down, my eyes were at the same level as his. I asked him to tell me if he had done what was reported. Fully aware of his guilt, his eyes darted nervously off to one side and up slightly as he searched his imagination for the answer that would protect him from disciplinary correction. When his answer came, it was clearly not the truth. My young son, when given the opportunity to tell the truth, lied straight to my face.

No one taught my young son how to lie like that. No one ever said to him, “When you’re in trouble, deny that you did anything wrong or make up a different story.” This sinful reaction to the pressure of the moment came straight out of his natural self— out of his heart. Just as Jesus said,

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, *as well as deceit*, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. (Mark 7:21-22)

Paul said the natural man is “filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, *deceit*, malice” (Rom. 1:29). According to Jeremiah, “The heart is more *deceitful* than all else and is desperately sick” (Jer. 17:9). The point is, the human practice of deceiving others is not a learned behavior. It flows out of what we are by nature, and what we are by nature is evil.

God abhors all evil, but He is particularly vocal about lying and liars. There are few sins in the Bible that are spoken of more harshly than the sin of lying. The general tone of Scripture toward this sin is captured in Proverbs 12:22— “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.” And when the writer of Proverbs lists “six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to him,” two of the seven are “a lying tongue” and “a false witness who utters lies” (Prov. 6:16-19). Even more sobering is the fact that all liars will be excluded from heaven. “Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination *and lying*, shall ever come into [the heavenly city] (Rev. 21:27). In the next chapter we read,

Outside [the heavenly city] are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolater, *and everyone who loves and practices lying*. (Rev. 22:15)

Lying originated with Satan. Jesus said of him, “Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar by nature and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Satan’s lie to Eve brought about the downfall of the human race (cf. Gen. 3:1-5). With this, it is no wonder that God is opposed to lying and those who practice it.

The obvious and often-repeated message of the Bible is this: God loves truth and hates that which is untrue. Lying and liars will be excluded from His presence because deception and dishonesty are totally contrary to His character. “The works of His hands are truth and justice” (Ps. 111:7). He is the God “who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). Jesus even described Himself as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Examine yourself for a moment. Do you claim to be a child of God—one who has been born of God (John 1:13)? If you answered, “Yes,” then ask yourself another question: Are you an honest person? Are you honest with your spouse? Are you honest with your children? Are you honest with your employer? Are you honest when filing your taxes? Children, are you honest with your parents, your teachers, and your friends?

Honesty is not the only important characteristic of a true Christian. But honesty is essential. The person who practices deceit cannot claim to have an inheritance in God’s heavenly kingdom.

My hope for my son is not that he can dredge up enough will-power to become an honest person. My hope is that God will create in him a new heart—one that despises lying and loves truth, like God. There are many people suffering in hell who were honest citizens. Their error was that they trusted in their own goodness rather than in the atoning death and righteousness of Christ—like the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-12. My hope is that my son will recognize that the deceit that dwells in his heart is totally opposed to the character of God. My hope is that he will look to Jesus Christ with an attitude of humble repentance and trust, like the tax-collector who said, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” (Luke 18:13). This man, not the self-righteous Pharisee, went down to his house justified, and only in *this* way can my son (or you) be saved.

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