

## THE TRUTH ABOUT LIES Exodus 20:16

### FOCUS

I'm sure many of you have seen that movie – Liar, Liar. Fletcher Reed, played by Jim Carey, was a successful lawyer who had built his career on lying, and his whole life in fact was filled with lies. After Max's birthday wish comes true, Fletcher ran into all kinds of hilarious problems when he could only tell the truth. Imagine what it would be like if everyone always told the truth.

In a book entitled – *"The Day America Told the Truth"* the authors claim from survey evidence that 91% of Americans admit they lie routinely about matters they consider trivial and 36% lie about important things: 86% lie regularly to parents, 75% to friends, 73% to siblings, 69% to spouses, 81% lie about their feelings – *"I'm fine, really"*. (*F-Honesty, RBC clipping*)

Now of course those are American statistics. We all know that Canadians don't lie that much – honestly. A British survey though, was also done which was published in the Toronto Star a while back. It indicated that young people tell more lies than older. Only 3% of those under 24 said they never lied. Over-all the figure was 8.5%. 25% of people polled said they had lied at least once in the past 24 hours and 31% believed they had been lied to. (*F-Honesty, Star – "To Tell the Truth", Jan 7/95*).

It was no doubt because we tend to be people who lie a great deal that God included in the 10 Commandments a command about lying and honesty. The 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Exodus 20:16 declares – *"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour"*. (NIV)

Or as the Contemporary English Version puts it – *"Do not tell lies about others."*

The first application of this command had to do with the court of law and what we call perjury. But the intent of the command is much broader than just a court of law. The 9<sup>th</sup> commandment involves all lies in all forms. It encompasses – lying, deceit, dishonesty, falsehood, cheating, misrepresentation, exaggeration, slander and gossip. If we're honest we'd all have to say that we are guilty of breaking this 9<sup>th</sup> commandment.

This morning I want to consider 4 Truths about lying from the Word of God.

### 1/ LIES GRIEVE GOD

Take a look at Proverbs 6:16-19. These verses show how seriously God takes lies, even if we don't.

Proverbs 6:16-19 (NLT)

<sup>16</sup> *There are six things the LORD hates—  
no, seven things he detests:*

*<sup>17</sup> haughty eyes,  
a lying tongue,  
hands that kill the innocent,  
<sup>18</sup> a heart that plots evil,  
feet that race to do wrong,  
<sup>19</sup> a false witness who pours out lies,  
a person who sows discord in a family.*

Notice that 3 out of 7 of these sins relate to the tongue or our speech – “*a lying tongue*”, “*a false witness who pours out lies*”, and “*a (person) who sows discord*”

Notice – “*God hates these things*” and “*detests*” them. The word “*detests*” is one of the strongest words that could be used to express God’s displeasure.

Why does God hate lies so much? It is because God is a God of truth. David said of God the Father in Psalm 31:2,5 – “*You are my rock and my fortress ... O LORD, God of Truth*”; (NASB). Jesus said of Himself – “*I am the way, the Truth, and the life*”, John 14:6; the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers, is named the “*Spirit of Truth*” in John 14:17.

Lies have no place and part in God. Lies should have no place and part in the lives of God’s people. In fact Jesus stated that dishonesty, deceit, and lying are so detestable to Him because they find their root and source in the devil. Jesus said in John 8:44 to a group of Jews who had made a profession of faith, but who by their actions did not appear to be true believers – “*You belong to your Father, the devil ... 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.*”

This story appeared a few years ago in Sports Illustrated.

It was about a baseball game being played in Wellington, Florida. In it, a seven-year-old first baseman, Tanner Munsey, fielded a ground ball and tried to tag a runner going from first to second base.

The umpire, Laura Benson, called the runner out, but young Tanner immediately ran to her side and said, “*Ma'am, I didn't tag the runner.*” Umpire Benson reversed her call and sent the runner to second base. Tanner's coach gave him the game ball for his honesty.

Two weeks later, Laura Benson was again the umpire and Tanner was playing shortstop when a similar play occurred. This time Benson ruled that Tanner had missed the tag on a runner going to third base, and she called the runner safe. Tanner looked at Benson and, without saying a word, tossed the ball to the catcher and returned to his position. Benson sensed something was wrong. “*Did you tag the runner?*” she asked Tanner.

His reply: “*Yes.*”

Benson then called the runner out. The opposing coaches protested until she explained what had happened two weeks earlier. “*If a kid is that honest,*” she said, “*I have to give it to him.*”

## **2/ LIES DISCREDIT US**

The reason we can trust God is because God is a God of truth. We can take Him at His word. Have you ever known someone you could never trust because you never knew whether what they said was true or false? Lies discredit us. They ruin our reputation.

The story is told of four high school boys who decided it was just too nice a day to go to class one morning. After lunch though, they showed up at school and reported to the teacher that their car had a flat tire. Much to their relief, she smiled and said, *"Well, you missed a quiz this morning, so take your seats and get out a pencil and paper."* Still smiling, she waited as they settled down and got ready for her questions.

*"First question", she said, "--which tire was flat?"*

In the book – *"Profiles of Leadership"* America's top business and government leaders were asked what quality they thought was most important to their success as a leader. Their unanimous answer was – integrity. (F-Honesty, PPRS-Nov,Dec'90).

In the lists for the qualifications for leaders in the church in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 there were among others qualities ones that have to do with honesty and integrity - such as – *"sincere", "does not pursue dishonest gain", has a good reputation", and "above reproach"*. These are qualities God desires for leaders and for all Christians.

Immanuel Kant, the famous German philosopher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century once said – *"By a lie a (person) throws away and, as it were, annihilates (their) dignity as a (person)."* (John, p106)

A story is told of Immanuel Kant's father – the person no doubt from whom Immanuel learned about honesty. As an older man, Kant's father was traveling from the forests of Poland to his native country of Silesia. On the way he encountered a band of robbers who demanded all his valuables. They asked him – *"Have you given us everything?"* Only when Kant answered yes did they let him go.

When he was safely out of their sight, he touched something hard in the hem of his robe. It was his gold which had been sewn there for safety. He had honestly forgot all about it in his fear and confusion.

At once he hurried back to try to find the robbers. When he found them, he said meekly, *"I have told you what was not true. It was unintentional. I was too terrified to think. Here, take the gold in my robes."* For Kant, his integrity was worth more than the gold.

To his astonishment though, nobody would take the gold. In fact, one of the robbers handed him back his wallet. Another gave him back his book of prayer. Still another led his horse toward him and helped him mount it while they all let him slowly ride away. (F-Honesty PPRS-Nov,Dec /90).

Things don't always work out that way of course, but we still need to tell the truth. Even if nobody knows, because God always knows and we always know.

### **3/ LIES DAMAGE OTHERS**

Aesop, the philosopher of the famed fables, was once asked what the most useful thing in the world was. *"The tongue"*, he replied. And what is the most harmful thing in the world? *"The tongue"*, he replied again. (John p108).

The 9<sup>th</sup> command condemns being a *"false witness"* because it harms others. The command forbids telling a lie, spreading a lie, or slander, gossip, and rumours which distort the truth and destroy others.

Proverbs 18:21 proposes – *"death and life are in the power of the tongue"*. There are many Christians who would never dream of committing some of the other commandments like - murder, adultery or stealing, but who listen to and spread gossip regularly which is very often a form of lying and being a false witness. I like the way the Good News Bible puts Proverbs 18:8 - *"Gossip is so tasty – how we love to swallow it."*

The letter by James has a lot to say about the tongue. In 3:9,10 he reasons – *"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse (others) who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers (and sisters) this should not be."*

A store manager overheard one of his clerks tell a customer, *"No, ma'am, we haven't had any for a while, and it doesn't look as if we'll be getting any soon."*

Horrified, the manager came running over to the customer and said, *"Of course we'll have some soon. We placed an order last week."*

Then the manager drew the clerk aside. *"Never," he snarled, "Never, never, never say we're out of anything--say we've got it on order and it's coming. Now, what was it she wanted anyway?"*

*"Rain,"* said the clerk.

### **4/ LIES BEGIN IN THE HEART**

Take a look with me at some very sobering words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 12:33-37. (NLT)

<sup>33</sup> *"A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad. <sup>34</sup> You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. <sup>35</sup> A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. <sup>36</sup> And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. <sup>37</sup> The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you."*

This passage makes it very clear that lies begin in the heart. What do we need to do to change our hearts?

#### **a) REFUSE EVIL AND YIELD TO GOD**

Paul puts it very clearly in Colossians 3:9,10. In the Message translation it reads – *"Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new*

*wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with His label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete.”*

Isn't that a great translation! In other words – be done with all that old stuff – stop lying – stop spreading untruths and gossip – stop misrepresentation and deceit! Instead – tell the truth – be honest. Be like the God of truth you claim to know!

**b) CONFESS OUR SIN AND RECEIVE CLEANSING**

Since lying and all other sins of the tongue begin in the heart we need to have our hearts changed.

First we have to admit to ourselves that lying is a sin and is detestable to God. We need to tell the truth about our lies. 1 John 1:8 declares – *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”* Then the next verses declare – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim to have not sinned, we make Him (God) out to be a liar, and His word has no place in our lives.”*

I like the way author David Seamands concluded his comments on the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment.

*God faced the truth about you a long time ago. Maybe you're just beginning to admit the truth about yourself and find it very disturbing, but God has known it all along. Despite this he has never withdrawn his offer of love. ...*

*As we stand before the cross we realize the truth is that we are bad enough to crucify the Son of God. That's the truth about the human heart... Admit it to him. Confess it. The moment you do, the power of the lie, the hold of darkness and untruth, is broken. When we confess and repent of our lies, his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, begins a miracle in our lives, leading us from lying and darkness to truthfulness and light. (God's Blueprint for Living - pp129,130)*

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**BENEDICTION - Hebrews 13:20,21**

*May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*