

CHARACTER CRUNCH

PART 4: HONESTY

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Most of us place high value on good character. We debate about it in our elected officials, expect it from our spiritual leaders and evaluate it in everyone around us. We want to be known for it, and we want to instill it in our children. Even so, we find that our good character tends to break down during “crunch time” – when the pressure is on and when things are going wrong. We struggle during the tough times because we fail to “exercise” the traits that make up good character during our normal, everyday lives when pressures and expectations are more manageable.

It is in our “normal, everyday lives” that our commitment to honesty is relentlessly tested. In every conversation and every interaction we have tempting opportunities to be dishonest.

Sociologists tell us that we either see or hear 200 lies every day. In many areas we’ve come to accept dishonesty and even expect it – in areas such as...

Advertising Business Education
Politics Relationships

We live in a culture that is saturated with disregard for the truth. As a result, we are suspicious and cynical people who can’t really find joy in anything.

When we sacrifice our joy by compromising the truth, we find ourselves in direct opposition to God...

Proverbs 6:16-19 (MSG) *“Here are six things God hates, and one more that he loathes with a passion: [17] eyes that are arrogant, a tongue that lies, hands that murder the innocent,[18] a heart that hatches evil plots, feet that race down a wicked track, [19] a mouth that lies under oath, a troublemaker in the family.”*

It is critically important to God that we avoid dishonesty for several reasons:

1. Dishonesty is contrary to His character.

John 16:13 (MSG) *“But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won’t draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said.”*

2. Dishonesty is contrary to our best interests.

Proverbs 12:13 (MSG) *“The gossip of bad people gets them in trouble; the conversation of good people keeps them out of it.”*

3. Dishonesty is contrary to the best interests of others.

Proverbs 11:9 (MSG) *“The loose tongue of the godless spreads destruction; the common sense of the godly preserves them.”*

Because God loves us, He wants us to avoid the consequences that occur when we compromise the truth. He even tells us how to avoid those consequences:

We have to make truth telling a priority in our lives...

Four Truthful Habits

1. Tell the truth completely.

Proverbs 28:23 (MSG) *“In the end, serious reprimand is appreciated far more than bootlicking flattery.”*

When we “beat around the bush” with the truth, we create confusion which prolongs negative relational issues.

2. Tell the truth consistently.

Ephes. 4:15 (MSG) *“God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do.”*

If we aren’t honest all of the time, we can’t be trusted to be honest at any time.

3. Tell the truth lovingly.

Ephes. 4:29 (NIV) *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*

We need to use our words to build people up and not to tear them down...

- People change easier and faster when you speak the truth in love.
- People always perceive truth without love as an attack.

To know if you’re speaking the truth in love, ask yourself...

- Who stands to benefit from what I’m saying?
- Am I trying to make things better for myself?

4. Tell the truth tactfully.

Proverbs 12:18 (MSG) *“Rash language cuts and maims, but there is healing in the words of the wise.”*

Two keys to tactful truth telling...

1. Carefully choose the words.
2. Carefully choose the setting.