

THE TRUTH ABOUT HONESTY

HONESTY WITH GOD

“Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?” says the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:24).

“Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4).

How honest am I with God? Could I be trying to deceive Him in any of the following areas?

1 My Motives

Are my motives pure? Do I serve God out of a heart of genuine love and devotion, or do I have a subtle, secret desire to be noticed and applauded?

“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts” (Psalm 51:6).

2 My Prayer Life

Are my prayers honest prayers? Do I say words that I think will impress God, or do I honestly communicate my real feelings and desires to Him?

3 My Sins

Am I quick to agree with God when His Spirit convicts me of sin, or do I tend to rationalize, justify, and defend myself?

Do I see my sin as God sees it, or do I tend to think in terms of “weaknesses,” “problems,” or “personality quirks”?

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden” (Psalm 32:5).

Do I love the truth so much that I actively and regularly ask God to search my heart and reveal anything that displeases Him?

HONESTY WITH MYSELF

Scripture warns repeatedly of the danger of self-deceit. Have I become self-deceived in any of the following ways?

1 Are there any truths in God’s Word that I know in my head but am not practicing in my life?

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

2 Do I give the appearance of being spiritual, yet fail to exercise control over my tongue?

“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless” (James 1:26).

3 Do I resist or deny the conviction of God’s Spirit or His Word in relation to my sin?

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

4 Do I think more highly of myself than what God knows me to be? Do I have an inflated view of my gifts/value to God and others?

“If anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Galatians 6:3).

5 Do I use the world’s standards rather than the Word of God to measure wisdom?

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1 Corinthians 3:18).

6 Do I believe that someone can habitually practice unrighteousness and still be a child of God?

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived" (1 Corinthians 6:9).

7 Do I live as if I can make selfish, sinful choices and not reap deadly consequences?

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

8 Through an absence of personal exhortation in my life, is it possible that my heart has become hardened so that I no longer recognize my true spiritual condition?

"Exhort one another daily . . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

HONESTY WITH OTHERS

1 Exaggeration

"Every word of God is pure. . . . Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

"All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them" (Proverbs 8:8).

- Exaggerating past accomplishments
- Exaggerating the results or fruits of my efforts in serving the Lord
- Overstating the truth by using words like *always* and *never*
- Making sweeping generalizations about people or situations
- Embellishing details to make a story more humorous or interesting
- Overstating (or understating) the seriousness of a situation, in order to make a point or for greater effect

2 Flattery

"With flattering lips and a double heart they speak" (Psalm 12:2).

- Giving insincere praise
- Complimenting another to enhance my own reputation in their eyes

3 Lying

"Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD; but those who deal truthfully are His delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

- Slandering—spreading false reports about another with the intent to inflict hurt
- Falsifying time cards, employment applications, expense reports, or tax returns for personal benefit
- Answering direct questions with untruths in order to protect my reputation

4 Misleading

"Providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the LORD, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:21).

- Leaving a false impression (though my own spoken words may be true)
- Communicating facts selectively to influence others for my own purposes
- Giving misleading references to prospective employers

5 Inaccuracy

"We are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably" (Hebrews 13:18).

- Failing to verify the facts before repeating a story
- Carelessness with regard to factual details of stories
- Failing to speak precisely or to make sure my words are literally true

6 Deception

"Deliver my soul, O LORD . . . from a deceitful tongue" (Psalm 120:2).

"We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

- Appearing to be busy at work while not really being productive
- Attempting to create a better impression of myself than is true
- Allowing people to say things that are untrue about another person, and implying consent by my silence
- Giving the impression that I am more spiritually mature and committed than is actually true
- Allowing my mate to believe that I am morally pure and faithful when I have failed morally
- Covering up sins of my past
- Hiding specific sins or failures from my mate or parental authority

7 Hypocrisy

"Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross" (Proverbs 26:23).

"The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Psalm 55:21).

"They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly" (Psalm 62:4).

- Speaking kindly to another while harboring hatred or bitterness in my heart
- Participating in corporate praise and prayers while my heart is cold, indifferent, or resistant to the Lord
- Praising another to his face while criticizing him behind his back

8 Inconsistency

". . . the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17b). "I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6).

"They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly" (Psalm 62:4).

- Flip-flopping on issues, depending on my "audience"
- Saying what I know the other person wants to hear rather than what I really believe
- Being unpredictable in my responses, temperament, or manner
- Putting a different spin on matters, depending on who I am talking to
- Responding one way one day and another way the next day

9 Guile

"Blessed is the man . . . in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psalm 32:2).

"Our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit" (1 Thessalonians 2:3).

- Maintaining hidden agendas and ulterior motives when dealing with people
- Looking for loopholes in a contract rather than honoring the intent and spirit of the agreement

10 Broken Promises

"Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

"He who swears to his own hurt and does not change" (Psalm 15:4).

- Promising to pray for someone and neglecting to do so
- Agreeing to be somewhere at a certain time or to meet a need but failing to do so
- Failing to fulfill a financial obligation

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