

## HONESTY - A BIBLICAL MANDATE

### INTRODUCTION:

The constant strain between expediency and honesty causes most of us, at some time, to compromise our standards and violate our consciences.

Example: The little boy at the door talking to the salesman:  
"We ain't got no bathtub, but Mom told me to tell you she's in it."

1. Honesty, as described in the Bible, is much broader than simply abstaining from lying. It involves being honorable.
  - A. 2 Cor. 8:20-21: "Avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us --providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."
  - B. Honesty must encompass our entire manner of life as well as specific details of truthfulness, for it is possible to be scrupulously honest in one area of life and flagrantly dishonest in another.

### I. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE MANY FACETS OF HONESTY AND DISHONESTY.

#### A. Truth.

1. Rom. 9:1: "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit."

#### B. Lying.

1. The scriptures condemn lying in any form.
  - (a) Prov. 6:15-19: "A lying tongue" and "a false witness who speaks lies" are listed among the abominations of God.
  - (b) But lying happens so easily, especially when speaking the truth counters what we want. We find it easy to shade the truth - changing it just enough to suit our desires. We fall into the habit of lying to God, lying to friends, lying to co-workers - and even lying to ourselves.
2. One key to good relationships is truth.

- (a) Col. 3:9: "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds."
- (b) Eph. 4:25: "Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

C. Slander.

1. Slander is a malicious form of lying. It is defined as "the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation."

The Bible speaks forcefully about slander:

- (a) Psalm 101:5: "Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy."
- (b) Psalm 15:3: The man who abides with God "does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor."
- (c) Eph. 4:31: Christians are commanded to "let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice."
- (d) Eph. 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

D. Deceit - "to cause to accept as true or valid what is false and invalid."

1. Psalm 101:7: The psalmist well expresses God's view. "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not continue in my presence."
2. Psalm 36:3: Describing the wicked man's words: "are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good."
3. Col. 2:8: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."

1 Peter 2:1: "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking."

4. 1 Peter 3:10: "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile."

(a) We practice deceit when we lead someone to believe a lie, even though we may be speaking true words.

(i) James 1:26: "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."

E. Another Aspect Of Honesty Is Integrity.

1. Integrity is a wholesome or moral completeness, and is characteristic of a person whose life reflects the life of Jesus Christ. Integrity demonstrates the inner person - the motive behind the act.

(a) Prov. 20:7: "The righteous man walks in his integrity - his children are blessed after him."

(b) Integrity encompasses all of what we do and are - speech, motives, and actions. Obviously, honesty involves more than simply not stealing money or not telling a bold lie.

## II. THE PROBLEM OF CONFORMITY AND PEER PRESSURE.

A. An Illustration of Peer Pressure:

"In college, he grew a beard, wore overalls and dirty T-shirts, and "did" drugs. Then he graduated, shaved his beard, bought a new blue suit, and joined the corporate treadmill. He married, had two children, joined the right clubs, and bought a home in the suburbs. He sold his soul to the company.

Then his wife left him. He divorced her, became a playboy and then remarried. He was promoted by his company. He cheated on taxes, his travel reports, and his wife.

He did none of these because he deeply wanted to or thought he should. Rather, they were the "right" things to do. They were acceptable. Everybody was doing them.

Yes, he was very successful - and very, very unhappy. Life had become a masquerade. By now he hardly knew who he was. Come to think of it, he was a little bit of everybody. Although

fiercely claiming independence, he actually would do nothing that might endanger his standing with his peers."

Note: Christians have always lived in non-Christian societies and have always been pressured to conform to the standards of their society.

B. At One Time in America, the Church and General Public Held Similar Views in Issues Dealing with Ethics and Morality.

1. Such practices as sexual immorality, cheating, and lying were approved by neither the Church nor the public. But in time the moral and ethical views of the public became increasing liberal. Philosophies of moral freedom and rebellion rose to prominence. In government, the separation of church and state was emphasized more. In the arts, obscenity became more prevalent. Pornography grew into a multi-million-dollar business. The use of drugs and alcohol became a major problem.
2. All the while, Christians were deploring the trends - but ultimately they, too, confirmed to them. Clearly, in a historical perspective, society has forced basic changes in almost every area of Christian thought and conduct.
3. Changes in the moral and ethical structure of our society have accelerated enormously in the past few decades.
  - (a) Two basic causes are involved:
    - (i) Our increasing affluence,
    - (ii) Impact of television.
4. While public schools have consciously backed off from teaching moral values, television programs reflect society's widespread acceptance of a new moral ideology - one that reflects increasingly lower standards.
  - (a) Many of the most popular programs have been those depicting family problems, divorces, adultery, and sexual deviation - often in the form of light, skillful comedy. They are depicted as amusing and skillful but they are the first step in changing moral values.
  - (b) Many students spend more time watching television than they do in school. It has been estimated that a graduating senior has watched almost 15,000 hours of

television (compared to 10,800 hours in school), and that the average American spends about 20 hours a week watching television.

- (c) Some are saying that television has more influence on children than their parents have.
- 5. With the enormous pressure of this input, much of it directly contrary to the teaching of the Scripture, we soon begin to accept society's standards. We become effectively brainwashed. But society's standards cannot be the standards for Christians.
- 6. As moral foundations steadily erode, we must learn how to resist the conformity that causes us to no longer reflect scriptural principles for honest and ethical living.

C. Every Christian Must Resist Conformity With This World.

- 1. Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Phillips translates: Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed."

- 2. The biblical warning against conformity to the world concerns outward imitation or practices that are not consistent with the inner spiritual life of a Christian. Conformity to the world is to act, think, and speak like those in the world about us. We must realize that the "world" spoken of is anything that is anti-God and anti-Christian.

- (a) 1 Peter 1:14: "As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance."

Note: Both Rom. 12:2 and I Pet. 1:14 are direct commands - not just suggestions. We are commanded to be different from this world.

The Greek word for conformity in these two passages means "to masquerade outwardly contrary to the inner person."

- 3. We Must Resist conformity:

- (a) In our mind.

- (i) The first battlefield of conformity is the mind. We cannot speak or act unless the mind directs us. This is where outward conformity to the world begins.
- (ii) Phil. 3:8: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things."

Note: Conformity of the mind to a totally secular society will eat away the very foundation of Christian teaching and action.

- (b) In our speech.
- (c) In our actions.
- (d) In our lifestyle.
  - (i) Prov. 4:14-15: "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on."

4. Look At The Sources Of Pressure To Conform:

- (a) Individual peers, groups, business connections.

5. Resist Pressure From Others To Conform By:

- (a) Being honest, checking one's spiritual moorings, develop personal convictions, recognize the source of pressure, speak up, be consistent, be an influence, run. (One of the best military maneuvers in the face of overwhelming odds is retreat.)