



HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

THE FUTURE OF HONESTY

HOW THAT IMPACTS EACH ONE OF US!

A Bible Study by Dr. Thomas Haney on the Future of Honesty. It's hard to imagine another subject that affect Christians more. If honesty becomes nonexistent, then we need to have a way to cope in a world where truth is lies and lies are truth. Four areas that impact us the most in the area of honesty; Honesty and government, Honesty and the workplace, Honesty and our personal relationships and Honesty mixed with sarcasm, exaggeration, and empty words.

By Dr. Thomas Haney

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THE FUTURE OF HONESTY AND HOW THAT IMPACTS EACH ONE OF US!

SESSION # 1 – HONESTY AND GOVERNMENT

I am so glad that you joined us tonight for a month-long study on the future of honesty. I cannot imagine another subject that will affect us as Christians more. If honesty becomes nonexistent, then we need to have a way to cope in a world where truth is lies and lies are truth. I have chosen four areas that I think impact us the most in the area of honesty.

Honesty and government, Honesty and the workplace, Honesty and our personal relationships and honesty mixed with sarcasm, exaggeration, and empty words.

Let's define Biblical honesty:

The Bible says a lot about honesty. It is the basis on which God wanted all of His children to deal with each other. Honesty is basically truthfulness. An honest person has the habit of making accurate trustworthy statements about life, self, others and God. An honest person represents himself just as he is and tells others the truth about themselves. Honesty is not “expressing everything that goes through your mind.” That is transparency, and a person needs to be honest without being totally transparent. No one can be consistently honest without a commitment to the truth. Honesty will, at times, hurt feelings but we are never to choose dishonesty.

Dishonesty is reproved in Scripture. God does not accept a person who “practices deceit.” **Psalm 101:7** “No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house, no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence,” Jeremiah tells us what will happen when a society moves from honesty to deceit, “Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth. They have taught their tongues to lie, they weary themselves with sinning.”

Jeremiah 9:5. Speaking honestly with each other is a mark of healthy human interaction and a nation a sign of healthy freedom.

The Bible does not spare words—it says, that a person who knows the truth and for whatever reason says differently is a liar. It is a slippery slope once you train your tongue to lie—we can void our relationship with Christ when we make a connection with our lies and link our lies to His truths!! It goes from there. If your conscience does not condemn you when you pray to Jesus—for the lies you tell—I would say your relationship with Jesus is very weak. **1 John 2:22.**

People are not naturally honest, **Psalm 116:11** says because dishonesty has earthly rewards—possible financial gain, power, or even satisfaction. But dishonesty leads to more and more dishonesty. “A wicked person listens to deceitful lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.”

All liars, unrepentant liars, will be left out of heaven **Revelation 21:31.** Honesty should always be accompanied by gentleness. An honest person is motivated by love and a truly honest person is concerned about telling the truth about God to cause spiritual growth in others. Honesty is a very important part of our life.

How does government—especially in the United States stack up with the truth? I am afraid not very good: the conviction of felons who pampered politician, stole for them, and did a lot of devious work under the name of politics is overwhelming. We do not have to look very far to see a list of convicted

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politicians, lawyers for politicians, and book keepers for politicians to realize that the way to political prominence in the United States has often been paved with misdeeds, undercover work, multiple lies and criminal activity. We don't get a much better example when we go down to the local level than my representative who this week will take a plea and get a fine and a reprimand. Note, he can still run for office—it did not make him unfit for office if he will pay a huge fine and accept this reprimand for what he did with his last campaign funds.

I want to show how this worked out in my life in the 1960's with three cameos of police officers involved in my life.

I had my first experiences with the government—and the police while in College. No, this is not confession time—I was so squeaky clean in High School I could have been the medical missionary that I said was my dream and my goal. But college was an eye-opener for me.

First, in the summer of 1963 our basketball team from Lincoln Christian University was on our first major road trip. We took three cars in those days and divided 15 very tall men among those three cars, we also had to wear dress shirts and ties in the cars—so we could represent our Lord in the very best way. The two coaches and the score keeper were the drivers and they divided the men into which car you rode in. I need to tell you the first three years of college, I rode in the gourmet car. It had two married men on the team whose wives were great cooks and sometimes would even let us suggest foods for their husbands to bring on the trips. We always surprised the coach at how little these young, tall, hungry men ate at the restaurants we stopped for lunch and dinner. When questioned we would almost all say, “Well coach, you know riding in the car ruins my appetite, but I will eat all that I can”. We were traveling between Vincennes, Indiana where we played a game the night before and on our way to Grayson, Kentucky to play a game at Kentucky Christian University on the Eastern side of the Appalachian Mountains and that is as ‘hillbilly as you get. We traveled down the banks of the Ohio River to cut some miles and time off of our trip and in the middle of nowhere we had a flat tire. As fate would have it none of the three cars had a spare that would work on the car with the flat, so we called the state troopers to come and help us.

We broke down right across from a hillbilly cabin that set about 20 feet above the road on a ridge in front of the forest. It had an outhouse about 20 yards from the house on a straight line with the road. When we all disembarked, we caught the attention of two of the daughters at the house. I guess they had never seen a dressed-up ball team right across the street from their house. They both looked like ‘Daisy Mae right out of Dogpatch’—blue jean bib overalls, a flannel red shirt, a bandanna in their hair, blonde hair, pig tails and barefoot. So, the trips out to the outhouse and the stroll back—complete with waves, a couple whistles and other actions got more intense and longer. The officers could not help but notice all the attention the team was getting and as they sent the mechanic off, they turned to the team and said, “Why don't you 15 men step up to the side of the road and wave and encourage the girls. It might be the thrill of their young lives. “Our coaches said yes, and we did, then squeezed back into our three cars and headed for Grayson. That was the most frivolous I ever saw the police in my life.

My next experience shows you what happens when you do not a friend in authority. Sharon and I had a very large youth group for a country church when we were at our first Church, Walnut Grove

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Christian Church. I often said, I think they hired me to be the youth minister who can also preach. Our group ran between 50-60 high school youth. I had several graduating that year from High School and for those farm families that was often the end of education no matter how intelligent they were. The farm families wanted family farming their ground not a hired hand. So, in the spring I suggested going to a camp in Estes Park outside of Denver for High School Camp. They all thought it sounded good, and we got families to hire us to load and unload the hay bales, and also walk beans. I need to tell you the enthusiasm for walking beans quickly waned and the last \$400.00 needed was raised by Sharon, myself and our best friends Mac and Pansy Bumps. Hard work with little pay. But I was intent on giving these farm children a very exciting experience and Mac and Pansy were going to take their four children with us. We raised the money by August 1 and the camp was August 16 so we thought this plan had come together. Then, I got a call from a youth minister in the Denver area that told me the camp had had snow on the 10th of August and they were cancelling the rest of the camp schedule. Just too cold and too many concerns to go ahead and have the camp. I must tell you my head sunk into my chest, my heart went lower and all I could think of was the futility of that great amount of work the four adults had done to make this trip possible.

But the next day someone came up with another suggestion. Maybe we could go to the Lake of the Ozarks, take the ski boat Mac and Pansy Bumpus had, and rally this trip back for everyone. We had a couple parents pull out because it was no longer at a Christian camp, but 40+ left in mid-August to stay at the rented cabin for 15 days in the Lake of the Ozarks.

It was a life changing two weeks, but we did have one incident with the police. Twice a week we would take the children into Bagnell Dam for the highlights: a bumper car track, chickens that pecked out tunes on a cheap little piano and a house that made you think it was weaving and going uphill when you were in it. Does not sound like a place that youth group kids could get in trouble, but farm children are some of the most creative children in the world. All their life they have watched mom and dad repair things with bailing wire, build tools out of binder twine, and saw mom make a meal out two tomatoes and six peppers from the garden. The adults were strolling along when all of a sudden--

I was flooded with attention, "Brother Tom"—my name at Walnut Grove—"come here, Joy and Ken are in trouble." So, they directed me to this little constable's office tucked in between two souvenir shops, and I saw my two 15-year old with their heads between their legs. Before I got a chance to ask what happened, a 20 something year old Barney Fife, you know the type-- the belt wraps twice around these size 6 jeans, with enough gumption for all of us and no compassion for my youth groups kids.

He started in, "I caught these kids red handed stealing newspapers and trying to sell them." That did not sound quite right, so I asked these two country kids what happened. They told me, "We had never seen one of those newspaper machines before. So, we put in a quarter and the whole door came open, so we decided we would just take all the papers and closed the door and then we couldn't get any back in the machine. So, we decided to sell them to people driving by." Well, it became quickly clear to Barney that he was going to get nowhere with my two youth kids, but he kept the questioning and harassment up for over an hour. Finally, I asked him, "Are you going to jail

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these two kids?” He said of course not, I asked if they could go back to the cabin and have their closing devotions for the day and I would stay and talk with him.

What a mistake, I guess I just gave him too much authority and he was feeling authority deprived; because for two more hours he lectured me on how poorly I was doing with my youth group, he was surprised that they even called me a youth pastor—as inept as I was—and if he had the youth group he could do a much better job. It was obvious that this man had very little authority, very little to do, and a need to pontificate about what he would and could do.

But it was the last encounter with the police in the 1960’s that was the most disappointing. My best friends in high school, twin boys had followed in the family tradition and had gone to Alexian Brothers School of Nursing in Chicago. Four Boys and one girl had followed their mother into nursing. While they were students at the nursing school one of the twins had fallen in love with a girl from Chicago and wanted to marry her. He contacted me about being in the wedding—as a co-best man with his twin brother and singing a solo. I was in graduate school and little extra time for Sharon and myself, plus the opportunity to relive some of our honeymoon—also in Chicago. So, I said, “sure.” He sent me directions to get to her house. But it included shorthand, like turn off at the loop, make a dip into the valley and go down the street for 24 houses before you come to her house. We had our hotel reservations and just went by to check out everything. Sharon was highly confused by loop, dip into the valley and so it was very stressful trying to find the home. When we got to that row of 24 identical houses, they were all two stories with a front porch—identical duplexes—with one-half of the porch having doors upstairs and downstairs for that side of the house, and if you went back outside and entered the other side of the porch, it also had those two same doors for upstairs and downstairs.

I was very excited to get the right house on the first knock and stepped back outside and told Sharon, “We are here, this is the right house.” She came into the house and we had a great two-hour conversation. Then something came up about the gift and Sharon said, “Why don’t you go get the gift and that is one less thing to worry about tomorrow.” “Sure,” I said, and went out to get the gift. I was not prepared for what I found, all of our clothes were gone—my only suit, Sharon’s best dress, her shoes, my shoes, etc. The only thing left was the gift and my Bible.

I rushed back in and shared the bad news and the family contacted the Chicago police for us. The police wanted to know where we were staying because it would be went on over an hour before they could come and write up the report. We on to the hotel and begin to discuss what we would have to purchase before the wedding. Soon a knock on the door told us the police had arrived and we let them in. We talked for a while and then they pulled out the report form and asked us questions. We were all on the same page until they said—we are just going to report the car was locked—that is the only way you will get money from your insurance company. I said, “No don’t report that, it is not true, we got excited finding the house and simply forgot to lock the car. I don’t want us to lie.” The temperature in the room changed immediately and one officer started in on us, “its stupid country bumpkins like you that give Chicago a bad reputation. You guys come into town with no sense at all and cause a lot of trouble for our city.” I don’t remember the next one-hour of beratement on how stupid we were, but I do remember his last statement under his breath as they left—these country idiots make our town look so bad.” That was 52 years ago and Sharon or I have ever been in the

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trouble with the law—but Chicago is the cesspool of gang killing, murders, and a long laundry list of sins. Maybe, the fruit of policemen getting angry when you do not lie like they asked you to.

Interesting, in 5 years: we had police men acting frivolous and having fun; a policeman showing off his skinny little authority; and the Chicago police angry at us because we would not lie. I'm sure you have similar stories with police, bureaucrats, judges, public defenders, and maybe even some politicians that you have interacted with. Honesty is not always the strong suit and often truthfulness takes a long time to win out.

So, what did God say about government and reacting honestly?

Most of my life I have heard a list of things I owed the government as a Christian: 1)Respect authority 2)Always put God first 3)Pray for our leaders 4)Pay taxes—all good, but I wondered if this was all the Bible taught about government??

All government came from God and He was the first government. Until cities were established God ruled over Adam, Eve, and their children. It was God who punished Cain for killing Able and gave his sentence. But God started much simpler: Adam and Eve were given three commands: enjoy each other, raise children and take care of the Garden—God also had one prohibition—do not eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. We all know they did not keep the one rule of their government, so they were expelled from the Garden. I want us to look at the government God had with his people. God governed His special people through Patriarchs for many millennia, and had another plan for other areas. When the government through the Patriarchs failed, and people chose to follow their desires and not God's—He sent a flood on the earth and started over with a new form of government. He chose Abraham with a special covenant where God expected Abraham and his family to follow what God told them to do. Starting with Abraham and going through Moses and Aaron, God wrote four books that were a Manuel for the governance of His people. It was and is the only country ever built and started on a Theocracy—a government where God was the head and the people were to do as God directed. God allowed all the other nations of the earth to choose kings or other rulers to guide their nation, and only the Hebrews chose to lean on an unseen God over a human king. They relied on a force they couldn't see to lead them, protect them, and provide for them.

That group went from a family unit of 72 people and then moved to Egypt to escape starvation. Two things happened in the 400 hundred years in Egypt: 1) the people grew in number to become a large nation. 2) They went from welcome guests to care for the flocks of the Egyptians to becoming slaves to the Egyptians. Moses was directed by God to go to Egypt and lead the people out: this he did with a series of God miracles; then 10 terrible plagues on the Egyptians; and finally, the total destruction of the largest army in the world.

Moses set up leaders for this vast nation to have order. God still was the head of the nation and His books Of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy were still the rule. God had Moses and Aaron set up priestly systems that were agents of the government and a council of 70 Elders to help rule the nation. After Joshua, the people began to get very slack in their worship of God and quit treating each other with dignity and respect. They proved once more the old truth: a lack of government is not freedom.

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God kept the system going with a series of Judges to fight off the oppressors in their land. The Book of Judges tells a clear pattern: God's people forgot Him, they were attacked by an enemy, God raises a leader called a Judge to deliver them, and they stayed faithful for a while and then they forgot God again. Note, never when God was in charge of the government of Israel did the entire nation get captured by enemies. That only occurred after the people began to choose their own leaders.

They insisted they needed a king, and it became the constant demand of the Israelite people. The last of the Judges was a man named Samuel and he was the one who anointed the kings of Israel. He told them a king would take their choice sons and use them in his army; their choice daughters to work in the palace; the best acreage for his key workers, and a tenth of all they owned for taxes. The nation only lasted four kings before it divided. Soon after the fourth king the northern 10 tribes of the nation called Israel were taken captive and never returned to the promise land; the other two tribes called Judah were captured twice, repented and returned but with one very brief exception were never free and during this time God revealed through prophets that He would again have His way of ruling over His people. It is the 1,000-year reign or the Millennial Kingdom, and for the last 1,000 years of physical life on this planet where Jesus will be our government, "A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon his shoulders. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with righteousness and justice for now and forever." **Isaiah 9:6-7**; and God will have again the government He wanted for the control of His people.

Finally, what is God's governance plan for the other nations of the world?

There is little direction for governments from Adam to Noah—Genesis was intent on getting from Adam to Joseph to show the lineage of His Son, but we have some great glimpses in Genesis. Righteous men and women like Job, Shem, Enoch, Methuselah communicated directly with God and God directed their lives. But after the great flood where Noah, his sons and all their wives were saved, God reestablished a covenant with Noah and his sons and all the other nations formed a table of nations and the first thing they did was establish a one-world government and their first project was to build a tower of prominence and dominance. God saw the danger for the permanent existence of people and He came to the earth: confused their languages and scattered them all over the world. They went from one universal language to many dialects and were scattered all over the world we now have.

The remaining references in Genesis show God continued to direct governments and nations—God rescued Abraham and Saria twice from the government of Egypt. He withdrew Lot and his daughters when the villages of the plains—5 total, with Sodom and Gomorrah the prominent two, because it was too evil to let them stand. God told Ishmael the nations he would rule when he became a man. God led Joseph through the maze of negative experiences and put him in a place of unparalleled prominence. He controlled the food supply of the world and as second in control of Egypt, he made his king very wealthy. He spelled out the nations that Esau and his family would control and what would keep them in power. God controlled the release of the Israelites from Egypt and God destroyed the world's strongest army for the safety of the Israelites. We could continue to show God's hand as He put His people in the dominant governments of the world to change the nation: Daniel, Shaddock, Meshack, and Abednego in the Kingdom of Babylon and Daniel, Nehemiah, and

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Ezra in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The list goes all the way through the Old Testament and the start of the New Testament.

But God also began to write commands and informed statements that showed where and why governments would stand or fall:

1. Who the nations reverence and worship influence their longevity? **Deuteronomy. 10:13-17**
2. David wrote: Why God will directly destroy evil nations. **Psalms 34:15-16**; and How He will do it.
3. God will bless people in nations that are just, honest and truthful—**Psalms 103:17-19**
Solomon in Proverbs wrote several reasons for nations to rise or fall
4. The blessings of righteousness nation contrasted with the destruction of an evil nation. **Proverbs 16:7-20**; condition of other nations under untruthful and evil governments. **Proverbs 29:2**

Other writers:

5. God grants grace to nations as He wills if they do His will and are righteous. **Isaiah 31:1-3**

But it is the Book of Daniel that tells us the most about God and governments

1. God controls the longevity of governments based on things like: evil or good; truthful or dishonest; and evil deeds vs good deeds. **Daniel 2:20-22**
2. God is resolute in destroying evil nations, **Daniel 5:25-31**
3. God can thwart wicked scheming by politicians. **Daniel 6:23-25**
4. God controls the times and the longevity of the kingdoms of the wicked.
5. God will destroy the strongest and the mightiest who oppose Him, **Daniel 4:27**.
6. God will replace the Medes and Persians with the Greeks—**Daniel 10:20**

I say that nothing matters more to America at this time Biblically than that we pray for good deed, honest speaking, and righteous and just men and women who can lead our nation to a point where it needs to be. The Bible says that the people get the leaders they deserve—usually we vote for those in agreement with us. The Bible says that we need Biblically honest men and women all over our nation to run our government in a way God can Bless!!!

I for one am tired of the pandemic, the social unrest in dozens of groups and areas of our nation, the national disasters, the disunity of our nation, the corruption of our political system, and the moral collapse of our country.

I for one am less worried about my vote but more so that I will vote for the right candidate that God wants. I pray daily for God to put righteous, honest, Godly men and women in places of authority for the preservation of our country.

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SESSION # 2 - HONESTY AND THE WORKPLACE

I am so glad that you joined us tonight for the second lesson in our month-long study on the future of honesty. I cannot imagine another subject that will affect us as Christians more. If honesty becomes nonexistent in our nation and the world, then we need to have a way to cope in a world where truth is lies and lies are truth. I want to lead us in a study tonight on the future of honesty in the workplace and how that will affect the life of Christians.

You might say, “Pastor Tom, I’ve already crossed that bridge and I have been retired from the workplace for several years.” That would be a fine answer for you if you were able to have no contact with people in the business world and if you have no descendants. But even for most of us retired, we still have bank, savings, and retirement accounts; still are consumers in many areas may have a mortgage on the house or a car; and still have several generations of children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren in the working world.

It is another of those fields where we do not always expect honesty—we have heard those ‘used car salesmen’ jokes all of our life, been warned about the snake-oil salesmen, and warned to not get sucked in by the manipulative advertising in all the social media outlets. But have we reached a new level of dishonesty in the workplace? And will we be able to help or guide our families as they work their way through a progressively dishonest business system?

I first heard major discussions about “the ‘tech’ wanta be millionaires” at the Diamondback Baseball games. It was the early 2000’s and we were all the new giddy fans of the new ball team in town--the Diamondbacks. We got close and well acquainted in a hurry with the fans around us and especially good friends with the young couple that sat by us. They found out where I preached and visited us a few times—45-mile commute got a little far but we found out they worked at a start-up tech company in Scottsdale. I was so far removed from Silicone Valley or even what happened there that I was flabbergasted by what they told me. We had just moved into our new facility at 1445 West Northern and I wanted to know how their company set plans and goals, met goals, and set up new goals. They were quite cooperative and ended up bringing me a lot of the materials that had been given to them as junior partners in the firm. The plans were unbelievable:

- 1) First goal; they had a stock value for their company that was the goal—profitable or not profitable, they needed to push their company to that stock price of \$28.00
- 2) Second goal was to get purchased by a larger tech stock and let them take over their business.
- 3) Third goal was then to divide the stock as pre-arranged between founders, partners, and junior partners and on their sheet of paper it said: “Retire as millionaires before we are 35.”

This was before our daughter had become a financial advisor with Edward Jones, so I immediately got on the phone and told my broker at Schwab to sell any tech stocks we owned that were not profitable. He seemed stunned but said yes and did. Shortly after that the Tech bubble broke and most of the high-priced non-profit tech stocks went broke. Why, because the goal of many companies was not to produce an honest and reliable stream of income for their company—but to shortchange the whole process to make them young millionaires.

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It was during the housing frenzy of 2007-2009 that I began to hear some quite worrisome statements about several of our younger couples taking out 2nd and then 3rd mortgages on their homes that prompted me to teach a month long series on responsible financial investing as a Christian. During that time, I even heard one of our young ladies telling a group of her peers, “I don’t know why Pastor Tom is discouraging this—my husband and I have used our home like a bank—we have refinanced four times and if the rates go down any more, we will do it again.” They lost that home. But the wildest story I heard was when one of our daughters told us that her nephew, single, one dependent- - who earned less than \$50,000.00 a year had been able to get a loan for \$650,000.00 and he was buying this large million-dollar home in Cave Creek. He lost that home also.

Why were large, uncovered loans easier to get than a sunburn in the July Phoenix sun? Because the banks were pressing their agents to sell loans to everyone they could and then packaging those loans—some good but mostly junk loans and selling them to investors as safe secured loans in this growing crazy real estate market. When the housing collapse hit and with it the need for the government to bail out, those financial institutions—the criminals ended up being rewarded. Basically, the banks in an effort to get richer—simply got and sold unsecured loans and packaged & sold them as good, secured and honest loans because it gave them a lot more money—and that circle of greed included: insurance companies; banks; hedge funds; brokerage firms; and others who handled money.

I could share how the “Savings and Loan Asc.” folded in the 1980’s and 1990’s because of greed and dishonesty; how firms and hedge funds on Wall Street has manipulated the United States financial markets often in the last 25 years; how the Hunt brothers manipulated the silver market to make millions, that only collapsed when they missed a margin call on March 27, 1980; and on and on it goes.

Let me just share one other as we continue to document the moral breakdown of honesty in the marketplace and that was Wells Fargo Bank and the false accounts. A few years ago the bank offered insider deals of bonuses and benefits to those who could produce the newest accounts. When these did not come easily, several branches or at a minimum people in those branches began to set up fake accounts with fake names and credentials to collect the money from the parent company. These deliberate and stealth-driven dishonest accounts were so widespread and terrible that when they became public, the company began to offer new commercials about making mistakes, starting over, and doing it right to keep from losing any more customers. But once again it was a dishonest environment that allowed workers to use deceit and dishonesty to pad their incomes and bilk the public.

So, what is the Biblical basis for honesty in the marketplace/business? It almost sounds ludicrous that I am giving and answering this question; but evidently a lot of “Christian America” has forgotten what the Bible says about business and truth telling:

All you have to do is list the major verses of the Bible that speak to honesty and you will soon see that God highly values; truth, honesty, and true testimony.

The virtue of honesty is grounded in the character of God—we are to be truthful because God is truthful.

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- **God Never Lies:** *Titus 1:2* “In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.”
- **Jesus is Called the Truth:** *John 14:6* “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
- **Holy Spirit is Called the Truth:** *John 16:13 and I John 5:6* “But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. **Psalm 119:43** “This is the one that came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by blood. And it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.”
- **God’s Word Called the Truth:** *John 17:15-17*, “My prayer is not that you take my followers out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of this world even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

So, we are to be honest because that is the very character of God and we are to be like our Lord. Truth telling is our moral guide because God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are all “Truth”. We are to be like God and His Son.

God also commands people to tell the truth, in the Ten Commandments,

- **Exodus 20:16**, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor”
- **Leviticus 19:11**, “Do not steal, do not lie, and do not deceive one another.”
- **Proverbs 12:19** says it with the consequences for telling the truth— “*truth lasts forever*” and the consequences for a lying tongue— “*refuted by truth*”. “*Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only for a moment.*”

Honesty is the Biblical foundation for all ethics, virtues, commands and consequences. It is how we learn about God—the honesty of His Word and His truths and it is how we know of everything that we cannot see, touch or feel—it is the honest truth of God’s Word.

The life of a Christian is to be a changed life and one of those changes is we never lie to each other:

- **Colossians 3:9-10a** “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on your new self.” It is one of the signs that you really are a Christian,
- **Ephesians 4:24-25** “Put on a new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, each one of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”

The Biblical expectation is clear—we are all to tell the truth. We are to be like God who is truth. We are to draw close to God with the truth because only the truth will bring you to God. God’s law is not prescriptive—when God tells us to tell the truth—it is also descriptive. A true Christian tells the truth and never deceives other Christians—whatever the reason—because lying reduces us to less than who God created us to be and damages ourselves and others. The basic attitude of the Christian is to be **Ephesians 4:15** “*Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the*

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*head, into Christ.” A person is only acting like a Christian when they give truth, II Corinthians 13:8
“For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.”*

It is obvious that the Bible supports truth in the work place and in every form of business; but does it specifically speak to honesty and business. The first law that God recorded, the Mosaic Law clearly defined how a person was to be honest in business: **Deuteronomy 25:13-15** says, *“Do not have two different weights in your bag—one heavy and one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house—one large and one small. You must have honest and accurate measures, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. For the Lord your God defeats anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.”*

Truth telling is absolutely essential for a society that wants to flourish and grow. God mandates it with very few exceptions. The reasons for truth telling are many when it comes to business:

1. Truth telling is essential for real communication to occur and it is the only thing that makes genuine interaction between people possible. We could hardly survive if we lived in a society that did not expect people to tell the truth to each other. There would be no way to discern between truth and falsehood and would create a chaotic world without truth between people.
2. Truth telling develops trust and trust is essential to a prosperous society. The only way to establish trust and trustworthiness is to be a person of your word—you must tell the truth.

Proverbs 3:20 states this clearly: *“Do not plot harm against your neighbor who lives trustfully near you”*

3. Truth telling treats people with dignity. To tell someone the truth is a measure of respect that is gone when a person is lied to.” **Genesis 29-30** tells us the story of Jacob working 7 years for his father-in-law to get Rachel as his wife only to be deceived by his father-in-law and given her older spinster sister, Leah instead. Although Jacob stayed and worked for Laban and did receive Rachel as a second wife; he never forgot the injustice and deceit done to him and bred the flocks he watched to give him the stronger better animals and Laban, his father-in-law, the weaker ones.
4. Truth telling builds a person up while lying and deception show disrespect for the person, **Proverbs 26:19** *“A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.”*
See also: Proverbs 26:18-19; 26:24; and 26:26.

God has outlined a Christian manual of marketing that we need to follow. We should always tell the truth and use truthful numbers when advertising our self or our business. The listed items on a resume should be real and honest. The claims for our business should be based on honest facts and not on exaggerations. Even when giving opinions that cannot be verified, you should still be wary of exaggerating, sine the person who requests your opinion is depending on an accurate assessment. If you are asked your opinion about a former student or co-worker, any specific claims you make are expected by the person reading your answer to be truth. One of my best students or one of the best co-workers I have ever had should be made only if they are true.

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So, what modifications to honesty have American business made. What modifications to honesty have American Churches made and how are we to help our family and ourselves through the present concepts about truth? The ultimate answer for us and our family is the same: It is what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:37** *“All you need to say is simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’, anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*

But there are some very clear areas where we need to be very honest ourselves and be able to see the dishonesty in others.

The need for truthfulness in the workplace is never more obvious than in the preparation of financial statements for the businesses, governments, churches, non-profit organizations and individuals. All are required under certain conditions to prepare financial statements for the purpose of giving others an accurate depiction of their financial condition. This often means disclosing information that is not favorable: reduced profitability, diminished cash reserves, controversial levels of executive compensation, spiraling debt obligations, etc. Although organizations and individuals might prefer to hide such information, they have a legal and moral obligation to provide accurate information.

Most financial statements are made according to rules that govern them but also are filled with judgments about factors the preparers know about with the business and equipment. The temptation is to estimate those judgments in a way that paints the entity in the most favorable light—rather than giving the most accurate picture of its true financial position. The Bible and laws and regulations in free and open countries prohibit such manipulations. The only acceptable criterion for financial statements is whether they ‘present fairly, in all material respects, an entity’s financial position, results of operations, and cash flows in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. They must convey the truth. It is not enough that they follow the rules, or that they refrain from making false statements. They have a higher duty, which is to inform an accurate picture of the true situation. You must tell the truth in all financial statements to please God.

Then there is the business of “white lies” in the business world today. The term “white lies” is a euphemism of statements meant to smooth discourse and try to prevent minor conflict. Some common ones are blaming traffic for being late to a meeting, when you simply left the house too late. Telling a co-worker to say you’re out of the office when you do not want to take a call. Saying, “I’ll call or I’ll get back in touch with you”, when you have no intention to talk to them again. Or saying such things as, “This is my dear friend about a colleague that you can hardly stand or telling a customer— “Oh, I see you are a wise person”, when your intention is to use their foolishness to sell them your product.

These might seem harmless so we have the term, “little white lie”; but they are not the truth and they open the door for more intense and deceptive lies. The Bible warns us about training the tongue to lie—because that is all that it wants to do. Many times, white lies are a cover for something where you do not feel you had fair treatment—the boss wants to know what you do with all my spare time--none of his business—so, whatever I say to get him to quit asking is fine.

This is an area of our life in America that has vastly changed in our lifetimes. Few would complete a business deal today with a verbal affirmation and a handshake. And it is not just because of social

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distancing. People without signed, sealed, and sometimes notarized contracts do not do well in court to matter what the agreement was or how hearty the handshake was.

It is at this point where I feel our children are at great risk as honesty becomes less of a guiding factor in the future of business. Those schooled in deception, those who know all the ways to manipulate HR to punish the co-workers they do not like; those who create an atmosphere of doubt and deceit will be very harmful to Christians who believe that in their heart of hearts they are always to trust others, believe what they say is the truth, and speak the truth. Jesus did tell us to be *“wise as serpents and gentle as doves.”* We are to be the one who adds to the peace of a situation while making sure that we are aware of all that is going on around us.

There are times when we simply need to step away from something because we do not feel it is honest. Jack van Hartesvelt, a vice president of a real estate trust fund tells about using a common but not very honest selling technique: I have been involved in many contract negotiations. I am not a negotiator, but I am with them all the time, and watched this business move often. When a person wanted to get a 3% fee, they would state that they absolutely had to have a 4% fee, knowing that they would drag me back down to 3% and feel like they won. The whole negotiation was based on a lie. He wrote that it had been wearing on him for a long time and in 1992, he decided he did not want to do negotiations this way anymore. He had taken advantage of someone legally that made him feel guilty and his faith—seems to create a dissonance between what he believed he should do in negotiations and what he was doing. It did not match the rest of his life—so he quit what he called negotiations built on a lie.

I want to share a video that is on You-Tube now about how crucial honesty and the tie to the Church are for the business of America to be successful. *“If we have no religion in the US, you cannot hire enough police.”* Clay Christensen, People of Faith, Professor at Harvard U.

I would like to close tonight with several scriptures about God’s view of honesty and deceit—in all areas and some especially in the area of the workplace.

- **Psalm 15:1-3** *“Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right and speak the truth from their heart, who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors.”*
- **Proverbs 12:17** *“Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence but a false witness speaks deceitfully.”*
- **Psalms 101:7** *“No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house.”*
- **Psalm 120:2** *“Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.”*
- **Mark 7:21-22:** *“For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, lying and deceit.”*
- **Proverbs 16:13** *“Righteous lips are the delight of a king-----(including King Jesus)*

He was a young man on my Church staff and working hard and seemingly doing a good job; but his young wife came in and told me that he was slowly estranging himself from her and their 3 children

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and could I speak to him. I did and he assured me that it was just her worry-wart nature and they and their three children were doing fine. But the antennae were up and I begin to see some interaction in the office that did not seem right. The young wife called me one weekend and said that her husband had asked her to take the children and move back to another state with her family. I promised her she did not have to do that and I would speak to the young man on Monday morning. But early Monday morning, she called and wanted me to listen to a rather incriminating phone message left accidentally on a phone she still had access to. I remember the words of a female saying, “I really enjoyed you running the water over my flesh and the excitement of you drying me off.” It seemed clear to me that the pieces had come together and I called him to come from where ever he was and meet me in my office. I spend the time in prayer, because I still believed that the man had a strong honest commitment in him that would take him back to his wife and away from this other woman.

When we sat down and we prayed, he starting in defending himself and I stopped him to tell him I had heard the message that morning, said what the message was and I thought he needed to repent of what he was doing and go back to his wife and family. I was not prepared for what he said next: he looked me straight in the eye and said, oh I had just taken her out for dinner and the waiter had overfilled our water glasses, when I bumped it and split some of it on her arm—we laughed about it and my clumsy way of drying it up with a napkin.

I first thought—Pastor Tom -you are not Nathan the prophet—this man is very secure in lying to you and second, I thought—how smoothly that lie came out. This young man has been lying to himself and others about what he is doing and he thinks it is really alright. Our meeting did not end on a pleasant note, a repentant note, or even praying together. When he would not change his story in the slightest, I gave him his two-week notice. A few weeks later, we met again at a special event for one of the children of the Church and he had his new partner with him and had no problem at all speaking to all of us as if this was something that should be happening.

When we teach our tongue to lie, and we do not stop the lying even in our business—we open ourselves to a hardened heart and a lying tongue, and great losses.

My challenge to you is, let’s let our yes be a yes, our no be a no, and not often anything else. May God bless us all to be truthful in our work place and to teach and help our family to be truthful as well?

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SESSION # 3 - HONESTY AND RELATIONSHIPS

I cannot imagine another subject that will affect us as Christians over the next five years more than the Future of Honesty. If honesty becomes even more compromised and is not the way our world communicates—then we need to have a way to cope in a world where truth is lies and lies are truth. It will control all of our personal relationships that are often the foundation of our life.

What are the relationships that affect you most: wife/husband, children, grandchildren, parents, someone special to you, someone you are dating or engaged to, someone you work with that is a good friend, your friends, or others that you share your innermost thoughts and feelings with. It is good for us to look again at what the Bible says about honesty and truth. We have to be grounded with what is right when the world throws a different playbook at us.

First, the Bible is clear—to be honest is to be truthful or sincere. Honesty is a sign of moral correctness and fairness.

We talk about an ‘honest day’s work’ where a person works hard and the pay is well deserved. An honest person is a person who is upright, has a moral character free of guile and is very concerned with truthfulness. The Bible stands completely on one side when it comes to truth. Truth is of God and lies/deceit are of the Devil. Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life”, **John 14:6** and the Devil is “the father of lies.”

The Bible says there is no darkness in God –He is light—and the source of all truth. God is completely honest, never lies, and desires that we also practice total honesty in our lives.

Jesus clearly defined the original source of lies. God made everything good and it had no fault, but when Satan was introduced to life—that all changed. Here is how Jesus says lies came into the life of humans. “The devil was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, 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.” **John 8: 44b-46** But since we belong to God and not Satan, our eyes have been opened and we know we are to be truthful and put off falsehood. Whenever we lie, we let Satan take over our words and we fall for his deception.

The New Testament when it speaks of living with other Christians, often speaks of how important that lifestyle needs to reflect honesty. **Ephesians 4:25** Says “Having put away falsehood let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members with each other.” **Ephesians 4:28** says our life should change when we are Christians: “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing an honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” **1 Peter 2:1-3** is very blunt about how honesty lives itself out when he wrote: “So get rid of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and evil and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

A life of honesty requires not only being honest with others, but also being honest with ourselves. Our own nature and the world system where we live are full of deceit. If we are not careful, sin can begin to look good to us and we can easily forget that the only source of genuine good is God, James

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1:14-17. That is why we need to be in the Word of God each day so that God can speak to us about what has strong and maybe even wrong influence on our minds and lives.

Another way to help yourself stay grounded in honesty is to make sure you are part of a Christian community that is focused on truth and being honest with each other. In fact, Peter wrote to Christians, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.” **I Peter 2:12** We display honesty both when we live with integrity and when we willingly share the truth about who God is and share His offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. The truthfulness of our words is often proved by the honesty of our conduct.

If you want a standard for honesty and integrity in the Bible that you can look up to, then this passage in **I Peter 2:22-25** about Jesus is the perfect model for us:

“He committed no sin, and no deceit was in his mouth. When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins, in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins, and live for righteousness, ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

It was one of those great spring days in Indianapolis where I was ready to make some excuse to go visit people or at least get out of the office. The project that I was doing was exhausting and I was ready for a break. I glanced as a car turned into our parking lot at Indian Creek Church; I heard the front door of the Church Office open and then my secretary said over the intercom: “Kenny O. is here to see you!”

Kenny O. that name conjured up all sorts of memories from my ministry in Southern Indiana. He and his wife had 6 children, she was a believer and he was not—so we focused prayer and preaching on him and God led him to make a decision. It was an instantaneous change. He became a Christian dad, God almost immediately blessed him career wise and he was put in charge of a bank to manage right in his home town. His oldest daughter had committed to attend Lincoln Christian University where her fiancée—also a strong member of the church had gone the year before and they were to be married and involved in ministry. It seemed like one of the best testimonies of my ministry in Odon, Indiana. But then, after we moved to Indy, we began to hear rumors—Kenny had left his wife and children and moved to another town and it seemed like the marriage was not repairable.

I called his wife and we spoke over the phone several times, but he was unwilling to come to Indianapolis or go anywhere to counsel with his wife, himself and me. Now he was in the front office. So, I said, “Please show him into my office,” opened the door and greeted Kenny and told him seriously how good it was to see him. He sat down and we begin to talk. He told me about the drive up to Indy and how beautiful it was—small talk for where we had recently been. Then, he stopped and said, “I have someone in the car I want you to meet. It is someone God sent into my life and she is such a blessing, I want you to meet her.” I said, “It is not your wife?” He then told me his story. He and his wife had separated—actually he moved out of the house and rented another home in a nearby town; they were getting a divorce—actually, he had filed for a divorce and she was fighting it in court right now; so, he was very lonely and not sure what he was supposed to do. So, he had gone

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to Church one morning in Washington, Indiana and spotted this lady in the choir and “god” had told him that was the woman for him. He had gone up to her after the service and invited her out to lunch and they had been together ever since. He needed me to meet his ‘soul mate.’

I explained lovingly and carefully that nothing he had said is the way that God works. He does not lead you to someone else when your wife is contesting the divorce papers that you filed. God does not encourage you to live with someone after you meet them. And he was still married, his wife was trying to work things out, he was unwilling to meet with her or anyone else and no, I did not want to meet this woman.

We spoke a few more minutes and when I was convinced, he was unwilling to even discuss his wife. I insisted, I would not come out to the car to meet her—so they left. That was 35 years ago and I have not seen Kenny O. since. I can only hope that he did reconcile with his lovely family and go back to his wife. But the string of lies he had come up with to convince me that I needed to go meet this woman showed me that Satan—not Jesus was directing Kenny O’s thinking those days.

How seriously does God regard our honesty in our relationships? Two simple stories from the New Testament illustrate the importance that God puts on honesty. The first is about a man who wanted to meet Jesus when Christ came to his home town of Jericho. He was a very unlikely candidate to meet Jesus—he was a chief tax collector—a collaborator with the Romans—a man who was instructed to keep at least two sets of books and he could keep more if he wanted. He had skimmed off a portion of the taxes he collected—as the Romans allowed and had become very wealthy. His influence was because he was a traitor and his wealth was because he stole from his people while he collected the taxes. But his desire to see Jesus was intense—so being a short man, he climbed up in a tree to see Jesus. Jesus came to the spot where Zacchaeus was right above him in the tree—Jesus looked up and told Zacchaeus to come down right now because Jesus intended to go to his house. Zacchaeus did and had Jesus and His disciples to his home. He had a “come to Jesus time” after Christ and the disciples came and stood and made two announcements:

- 1) He would immediately give one half of all of his wealth to the poor people in Jericho and the surrounding countryside.
- 2) He would pay back anyone he had cheated out of taxes, four times what he had profited or stolen from them.

The response of Jesus was immediate. When he saw this dishonest man not only become honest but try to repair the damage that he had done with his dishonesty and deceit, Jesus said, *“today salvation has come to this house, because this man is also a Son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”* **Luke 19:1-10**

Honesty was a sure sign to Jesus that Zacchaeus had changed his heart and become a believer in God. Jesus needed no more proof and pronounced that Zacchaeus was a restored brother of the Jews.

The second is about a couple that wanted the glory but did not want to make the sacrifice. Their names were Ananias and Sapphira, and they were part of the very first Christian Church in Jerusalem. They had seen many make significant donations to the Church by giving a tract of land or possessions

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to the Church to care for the needy. Joseph from Cyprus had been one of the last gifts and his gift was so generous that the Church renamed him, Barnabas—or “Son of Encouragement”.

They wanted the glory of being one of these “over-the-top” givers but they also wanted to keep part of the money for themselves. So, instead of just saying, “We would like to give one-half or even one-third of this property we sold to the Church; or this is all we can afford to give right now—they devised a very elaborate scheme to deceive the church family into believing that they gave the entire sum while keeping what they really wanted. It did not go as planned, because the Holy Spirit was intent on not letting the first Church get corrupted by lying and manipulation with the offerings. So, the Holy Spirit informed Peter of the subterfuge and when Ananias came to announce the gift—Peter spoke clearly to him about how the money was his even up to the point where they decided what they would give to the Church. But the moment they mixed lies in with their offering—they not only lied to the Church—they also lied to God. When Ananias heard this, he fell over dead.

The plot continued as Sapphira came into the place where the Church leaders were a few hours later and when questioned by the Holy Spirit trained Peter—gave the same answers as her husband. Peter informed her that the young men that had carried her husband’s body out would carry hers out and she also fell over and died.

Why would God be that fanatic about honesty and truth telling in the Church? Because when corruption gets into the Church or into other personal relationships, it corrupts, destroys and finally kills.

I do not think God included that story in the Bible just to scare us; but to show how important the truth is to God. So, I want us to look again at some of the things the Bible says about honesty, truth, integrity and trusting others in our personal relationships.

Integrity in the Bible is translated, “the condition of being without blemish, completeness, perfection, sincerity, soundness, uprightness, and wholeness. It is an adherence to a pattern of good works. It is the clear definition of our Lord Jesus Christ—who after His baptism and while observing a 40 day fast was tempted by Satan and the Bible says without sin. It is something that God calls us to do with our family, our friends and in all of our life. We have the indwelling Holy spirit at work in us to make us more like Jesus, and we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, **Philippians 2:12-13** so that we live more and more like Christ as we grow in Him. It is by God’s power that we become increasingly people of integrity. We are called to obey God and in so doing to become people of uncompromised morality and integrity. We are to adhere to the truth and do good works.

Living in a world with integrity where the corrupt seem favored as well as our own battle with our desires makes an interesting and hard struggle. But I **Peter 3:13-18** tells us to always revere Jesus Christ and let Him prepare for you the answers that you are supposed to give. We are to do this with gentleness and respect so that those who speak bad against you will become ashamed of their slander. We can only live with true integrity by the power of Christ, which He graciously and freely gives to all who are His. (**John 16:33**)

When it comes to the future of honesty and relationships two of the key areas are ‘trusting each other’ and ‘speaking the truth in love.’

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What does the Bible say about trusting others especially in our key relationships? Perhaps King David summed it up best when he said, *“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes,”* **Psalm 118:8-9** David had been betrayed by those close to him several times, but instead of becoming bitter or writing people off as untrustworthy—he learned and taught a simple truth: *sinful people will fail us, but we can always trust in God. Solomon added that it is better to trust in God than to trust in our own minds.* **Proverbs 3:5-6.** (Please hunt up and read!)

Even though others will fail us at times, and we ourselves are not always trustworthy, we can and should trust people as much as possible. Without trust, true relationship is impossible. It is precisely because we know that God will never fail us that we can trust others. Our ultimate security is in Him, so we are free to trust others and experience the joy it brings. Trusting others is almost inseparable from loving others. True intimacy can only be achieved through honest and trust. It requires trust to bear one another’s burdens, encourage others toward love and good deeds; trust to confess our sins to one another; trust to share our needs and live the Christian life. Trust is necessary in any number of human relationships, and especially for the healthy functioning of the family and the Church. We should as Christians strive to be trustworthy, keep our word, not gossip, **I Tim 5:13, II Tim. 2:16.**

Trusting others is not always natural or easy. We are wise to take time to get to know others and not heedlessly give them our complete trust. Jesus often withdrew from the crowds and the ministry to assess where He was going and who He could depend upon.

Maybe you won’t or can’t trust people. If you are reluctant to trust anyone to any extent, we are wise to ask God to heal our wounded hearts.

The Bible gives good advice about trusting others after you have been hurt:

- 1) Trust God is the first and most important step. When we know and accept the fact that no matter what men does to us, God will always be there, faithful, true and trustworthy, it is easier to handle betrayal or disappointments. **Psalm 18:6**
- 2) Prayer is key, especially if we feel God has betrayed our trust by allowing us to be hurt.
- 3) When we have been hurt by trusting others—we must forgive. The Lord did not put a number on forgiveness— (77 times 7 simply means endlessly)—but He also did not tell us that we had to associate with the person(s) who constantly betrays us or make ourselves vulnerable to them.
- 4) We must strive to be trustworthy ourselves. This means to be good and godly—a safe place for others; one who keeps confidences; known for honesty, willingness to suffer with a friend; and always ‘speaking the truth in love.’

What does it mean to speak the truth in love, **Ephesians 4:15** speaking the truth in love is not as much about having a gentle demeanor as it is about the way truth and love go hand-in-hand. Because we love one another, we must speak the truth. Because we know the truth, we must be ones characterized by love. Importantly, we are also called to love those who do not know Christ. The best way we can show love is to share with them the truth of the gospel. Apart from Christ, people are dead in their sins and destined for an eternity in hell; but in Christ they can receive new

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life and eternal salvation. This is a message we must share. Peter summarizes it best when he writes in *“I would encourage you, if you want to read more, to read “Words that Hurt, Words that Heal, Speaking the Truth in Love”* by Carole Mayhall.

All friend and family relationships hinge on truth and trust. Honesty is the best policy and is the basis for trust. If my words reflect my heart and my words are good—I keep my promises; then I give others a reasonable basis on which they can safely share their hearts and make commitments with me. Jesus said that those who hold to his teaching know the truth—and the truth will set them free from slavery to sin, self-rule and self-justification. (**John 8:31-32**)

A central theme through the entire Bible is the necessity of truth in our relationships—with both God and others. David wrote that God desires truth in the inner person, **Psalms 51:6**; Paul affirms that when we speak the truth in love among other believers, then we grow up and together mature into the character of Jesus, Eph. 4:15 Being a Christian requires us to tell the truth, **Ephesians 4:25**.

Truth-telling encourages in others the belief that I am not hiding, manipulating, or scheming in order to get my way at a cost to you. We create brokenness in our relationships when we do not keep our promises or do not do what we say we will do. We can break that trust and create an unstable and uncertain relationship; but in contrast speaking honestly and living our word enables relationship to be stabilized and eventually healed and renewed.

It is a three-step process to override what the world may tell us about relationships and truth and implementing the teaching of the Bible:

1. Keep your promises---it strengthens trust
2. Answer honestly—even if it has a cost for you—it builds relationships.
3. Honesty will promote intimacy on all levels.

Finally, realize that telling the truth is a process. Nothing in the Bible is as instantaneous as we make it sound. We grow up and grow into—even our salvation. Our conversion and growing relationships will not totally eliminate our fears, our selfishness, and the illusion of independence—even as we grow into mature Christians. We can learn to love ourselves as God does, and to love others as we want to be loved. We can deal with the pain in our hearts, and we can discover the camaraderie of shared wounds, experiences, losses, and struggles with our relationships in settings that encourage honesty and demonstrate grace.

Scriptures for Honesty and Relationships:

1. **II Tim. 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.
2. **Col. 3:9** Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices.
3. **Ephesians 4:25** Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.
4. **Luke 6:31** Do to others as you would have them do to you.
5. **Pro. 12:22** The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.

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6. **I Peter 3:10-12** For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”
7. **Pro. 6:16-20** There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and person who stirs up conflict in the community. My son, keep your father’s command and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.

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SESSION #4 - HONESTY AND UNWHOLESOME WORDS

I know no other subject that will affect us in our Christian lives over the next five years more than the future of honesty. If honesty becomes even more compromised and is not the way our world communicates---then we need to have a way to cope in a world where truth is lies and lies are truth. It will control our very existence.

Ephesians 4:29 says, *“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.”*

What does that mean? Paul in this chapter has been explaining to the Church in his letter what it means to be one family of God living and working together. He speaks of truth telling, giving up a sensual life style—in which your desires control your life, you must give up your old style of life and become a new person in Christ, all must contribute to the family and not just take from the family, and finally he says starting with no unwholesome words and ending with forgiveness—you must treat your brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that builds them up and encourages them in their life.

What are those unwholesome words? I will take the list from Lisa Woodward in her blog:

1. **Lying**—Telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow.
2. **Gossiping**—casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true. Gossip is literally a form of lying and even if what I am saying is true, is usually is not intended to be helpful or build another person up.
3. **Complaining**—usually when we are sucked down into a vortex of negativity, everything around us is skewed into a burden instead of a blessing
4. **Exaggeration**—this is just one other form of embellishment of the truth and we know it is really a lie.
5. **Sarcasm**—the use of irony, saying one thing while meaning another, that is intended to hurt or even be biting to the one who receives the sarcasm.
6. **Put-downs** or belittling—it is the time we become like spin doctors, who put their finger into the wind to win an argument or belittle a person and decide how to bend the facts to make them sound more appealing—with little or no regard of the truth.
7. **Profanity**—Jesus said it best, *“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. What you say flows from what is in your heart.” Luke 6:45*

One of my favorite authors was Charles Colson and I also loved his short devotions on the radio/TV called ‘BreakPoint’. He and Anne Morse selected many of the BreakPoint programs and published them in a book he titled, “Burden of Truth—Defining Truth in an Age of Unbelief”. Most of these programs were written and given between 1985 and 1997 when the book was published. They were an outgrowth of his ministry, “Prison Fellowship”. I want to use several of those programs tonight to

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illustrate where truth has moved in the last 23 years, since the book was written, and speculate on where the future of truth will go in the next five years.

“Mr. Colson, how do we know there is truth?”

Standing before me was a spit-and-polish major at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where I had been invited to speak to 2,000 marine officers about ethics. In this very place, many years ago, I once served as a young lieutenant. Now I had returned to urge a commitment to absolute moral standards. Otherwise, I argued, America will suffer an escalating cycle of crime, drug abuse, and family breakup.

It was at the end of my talk that the major strode up to the microphone. “You’ve made a good argument that absolute moral standards are necessary to prevent social decay,” he said. “that’s a pragmatic argument, I want to know sir: Is it true? Is there such a thing as moral truth—and if there is, how do we know it?”

I stared in astonishment at the officer. After speaking on the subject all across America, I had finally found someone who knew the key question. The most important question is not whether moral standards are useful in propping up society but whether they are true. Many Christians contend for Christian values in order to knit together some threads of civility in a rapidly unraveling society—as I did that day at Camp Lejeune. At Prison Fellowship, we’ve crafted a moral case against crime. Crime is a moral disorder, and unless America adopts a moral response crime will overwhelm us. Similar arguments can be made to help prop up the shattered social structures in every area of American life. A free society’s way of sustaining social harmony is through a shared value system.

We must recognize that pragmatic arguments do not move people’s minds and heart. David Klinghoffer went to the heart of the matter in a Wall Street Journal article, “*A person doesn’t accept a new, rigorous system of moral action because it might in the long run prop up a society.*” He wrote. “No, a person submits to a more demanding moral system because he believes the system is, in a fundamental sense, true—very likely because he believes it is the will of God.”

Today, it has become more important than ever to frame arguments based on truth itself—that we owe allegiance to these moral standards, not just because they work well in society but because they are true.

Colson spoke about the time he was invited to give a Distinguished Lecture at Harvard Business School on ethics and he prepared by reading every book on ethics he could find as well as studying their four-week course on ethics. The course was all pragmatics—as Colson interviewed one business graduate he knew personally, he asked him what he had learned in the Harvard Ethics Class. The man said, I can sum it up in one sentence. “When you are making a serious business decision, never do anything you think might end up in the newspapers.” He arrived to a packed hall of students and teachers at Harvard’s Aldrich Hall. For 45 minutes he spoke on the question: ‘*Can man be good without God*’—first posed by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

His conclusion was no, because without absolute truth in the formulation of ethics over time things will be decided subjectively. He expected feedback from the students but none came. One Christian

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student said, “They didn’t know what to ask. They had never thought of the source of truth that ethics is built upon.

The young marine wanted to know: *Is there truth? And is it knowable? Is there a right and wrong?* “Yes.” Mr. Colson replied, “*There are moral absolutes and we know them because God has revealed them in Scripture.*” We can know God through His Word. And God gives an objective order—just like there are laws of gravity, there is also a moral law. God’s revelation—His word—fits what we know from experience.

When I was studying for my Doctorate at a Liberal University, I had a class co-taught by the head of the Counseling Department and the head of the Theology Department. One day in class we were discussing ethics and our Theology Professor was asked a direct question about sin. His answer absolutely floored me. He said, “*I do not think we can accurately label any action as a sin, with the exception of taking your own life.*” This was a Seminary where the head of the Theology Department did not believe in any of the absolutes of the Bible.

It seems like we may have a new attention to values, morals, and virtues; but be careful and aware of the pragmatic spirit behind it. Many of our leaders view virtue and morality merely as useful ropes we can use to pull ourselves out of the social sinkholes we have fallen into. British historian Paul Johnson writes in *Enemies of Society* that “*at all times civilization has its enemies, though they are constantly changing their guise and their weapons.*” These enemies are those who, “*for whatever motive, deny, distort, minimize, exaggerate or poison the truth.*” The great defensive art, Johnson says, is to detect and unmask truth’s enemies before the damage they inflict becomes fatal.

The question today is no different from what it was two thousand years ago when Pontius Pilate sarcastically asked Jesus Christ, “*What is truth?*” The one who stood before Pilate two thousand years ago speaks today with the same firm and unshakable confidence. He is the one who responds, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*”

Let me next address the issue of the exaggeration the facts or embellishing the truth. The Greek word for this is ‘*pseudomai*’ and it is used 7 times and always portrays someone who misrepresents who he is or what he does, by what he says, and by the fact or truth he purports to be true. Paul was very emphatic about it and commanded the Colossians to STOP LYING TO ONE ANOTHER! This included trumping up a story about yourself or your past deeds to make yourself look better in the sight of others. This is so widespread in our nation, that we have fact checkers checking out the fact-checkers. We have developed an entire series of words that have to do with pointing out exaggeration and delisting embellishments. We will need to realize that we may be only a few years away from diplomas on the walls of the professionals we see as imitations of the real thing. We may be hired by or fired by someone who has developed the skill of exaggeration and embellishment to the point that they control our entire career life. We may find that exaggeration can ruin our marriage, our home, and even our spiritual bonds of fellowship.

Another program on BreakPoint spoke to this subject:

Rita Warren is a 68-year-old immigrant who grew up in Italy, and this Italian taught her Virginia neighborhood a lesson in protecting American freedom. For years, every Christmas, Mrs.

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Warren traveled from Fairfax, Virginia, to Washington D.C. to set up a nativity scene at the Capitol. Because Mrs. Warren sat by her crèche all day long and then took it home at night, the display was considered a form of free speech, not a public display.

But in December, 1995 Mrs. Warren took a different tactic. That summer the Supreme Court had ruled that the Ku Klux Klan had the right to erect a cross in a public park in Columbus, Ohio. Such displays are permissible, the court said, if public property is designated as a forum for public expression.

Well, if the Klan had the right to a public display, Mrs. Warren decided, then so did she. This elderly, soft-spoken woman got as tough as any ACLU lawyer. She threatened to sue Fairfax if city officials didn't permit her to display her crèche on public property. And she won. The city designated an area near city hall for public displays and gave Mrs. Warren permission to set up her crèche there.

Mrs. Warren was ecstatic. As she told the Washington Times, *"It's a victory for . . . the little baby in the cradle and for all the people of Fairfax City."*

Well not all the people. The grinchers at the ACL muttered and fumed, trying to figure out some way to get rid of Mrs. Warren's crèche. But if they decide to take Rita Warren on, they'll have quite a fight on their hands, because this is one woman who takes religious freedom seriously. Rita Warren still remembers vividly the day fifty years ago when Mussolini's henchmen marched into her junior-high classroom in Italy and striped the cross off the wall. In its place, they hung pictures of Mussolini and Hitler. Instead of reciting the Lord's Prayer, the children were forced to salute the two dictators.

The memory was burned into Rita's mind and stayed there long after she immigrated to the US in 1947. It taught her that citizens must fight to protect their religious freedoms.

"I am not a religious fanatic," she says, "but maybe if we Italians had put up a fight years ago, we could have avoided that horrible war" (Washington Times, December 8, 1995).

Unlike Rita Warren, too many Americans think we can strip the public square of all religious influences and replace them with a neutral secularism. But as the Italians discovered, when you get rid of God, another ideology will spring up in its place---one far less benevolent.

We need to remember that our religious freedoms must be guarded; regardless of the exaggerations and embellishments those who want Christian religion out of the public eye say or do. Letter in the Arizona Republic about how the Christian Pastor at the Democratic Convention should not have used the name 'Jesus Christ' to end the prayer and the situation that Chaplain Frank is in at Phoenix Children's Hospital.

Let's take a look at another one of the 'unwholesome words'—sarcasm.

Sarcasm is the use of irony, saying one thing while meaning another, in a biting and hurtful way. The Bible uses irony and even satire, but not sarcasm in the sense of belittling or ridiculing someone. It is not appropriate. Sarcasm has at its core the intent to insult or to be hurtful with no corresponding love. Jesus warned against such harsh, unloving words in **Matthew 5:22**. We should speak the truth

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with loving intent, *Ephesians 4:15*, avoiding “foolish talk or coarse joking” (*Ephesians 5:4* says, “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”) We should speak in such a way that the hearer will understand our motivation. And it should never be malicious or cruel. Carefully worded irony may be fitting, but malicious sarcasm is not.

We live in an age where sarcasm has become the normal speech for those who intend to use their words to get their way. It is not innocent and it is not sincere. It is a way to move people to do what you want and accomplish that with a little humor and a lot of dismissive words. It is a lazy way to carry out discussions and arguments, because the person who learns to be sarcastic the best--- only has to rely on a tarnished wit instead of research and thought out arguments. It is dangerous because it limits the person using sarcasm to a series of shallow relationships built on biting, hurting comments to those who do not agree.

Another program on BreakPoint spoke to this problem:

When several Christians were elected to the school board in Vista, California, national groups immediately swooped down for the kill. The American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way relentlessly attacked the board members as bigots, religious extremists, and used severe sarcasm and ridicule as their weapons of attack.

What is their crime? Why, the Vista board actually asked schools to teach students about the scientific evidence against evolution.

The Vista controversy is proof once again that science has grown rigidly dogmatic. To question the ruling orthodoxy of evolution is dismissed as out-of-bounds. To go further and suggest that life may be the product of design or purpose is regarded as really outrageous—as some oddball invention of the Religious Right.

But design in nature is no recent invention of religious extremists. In fact, it has a long and respectable history. As Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton show in *The Soul of Science*, for nearly three centuries biology was dominated by the Christian concept of creation.

Take for example, John Ray in the seventeenth century. Ray is credited with offering the first biological definition of species, based not on how organisms look or behave but on reproduction. No matter how much variation an organism may exhibit, it belongs to the same species as its parents.

To modern ears, this sounds obvious. That’s because reproduction—the ability to interbreed—has become the standard definition of species. But where did it originate? From Genesis 1, John Ray proposed that a species consists of all the descendants of a male-female pair created by God—just as the human race consists of all the descendants of the original human pair.

Another famous believer in creation was Georges Cuvier in the 19th century. It was said the Cuvier could reconstruct an extinct animal from a single bone. His stunning accomplishments flowed from his conviction that God created each organism as an integrated system—with each part adapted to its way of life. So, carnivores have claws and sharp teeth for catching prey, while grazing animals have hooves instead of claws, and flat, rough teeth for grinding

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Cuvier was adamantly opposed to any notion of evolution. He argued that since an organism is an integrated system, you cannot create a new organism by random changes. It would be like letting a child randomly move a few wires around in your computer. Obviously, that would be much more likely to destroy the computer than to create a new and better one.

If these arguments sound familiar, it's because they have been revived in recent years by the creationist movement. Creationism is not a recent fabrication by religious zealots. It has a rich and respectable history. Groups like the ACLU will continue to inflame public fears, sarcastically saying that any mention of creation in the classroom will destroy science. But our response ought to be that for centuries the majority of biologists believed in creation—and biology survived very well indeed.

It is vitally important that we Christians recover our history and reclaim our rich heritage in science in spite of the sarcasm of those who defend evolution.

The last unwholesome word I want to look at is “belittling” or “put-downs.”

It is the most dangerous foe of future honesty in my mind of all the seven I listed. It is the role of the “spin doctor”—who decides how to bend the facts to make them sound appealing to their cause. They are the people who live by public opinion and not principles. Paul wrote in *Romans 1:18-20*—*“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse.”*

We again live in an age when people soften their own sins with mild words and skewer others with harsh words. Or worse, they see the sins of others and are blind to their own. And when the truth hunts them down and corners them, they will dodge, distort, evade, mislead, and equivocate and finally lie—anything to hold down the truth from having its full effect in their lives. This is who we are and what we are in a vast part of our nation. Paul after saying that all people, Jews and Greeks are under sin, and none are righteous not even Paul, **Romans 3:9-10**, then says, in **Romans 3:13**—*“Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they keep deceiving.”* They intentionally suppress the truth—especially the truth that we were made to glorify and thank God. They do this with unrighteousness and especially in the denial of God and His power over their lives. We are made to give him glory not compete with Him for glory, and we are dependent on him. We do not supply God—He supplies us, and therefore we are to live with constant gratitude.

There are many examples of this in American culture but none more obvious than our intellectual community's blind allegiance to the concept of evolution in spite of the plentiful and convicting evidence that denies evolution. I want to share one more program of Break Point that captures that battle and points out how it is fought primarily by ‘put-downs’ and ‘belittling’.

An 8-year-old boy made a startling comment to his mother, “Mama”, he said, “sometimes I wonder what we’re here for.”

Does life have a purpose? Is there meaning to existence? These are among the most significant questions human beings face over their lifetime—questions that often drive us to God for answers.

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But today, many scientists and most of the broad intellectual community uses put-downs and belittling to tell us that we must turn to science for all the answers. Science is not just about forecasting the weather or mapping our genes, we're told; it is also the basis for an entire worldview—a naturalistic worldview that tells there is not ultimate purpose or meaning to life.

Cornell professor William Provine is an evangelist for the naturalistic worldview. He travels to college campuses giving a lecture entitled, "the Unfinished Darwinian Revolution." His message is that Darwinism is not just about biology, it also entails an entire philosophy of life. It tells us how the appearance of life can be explained by natural causes alone—and that the history of the universe is a product of random events and impersonal natural laws.

He states, Darwinism entails the philosophy of naturalism, and since that is true there is no God and therefore no ultimate purpose in life. As Provine puts it, evolution operates by mindless mechanistic principles: It is a 'totally purposeless, uncaring process.' But if you ask about the evidence for the Darwinist worldview, it is very meager. (An aside—I was taught years ago that the growth of a horse from a small animal to now a large animal is proof of evolution. Really, it is still a horse) Let me share you a proof of evolution that Jonathan Weiner claims he saw on the Galapagos Islands, home of Darwin's famous finches. Weiner observed that the finches' beaks grew larger in the dry seasons, when the seeds they eat are tough and hard, but after a rainy season, when tiny seeds became available once more, the finches' beaks grew smaller again. He wrote, I witnessed 'evolution in action,' New York Times, May 8, 1994.

But what he really witnessed was the exact opposite of evolution. As Phillip Johnson explains in 'Reason in the Balance' a change in beak size is a minor adaptation that allows the finches to adapt and survive. In other words, it allows them to stay finches. It does not prove that they are capable of evolving into a different species of bird, and it certainly does not prove that finches evolved from some other organism in the first place.

When Darwinists claim that evolution is an observed fact—often in a very dismissive way to those who don't believe that, they invariably refer to minor adaptations like the finch beaks. And on this flimsy basis they urge us to abandon belief in a Creator and take a leap of faith, to a grand metaphysical story about naturalism. They insist that we accept a grim version of a universe with no ultimate meaning or purpose, and often literally label everyone who does not believe this as superstitious and uneducated.

If Darwinism were true scientifically, then we'd all have to accept its dark implications. But Darwinism is not even good science. DNA alone proves that species do not evolve and do not change to another species. Our present prison system has been changed by the fact that 20-30 year old DNA kits still prove that only one person could have committed a crime. You and I need to fight the hold it has on our culture, not only in the science classroom, but in every area of life. Otherwise our children may come to believe that their own lives are nothing but a cosmic accident. The great increase of suicides of people 35 and under should show the disaster of that mind-thought.

I would remind you that the *"Future of Honesty in the United States"* is a battle for the minds and eternal direction of our nation and our families. *"Unwholesome words"* can sink the ship when they become the only words our 'influencers' are using.