



SESSION 10

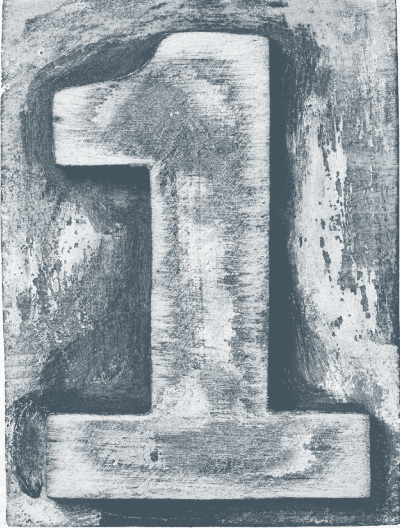
DO NOT LIE

During the 2000 Summer Olympic® Games, Marion Jones became a household name as she brought honor to her country. She won a record five medals at the Olympiad, specifically three gold and two bronze. Her performance was astonishing and demonstrated a dominance in the sport of track and field that many had never seen. Jones would receive wealth and fame as a result of her victories. She became a face for organizations and products such as Nike®, Gatorade®, and milk. She was the hope and promise of athleticism in the United States for about five years.

But then rumors about her use of performance-enhancing drugs began to emerge. Jones testified to federal agents while under oath that she was not guilty of using steroids. She would not relent from her pursuit of a drug-free image.

All of her hard work, training, and competing, however, would be undone as she was found to have lied. She was convicted of perjury, sentenced to six months in prison, and stripped of her Olympic medals.

The Ninth Commandment Helps Us See That...



God Forbids Lying

We live in a world that makes money off of the kinds of lies this passage speaks against. Tabloids lie about celebrities and politicians, and people want to hear the latest gossip from Hollywood or Washington, DC. An entire wing of the entertainment industry has been built on the backs of lies that appear as news. As believers, we must seek out the truth and learn to discern what is news and what is gossip.

Though we may not be ones who purchase tabloid gossip, we still have forms of lying that we must watch out for:

Stretching the Truth

One form is embellishment. Sometimes this is meant in fun during the telling of a story by making the surrounding details more exaggerated than they truly are. However, this can also be done in a malicious manner to tear down someone's reputation. As Christians, we should make sure that when asked to give an account of a situation, we are not embellishing details that could change the outcome of a person's punishment or reward.

White Lies

Another popular way to lie is the concept of white lies. White lies are seen as minor and harmless and are often used to shelter someone from a hurtful truth or to make them feel better about themselves. White lies may seem innocent, but even the innocence is deceptive. We lie first to ourselves in telling a white lie.

► What kinds of lies are seen as culturally acceptable today?

Business as Usual?

I'm glad I'm not a businessperson. I would be far too tempted to practice deceit. God bless those of you who are and who will be God-honoring businesspeople.

After a friend of mine quit working at a nearby store, he shared a little bit of what went on behind the scenes. Many of the items in the store were of poor workmanship; the store wanted to purchase lower-quality items to lower its own cost and to get people to buy items more often (since the lower quality items would break down). "Planned obsolescence," it was called. And the arm-twisting people went through with the salespeople (complete with exaggerations and empty promises) to get the price down—it was all a game of wringing the customer for every dollar's worth. (The fact he was paid on commission didn't help the situation.)

Another example with a different business: there was a big sale on gift cards, half-off. Buy a \$20 gift card for \$10. A few days after that sale, the business suddenly closed. One more chance to practice deceit and get rich.

It seems like you have to go into business with your guard up and your lie-detector set to super-sensitive. A God-honoring business, on the other hand, seeks to provide the best service or product it can to meet the precise needs of its customers. It seeks to love people and get a fair price for its service or goods, and trusts in God for its profits. So it has no need for deceit. Too many businesses depend on deceit, embellishments, and hidden loopholes because they rely on themselves, not God. (Look at Matt. 6:33.) And in a consumer-eat-consumer world, deceit is a great condiment. May we be people who feast on and trust in Jesus, not our fellow man, so we can allow our mouths to be fountains of truth, be it in business or otherwise.

Exodus 23:1-3

You must not spread a false report. Do not join the wicked to be a malicious witness. You must not follow a crowd in wrongdoing. Do not testify in a lawsuit and go along with a crowd to pervert justice. Do not show favoritism to a poor person in his lawsuit.

► **Why should we be aware of our motives to lie? How can we resist the temptation to lie?**



God Desires a Truthful Heart

Our God is a God of truth. Honesty is important to Him because it is part of His nature, and He created human beings in His image to be honest with Him and one another.

Psalm 15 was prophetic, describing what the Messiah would be like, and the Messiah would be a person of integrity. One quality listed said he would be a person who keeps his word regardless of the cost. Who else but Jesus?

The Cover-Up

One of the scarier moments I had to face against my fallen nature might not seem so scary to you. I had a meeting for work to catch, but I had wanted to cram in just one more task before heading to the meeting (and then one more little thing, and then another little thing...). Consequently, I was running late to the meeting.

On my way there, one of my colleagues (who was not supposed to be at the meeting) stopped me to ask about something. We proceeded to have a brief conversation before I was able to shrug him off and continue my hurried way to the meeting.

As I went, I thought, “Ah, good, now I can say that Mike [my buddy] stopped me and made me late to the meeting. Then I’ll have an excuse.”

A moment after the thought formed itself in my mind, the Holy Spirit was pleased to convict me. How dare I? It wasn’t Mike’s fault I was late. It was mine. Period. Nobody else’s. And I was going to lie about it.

The fact that I was planning on lying really bothered me. It was second nature to me. And that scared me. Usually, we lie to make ourselves look better (like my justifying why I was late to the meeting) or to hurt others. And that’s scary, because that part of our nature comes from the father of lies (John 8:44).

May the Holy Spirit help us to be a people who don’t need to look out for our own interests (like why we’re late to a meeting). Rather, let us be a people who so trust the One who gave His own Son that we can be honest and show ourselves to be children of the Father of lights (Jas. 1:17), not the father of lies.

While on trial in front of His false accusers, He could have denied His Deity and taken the easy way out. He could have avoided isolation, persecution, and death by lying about who He is, but He chose to tell the truth. Pilate tried to convince Jesus to recant but He would not. He is the Messiah and could not deny the truth of His kingship and kingdom. He fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 15, showing He would keep His word whatever the cost.

► **Why must honesty be a quality found in a follower of Jesus? What are the effects of dishonesty from a believer?**

In the same way that Christ told the truth about Himself, we too must tell the truth about Christ and His salvation.

► **Think of when you are most tempted to lie. Is it when you are in trouble? when you have a chance to gain reputation in the eyes of others? when there is a pleasurable advantage for you? How do your answers reveal what need you seek to fill by deceit? What promises in Scripture can you trust in order to satisfy this longing in your life?**

Psalm 15

LORD, who can dwell in Your tent? Who can live on Your holy mountain? The one who lives honestly, practices righteousness, and acknowledges the truth in his heart— who does not slander with his tongue, who does not harm his friend or discredit his neighbor, who despises the one rejected by the LORD but honors those who fear the LORD, who keeps his word whatever the cost, who does not lend his money at interest or take a bribe against the innocent— the one who does these things will never be moved.

A Truthful Heart is Found in Christ

Honesty is a primary indicator of the change that has taken place in Christians. Because we have the truth of the gospel and a new identity in Christ, we should be truthful with one another and toward God. Yet this is only possible because the Holy Spirit empowers us to put away lying and to live out the new, truthful self we have put on.



Now, this does not mean we are incapable of lying. We still wrestle with our former ways, known in Colossians 3 as the old self. The temptation to deceive and lie remains within us.

However, the cross demands our repentance, or turning away from our sin. By telling the truth that sin is in us and Christ has set us free from it, we are speaking the truth about lying. We should always make sure to heed the words of puritan pastor John Owen: “Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.”¹

1. www.johnowen.org/quotes/

The Worst Thing an Honest Man Can Do...

“The worst thing an honest man can do is to make an honest mistake.” My friend’s Grandpappy Funk said that quote, and I’ve found it to be true.

Grandpappy Funk came from another time. In his day, about the only thing that had an engine was the farm’s tractor. His value for honesty was inherited from the days of the cowboys, where “a man’s word is his bond.”

In the Old West, where lawmen were few and far between, honesty was invaluable. In the movie *Open Range* (Touchstone, 2003),¹ one cowboy, Charlie, holds a grudge against a younger cowboy named Button for days because Button tried to cheat in a card game. He won’t work with Button. Days later, he pushes Button into a creek and tells him, “That’s for cheating at cards.”

The boss of the outfit, a wizened old man named Boss Spearman, tells Button, “A man’s trust is a valuable thing, Button. You don’t want to lose it for a handful of cards.”

Cowboys and Grandpappy Funk valued honesty so much because it marked the very core of a person. A dishonest person wasn’t worth working with, playing cards with, or even

► **How can honesty aid us in our mission to share the truth of Jesus Christ?**

Colossians 3:9-10

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator.

► **How can you make restitution for a lie you have told?**

talking to. If that was so valued among cowboys, how much more so ought honesty be valued among Christians!

In a world where advertisements make false promises and it is assumed that everyone is out to get something from you (try asking a stranger on the street how her day is going, then watch her guard go up as she wonders what you want from her), people almost assume deceit. If and when they see Christians being authentic, it's a fresh breeze across an otherwise rotten landscape. The only way to authentic honesty is through the new heart given by the Holy Spirit in the new birth—a heart that treasures Jesus above everything else, be it a handful of cards or all the riches in the world.

1. We are aware that the referenced movie is rated R. We do not endorse this movie, but are simply referencing a general story from this film.

GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

When compared to other Commandments forbidding stealing, adultery, and even murder, the Command against lying might seem rather insignificant. It may seem that way because deceitfulness has almost become an everyday occurrence within our culture. From our highest political offices, to the average citizen on the street, intentional deception is ever present throughout our culture.

What are some examples from pop culture where someone was caught in a lie? What are some television series that have to do with lying?

Even though we may not think of this sin as being as bad as the rest, it is important that we understand God's stance on lying. By following the biblical perspective about lies and deception, we lift up the truthfulness of God and the gospel, acknowledging Jesus as the Truth who changes lives.

What is the connection between truthfulness and God's character? What is the connection between our new life in Christ and living a life of truthfulness?

As with the rest of the Commandments, there is a connection between lying and the heart. Since lying is an overflow of what is in the heart, we recognize the importance of examining our hearts whenever the rotten fruit of lying presents itself.

If you have been living with deception and deceit, why is it important to examine your heart? How is the heart the root cause of your behavior?