

A CULTURE OF DISHONESTY

Proverbs 17:4 ... "An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue."

It should come as no surprise to you that telling a lie is a sin. That fact is repeated often in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Even unbelievers know that lying is wrong. However, knowing that lying is a sin seems to have little influence on people, both the saved and the unsaved. A clue to explaining this is found in today's verse, which defines a culture of dishonesty.

The first step in being absorbed into the culture of dishonesty, is the ease with which you tell someone a lie. The Holy Spirit reminds you through your conscience that what you are saying is wrong. But the more often you lie, the easier it becomes to ignore Him. We see the same pattern with sexual immorality, stealing, adultery, and other sins. Sin begins to feel natural and normal.

Our verse today goes beyond the basic fact that lying is wrong. It reveals that lying can become a habit. Liars "listen eagerly" to other liars. It is like the habit of smoking. The first cigarette you smoke may make you feel sick. But the second and third cigarettes are more comfortable. Over time, smoking bothers you very little and you do it despite the dangers to your health. Even more profound, is that you ignore the discomfort and danger you create for people around you by smoking. Such is the image we have of dishonesty in today's verse. Not only does lying become easier for you, but you are drawn in by the lies of others. Other liars seem credible to you because they are just like you. And the problems you create by lying do not disturb you.

Obviously, a lie is telling someone something that is not true. But gossip is also usually a lie because gossips cannot resist embellishing the truth. Rumors are usually lies, because they speak of things that did not happen, or happened differently than how the rumor explains it. Withholding information can be a lie, such as when you do not inform your parents of a misdeed at school, or that you became drunk by drinking with your friends. Most other sins involve lying, as well. If you steal something you lie to hide the theft. If you have sex with your boyfriend, you lie to your parents to hide that sin. If you cheat on your wife with another woman, you lie to cover up that sin. Sins breed more sin. This is how dishonesty becomes its own culture; it captures people so deeply, that it feels natural.

Like smoking, lying will become a habit if you practice it often. Lying will seem normal if everyone around you is living a lie. If you find it easy to lie and believe other liars, you are already trapped in that culture. However, Christ offers us an escape from that sin, just like every other sin God forbids. The first step in breaking that habit is to pray every morning, asking the Holy Spirit to convict you when you are about to tell a lie. Breaking the chains of any sin can be difficult. But living in bondage to sin could find you locked out of heaven. Pray every day or even many times a day to be released from the bonds of sin that have captured your mind and heart.

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