

Keys For Living

Part 3 – Living Honestly

Gen 20:1-13

Gen 26:1-11

Today, we're continuing in our series Keys For Living, and our title is Living Honestly.

Just like Abraham and his son Isaac, it's easy for ordinary people to fall into a pattern of lying.

But honesty is the foundation of all our relationships because it's the basis of trust.

I'm going to give you three reasons why people lie.

1. People lie because of fear.

ILLUS – Abraham went to live in the land of the Philistines, and looked round and thought, "I bet these Philistines are a godless bunch. Not like me. I've got the call of God on my life." Then he had an idea: "My Sarah is pretty gorgeous. If these guys see her, they'll want her for sure. They might even kill me to get her." So he said, "Sarah, you better tell them you're my sister." "But..." "No buts. You tell them I'm your brother."

And his fear caused him to lie.

And that little lie put his wife at risk.

Abimelech saw her, wanted her, took her, and if it hadn't been for God's intervention, he would have violated her.

Fear can lead to lying – fear of consequences, fear of losing popularity, fear of failure, fear of being found out.

Lots of people will be tempted to be dishonest when they are afraid.

ILLUS – A grandmother was looking after her two little grandchildren – a 7-year-old girl, and a 5-year-old boy. And they were really, really bad. When it came time for their mother to pick them up, the little girl said, "Are you going to tell Mummy?" The grandmother replied, "No, I'm not. But if she asks me, I can't tell a lie." The little boy looked up to her and said, "Why not? I'm only 5, and I can lie great."

2. People lie for personal gain.

ILLUS – Pepe Rodriguez was one of the most notorious bank robbers in the wild, wild west. He would creep over the border into Texas, rob a bank and then flee back to Mexico. The Texas Rangers got so frustrated they decided that they would cross the border illegally and track him down. There was a long search, and finally they cornered him in a Mexican bar. All the lawmen had their guns drawn. Pepe was terrified. He could speak no English and the Rangers couldn't speak any Spanish. So they asked Pepe's friend, the bartender, to translate. He explained to Pepe who they were. The Rangers asked the barman to explain to Pepe that they wanted to know where he had hidden all the money. If he didn't tell them, they would shoot him down like a dog. The bartender translated, and Pepe began to shake with fear. "Tell them the money is hidden in the well. Count down 17 stones from the handle, and that's where all the loot is." The bartender turned to the Rangers and said in English, "Pepe is a very brave man. He says that you are a bunch of stinking pigs, and he is not afraid to die."

That's only a story, but the desire to get ahead is a strong motivating force to mess with the truth.

People talk themselves up, they make up stories, they misrepresent.

And they sacrifice the truth for a little material gain.

But Jesus said, (Mat 16:26) “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

The things in this life are only temporary.

The pleasures of this world are short-lived.

One day, when we stand before Almighty God, we’ll see very clearly that there’s nothing in **this** world worth losing your soul over.

3. People lie because of expectations.

ILLUS – Someone gave me a bookmark which said: Look famous. Be legendary. Appear complex. Act easy. Radiate presence. Travel light. Seem a dream. Prove real.

Wow! That’s a lot to live up to.

Is it any wonder when there are expectations from every direction to be all sorts of things, that people lie to make themselves look better than they really are.

We have an expression in church circles when a preacher starts doing this – we say he’s being evangelistic. Stretching the truth.

There’s nothing wrong with telling a good story, as long as people have a fair idea that you’re taking poetic licence.

But when you find yourself making it up and deliberately passing it off as the truth, you’ve got a problem.

ILLUS – I used to teach guitar to a boy named Andrew. One lesson he was really excited and started telling me how his father had a Harley Davidson and raced on the track. I was impressed – as impressed as someone can be when they don’t give a hoot about racing. Until his mother arrived. “I’ve been hearing all about the Harley.” “Harley?”, she said. “The only bike we’ve got is a bicycle.”

I had to bite my tongue after that because whenever he said something like, “We’re getting a couple of horses,” and I knew all they had was a small suburban block, I was tempted to say, “That’s great. Will you park them next to the Harley?”

Isn’t it true, that once you know that a person lies, you take everything they say with a grain of salt?

Even when they are telling truth – because you don’t always know which is which, and you no longer trust them.

Fear, personal gain, and expectations are all strong motivators to lie.

Now let’s look at three areas where we need to try to be honest.

1. Be honest with others.

Like I said, honesty is the basis of trust.

This is so important in the eyes of God, that when He decided to take all the things that were important to Him, and condense them into Ten Commandments for living, He included this commandment: (Ex 20:16) “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.”

In plain English: You shall not lie.

It’s one of the ten things most important to God.

This means being honest in our dealings with others.

It doesn’t only apply to what we say, but what we do, how we act.

For instance, falsifying information on a tax return is still lying.

2. Be honest with God.

Why should we be honest with God?

Because He knows everything anyway.

You can't surprise God, you can't shock Him, you can't catch Him unawares.

He knows all things, even our most secret thoughts and desires.

1 Sam 16:7 For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

1 Chron 28:9 As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts...

Ps 139:1-4 O LORD, You have searched me and known me. (2) You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. (3) You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. (4) For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

If God's knowledge is so amazingly complete, why do we bother trying to conceal the truth from Him?

There's no good reason to be anything but totally honest with God.

Mk 9:14-24

I just love this guy's honesty.

He didn't try to bluff his way through, he didn't try to pretend.

He said it like it is.

What surprises me is that Jesus never looked at this guy and said, "What is wrong with you people? How do you expect to ever get anything when your faith is so weak?"

There was no condemnation, not even the slightest hint of rebuke, or anger, or disappointment that the man's faith wasn't what it should be.

He just gave him what he asked for.

I don't know how many times I've prayed that prayer: Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.

Because I'm trusting God in something, and no matter how I try, it seems like it's just a little beyond my faith.

I reckon the hardest thing is for people to admit their sins, their failures, and their weaknesses to God.

But when we admit our sins to God, here's what the Bible says will happen: (1 John 1:9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He doesn't forgive or cleanse excuses, He doesn't forgive or cleanse cover-ups, He forgives and cleanses sin that is honestly brought to the light and confessed to Him.

This leads us to the third area.

3. Be honest with yourself.

I think that people have trouble being honest with God because they are not really honest with themselves.

It's hard to admit failings, faults and weaknesses.

It takes courage, humility, and real inner strength to deal with these things.

ILLUS – David and Bathsheba.

David admitted his sin, and God's immediate response was to forgive him.

When we choose to walk in integrity, 70% of the decisions we have to make, have already been made.