

Ethical Exhortation

Being honest/not telling lies

Discipleship and Ethics

Mark D. Baker, Ph.D.

Brenda Horton

Brenda@congoministries.org

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I have often thought about what is appropriate and good in regards to speaking the truth. We have so many ways that we explain our alterations of the truth. We call these alterations little white lies, bending the truth, exaggeration, etc. We also come up with many reasons why we do this. Most of the time it's to avoid an unpleasant situation. Rarely do we lie in order to deliberately harm. We may tell ourselves that most people may not even want to *know* the truth. We want to give people the answer or the scenario we think they want to hear, creating a situation where everyone is happy. Who doesn't want the people around them to be happy and impressed with them? However, there is a cost to this unsubstantiated happiness. These alterations of the truth will eventually bring more trouble in the end or keep us in a prison of deception.

great
phrases

Being caught in deception always results in heartache for the one who was deceived and the one who was caught. However, when we deceive others we think this will never occur. The lies that are believed can be just as damaging. Lies about who we are or what we have done can define us in the minds of others. When we have built an image that does not reflect who we truly are, it is nearly impossible to build real relationships. These deceptions will build a wall between us and others and these walls will create our prison. We are trapped in feeling like we must live as someone who we are not resulting in not being able to truly connect with those around us.

I am a people pleaser and for me it is exceptionally hard to fess up to something that will lead to the demise of my good standing in the eyes of others. It's interesting to me though, that those closest to me, don't put me on a pedestal, and in a sense I feel I have no "standing" to loose. It's a lot easier to admit I made a mistake at work to my husband than to coworkers. My pride tells me that others who may not know me as well

may see me as something wonderful and that I have much to ^{lose}lose. How laughable that is when written, but it's that the very thing I'm afraid of losing. It is this fear that can lead me to deceive others.

The deception that occurs between loved ones is much more dangerous and much more serious. Being sinful people, there may be things that humiliate us or things we may not be able to come to terms to with ourselves. I'm not suggesting that we must air out all our dirty laundry at all times. God is working on us and we will always need perfecting, and dealing with our imperfections may be frightening and will take time. However, there is a time and place for us to deal with those imperfections with those closest to us, and this is the opportunity for grace to be lived out to the fullest.

God has extended grace to us through His Son Jesus. This can give us the strength to face our imperfections and move past them and not live in them. There may be things that we have to face that may seem more difficult because we choose to tell the truth, but it is possible to learn from and leave these difficult things in the past when we live in God's grace. God has set us free from the hold that sin has on us. He wants us to live in that freedom. Because he has forgiven us we are free to live as our true selves without having to hide behind deception

Grace and forgiveness are what make being honest beneficial for us as Christians. Because God has offered this to us in its fullness, we can live in peace with God and others. Our honesty can lead to healing instead of division. Grace allows us to know acceptance through mistakes. The ultimate sign of grace is the sacrifice of God's only Son on the cross. He knew of our sin and still loved us and extended grace. He still

This is great, key theological point

beneficial or possible? maybe both I sense you need another sentence or two in this TP

wants us to be honest with Him so that through this honesty we can build a trusting relationship with Him. This is the ultimate example of building relationship.

As a Christian community we are to follow Christ's example and build relationships with each other through honesty and grace. How beautiful it is when we can remove the wall of deception and connect with those around us. How comforting it is to know we do not have to impress others with exaggeration to be accepted. How refreshing it is to know that grace will be extended when we fail and we can feel the freedom to be honest about our imperfections and move forward.

excellent

A

very good - great motivational feel - you invite to something better. It is demanding, but there is promise here - feels "centered" - not about measuring up, it's about thriving. But there is a clear challenge, forward, You root it very well in the indicative of what God has done

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Why tithe?

Whenever we hear a discourse about tithing, it often sounds too much like a legalistic prescription. Scriptures such as Malachi 3:8-10^{are} is employed to prove that it is a Biblical teaching. “We rob God when we don’t bring our tithe.” Couple that with Jesus’ exhortation in Luke 11:42 “You should have practiced the latter (justice and love of God) without leaving the former (tithing) undone.” Then a case is made that if we don’t give a prescribed amount, we have failed God. Giving within those parameters is easily defined and measurable. The motivation to give then becomes the fulfillment of the required amount.

I once asked one of my professors what he thought of tithing. He answered by asking if I meant, “Should we share what we have?” This is the more appropriate question. The answer to this question moves us beyond the limits and boundaries set by an external standard. It forces us to question our motives instead.

I would like to engage the issue of tithing by departing from both the usual line of reasoning and from the usual text. Instead of approaching it by saying that “It is a requirement and I should live up to that expectation.” I would like to instead offer an alternative. What if we looked at tithing and giving in general as an opportunity for God to work in our midst? What if we viewed this as an opportunity for us to grow?) nice

Abraham’s story

Instead of drawing from Malachi and Luke, let us examine the story of Abraham. Let us take notice of how God worked in his life. God initiates the story of Abraham by

asking him to take a risk. “The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you (Gen 12:1).’”

What is often lost in our reading of this text is that God was essentially asking Abram (instead of Abraham at this time) to leave what was for him a secure place.

Family for him offered security in different ways than it does for our contemporary times. Apart from the emotional and psychological security, being in the midst of “your people” also keeps them from possible physical harm. He was not traveling in a society such as ours with a sophisticated police force and justice system. He was instead easy prey for bandits.

He was also leaving a place with a secure future and wealth. He would have land and animals if he stayed. It was risky for him to leave that setting. There were no systems—such as universities, government subsidies, or insurance—in place for him to take advantage of. He needed to fully rely on God and his promise.

God and his promise is really the central player in this drama. It is not so much that Abraham was worthy. There were no overt and measurable prerequisites for Abraham to fulfill.¹ In fact, Abraham and Sarah were guilty of lapses in faith. Abraham lied about Sarah’s identity and Sarah did not believe she could conceive a child. Through all these lapses, God was faithful. He was not thwarted by Abraham. God gives Abraham a promise, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you (Gen 12:2).”

Abraham risked that God wouldn’t fulfill his promise. It would have required less effort for him to rely on his tangible resources. He could measure success and chart his

¹ Although one could argue that faith was a necessary ingredient, this is more implied rather than placed in front of Abraham as a measurable milestone. I am also aware that God asked certain things of Abraham—such as “keep my covenant” and circumcision—as the story unfolds.

progress. He could control the direction of his life and make prudent and practical decisions. He instead chose the risky and less comfortable path.

Security

It is natural for us to gravitate towards measurable objectives because it is in those waters that we can easily navigate through life. Letting go of this comfortable security blanket is our challenge. We are programmed in our society to think independently. "We should be rugged individualist." To make our own way and be secure becomes the goal for most of us.

It is a disconcerting reality that the motivation to accumulate wealth becomes the consuming crusade in our society. The worth of a person is measured by the wealth they have been able to accumulate. People will zealously cross almost any boundary in order to gain financial advantage. And sometimes people who do cross that line will be excused as others view their motivation with empathy wishing that they had done the same thing. This is a testament of how wealth has been elevated on the altar of our lives.

The need for money is an idol. I am not speaking of the paper and metal but of the prominence we place upon its accumulation. It is shamelessly accepted and even admired. It is also a deceiving deity. One can be in the midst of its grasp and not even be cognizant of that fact, because it offers such comfort and security.

Why give?

Giving gives us the opportunity to place wealth in its rightful place: as product and an instrument of God's kingdom. By giving, we place our trust in a God who is faithful. Because he is faithful, we can rely that he will provide for our needs. Because he is faithful, we can anticipate with eagerness his work on our behalf.

great
key
point

Instead of approaching giving and tithing as a requirement we must meet, let us instead view it as our way of putting our life in his hand. That is what Abraham did. What if Abraham did not believe God and instead chose to stay where he was comfortable? He would not have witnessed a God who is faithful.² Abraham came to know God in a deeper level, so can we. Abraham's willingness to risk was the catalyst for God's intervention. Let us give God the opportunity to work in the same manner in our lives.

I think right here you could add a further line or two. Make an explicit call to give & maybe even return to talk about tithing

*Beautiful, great work
very well conceived*

*A/A-
(3.83)*

² I realize that this could be somewhat argumentative since I mentioned that God would not be thwarted. I am also presenting a picture of God that would not abandon us even if we fall short. The point I am trying to make here is that Abraham's life would have taken a different route and the works of God we associate with Abraham's story would have a different flavor.