

How did you get on with a 48-hour Media Fast?

This week's message from Jesus is about 'How to live without lying'. **Read Matthew 5: 33 - 37.**

Q: Do we recognise ourselves as liars??

1. We are all Liars!

- We have all said 'I'll be there in 5 minutes' knowing we'll be longer and who has really read all the 'Terms and Conditions'? Studies reveal we lie every 3 minutes: to our children, to the dentist, to the doctor
- Also, we are lied to c. 200 times a day so, 2/3rds of all conversations involve some kind of deception.
- **Why do we lie?**
 - **Fear:** of the consequences if the truth comes out; of facing a difficult reality about ourselves.
 - **Selfishness:** there is gain in lying if it works; we lie to get what we want or avoid something we hate
 - We can quickly rationalise lying: 'it was only a white lie; I'm just being economical with the truth'.
 - Because it works! Exam cheats are undiscovered, we exaggerate on a CV and get the job.... Research suggests we are cheating and lying more and more but we **feel less guilty about it**. And yet most people name honesty as the most important virtue of all. **Q: How do you get a job nowadays?**

2. Jesus says simply tell the truth.

- **Verses 33-6.** Lying was ubiquitous and trust very low so swearing an oath to prove your honesty was very common practice. The Jewish Teachers introduced a double standard to provide a way round the OT laws. They insisted that oaths invoking God were binding, but if you swear by anything else it's not binding.
- Jesus says 'think: this is nonsense because everything is under God's sovereignty; **don't swear at all!**'
- Minimal honesty across society, breeds a lack of confidence and leads to widespread cynicism: no-one trusted anyone in Jesus' time and neither did they in OT times: **Jeremiah 9:5. Isaiah 59:15.**
- **Verse 37.** The answer is not oaths but to simply to let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No'.
- 21st century British culture is not much different. Too often our 'yes we'll do it/be there' disappoints, we say we'll pray for someone and forget. So we start adding oath-like extras, 'I promise/swear I'll come'.
- There is a cost to our integrity when we lie: **Matthew 16:26.** Jesus wants His disciples to speak simply and with godly integrity. He wants us to say 'yes' and mean it, to be trustworthy and truthful in what we say.

3. How do we achieve godly integrity?

- **Be attentive to the reality of our speech.** Listen to what we are saying and face into inner falsehood. Ask yourself 'Why did I pretend I'd been to a film/blame 'traffic' for lateness when I didn't start out on time'? Because I want to be respected? But lying leaves us where we are, honesty leads to change and growth. Ask the Spirit of Truth (= Jesus the way the truth & the life) to help us to listen to ourselves.
- **Repentance.** Big or small, the origin of all lies is Satan himself, the father of lies. He traps us into shame and drives a wedge between us and God. We end up isolated and lose our soul.
- The old C of E words of confession pray, 'We confess we have sinned in thought, word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault'. I did it on purpose – please forgive me. God will forgive because there is no condemnation for all who are in Christ Jesus. **Romans 8: 1.**
- Greater levels of truth in our church will need greater levels of maturity, grace and love for each other.

Soul Training Exercise: Silence.

1. JBS gives us two exercises this week: the first is to go a day without speaking. Choose the most convenient day of the week and warn people of what you are doing: they may get worried! If you are asked to speak, do so: love overrides discipline - yell if someone is in danger!
 2. Go a day without lying. If you stumble, correct it on the spot. You will almost certainly find people admire you for telling the truth. 'The paradox of honesty is that we don't seem foolish, just genuine, which is a lot more important to people than trying to impress them'. JBS page 115.
- Questions throughout Chapter 6 of 'The Good and beautiful Life' by James Bryan Smith and on pages 234-236.