

Are You an “Honest” Person?

No one, I presume, likes to be called a “liar.” Almost everyone considers him/herself to be a *basically* “honest” person, though there are certainly differing opinions on the qualifications for such. Many would likely admit to lying under special circumstances—like to prevent hurting someone’s feelings, or to protect either themselves or someone else, and yet still proclaim their own “honesty.” However...

Please note Ephesians 4:25, “*Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*” The word translated by the NASB as “*falsehood*” (*pseudos*) is usually rendered as a *lie* or *lying*, but is also defined as a “conscious and intentional falsehood” (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon). Think for a moment. Wouldn’t using truthful but not the whole truth statements in a deceiving way to create a false impression also fall within this definition? Pretty much every teenager or parent understands this well. Parent: “Where did you go last night?” Teenager: Truthfully recounts every place he or she went, carefully excepting the one(s) they were forbidden to attend, or the ones that they know will disappoint the parent and result in punitive consequences. Everything the teenage *said* was perhaps *technically* true, but the *omissions* were certainly designed to create a *false* impression! Unfortunately, this “teenage” proclivity is often further developed and continued in adulthood.

But while we’re at it, let’s consider some other forms of *lying* from perhaps an unexpected source. 1John is often considered the epistle of *love*— but it also has much to say about *lying*:

1John 1:10, “*If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*” In such cases, we “*make Him a liar*” because He has said, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” Romans 3:23. Surely in these regards, “*let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.*” Romans 3:4. Denying our sin(s) doesn’t remove or cover them— it just adds *lying* to the list!

1John 2:4-5a, “*The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has been truly perfected.*” Perhaps this is the most common lie people who consider themselves “Christians” (in a very broad use of the term) and “spiritual” tell themselves and others. John isn’t drawing a detailed sketch with fine lines— he’s painting a big picture with a broad brush. He isn’t talking about a *child of God* who sins and then confesses and repents, as in 1John 1:8-9. He has reference to the *practice* or *habitude* of sin, as further described in 1John 3:4-10. Simply put, one cannot claim to be a *child of God* and live like a *son of Satan* (cf. John 8:44).

1John 2:22, “*Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.*” As emphasized in the previous paragraph, there are other ways to *deny* that “*Jesus is the Christ.*” Though John seems to have in mind a verbal rejection of the *divinity* and *authority* of Jesus (cf. vv.21-23), we can certainly produce the same effect by our actions (cf. 3:9). This is well illustrated by Jesus’ prayer in John 17. In v.21, He besought the Father for the *unity of believers* stating further “*that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.*” By disunity and division, and necessarily by the attitudes and actions that produce them, we *deny* the *divinity* and *authority* of Jesus. Thus, through the *denials* of our actions, we become *liars*, cf. 1John 5:10. And finally,

1John 4:20, “*If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he*

has not seen.” The proclamation of anything does not necessarily make it true. Lies told loudly enough long enough may be believed and accepted as “truth,” but they’re still lies. So it is with proclaiming our love for God in the face of evidence to the contrary. John, again, makes it painfully clear and obvious: We don’t really love God- nor or we His children, if we hate one another. Though John surely intends “*brother*” in a spiritual sense, it really doesn’t matter since Jesus also proclaimed that we should *love our enemies* also, Matthew 5:44. If we claim to love God and yet hate anyone, we are liars and not God’s children at all, Matthew 5:45-48.

Honesty is a big deal to God. He cannot lie (cf. Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18), and He will not accept or claim as His own those who do, regardless of the form the lie happens to take. “*These are the things which you should do: Speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. Also let none of you devise evil in your hearts against one another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,*’ declares the Lord,” Zechariah 8:16-17. Think about these things, won’t you?

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