

## TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES? [Scripture ~ Psalm 15]

A husband & wife decided to eat out one night, but didn't make a reservation. When they arrived at the restaurant, they noticed that several couples had signed up for a table ahead of them. They left their name with the hostess, & sat down in the lobby. Shortly after, a disgruntled couple left the restaurant, complaining that the wait was too long.

Within minutes, the hostess called "**Walker?**" No answer. She called again but still got no response. Now, assuming that the couple who left were the Walkers, the husband quickly convinced his wife that if they told the hostess they were the Walkers, they'd get a table faster. The couple went forward as the hostess called a 3<sup>rd</sup> time.

"Mr. Walker?" The man nodded. "We've been expecting you," she announced, "Come this way; your family is waiting for you in the private dining room."

Little lies, little lies!

The "credibility gap" that once scared the public about people in high places, now seems to separate us from one another in all walks of life. Canadians lie on their income tax returns to the tune of millions of dollars every year. Unscrupulous doctors' fake reports so they can profit from medical insurances. Prized athletes in huge, sports-minded universities are kept eligible for competition through bogus credits & forged transcripts of academic results.

Children soon learn that lying is normal in TV ads.

In the words of a Time Magazine essay, ours is a "**huckstering, show-bizzy world, jangling with hype, hullabaloo & hooley, bull, baloney & bamboozlement.**"

After a while, people become worn down & don't expect to hear the truth anymore.

Since creation there has been an evil nature about us, that tries to distort the truth. Researchers say that children can tell lies by the age of 4. However, until they are 8, most children can't understand the difference between a deliberate false statement & an unintentional one, but they do know that it is wrong to mislead someone.

Lying is everywhere in our society. We see mass media distort the truth through sensationalism. You've seen ridiculous headlines as you stand at the checkout at Metro, scanning the National Enquirer, or some other "gutter press" publications while you're waiting, "Woman gives birth to a reptile," or some other totally off-the-wall kind of claim. Where do they get these stories anyway?

Canadians say that they no longer trust journalists to tell the truth.

We see truth distorted by politicians, TV evangelists, investment brokers, used car dealers & unscrupulous mechanics, plumbers or contractors.

Since ancient times great thinkers have been absorbed with ethics – defining right & wrong.

Some say that each culture should define what is right for its members.

Others maintain that each person should define what is right for themselves.

Then there is the school of thought which defines right, as whatever is best in the long run.

And where did all this begin? You will recall the story of Adam & Eve, whom God told not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge or they would die. I don't actually think that God meant that literally...basically, I think He meant that they would be disinherited.

When John Baillie, a Scottish theologian who taught a course about the doctrine of God at Edinburgh University, began his first lecture of each year, he would open with these words:

*"We must remember that in discussing God, we can't talk about Him without His hearing every word we say. We may be able to talk about others behind their backs, but God is everywhere, yes, even in this classroom. Therefore, in all our discussions, we must be aware of His infinite presence, and talk about Him, as it were, before His face."*

The knowledge that the Lord is everywhere should have a tremendous impact on what we say.

Lies, gossip, unkind remarks, ethnic slurs, off-colour comments, angry words, irreverent speech and disrespectful use of the Lord's name **should** never come to our lips.

If you have ever been on the wrong end of gossip, you know the destruction that the lack of truth can produce.

God's kingdom is strikingly different.

God is a god of truth and as His children, it is imperative that we too, are truthful people.

Friends, churches are facing an integrity crisis. This has been blatantly brought to the front by the headlines concerning the residential schools, all run by "Christian" leaders, and no denomination is exempt.

It seems that for the church, wrong is not always wrong, and right is not always right. There has never been a better time for those of us who try to live by God's standards, to recommit ourselves to honesty. Truth works in us to create a character of integrity, and a person of integrity seeks to use the truth to eliminate lies.

And let's face some home truths about our manipulation of the truth. We lie to promote our personal interest, to get attention, or to manipulate others.

We even circumvent the truth through deception or exaggeration. We shade the truth to cover our shortcomings and to hide our true feelings.

Then there's the temptation to blame our problems on others. Case in point ~ remember how Adam blamed Eve, then Eve continued to 'pass the buck' by blaming the serpent?

It might seem that lying has no direct connection with immorality, but it does. Look at the degradation that started in Eden with a simple but explosive lie, "You shall not die."

If a person lacks self-control in one area, it often spills over into other areas of our life.

Moral failures can usually be traced to three lacks:

- No personal daily walk with God
- Failure to meditate on scripture, AND
- The absence of truth in our lives.

We cannot know the truth if we don't know God.

Many are anemic in their understanding of biblical truth. We are legalists when we apply God's truths to others, but when we find ourselves in the same situation, we make excuses, and kid ourselves that we don't have the same faults as other people.

Friends, let's always be on guard to purge lies from our hearts and minds. After all, the absence of a lie, is the truth.

I leave you with this quote from Oliver Wendell Holmes, "***Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all.***"

AMEN