

The Power of Truth

In a “*Telling the truth*” survey taken from a cross-section of people in today’s society the following attitudes were revealed:

20% said if the opportunity to make more money was involved it is alright to lie.

25% said it is alright to lie to make yourself look better to other people.

30% said they had lied on a job application form.

46% knew of a friend who had cheated on their spouse.

51% said people are not as honest as they were 10 years ago.

60% said it is alright to lie to save yourself from embarrassment.

Is honesty the best policy?

In a survey of young adults:

80% of teenagers said they lied to their parents on a regular basis.

75% said they regularly lied to their friends.

61% said they regularly lied to their employers.

59% said they regularly lied to their children.

73% said they regularly lied to their brothers or sisters.

69% said they regularly lied to their lovers.

No wonder we have fragmented relationships because we have to have honesty in relationships for them to exist.

1 Corinthians 13:6 [NIV] *“Love rejoices in truth.”*

Love desires, in fact demands, the truth.

True love cannot exist in a relationship that is not founded on truth.

Ephesians 4:15 [Amplified Bible] *“Let our lives lovingly express the truth in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly, enfolded in love...”*

Love and truth go hand in hand, love does not exist outside of truth.

Dishonesty destroys relationships, no marriage can last with constant atmosphere of dishonesty.

How do we tell the truth to others

Not only does dishonesty destroy a relationship but truth wrongly presented can also destroy a relationship.

There are four ways in which we should express the truth to others to build strong relationships.

We must tell the truth consistently

What kind of relationship could there be in a marriage if the husband promised to be faithful to his wife six days in every week.

If we are not faithful all the time we are not faithful at all.

If we don't tell the truth all the time we are not truthful at all.

If we lie 10% of the time we are a liar and no-one could trust us any of the time to tell the truth.

Do we like to be lied to? No!

Well, the same is true of other people!

Nobody wants to be on the receiving end of a lie and the consequences that such lying generates.

Proverbs 13:17 [Living Bible] *"An unreliable messenger can cause a lot of trouble. Reliable communication permits progress."*

For a marriage or any other relationship to grow in strength and maturity, there must be reliable, truthful communication.

All good relationships are built on trust, this includes our relationship with our Creator God.

We can always trust God to be truthful and fulfil His promises but God also needs to be able to rely on our integrity, that we will truthfully fulfil what we have promised.

Trust and truth go together, the way we develop trust is by constantly telling the truth.

Proverbs 11:3 [Good News Bible] *"People who cannot be trusted are destroyed by their own dishonesty."*

The more honest we are the better our life will become.

It is good business to tell the truth.

In my business I never deal a second time with a supplier who is dishonest about his product. If a salesperson *"puts down"* a competitor's product they don't even get a first order from me, for it tells me that he is dishonest about his own product.

Proverbs 12:19 [Living Bible] *"Truth stands the test of time, lies are soon exposed."*

Most of the new customers who come to my firm to trade come by recommendation from others who have found we can be trusted to do an honest job.

Being honest in business and any situation in life causes you to stand out as a beacon in a darkening world, and people are attracted towards a bright light.

10 great business lies:-

- 1 The cheque is in the mail
- 2 Your money will be cheerfully be refunded
- 3 Give me your number and the doctor will ring you right back

- 4 Your table will be ready in five minutes
- 5 This offer is limited to the first 100 respondents
- 6 We service what we sell
- 7 One size fits all
- 8 Open wide, this won't hurt a bit
- 9 This used car is in mint condition
- 10 I'm from the Inland Revenue and I'm here to help you

Unfortunately we don't trust many people anymore.

In a survey asking "*which professions do you think are the most honest?*"

The overall impression was that no profession could be trusted at all times but I am glad to say that pastors of Christian churches came out top but advertising firms came out bottom.

Only 10% believed that advertisers could be trusted.

Only just above advertisers came car mechanics!!

Lawyers did a little better, they came in 3rd from the bottom.

39% thought news reporters were honest but people thought fictional TV characters were more honest.

Doctors rated only 3% higher than politicians with 63% of those surveyed thinking they could be trusted.

If we are Christians in any profession, we have to work much harder to overcome the general bias against our profession in the public mind.

We must tell the truth completely.

Proverbs 10:10 [Good News Bible] "*Someone who holds back the truth causes trouble...*"

Don't tell a half truth, for telling a half truth implies a whole lie.

There are two ways we can lie, not meaning what we say and also not saying what we mean.

If we continually tell white lies we will eventually become colour blind.

We will be "*colouring*" the truth every time we speak.

The kind of trouble half truths or "*white*" lies cause is confusion, doubt, bitterness, resentment, mistrust; but most of all it causes shallowness in all relationships.

We cannot have a close relationship with people who do not completely tell the truth at all times.

Why do we hold back the full truth?

Because we are cowards and want to avoid conflict.

Too often we are advised today "*not to rock the boat*" in relationships by not telling the complete truth about how we feel about another's words and actions.

"*Keep the peace at any price*" we are told, but the price will be loving, deep and lasting relationships.

A mature and lasting relationship demands openness on all sides.

Proverbs 10:10 [N.E.B.] *“To wink at a fault causes trouble, but a frank rebuke leads to peace.”*

Proverbs 28:23 [Living Bible] *“In the end people appreciate frankness more than flattery.”*

Too often, as we develop a relationship, we avoid any subjects that may cause conflict in that relationship, this lacks wisdom.

When a subject that had been avoided by one of the persons in a developing relationship the other person assumes there will be no future conflict, that both agree on this subject. When later disagreement is revealed, resentment is generated by the one who was not told the whole truth, and the relationship suffers.

Proverbs 24:26 [Good News Bible] *“An honest answer is a sign of true friendship.”*

If we *“sweep all contentions under the carpet”* the mound will get bigger and bigger until everyone eventually trip over this pile of unresolved issues, conflict breaks out, and the relationship takes a *“nose dive”*.

Some of us are hiding our true feelings in a pre-marriage or marriage relationship which will eventually *“blow up”* into conflict which may destroy that marriage by undermining the relationship.

The same principle applies to any relationship; at work, with our children, in our church, even in our relationship with our Creator God.

John 15:18, 20-21 [NIV] *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.” ... “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.”*

John 16:1-4 [NIV] *“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.”*

God in His Word is very open and fully honest about our becoming one of His disciples.

God does **not** hide the fact that conflict with this society is something that will come with our decision to follow His way of life.

Problems are prolonged by not telling the full truth, but when we are open at the beginning of a relationship there will be a lot of unpleasantness to begin with but in the long term the relationship will be made more binding.

We all agree in theory that honesty is the best policy.

But in practice, when we are in a situation we feel will lead to conflict, we consider that it is not the best time to be open and honest.

We always find an excuse to hold back the whole truth.

Teenagers will think *“If I told my parents what really happened they would turn me out of the house.”*

“If I told my employer the truth about this project I would lose my job.”

“If I told my husband how I really feel about our relationship he would ‘blow up’.”

“If I told my wife about the frustrations I feel about our love life she would accuse me of having a one track mind.”

“If I told my pastor what I really think of his presentations...” [You may be surprised by his reaction]

Avoidance only deepens the problem and makes the eventual crisis worse.

How do we keep marriages out of court?

We do exactly what is done in court but you do it at home, *“tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.”*

We must tell the truth lovingly

Ephesians 4:15 [Good News Bible] *“Speak the truth in a spirit of love.”*

We don't tell the truth in a brutal way. We don't use the truth as a weapon to destroy the other person.

Think now of one person who we would like to help change.

Now remember two things before we start on a project to help this person.

- a) People progress faster towards change when they are told the truth wrapped in love.
- b) Truth without love will be resisted because it is pure manipulation. The person on the receiving end sees it as an attack and will defend themselves against it.

Let us study a conversation between Bill and Mary; see if we identify with this!

Mary: *“When are you going to fix that dripping tap, I cannot stand it anymore?”*

Bill: *“Well, you don't give me a spare minute; you know what you made me do yesterday?”*

Mary: *“Made you! You offered to take my mother home after dinner; I didn't make you do it, it seems that however nicely I ask you to do anything you always find a way to start a fight over it.”*

Bill: *“Start a fight! All I'm doing is explaining why I haven't had time to repair the tap, you always expect me to do more than I have time to do.”*

Mary: *“Expecting you to do! Let me tell you something: you are not the one to talk, look at the list of things you expect me to do, and you never thank me for doing any of them.”*

Does this sound familiar?

The original issue of the dripping tap has been forgotten and it has developed into a battle of attack and defence on many other subjects. Stored up ammunition of past unfulfilled needs are being fired at each other in an unending conflict.

Truth becomes lost in the argument between attacker and defender.

We use attack and defence to avoid saying what we truly mean, or avoiding what other people are trying to convey.

Most marriages don't harmonise because both partners play this role of attacker and defender when differences come up in the relationship.

The alternative to this attack and defence is to speak the truth in love.

How do we know if we are speaking the truth in love?

We have to ask ourselves "*for whose benefit is what I am about to say going to be?*"

For whose benefit am I about to share this truth?

For my benefit, so I can put the other person down?

Or for their benefit so I can help to build them up?

Ephesians 4:29 [Good News Bible] "*Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you.*"

We need to tell the truth tactfully

Many times in life we are going to be forced to tell "*tough truth*".

We will be pressured to disclose truth to another person about their conduct that we know is going to be painful for them to receive.

We don't want to share this truth.

They don't want to hear it.

But it needs to be said, because the relationship we have with them is deteriorating because this difference has not been resolved.

Most times when we are faced with such a situation we avoid it or lie about its existence.

We seek to "*not rock the boat*" or "*keep the peace at any time*", etc. rather than cause the conflict we know that sharing the truth will cause.

The answer to sharing tough truth is to tell the truth tactfully.

How do we do this?

What is tact? Tact is making a point without making an enemy, attacking the problem rather than attacking the person.

Proverbs 12:18 [Good News Bible] "*Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal.*"

When we tell the truth we have a choice.

We can tell the truth in a way that hurts or we can tell the truth in a way that heals.

We can, when telling the truth, build people up or tear them down with the same knowledge.

How do we then disclose the truth without hurting the person who is being shown the truth?

We apply two principles:-

a) Plan our presentation

Proverbs 16:23 [Good News Bible] *“Intelligent people think before they speak: then what they say is more persuasive.”*

Consider before we speak how the person who is about to receive our comments will react.

Plan to present our statement in a way that will build up the person but attack the problem.

How we introduce the subject is very important.

When I was being trained in a speakers club I was at times given the assignment to evaluate another member's speech. The manual told me to find as many positive things as possible to say about the speech and its presentation. To build the person up with this encouragement before giving one was one way in which they could present an even more effective speech.

When I received such an evaluation, knowing this was the best way to evaluate and waiting for the criticism that I knew was going to come at the end, I accepted the criticism willingly because of the way it was presented.

Proverbs 16:21 [Good News Bible] *“A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is.”*

b) Choose the right time

Ecclesiastes 8:6 [Good News Bible] *“There is a right time and a right way to do everything.”*

Timing is the major part of good communication.

Truth + tact + timing = good relationships.

Because it equals good communication and good communication is the life blood of good relationships.

If we are sharing the truth in the wrong way, at the wrong time with the wrong people, although all you say may be true, God's Word condemns such action.

The Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, calls it gossip.

Before we convey needful, but painful truth to another person we need to prepare well the atmosphere so that what we have to say will be well received.

The one receiving this truth about themselves must be convinced that it is given out of love for them. Know without a doubt that what we are doing is with their welfare foremost in our mind.

We may be ready to share the truth but make sure the other person is ready, that is showing love for that person.

Note that all the above is singular, never share critical truth with a person in public, such disclosure must always be one-to-one.

What we have just learnt is all very demanding on us in time and patience.

Why should we be willing to take on all this extra work?

Because of the wonderful end results!

1 John 1:7 [Good News Bible] *“If we live in the light, just as He [Jesus Christ] is in the light, then we will have fellowship with one another.”*

What is fellowship! Fellowship is real friendship; it is intimacy, it is deep relationships, it is support when in need.

Such fellowship is only produced through the truth telling, completely, continually, lovingly and tactfully.

You may at this point with this knowledge be thinking *“I can’t do this in my home, things would blow up, there would be conflict.”*

My reply is, that is most likely true, but there is no intimacy without conflict. This is the only way we have intimacy otherwise we stay at a superficial level in our relationships.

Matthew 10:34 [NIV] *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

God’s way is so different to man’s way of living that it will bring conflict.

John 17:17 [NIV] *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

To *“sanctify”* is to *“set apart”*; telling the truth will cause us to stand out in society.

Hebrews 4:12 [NIV] *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

God’s Word, the truth, will reveal our deepest thoughts and motives, and this is the only way to intimacy.

Telling the truth completely, continually, lovingly and tactfully will be painful for all concerned, but it will lift our lives to the heights of intimate joy-giving relationships.

John 8:32 [Living Bible] *“Jesus said to them, you are truly my disciples if you live as I tell you to, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”*

Free from doubt.

Free from deceit.

Free from superficial relationships.

Free to know and experience true love.

Free to know God, for God cannot lie: God always tells the truth.