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The power and value of truth

“The question is, Frau Helm, were you lying then, are you lying now, or are you not in fact a chronic and habitual LIAR!”

A most memorable line from the movie *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957). Regrettably, lying is an age-old behavior. The ripple effects of lies can be vast and profound, influencing not just the liar, but also those deceived.

Lying allows a person to establish perceived control over a situation by manipulating it. One might lie as a defense mechanism to avoid punishment, embarrassment, or just to escape an uncomfortable situation. Others are hoping to gain an advantage as we see politicians attempting to do when speaking untruthfully. Some lie hoping to achieve social approval and fitting into a group. One might offer a noble lie with the belief they are protecting others. Lastly, there is the compulsive liar that lies for no obvious benefit as the lying stems from psychological issues.

The impact of embracing a lifestyle of lying is threefold. First, lying distorts reality beginning with the liar. Lying undermines personal integrity and self-worth. When we lie, we create a false self-awareness, and over time, the gap between who we are and who we present ourselves to be grows. The psychological toll can include persistent anxiety and stress, as maintaining a web of lies demands constant vigilance. In 1 John 1:8-10 we read, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”. Let’s be real and quit the pretending as God knows what’s true and will not be fooled.

Lying also desensitizes individuals to the truth, dulling their moral compass. This can lead down a slippery slope where minor deceptions pave the way for more significant, harmful falsehoods. The initial discomfort of lying diminishes over time, leading individuals to rationalize their behavior and losing sight of ethical boundaries. Psalm 34:13 urges, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.” Secondly, lying disrupts relationships by fostering suspicion and eroding trust. Once trust is broken, it can be exceedingly difficult to rebuild. Proverbs 12:22 sheds light on God’s stance towards deceit, stating, “The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in people who are trustworthy.” Deception plants the destructive seed of doubt within relationships. Thirdly, the societal consequence of lying has the potential to dismantle families, entire communities and even nations. Honest communication is the glue that holds societies together. When deception seeps into political, social, or religious institutions, the consequences can be dire. Proverbs 19:9 warns, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish.” History is replete with examples of societies

crumbling under the weight of dishonesty and corruption. Public figures who lie erode public trust, resulting in cynicism and discord within the community. Recent national history demonstrates this truth all too well and Ecclesiastes 12:14 reveals that, "God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." Accountability for falsehoods is a central tenet, stressing that while lies may provide temporary gains or shield from immediate repercussions, they ultimately invite divine judgment and societal instability.

Fortunately, scripture provides an abundance of guidance on returning to a life of honesty and integrity. Individually, we might feel at a loss regarding the cultural acceptance of lying, but we are not powerless. Jesus reminded his disciples (Matthew 5:13-16) that they are salt and light. While the temptation to tolerate lying may be strong, it is important for us as Christians to hold fast to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus and resist the allure of deceit. As Proverbs 12:19 states, "Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." Let us strive to speak the truth in love and uphold the values of honesty and integrity in all aspects of our lives. Be resolute and firm in our Hope and daily seek to honor Romans 12:21, "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."