

Job 31: Living With Integrity

Adapted from a series of studies by Brian Haines



Job 31:5-8

Integrity and Honesty

Colossians 3:8-10 *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*

When Job presented his defense of his identity, his integrity was his chief point. In Job 31:6 he specifically ties integrity to honesty. In his claim of honesty (5-8), he describes the idea of dishonesty as something of a stain that is not removed, or a path off of which one does not stray. He seems to acknowledge there may be a desire to be dishonest (vs. 7), but he refuses to permit his heart to pursue it.

Honesty is a virtue that the world both respects and rejects all at once. We claim to respect it, as all men desire to be dealt with in a honest manner. Yet very few people have an emphasis on honesty. Consider our mindset towards one of our presidents whose honesty was well respected. When Abraham Lincoln began his law practice, he admitted that this was a profession at which there was a "popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest." His advice to potential lawyers was: "*Resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do, in advance, consent to be a knave.*" Abraham Lincoln's honesty was even a matter of reputation to those who were his enemies; his presidential opponent in 1860 (Douglass) remarked that the people had nominated "*a very honest man*".



To understand honesty it is necessary that we define dishonesty. Dishonesty is the intention to deceive, either by statement, action or omission. It is important to understand that this does not include: being wrong, telling fables or stories (as Jesus did), or simply not speaking. Thus honesty is the intention not to deceive.

Is Honesty Possible?

May people have given up the pursuit of honesty because they do not believe it is possible to be utterly honest. Yet this is simply not so. While some professions are more given to dishonesty practice, we know that even Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-9) as a tax collector made certain his conduct was honest. It is possible to always be honest, but not necessary that we must always speak.

Can We Be Honest In Difficult Circumstances?

We must believe that honesty is always possible. It may be that we need to find ways to speak the truth with love (Eph. 4:15). It may be that, as Paul did in Acts 17:22, we can speak the truth with tact. It is not dishonest to find ways to explain truth that are less offensive, or to keep opinions to ourselves.

Living Honestly

Much of the language of the New Testament speaks more to LIVING a lie as much as speaking one. In 1 John 1:6 we are told that if we claim to be in Christ but walk in sin, we are lying. Revelation 22:15 speaks of one who loves or practices a lie. If we have envy or are self-seeking, we are lying against the truth (James 3:14). Honesty is a way of life. Job said it was his path. It should be ours as well.

Questions to consider:

1. What is the one time when a member of the church was put to death for sinning? What was the sin?
2. In what way are some professions more prone to dishonesty?
3. How do we account for the seemingly approved dishonesty of Jacob (Gen. 27) or the Israelite midwives (Ex. 2) ?
4. How did Zacchaeus make certain he had a reputation for honesty?
5. What are some situations that you may be tempted to be dishonest?
6. Who might exert pressure on you to be dishonest?