

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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How Honest Are We?

An article in the December 1995 issue of Reader's Digest tells of an effort to determine just how honest the American people are. One hundred and twenty wallets with fifty dollars in them were dropped in various places in twelve cities across the United States. These wallets were watched to see how many people would try to return them to the owners. About 65.8 percent of the people who found the wallets returned them. Almost two thirds of the people were honest in the experiment. And 34.2 percent kept the wallets. I wondered if any of these were Christians. What would you have done?

Are you honest? Are you really honest in everything with everybody at all times? Have you ever been dishonest with your parents, with your teacher in school, with your husband or wife? Have you always been honest with your children? Have you always been honest with God in worship. When you came to "lay by in store" as the Lord prospered you, did you do so dishonestly thinking that no one will know about it? Have you always been honest in paying your taxes to the government? When the clerk at the store gave you too much change as you paid for some article, did you give the extra change back to the clerk? When you forgot to pay for something, but remember later that you did not pay for it, did you return immediately to pay for it? Have you ever found some valuable article and knew the owner? Did you keep it? Did you ever fail to pay some debt, however

small, thinking that only a few will ever know? We are all acquainted with some preachers who left a community owing debts without arranging to pay the debt later. To these and similar questions we may all desire to plead the 5th.

In representing what someone teaches about a certain subject, did you misrepresent him just a little or maybe a lot? Did you do this deliberately or mistakenly? When you knew that you did not tell the truth about what someone else believes and teaches, did you correct it? Did you just let it slide by without any remorse of conscience? What one says and writes about others has grave consequences.

Vengeful gossip could well destroy the good name of a brother. Those who do this are not being honest. It may be that everyone has been dishonest at some point in life, so the question should be, "Are you honest now?" What does the Bible teach about honesty?

Paul said he had, "Renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Lord of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

The word "honesty" means the quality or fact of being honest; uprightness, probity or integrity. It means truthfulness, sincerity, freedom from deceit or fraud. The word "honest" comes from the word meaning honorable, worthy, virtuous. Every individual that has observed the actions of people around him or knows the working of his own heart will recognize that there is a great need for people to be more honest in one's dealings with others. The "honest and good" heart is the soil in which the word of God, which is the seed of the kingdom, can germinate and produce a life acceptable to God (Luke 8:15).

Honesty and the Marriage Bond

When a man and a woman pledge their love one to the other, they must be honest about these sacred promises. As they make their plans for the wedding, they must be free from deceit. When they stand before the one who hears their wedding vows and say, "I do," they must be sincere and completely honest in making their vows. If all were sincere in making their vows before God, there would be no unhappy families. All marriage problems would be quickly solved if the relationships were based upon honesty and virtue. One reason marriages fail is that one or both parties are not honest. The husband is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25), and the wife is to love her husband (Tit. 2:4). The love that binds them together should last, "till death do you part." When one becomes a Christian it is forever. There is no thought of forsaking our Lord. So it is when two souls are joined in the holy bonds of marriage, it is as long as they both shall live. Honesty, sincerity, virtue, love, and honor are the ties that bind them together as one. What a great difference it would make if all marriages were built upon honesty!

Honesty Among Christians

When the church was to select men to be appointed over the business of the daily ministrations of the neglected widows, the first qualification for those selected was that one be "of honest report" (Acts 6:3). Paul says that Christians must "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Among the many instructions given to Christians in Romans 12, Paul says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of men" (Rom. 12:17). Paul also says, in 2 Corinthians 8:21, that one is to honestly provide things in the sight of the Lord. "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Paul prays that God's people do that which is honest (2 Cor. 13:7). Christians are to think about things that are honest. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). A person is what he thinks (Prov. 23:7). When Christians think honestly about one another, there will be peace

among them. One will not wish any harm, but only good things for others. Though people differ sometimes about important things, there is no reason for one to be dishonest in thought or actions toward others. What a difference it would make for peace if all of God's people would be honest in all things before God and all men!

Honesty in Politics

If one reads the daily news or listens to the news on radio or television with any discernment, one is aware that there is much dishonesty among the leaders of the nations of the earth. What a wonderful world this world would be if all politicians were transported far beyond the Northern Sea. What the world needs are good, honest, sincere, and virtuous statesmen. As we look about us in the political realm, we discover that dishonesty has been sown with an unsparing hand. And according to the newspapers they are bringing an abundant harvest. What a difference it would make if all politicians would be forced to state accurately what his opponent believes.

Honesty in Religion

One may be honest in religious error. However, when one learns that he is in error and remains so, he is dishonest. When one learns that he is in error, he will cease to be in error or he will cease to be honest. In religious matters, one must be honest. Those who preach and teach the word of God must be completely honest toward God and those he teaches. One who is honest will teach the people the truth, though it may offend and make people quake. A dishonest teacher will compromise with those of the world with little principle or conscience. We need more honesty and godly fear in the pulpit and in the pew. Preachers should be honest with each other as they discuss differences. One should be very sure that what he says about another person is true. One should not rely on what someone else says, but should be very sure. In religious debates with sectarian preachers or debates between brethren one must be honest in representing what the other believes and teaches. It would be a good idea in debates if both disputants were required to state clearly what his

opponent believes each time he begins to speak and before he answers or refutes his opponent's position.

There are many contributing factors to dishonesty. Children see dishonesty in their parents and are trained to be dishonest. Selfishness and covetousness contribute to dishonesty. But God demands that one be honest toward everyone, about everything at all times.

Honesty the Best Policy

“Honesty is the best policy,” is an old adage. One should be honest, not because of policy, but because it is the only right and proper policy. Honesty and any other policy cannot be mixed. Like mixing water and oil, one will come to the top and the other will sink to the bottom. One who is honest because it is the best policy would not be honest if it were not for policy. One should live by this eternal principle of honesty because it is right. It is never right to be dishonest.

Ananias and Sapphira

Ananias and Sapphira are examples of dishonesty (Acts 5:1-11). “And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet.” This was to assist the needy saints in Jerusalem. Ananias and Sapphira owned some land. They sold it and gave part of the money to be used to assist the needy saints. Because of their desire for the praise of men, and because of their greedy love for money they kept back part of the price. It would have been perfectly permissible for them to do so. But they said in so many words that they gave it all, like Barnabas did. Satan filled their heart. They lied to God, they lied to the Holy Spirit, and they lied to Peter. They both fell dead because of their dishonesty.

- Quentin McCay

"Teachers After Their Own Lusts"

"For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

It has always been true that there have been those who will refuse to listen to the truth of God's word. It is an attitude of rebellion on their part. They do not respect the authority of God's word and they are unwilling to be taught. Such was the condition in Isaiah's day. Jehovah described His people in these words: "For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits . . ." (Isa. 30: 9, 10).

When people are determined to have their own way, follow their own sentiments and emotions, and refuse to be taught God's will, they will rally around a preacher who will preach what they want to hear.

- Hoyt Houchen

*Elders: Gregg Needham,
Gordon Percell & Gary Smalley*

Evangelist: Gary Smalley

Sunday AM: 9:30 & 10:30

Sunday PM: 5:00

Wednesday PM: 7:00



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)