

## Moral Issues

### *Honesty*

We live in an age where a firm handshake is no longer considered a binding contract. Contracts must be signed. Documents must be notarized. Oaths must be recited with eyewitness proof. A person's "word" is about as firm as a wet noodle. This should not be the case for the Christian.

Strict judgment is placed upon the Christian who does not keep his word. Jesus stated, "...let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37). James writes, "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment" (James 5:12). Though the world may laugh at the idea of one's "word" Jesus clearly takes it seriously. He demands unequivocal honesty. Consider the various areas of life we might improve if we would all subscribe to a policy of unwavering honesty.

#### **Honesty in marriage.**

Most marriages begin with a vow or oath of unwavering loyalty. Nearly every marriage begins with a promise to remain married "until death do us part." Yet, how many married couples go back on their word? Over half! It is no better on the second marriage either. The percentage of second marriages ending in divorce is even higher than first marriages. It makes sense, doesn't it? If you did not keep your word the first time you were married, why be trusted to keep your word the second time around? The prophet Malachi teaches "God hates divorce" (2:16). God does not just arbitrarily hate divorce without cause. He hates it because it violates His very nature. God is truth. The one who puts away their spouse without just cause makes their vows a lie!

#### **Honesty in government.**

It should be every Christian's desire to see a government act justly and honestly. It is every government ruler's job to be a "terror...to evil" (Romans 13:3). Unfortunately, some governing rulers have exchanged evil for good and good for evil. Some do so for the sake of bribes (see Acts 24:26-27). Others do so out of an ignorant disregard for God. As government's despise truth and endorse moral lies Christians are put at higher risk of persecution. For this reason, Paul encouraged all to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2). As government's exchange their God-ordained roles in favor of their self-serving ideals our risk is in peril. Thus, we need men and women in government who honestly perform their duties. Further, when we elect good men based on moral promises we should expect them to deliver.

#### **Honesty in business.**

Have you ever been quoted one rate or price and find out later the quoted price was raised? Has anyone ever tried to sell something to you on the phone that was "free" only to find out it was "free for thirty days?" Businesses are famous for jacking up rates, using the bait-and-switch and excluding the "fine print" from the original deal. These are dishonest practices. God expects more out of Christians. Though we may make more money with dishonest business tactics, we will also have to live with a guilty conscience for ripping off others (Hebrews 13:18). Further, our reputation will suffer as a result of our evil.

#### **Honesty in the church.**

It would be nice if all churches taught the same true doctrines. However, churches often teach and practice different doctrines. We need to be careful our preachers and teachers "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Jesus warned of the reality of false teachers (Matthew 7:15). Peter warned of the past, present and future reality of false teachers (1 Peter 2:1-2). Paul commanded, "...brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). A teacher or preacher who is dishonest with the truth should not be embraced, but avoided.

#### **Honesty in everyday affairs.**

If we are known as honorable people it will slowly impress the watching world. Peter wrote, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12). Hypocrites will turn people off. Honorable Christians will draw them toward the religion of Christ. Do you keep your word, even in the smallest of matters? Jesus once stated, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

Failing to be honest in the relationships of life ruins our reputation. In marriage it makes us an adulterer. In government it makes us a terror. In business it makes us a cheater. In the church it makes us a liar. In life it makes us a hypocrite. Keep your word!

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