

Moral Issues

Cheating

Cheating can be a controversial topic in an age of relative truth. Yet, when God's Word becomes the absolute standard of right and wrong it is easier to decipher whether or not cheating is a sin (John 17:17).

The examples of "cheating" are numerous. Kids cheat on tests at school. Spouses have affairs and cheat on their marital partner. Athletes cheat by taking illegal drugs. Recruiters cheat by making too many phone calls. Adults cheat by not paying the taxes they are obligated to pay. Of course, everybody has their excuses...



- "What's the big deal? I'm not hurting anyone."
- "There's just so much pressure to succeed."
- "Everybody cheats...so what?"
- "If it makes me happy, and nobody finds out, who cares?"

Despite our rationalizations, cheating should be rebuked. It is a sin. Why?

Because cheating is stealing. The Bible may not use the term "cheat" but it does use the word "steal" (Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28). The kid who cheats on his test steals information. The man who has sex with his

neighbor's wife steals from her husband, and vice versa. Illegally withholding taxes is stealing from the government (Romans 13:6-7). Lying on a resume can lead to stealing a job from someone more qualified than yourself. God expects you to do your own work and live off your own blessings.

Further, cheating lacks integrity. Integrity is defined as "adherence to a code of values." Any Christian must ascribe to Christ's code of ethics. The willingness to cheat indicates a failed standard of right and wrong. God expects us to act with integrity. Proverbs 11:1 says, "*Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight.*" A butcher weighing meat could easily make more money by rigging the scales. However, God expects him to act with integrity and honesty in doing his work. Someone who fails to act in accordance with the standard code of values in his situation displays a lack of integrity.

Cheating harms you. Whether now or in eternity, cheating destroys. Of course, it can ruin our reputation. Despite your accomplishments, the cheater's name is often followed by an asterisk in our minds. In the Scriptures, Laban was a prosperous businessman but is better known for cheating Jacob. Judas may have done good in his three years as a disciple, but he will be remembered for betraying Jesus. Ananias and Sapphira were prosperous Christians but their lie is remembered. Proverbs 10:7 says,

"The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot." Of course, eternally, the thief, embezzler, pilferer or stealer "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Titus 2:10). Are the temporary benefits of cheating worth the long-term risks?

Finally, cheating is a product of the flesh. Among the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21 is "covetousness." Many cheat because they are motivated by covetousness. Athletes will cheat because they covet money or glory. Students will cheat because they covet academic success and scholarships. Adults will cheat just to pocket more money. Spouses will have affairs to satiate their sensual desires. Yet, Colossians 3:5 says, "*...put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry...*"

Jesus calls us to live by a higher standard—a standard established by truth (John 17:17). Cheating often undermines truth and the sincere Christian should be sensitive to it in their lives.

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