

Just Trust

Lesson 2—Honesty: Ananias & Sapphira

OVERVIEW

Bible Passages: Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:19,22; Acts 5:1-11

Key Verse: Proverbs 12:22—“The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.”

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine what direction your class will go.*

- Consider times in your life when you have been tempted to be dishonest.
- Consider the depth of integrity that your life exhibits on a daily basis.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Contact students who missed Sunday School last week.
- Pray for each student by name.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your faithfulness and commitment to teaching our students the truths of God's Word

OPENING ACTIVITY

The Best Liar in the Class

Tell your students that you are going to go around and you want every person to tell the group three things about themselves—two that are true and one that is false. Then the class will vote to see how many guessed the “untrue” statement. Keep tabs on how the voting goes so that at the end you can deem one of your students “The Class’ Best Liar.” (This title, of course is not a bad one—it’s just a game, although we’re not sure it’s a good one either!)

Discussion

SAY: Recently we talked about Elisha and how he trusted God.

- *What percentage of the time is God trustworthy? (100%. God does not lie and is always trustworthy.)*

• *What percentage of the time are you trustworthy?*

• *In which of the following situations do you think you would lie?*

(1) You do something that is wrong. The other students involved get caught but they won't tell on you but a teacher asks you if you were involved too. Would you lie to stay out of trouble?

(2) The hour before English class you remember that you forget to write an essay. It's a big part of your grade. The teacher has said several times that she won't accept it late and if you don't get an A on it, you won't pass the class. Would you lie to say that you're sick so you could go home, write it that night and turn it in the next day?

(3) You find a wallet in it with \$1,000 in cash. Would you take the money (or some of the money out) and then turn it in saying that it had no money in it when you found it?

KEY VERSE

Discussion: Excuses

SAY: Consider the following excuses.

Ten Excuses for Being Late

(10) We ran out of gas.

(9) My Bible Study teacher ran over time.

(8) My dog ate it.

(7) Oh, I mean, we lost the dog and had to go and find him.

(6) I think my watch stopped. What time is it?

(5) Dad choked on his coffee and donut, so I had to do the Heimlich on him. We took him to the emergency room and the doctor said I saved his life. Was it on the news?

(4) We couldn't figure out where we parked until everyone left the mall.

(3) We were witnessing to some Jehovah's Witnesses and we lost track of time.

(2) No, really—It was a seven hour movie.

(1) I lost my flip flops and I had to walk uphill, barefoot, in the snow!

• *Are these excuses or lies?*

• *What is the difference between an excuse and a lie? (Remember, dishonesty, no matter what you may call it, is still dishonesty. A lie by any other name, is still a lie.)*

SAY: One difference between the truth and lies is that truth stands on its own, while lies usually have to be supported by other lies.

Read Proverbs 12:19, 22

SAY: God hates dishonesty, even when we justify it as an excuse or half-truth. Today, we'll learn why it's important to be honest people.

Re-read Proverbs 12:22

- *Considering your level of honesty, are you delightful or detestable in God's eyes? Why do you feel this way?*

Discussion: Six or Seven Things

Read Proverbs 6:16-19

- *What is the difference between disliking something, hating something, and detesting something?*

SAY: The reason it says, "Six things that the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him" is because this was a Hebrew poetic way of emphasizing a point. It was written this way to help people remember the importance of God's code of conduct.

- *Without looking at your Bibles, how many of the seven things that we just read can you name?*

SAY: There are seven things here that God says he despises and two of them refer to lying: a "lying tongue" (v17) and a "false witness" (v19).

- *In what ways could God bless someone who practices the behaviors listed in Proverbs 6:16-19? (God will not seek to bless someone who lives in rebellion against Him.)*
 - *How could God bless someone who avoids these evil behaviors?*
 - *How does it affect you when you are caught in a lie? (You lose trust. You get in trouble. You could even lose your job.)*
 - *Have you ever been caught in a lie? (See if anyone has a story about this. If so, ask them the outcome: How did it affect them, their relationship with others, and their relationship with God?)*

Story: Fair and Accurate

SAY: The following story is true and shows four things:

- (1) *How lies create lies lead to a habit of lies, especially if you think you can do it and get away with it.*
- (2) *How lies lead to more lies to cover up the original lie.*
- (3) *How lies can ruin a life, relationship, or career.*

(4) *How dishonesty will eventually become a reputation for those who lie.*

For journalists, nothing can beat the adrenaline rush of seeing their own names in print and the notoriety a byline brings. At 25, Stephen Glass, an up-and-coming reporter at *The New Republic* knew that feeling well, and his desire for it cost him his career.

A reporter who began at *The New Republic* in 1995 as an editorial assistant, Glass was the author of several high-profile, attention-getting stories in his own magazine and other national publications. The only problem? He made up people, places, events, organizations, and quotations. Sometimes, he even fabricated entire articles. Glass went to extremes to cover his deception, creating fake notes, voicemails, and in one case, a completely fake Website. Every lie he told led to another series of lies to cover up his initial deception.

“My life was one very long process of lying and lying again, to figure out how to cover those other lies,” he said in an interview with Steven Kroft for the CBS newsmagazine “60 Minutes.”

First assigned to write a short story on a piece of legislation about to be passed, Glass wanted the perfect quote to give the story a little more interest. Sadly, though, none of his interviews had yielded such a quote. So instead of using what information he had, he typed the perfect quote onto his screen and looked at it, and decided to let it stay. It went to print, and Glass moved on from beefing up his stories to making them up entirely.

“The general trend of the stories is that they started out with a few made up details and quotes,” he said in the “60 Minutes” interview. And then they progressed into stories that were completely fabricated.

“I loved the electricity of people liking my stories,” he continued. “I loved going to story conference meetings and telling people what my story was going to be, and seeing the room excited. I wanted every story to be a home run.”

Glass’ actions didn’t come without circumstances. His lies eventually caught up with him, and the careful steps he’d taken to cover his fabrications unraveled. He was fired and dropped out of sight as a journalist. He eventually went to law school and earned a law degree. He’s since passed the bar exam, but has yet to begin to practice law because of questions regarding his character.

“What I did hurt the people I worked with,” he said. “It hurt my editors. It hurt my family. It hurt my friends. It hurt the readers.”²

BIBLE LESSON

SAY: Let’s take a look at someone else who told a lie and suffered the consequences of that action.

Let a student read Acts 5:1-11.

EXPLAIN: how Ananias lied by presenting the money as the total he had received from the land sale. Observe that Ananias could have simply made his offering honestly and received a blessing from the Lord for his gift.

- *Why do you think Ananias lied?* (Probably to look good to everyone else—The same reason the journalist in the above story lied—for esteem.)
- *How can a desire to look good to others lead us to lie? Ask them to give examples—i.e., “I caught a fish THIS big!”*

- *How do you feel about a person after they lie to you?*

SAY: In the following situations, would you continue to trust or distrust the person:

- *A friend tells you some gossip about another friend.*
- *A fellow employee calls in sick to work for the fifth consecutive Friday night.*
 - *A fellow student confesses to a teacher that she cheated on a test.*
 - *A friend tells you a lie to use on your parents about your grades.*

SAY: The moral of the story of Ananias and Sapphira is not how much money to give or not to give, but the seriousness of telling lies. The moral here is that dishonesty, whether in the form of an outright lie or a lie of omission, is wrong, and those who lie will face the consequences of their actions.

Consider the consequences of lying:

- *Lying creates conflict.*
- *Lying breaks relationships.*
- *Lying is a form of idolatry because you are choosing something (whether it is the praise of people or the chance to get out of trouble, etc.) as being more important than following Jesus.*
- *Lying creates mistrust that is not easily overcome.*
- *Lying leads to more lying to hide the truth.*
- *Lying leads to more lying by way of habits and your habits becomes your character and your character determines your destiny.*
- *Lying never goes unpunished.*
- *Other consequences?.*

SAY: Ananias and Sapphira died because of their lie. This may seem severe, but you must trust that God is just and that the discipline He dealt to them was righteous. In part, this severe discipline was to protect the early church from deception and leaders who were not godly. Lying may not seem significant to you but remember what Proverbs 12:22 said, “The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.”

WRAP IT UP

Final Thoughts

- Don't answer aloud: *Are you currently facing a situation in which are being tempted to lie?*
- Don't answer aloud: *Have you told lies in the past you need to confess to God and others?*
 - *What can you do to guard yourself against lying?*

SAY: Remember, God delights in people who are truthful.

Prayer Time

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

¹Adapted in part from Lifetrak 5.3 Sunday School curriculum, Nashville: Lifeway, Spring 2005, “On My Honor: Session 1: Tell It Truthfully.”

²Quotes taken from “Stephen Glass: I Lied for Esteem” CBS “60 Minutes” [online]. Cited August 17, 2003 [Accessed 9 September 2004] as cited in Lifetrak 5.3 Sunday School curriculum, Nashville: Lifeway, Spring 2005, on CD-Rom.