



Straight Talk On Honesty & Integrity

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37).

VCM-SOTM18

31 January 2018

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Matthew 5:33-37).

This is another important teaching of Jesus that addresses fundamental issues in the society. The great challenge of our times is to find honesty and integrity in the midst of a preponderance of lies, deception and manipulations. The search for truth has resulted in the creation of various validation and verification schemes such as clearance checks, affidavits, sworn declarations, speaking under oath, references, etc. Even with these, many lies still go undetected, even with the very best lie detectors.

At the time Jesus taught this, it was common for people to swear as a way of attesting that their statements are true.

By this teaching, Jesus advocated a higher standard of life where honesty and integrity were not just occasional events but an habitual and consistent life-style. First, He pointed out that honesty and integrity are not products of swearing by external things such as heaven, throne, earth, Jerusalem, temple or head - all of which are created / temporal things that may not have power over our beings to enforce these attributes.

Christianity is such a transformational experience that makes everything new from the inside out. The new birth experience transforms the individual to become the dwelling place of the Trinity. “... Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). When the Spirit of truth, the God of truth and Jesus the truth, indwells a person, only the truth can come out of that life all the time. So, honesty and integrity are the products and fruit of what we are in the innermost being and who indwells us.

“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:21).

Getting your way through lies and deception are not marks of wisdom nor leadership as some claim. Remember that if Satan could speak through Peter (Mark 8:33), he can speak through you. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

In John 8:44 Jesus boldly pointed out to the religious people “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”.

This is powerful and underscores the point that every lie originate from Satan, while truth originates from God. It also provides a reliable pointer to whose influence and power we are under - either God or Satan. It was for this reason, that Jesus concluded His teaching by saying “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:33-37).

This agrees with Jesus' emphatic teaching - “Ye shall know them by their fruits...” (Matthew 7:16). The Bible refers to the words that proceed out of a person's mouth as “the fruit of the lips” and the “fruit of his mouth” (Proverbs 18:20; Isaiah 57:19; Hebrews 13:15).

If the fruit of our lips are not consistent with the nature and character of God, it is high time to examine our lives with a view to ascertaining who produces them. Jesus made it clear that anything short of honesty and integrity comes from evil.

Fearing mankind more than God and a desire to please human beings at the expense of God is one of the avenues Satan uses to get people to lie. “And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?” (Isaiah 57:11). It is time to cast out the devil and let God take full possession of our lives.