

This is What the Heart Looks Like // 9 – Thou Shalt Handle the Truth // Exodus 20:16

Think you guys you'll enjoy this... *Outreach magazine came out with their top 100 fastest growing churches of 2010... We love growth, yes... but I feel like I spend a lot of time trying to scare people*

~~**BCAM:** Just wanted to say again, good to have all you college students with us... we love you guys and love that you're here... we really want to be your church home, and not just an event you come on Sundays. This is such a key time in your life and we'd love to be a part of you discovering what God's intentions are for you in His mission and what gifts He's given you for that... In your worship guide is info about our college ministry meeting next Sunday am at 9 in Suite 111...~~

How many of you guys have a problem with lying? Trick question?

If you can believe what the stats say, 91% of Americans lie at least weekly. Not sure if that's true. But I have no doubt that most of you are pretty intimately acquainted with lying... favorite commercial out right now...

This takes various forms...

- **There is the straight up lie, where you make something up completely to get yourself out of a jam...**
 - I asked our other pastors to give me an example of where they do this... I told them, "I'm tired of confessing my sin each week; I want to confess some of yours." So Jason Gaston told me a story; in college he went to work for a Christian bookstore down near Apex called "Sign of the Fish"...

- Agreed to work for the summer... made up this part about his dad's business failing and really needing to go and help him so he could get out of the job. Which was not true b/c his dad didn't even own the business...
- People were super-understanding... had a big send-off for Jason, gathered around him and laid their hands on him and prayed.
- "I'm definitely going to lose my salvation over this one."
- The great part is they sent his dad a card telling him they'd be praying for him. His parents get the card and are like... ?
- **Then there's the half-truth, or twisted truth...** where you say something that is technically true but are clearly saying in a way to mislead. In seminary one of my roommates nicknamed his bed "The Word," so when people would ask him, "What have you been doing today?" He'd say, "Well, I spent all morning in the "the Word." Things like that.
- **Then there is exaggeration, or stretched truth...** You exaggerate a truth to make a point; or, you inflate your successes to make yourself look better.
 - Pastors are real bad about that w/ things like numbers... we even call it "evange/astically speaking..." Whenever I hear a pastor talk about #'s I always subtract about 30%... **Some pastors will give you their largest attendance of the year**, like Easter, and then say that's average. 1 guy explained to me that since the average person at his church only came 2 out of 3 weeks, he **took his attendance and added 30% and that's how many people he said came to his church...** other pastors count everyone on the rolls... doesn't matter if they've left the church or if they are dead... So I never know what to tell people when they ask me... how do I adjust our # to match theirs... **so, I just try to tell them honestly...** and the 16,000 of you that are here this weekend can back me up on that.
- **Then there are lies we tell to avoid owning up to things we've done or not done:** Not being honest with your boss about why you didn't get a job done... or why your schoolwork is incomplete:

my parents were sick this weekend and I had to go home so I need more time. I had my report done but my computer crashed. PC not a Mac.

- **Then there are lies we tell to avoid confrontation or awkward situations...**
 - By *that* I don't mean you are judicious in how you give truth to be polite... You don't say every negative thing that comes into your mind...
 - What I mean by telling lies to avoid confrontation is when you withhold truth to someone who has the right or need to hear it because you are too cowardly to say it... like, **when you are not honest with an employee** about why they're getting fired... or why they're not getting promoted.
 - **Or, not really telling somebody why you're breaking up with them.** The old, "It's not you, it's me... but we both know it's really you" line. Or, even worse, blaming it on Jesus. I want to date you, but Jesus is forbidding me.
 - Or, how about this... or when you are just too cowardly to speak truth to someone. Your silence implies that you are ok with what they are doing. *Do you ever see somebody making a decision you know is going to destroy them, and you just don't say anything... ever do that?*

These are all ways that lying is a part of our lives. Which leads us to the 9th commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16)

This command comes right toward the end of the 10 commandments, and its placement is very strategic. So, 3 things I want to do: **1.** I want to make a couple of observations about this commandment; **2.** I want to show you how God feels about our breaking it. **3.** I want to try and show you how you can overcome dishonesty.

A couple of observations:

1st observation: The commandment about lying comes at the very end of the commandments. The very last one, the 10th one, is a kind of a summary of all of them, so, this command, "thou shalt not bear false witness" comes right at the end of the prohibitions, because lying is inevitably the way we perpetuate the breaking of the other commandments.

- Adultery... you lie (David)
- If you steal...
- Lying is like the glue that solidifies you in the other sin... You weave a web of lies... Satan is the father of lies, so he weaves you in a web of lies and gets you in a place where you feel like you literally can't repent.

2nd, I want you to notice what this command actually says. It does NOT say simply "thou shalt not lie." It says specifically, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." The focus of this commandment is on distorting the truth in a way that harms your neighbor. This commandment has one eye on the truth and one eye on the neighbor.

- **There was a kind of a surprising thing I found as I studied...** throughout Exodus and Deuteronomy, whenever Moses talks about the commandment, he does so in context of the rich yielding their influence in a court of law in a way that distorted the truth against the poor, who couldn't defend themselves as well as the rich could.
- Now, you could say, "Well, OK, in court, don't tell lies about poor people. Got it." But if you think that, you don't understand how these commands work. The commands target an extreme form of the sin... it says, "**Do not murder.**" But Jesus said, "The real point is loving others and valuing their lives like you value your own." The command says, "**Do not steal.**" The Apostle Paul says, "The point is not just "not stealing," but living lives where you give and bless and not take and exploit.
- Well, in the same way, this commandment prohibits lying in a court of law, but **the point of the commandment is loving**

truth and loving your neighbor and having our words reflect both of those things. It means you use the power of your words to promote truth and to promote your neighbor.

- So those are the questions to ask about your words: **Are your words true words? ...and are they blessing words?**
 - *True words: do you commonly exploit the truth for personal benefit? Do you lie to get out of jams? Do you stretch truth to make yourself look good?*
 - *Blessing words: Do your words aim to protect and bless your neighbor?*
- *Let me give you a really common way we violate the spirit of this commandment:*
 - **Gossip.** Gossip goes against every component of this command.
 - First of all, gossip is not usually truthful.
 - It always involves exaggeration—where you make their fault worse than it is.
 - And it involves caricature, where you define that person by their fault. Girl makes 1 bad decision with a guy and that’s all you define her as. You see her whole life through that lens. Boss makes you mad and that’s the lens through which you see his whole life. You’d be furious if someone did that to you... but you do it to others. I’ll tell you why you do that... you love yourself, and so see yourself positively... but you don’t love them, and so see them negatively, which is the 2nd thing about gossip
 - Secondly gossip is usually done w/o love. Even when you precede it with phrases like, “Bless his heart,” or, “you know I love him to death... but...”
 - Or the best is when you try and make it spiritual... and give it the form of a “prayer request.” After you gossip, you should pray for your own sick soul, not theirs... I decided this week that I’m going to start doing that...

Someone says, “*Let me share a prayer request....gossip, gossip, gossip.*” Then I say... “God help this person who just gossiped to me. Their own heart is so sick and distorted that they don’t know it.”

- Here’s how you know you are doing it without love... you enjoy talking about the negative. Someone you love... you’ll talk about their faults, but you don’t enjoy it. For example, my kids have faults... and I’ll talk about them when it is helpful. *I’ve sat with teachers and talked about weaknesses my kids have.* But I love my kids... and I don’t enjoy talking about them that way, and, if anything, I’m trying to explain away their faults in light of the bigger picture of who they are. Is that how you talk about the faults of others? The difference is love. The person you are gossiping about you are not loving...
 - Gossiping violates every part of this command.
 - You all love gossiping... you sick pervert. Yes you do.

2. How God feels about it... If you go through and just make a list of the verses where God talks about lying and how He feels about it, it is pretty jolting...

- **Psalm 5:6 (ESV)** *You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*
- **Proverbs 6:16–19 (ESV)** *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

- **Proverbs 12:2**, “The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in all who are faithful.”
- **Psalm 15:1–3 (ESV)** O Lord... who shall dwell in your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
- **Revelation 21:8 (ESV)**⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”
- **Revelation 22:15 (ESV)**¹⁵ And outside (the gates of heaven) are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.
- **Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira**... (tell story—growth rate was #1: 8000 people got saved). What if God did that today? AW Tozer, “Christians don’t tell lies, they sing them. Not how it works now, God is still the same.
- God is truth. He is light. His whole universe that He created is founded on truth.¹

Do you realize how dominated our lives are with lies and words that tear other people down?

- If there is nothing else that reveals the sickness of our hearts, it is the deceit and the hate that spews forth from our mouths. We are *sick* with it. The poison of deception and hate flows through our bodies and spew out our mouths.
- One guy said, “Our words are like a thousand newscasters rushing to file their reports as to the condition of our soul.”
- Most of you think you’re “pretty good people...” What if God judged you just on the words that you spoke? Strapped a tape

recorder around your neck and just recorded your speech and used that to judge you? What would your words reveal about how much you love truth and love people?

- Our words reveal our depravity. Jesus said, “By your words you will be condemned.” They reveal dishonesty, selfishness.

So now, let me turn my attention to how we can overcome a lying spirit. Do this by showing you *why* we lie and *what* is so destructive about it.

1. Why do we lie? Why do we use our words to distort reality, to tear down others, and build up ourselves?

Lying grows out of a deep insecurity we all possess in life

- I want to show you this by telling you a couple of Bible stories which will illustrate this...
- The 1st one you are very familiar with because I tell it to you all the time... story of the original lie told by the 1st humans, Adam and Eve
 - Nakedness... we want to clothe ourselves... that is a picture of the human condition: we’re always lying to cover up an insecurity we feel from losing the security and satisfaction of our relationship with God
 - **Now, naked, we don’t know we’re accepted; or valuable... and we wonder if we’ll be taken care of. So we feel like we have to promote ourselves**, to show why we’re valuable, and to take care of ourselves, and so we lie to do that.
- A great example of this in the Bible is Jacob...
 - Jacob was the 2nd of a set of twins born to a guy named Isaac in the Bible, who was the son of Abraham.
 - Now, in those days, being 1st born was a big deal. The 1st born got the major portion of the inheritance, the family name, and... in the case of Abraham’s

¹ When we speak lies we contradict his character and unravel his whole creation... integrity

descendants, it meant you were the line the promise of the Messiah would come through.

- Well, Jacob was born 2nd, which meant his older brother, Esau, would be the one that got the blessing.
- However, God had prophesied that in this case he was going to give the blessing to the younger, not the older. He'd be the 1 the Messiah came through.
- But, Jacob didn't believe God. So, when it came time to officially confer the blessing, Jacob pulled off the greatest stunt in the whole Bible.
- Ceremony... So Isaac calls for Esau, the oldest son, who was his favorite, to go and hunt some deer for him to eat.
- And this is where it gets good. Jacob waits until Esau leaves and decides to impersonate Esau so his dad will give him the blessing instead. Now, the reason he could do this was Isaac was really old and couldn't see or hear well.
- **But, here's the problem: Jacob and Esau were very different.**
 - Esau was a man's man: He was **rough and hairy**. In fact, that's what his name literally means—hairy. (Interesting note is that they gave him this name at birth, which means he must have been born hairy, which is a little strange. Little hairy baby.) But the point is. He was a man's man. **Drove a Ford F-150; he didn't usually drink beer, but when he did he preferred *Dos Equis*.**
 - Jacob was completely the opposite—Jacob had soft skin; he liked pastels; he used a luffa, knew not to wear white after Labor Day, he drove a Cabriolet... **drank drinks with little umbrellas in them...** that kind of guy.
- So, even with Isaac's bad eyes and ears, you could still tell the difference. So, Jacob kills a goat and straps the

skin and hair onto his arms and the back of his neck and rubs raw meat all over himself so his dad will think he is Esau, and he goes into Isaac and says, (high/low), Dad, it's me Esau... I've killed the deer and am ready for the blessing.

- Which, I'll just throw this in... I'M ALL INTO THE MAN'S MAN BIT, BUT WHEN people who want to impersonate you cover themselves with a dead goat and deer urine... that's a little bit far for me.
- But, Jacob got away with it... he got the blessing, which God had already promised him anyway, but because of his deception his relationship with his brother and dad is destroyed and he has to leave home for the next 30 years.
- **Here's the point: Jacob didn't believe God. Because He didn't believe in God's blessing,** he sought the blessing of his father, and he had to lie and manipulate things to get it.
- Pay attention: What is happening? Jacob is insecure before God. He doesn't trust the goodness and sovereignty of God in His life. God's blessing is not enough for Him. So, he lies to protect himself.
- That's what we do when we lie. We either don't believe we have God's blessing or it is not enough for us, so we seek the blessing of someone or something else and we're willing to lie to get it.
 - Some of you might remember in 2001 a guy named George O'Leary who'd just been named head football coach of Notre Dame. O'Leary's resume said he'd lettered in football for 3 years at New Hampshire... so, a reporter calls to talk to some of his teammates... turns out O'Leary had made all that up. Years before, when he was applying for his 1st job, he didn't think his

resume was impressive enough. He would never get “the blessing” unless he beefed it up.²

- Do you ever do that? Saw a survey this week of 3 million job applications that said that over 50% of them contained 1 or more falsehoods.
- What are you doing? You are lying to secure for yourself some blessing, because you don’t trust God in your life.
- Maybe it is not literally on your resume... maybe it’s just in how you present yourself to people. I’ve confessed to you frequently that I get tempted to exaggerate my successes and minimize my failures because I want the blessing of other people’s admiration.
 - Let me give you an example: I played soccer for the 1st college I went to... That is true. But, the rest of the truth is that it was a little Bible school with about 500 people in it and absolutely anyone could have made the team. I think if you had a pulse you’d make the team. In fact, the whole team was an evangelistic outreach... like, we played the local jail teams. We played the US ski team. We lost.
 - Now, it is a true statement that I played college soccer. I could even say “our most memorable game was against Penn St., or State Pen, however you want to say it,” I can even say that we played TeamUSA (not their soccer team but ski team). There have been times I have let people think things about me that weren’t entirely true.
- Why do we do that? Insecurity. I’m not comfortable with how God has made me, what He’s promised to me... I’m not content with what He’s doing with my life or how He’ll take care of me... His blessing and

presence doesn’t mean enough in my life, so I lie to procure my own blessings.

- **And, the tragedy is, like Jacob, I spend my life pursuing lesser things than what God wanted to give me anyway and bring untold destruction into my life.** Your selfishness, your drive and dishonesty cause you to lose relationships; lose trust; and lose your own integrity.

- So how do you overcome that? Well, if our lying arises out of an insecurity we feel before God, then the way we overcome that is to restore a sense of God’s security to our heart. And how do we do that? The Gospel. In the cross of Jesus we see that God has the means of taking care of our needs and the will to do it. The security we need to overcome lying comes from understanding and believing what God has said about us and promised to us. When your soul has found refuge in God, you won’t need to seek it any longer in lies.
- Jacob gives you an interesting picture of that at the end of his life. There’s this **odd little scene that takes place right before Jacob dies. Crosses his hands.** Hand of blessing; hand of cursing.

2. What is so destructive about lying?

Lying keeps us from being able to experience the healing of God

- God deals in the realm of reality. He’s not into perceptions or spin. And it’s only when we deal with things as they really are that we can access God, who is more than willing and more than able to help us.
- I’ve read in a number of business books that one of the indispensable keys to success is brutal honesty. Really understanding what is going on in your company, in sells... when you spin negative things positively, or cover up the bad, you are leading your company to disaster. Same thing with you. What keeps many of you from God, or from His healing, is

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone*, 185–86.

you are just not honest with Him, or w/ anyone, not even yourself, about what is going on in your life.

- Let me illustrate this through a story in the NT, where you have someone who is living a lie meet someone who always tells the truth.
- John 4: Jesus meets up with a Samaritan woman.
 - We can read between the lines and know this is not the right kind of woman...
 - 1st clue... coming at noon. Women didn't do that. She was an outcast.
 - 2nd we learn in the story that this woman has had repeated affairs and is shacking up now with a man not her husband. Basically, this is a skank.
 - Jesus goes through this little charade with her... How are you? He asks her for water... If you knew who I was, you wouldn't be asking me for water... Jesus said, "If you knew who I was... you'd be begging me for a drink." She says, "How would you draw water? No rope and bucket." Jesus said, "I have water you know nothing about. Whoever drinks this water will thirst again..." She says, "Shut up." He says, "For real." OK, wise guy, give me a drink of this water where I'm not thirsty." Jesus says, "OK, go get your husband..." She says, "I have no husband." Jesus says, "You're right..." All of the sudden what Jesus has been saying makes sense.
 - How this woman is living her life is similar to how she comes to this well... (go through story) and she's hiding. She's not being honest about how lonely she is. And she's hiding in her sin.
 - So Jesus exposes her. Someone living a lie means someone who always tell the truth.
 - And he says, "God only wants to know people in Spirit and truth." Which means... God wants to satisfy the deepest needs in your spirit. And only

way is to be honest... that's where God dwells, is in reality.

- Here is what is happening...
 - This woman cannot access the forgiveness of God and the healing of God because she is living a lie.
 - This is what is happening to some of you. Back stage/front stage.
 - Some of you have some dark secrets, and deep pain; I'm not so naïve as not to realize that in this room there are a number of secrets. Affairs going on; people who are secretly alcoholics; men who struggle with porn; women, too; some of you are so broken and lonely you don't know how to go on; we have business men are scared about the future—economic outlook frightens you, and you wonder about your abilities to make things work, but you paper it over with a false confidence.
 - You have to come out into the light and be honest with God before you can get help.
 - People say, "Sure you should always be confessing your sin? Embarrassing. People use it against you." Yes... they do. But my point is not to convince you I'm a great guy, but that I have a great Savior. If I convince you I am a great guy, that I get you to try and emulate me, it will just overwhelms and discourages you... But if a great Savior, there is hope.
 - If you realize I'm screwed up like you... some of you see all these people walking around here... smile, gleam in their teeth, Bibles with the lambs and naked baby angels on them... we're all screwed up.

- Got to point this out: Jesus was willing to speak the truth.
 - **How many people are not in this room because no one has spoken truth?** How many people are still stuck in a sin, or in the midst of a destructive lifestyle, because one of us hasn't spoken truth to them?
 - Who is there in your life that you know, out of love, you must speak to, give the Gospel to, confront because of destructive choices, but you just haven't?
 - **Probably our biggest lies are out cowardly silence.**

Here's how I'll close:

- Some of you are coming out of the light... Stay there! Get adjusted. Light of your depravity and light of God's character. Like a movie theatre.
 - If you'll be honest, Jesus can help you. On the cross is where Jesus most clearly told the truth about us. That's where he exposed our sin in its fullest destruction. It's also where we see His love and acceptance most. We see that even though we're sinners, God has loved and accepted us anyway by dying in our place. It's where we find the freedom to be honest. God sees me fully, loves me entirely, and promises only good to me all my days. I don't have to worry about the blessing of others; I have His blessing. I don't have to lie to protect myself and my interests, in the cross, I see He protects me.
- If you won't admit you have sin, won't admit you don't have it all together, God can't help you. but you can be honest with Him, because He already knows it, your soul is naked and open before Him, and He sees you in all your dysfunction, and loves you anyway... b/c Jesus paid it all.

I told you that this subject reveals how sinful our hearts are more than any other. Our words are like 1000 reporters a day rushing to file their reports on the state of our souls. You desperately need forgiveness and healing. Jesus can give it. Jesus died for your wicked, lying, sinful heart. He's the only one who ever lived completely truthfully, but on the cross he was scorned and shamed like a liar. He was the ultimate promise-keeper who died like a promise-breaker. He traded places with you. But it's a gift you have to receive. Have you ever done that?