

The Traits of an Honest Person

Introduction

1. It is sad to note that a great portion of our society is dishonest.
 - a. We must have locks on our doors, alarm systems, lengthy business contracts, etc.
 - b. People just generally think that those they are dealing with are dishonest.
 - c. Many elected officials are dishonest in their conduct and seek to either hide their dishonesty or couch it in "legalese."
 - d. Many, even those who claim to be Christians, see nothing wrong with shading the truth or willfully and knowingly leaving the wrong impression.
2. Honesty must not become an altogether forgotten virtue.
 - a. Children of God must especially be concerned with it.
 - b. Is honesty a characteristic you possess?
 - c. Do others perceive of you as honest?
 - d. Does God, who knows your heart, regard you as honest?
3. This lesson will:
 - a. Discuss the meaning of honesty.
 - b. Establish the need for honesty in our lives.
 - c. Examine some characteristics of an honest person.

I. Honesty Defined

- A. Honesty is "the character or quality of being honest; sincerity; honor; virtue; upright conduct; conformity to justice and moral rectitude." (*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*)
 1. Rectitude: "Rightness of principle or practice; uprightness of mind; exact conformity to truth or to the rules presented for moral conduct either by divine or human law." (*Webster's*)
- B. The word most often rendered "honest" in the NT is the Greek word "*kalos*."
 1. It is also rendered "good" or "honorable."
 2. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* says it "has various shades of meaning; moral excellence, sincerity and the sense of fairness in moral, social and commercial dealings."
 3. W.E. Vine defines it as "good, admirable, becoming, has also the ethical meaning of what is fair, right, honorable, of such conduct as deserves esteem; it is translated 'honest' which has the same double meaning in the A.V. namely, regarding with honor, honorable, and bringing honor, becoming." (*Expository Dictionary of NT Words*)

II. The Need for Honesty

A. Honesty was demanded in the Old Testament.

1. The Israelites were not to cheat their neighbor. (Leviticus 19:13)
 - a. Jesus interpreted the ninth commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16), and the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:17), in Mark 10:19 as "do not defraud." [Defraud: "To deprive of something by deception or fraud." (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)]
2. The people of Israel were prohibited from being dishonest in commerce. (Deuteronomy 25:13-16)
3. The children of Israel were to speak honestly. (Proverbs 12:22)
4. God blessed honesty among His people. (Isaiah 33:15-16)

B. Honesty is demanded in the New Testament.

1. Virtue is to be added to one's faith. (2 Peter 1:5)
2. One is to be honest in work. (Ephesians 6:5-6; 4:28)
3. One is to be honest among the worldly. (1 Peter 2:12)
4. One is not to do evil but rather that which is honest. (2 Corinthians 13:7)
5. One is to provide things honest in the sight of all. (Romans 12:17 - KJV)

III. Characteristics of an Honest Person

A. He speaks the truth. (Proverbs 12:22; 6:16-19)

1. The Christian cannot do otherwise. (Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:25; cf. Ephesians 4:15)
2. The Christian lets his "yes be yes" and his "no, no." (James 5:12)

B. He has a sincere sense of fairness.

1. He has a personal honor that is not self-centered but considerate of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)
2. He lives by the:
 - a. Rule of Matthew 7:12.
 - b. Law of James 2:8.
3. He provides things honest in the sight of all men. (Romans 12:17 - KJV)

C. He loves the truth above all else. (Especially in spiritual matters)

1. Consider the teaching of the Parable of the Sower. (Luke 8:4-15)
 - a. The wayside soil. If one's heart is so hard that it will not receive the truth but allows the devil to take it away before he believes and acts upon it, his heart is not good and honest.
 - b. The rocky soil. If one receives the word and endures for a while but when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word and he is offended, his heart is not good and honest.

- c. Among the thorns. If one receives the word and makes a start but then allows the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches to choke out the word, his heart is not good and honest.
 - d. The good ground. If one receives the word, holds it fast and brings forth fruit, his heart is good and honest.
 - 2. An honest person buys the truth and does not sell it. (Proverbs 23:23)
 - a. He knows the truth will make you free. (John 8:32)
 - b. He is so aware of the value of truth that he is willing, in effect, to “sell all that he has to obtain it.” (Matthew 13:44-46)
- D. He seeks to please God. (Proverbs 16:7)
 - 1. He knows he must please God if he is honest with God and with himself.
 - 2. Consider the teachings of 1 John 3:19-21.

Conclusion: How to Ensure Honesty

1. Practice honesty yourself and strive to influence those around you to do the same.
2. Pray for the strength and determination to be honest.
3. Be honest with yourself and with God. Obey God’s truth today and every day.