

Be Real: Honest to God

Luke 18:9-14

19 March 2017

Everton Hills

Have you told any **little white lies** this week? Is there any truth you pushed a little bit too far? Was anybody hurt by it? Possibly. But we think 'probably not'.

Truth be told, and this morning I want to talk about truth, about Being Real: Honest to God, we've all probably extended the truth – if only a little bit this week. Or we have been the recipient of a stretched truth.

Newsweek ran a poll last year... it discovered that...

12% of adults admit to telling lies 'sometimes' or 'often'

13% of people lie to their doctor

30% admit to lying about their diet and exercise regimens

60% admit to lying at least once during a 10 minute conversation

80% of women admitted to occasionally telling harmless half-truths.

What do you think? Do you think that there is any truth in that?

Now blokes, you might be looking at that and thinking that that is pretty huge... but before you start pointing fingers at your wives or partners, hear this other bit of research: The average number of lies per day by women to their partner, boss or colleagues was **3**. Have a guess how many it was for men? **6**.

***So why do people lie?** Share your thinking*

Research suggests that people lie to either preserve their self-image or their social status, or they lie for strategic gain.

We lie to preserve our self-image and to maintain our social status. So, for example, say that **you catch your child with chocolate** all over their face, and you ask, "Have you been eating chocolate?" their response will usually be what - "No". And the reason being is your child knows that you are not going to be happy, and he wants you to see him as a good and obedient child – because that is what we drill into our kids – that that is what makes them feel valued – and to protect that self-image, their social status (of being loved) they lie. Often this is called a 'white lie'

Other people **lie strategically** – to advance their situation; either at home politics or in business. And you're at the shops, and you ask the shop attendant if your bum looks big in this, and their answer – no! A strategic lie!

The problem with lying, either to others or to yourself, is that it confuses fact and fiction...

When we lie to others, eventually the community in which we live becomes untrustworthy and dysfunctional.

When we lie to ourselves, the same thing happens, we create profound wounds that can lead to immense social, emotional, psychological and spiritual dysfunction.

So what is the opposite of lying? The simple answer might be ‘tell the truth’. But it is more than that. Brené Brown, in her book *Daring Greatly*, says the answer is to be vulnerable.

Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path. —Brené Brown

And it is into that context that I want to share today why it is, as followers of Jesus, that we can, indeed, be vulnerable and honest with God, and also with others...

But let me begin by recognising one thing. The bible tells us that God knows everything. Theologians use a fancy word to describe this knowing by saying that God is omniscient!

Psalm 139 begins...

“O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away.” (Psalm 139:1–2, NLT)

REMIX: When you hear that, what emotion comes to mind?

Now your view of God is going to shape how you feel about God knowing everything.

For some, knowing that God knows everything can be a scary thing. Knowing that God what’s in your heart, in your mind, what you do and don’t do, can laden them with guilt and shame...

But I don’t think that’s the point of God’s all-knowingness. The point of God’s all-knowingness, his omniscience is not so that you can feel small and inconsequential, or that you need to think that God is like Big Brother, with security monitoring your every movement.

God’s all-knowingness helps us to be honest with ourselves, and be the people he created us to be, because we can know that despite what we do, or think, or say, he still loves us and cares for us.

In the bible, Jesus tells a story about a man who could not be honest with himself...

“Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9–14, NLT)

Now notice, who is the one that Jesus says walks away 'justified before God'. It's not the one who lied to himself, telling himself that he was OK... it was the one who was honest with himself, who uttered four simple words - 'I am a sinner.'

Why were those words so profound? Why did they have such an impact? It was for one reason and one reason only... they were the words of someone who was honest to themselves, who knew that by themselves were incapable of being loved. But they were also the words of someone who was to discover that God would rather die, than let a person live in that sort of guilt and shame.

Understand that. That is who God is and how God works. God forgives when we are vulnerable and honest with ourselves and with him.

I saw that powerfully portrayed in a TED Talk this last week – and if you want to know more about TED talks speak to me later. It was the story of some profound reconciliation, between Tom Stranger and the 16 year old girl he committed a vile crime against, Thordis Elva. And while it would be good to see the entire talk, or read their book that they are releasing soon, called **South of Forgiveness** I want you to hear what Tom learned as he became honest and real...

Video Clip (See entire clip) Section showed 14:55-15:30

https://www.ted.com/talks/thordis_elva_tom_stranger_our_story_of_rape_and_reconciliation

“When you own something and really square up to your culpability, I do think a surprising thing can happen... I was offered to own what I did and found that it didn't possess the entirety of who I am. Put simply, something you've done doesn't have to constitute the sum of who you are.” Tom Stranger

Owning our lies, owning who we are, helps us to break free from the fear that binds us to thinking that what we do determines who we are. Owning our lies, gives us a freedom that enables us to fly free.

Consider some of the figures in the bible...

The tax collector – “I am a sinful man”

Paul – “I am the chief of all sinners”

King David – taking ownership of his affair with Bethsheba

Isaiah – who acknowledged that he was sinful and lived around sinful people.

Each of these people found a freedom, once they came clean.

And that is the paradox of honesty. And that is why **Real Followers Are Honest to God...**

Followers of Jesus know that it is because of God's grace, love and mercy, that we can be vulnerable and honest, with our attitudes and behaviours towards others, our biased judgements, the masks that we wear that maintain the lies that try to keep a social standing, or have some strategic intent. And they know that through such honesty that we become free to be the people God intended us to be. As Jesus said, **“So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” John 8:36, NLT**