

# CHAPTER 6, SESSION 17: LEARNING TO LIVE WITHOUT LYING

## CHAPTER CHALLENGE

This chapter presents two challenges from the one goal of learning to live without lying. The first challenge is for us to accept the fact that lying is highly pervasive in our lives. Sometimes this is a difficult reality to admit. Even though the evidence is strongly stacked against us, we may be tempted to think we are relatively honest people when in fact we are constantly shifting words, withholding truths and “fudging” on details.

The second challenge is the opposite of the first challenge; that is a tendency toward legalism. Because lying is so pervasive in our culture and in our lives, it is tempting to say you must never lie—ever! For anyone who leans this way it is helpful to remind them that the overall point of all of these teachings is to have our hearts transformed so that it becomes more and more natural to tell the truth. The chapter points this out clearly, but as the leader you need to be vigilant in helping the group to understand it.

As the leader you should also be prepared for the tension that surrounds the question, “What are the limits of honesty?” We would all prefer a rule here that tells us when it is acceptable to lie and when it is not. Unfortunately, there is no clear rule. Participants in your group may be able to speak of times they told the truth and deeply regretted it—not a bad topic to explore. They can also probably name times when telling the truth could cost them a friendship or a job. In the end, the only guideline we really have is to act in love for others. This is very helpful, but it certainly doesn’t make things easier. But a wonderful point cannot be lost here, namely that when we move beyond rules we enter into relationship. When we are faced with the dilemmas and struggles of telling the truth, we are given an opportunity to turn to the Spirit for wisdom and guidance. Would it be better to tell the truth and lose our job or lie and stay employed? Take it to the Spirit and see how the Spirit works through the question—and through the situation.

## SUPPLIES

- 📺 DVD of the film *Liar, Liar* starring Jim Carey
- 📺 DVD player and TV or computer and video projector
- 📄 Copies of the “Scripture Immersion Worksheet” handout
- 📖 Bible for each participant

## WELCOME

### RECITE COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 TOGETHER

Then begin the silence.

### 5 MINUTES OF SILENCE

### PRAYER TO END THE SILENCE

*Open wide the window of our spirits, O Lord, and fill us full of light; open wide the door of our hearts, that we may receive and entertain [you] with all our powers of adoration and love. Amen.*

—Christina G. Rossetti, England, 19th century., *United Methodist Hymnal*, No.477

### SOUL-TRAINING [10 minutes]

For this week's session, the reflection on the soul-training exercise is only necessary if your group did not do the silent retreat, or if there were individuals within your group who did not participate in the silent retreat. If you are in a group of six or more people, divide into small groups of three or four. Use the questions below to help you process your experiences of going a day without words and going a day without lying.

1. Which of the two exercises were you able to do this week? Describe what you did and how it felt.
2. What did you learn about God or yourself from the exercises?
3. Spend a few minutes reflecting on the soul-training exercises that have been done up to now. Which disciplines are you still practicing? How are they affecting you?

### LIAR, LIAR [10 minutes]

In this film Jim Carey plays Fletcher, a lawyer who uses lying in all of his relationships. His son, Max, made a birthday wish that Fletcher could not tell a lie for 24 hours, and the wish came true. Fletcher has struggled through his day discovering the consequences of telling the truth. In this scene, he has realized that Max's wish caused the "curse" (or is it a blessing?), so Fletcher goes to Max to un-wish the wish.

The clip begins at 38:16 and finishes at 40:06. [WARNING: this film contains vulgarity and scenes of inappropriate sexual activity—preview the clip prior to showing it so you know exactly where to start and stop it.]

- ☞ What are Fletcher's narratives about lying?
- ☞ Is there any truth in Fletcher's description of the adult world?

### ENGAGING THE CHAPTER [20 minutes]

THE MAIN IDEA OF THIS CHAPTER is that we lie when disconnected from the kingdom and are unsure of our protection and identity and care, but in the kingdom we can dispense with lying.

Read through the following questions before you begin discussion. Note any questions you especially want to discuss. Depending on your group size and the conversation, you may not have time to discuss all of these questions.

1. The author gives an insightful list of lies we often tell. They are:
  - ☞ Yes, I have read that book (or seen that movie).
  - ☞ Yes, let's definitely get together soon.
  - ☞ He's in a meeting.
  - ☞ She's not home.
  - ☞ No, that outfit does not make you look fat.

As a group, add to this list by brainstorming lies we tell that seem harmless.

2. Two motives are given for lying: "in order to get what we want" or "to avoid something we don't want" (p. 108). If you are comfortable, discuss with the group which of these motives is most common for you. Are there any other motives you would add?
3. The continuum for this question is contained in the Small Group Guide Appendix in the back of the book (p. 236). Have participants turn to this page to answer this question: In discussing Jesus' narrative about lying, the author contrasts the "old law" with Jesus' teaching. He writes, "The standard of righteousness in Jesus' day was clear: You can tell lies and not be liable (until you get caught), but if you lie 'under oath' you are guilty. Jesus, as always, is aiming for something higher, for a new kind of person with a new kind of character. He is saying, 'Under oath or not, those who live in the kingdom can and should tell the truth'" (p. 110). Put an "X" on the continuum to represent where you think the average person stands regarding lying. Then draw a circle for where you see yourself.



## SCRIPTURE IMMERSION WORKSHEET

Look up, and write out, the following verses:

Psalm 12:2

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Proverbs 12:19

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Proverbs 12:22

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Zechariah 8:16

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John 1:14

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John 18:37

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Ephesians 4:25

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