

THE DANGERS OF DISHONESTY

Charles Itseghosimhe

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, dishonesty means shame (*something without honour, carries humiliation does not set forth a godly example and creates embarrassment*).

Dishonesty is an all-encompassing word. It covers everything that is shameful before God.



2 Corinthians 4:2 reads that *but we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty (shame), not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

In **2 Corinthians 4:2a**, the **KJV** reads *but we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty* while **NKJV** reads *but we have renounced the hidden things of shame.*

When we talk about shame, many will want to think of it only in the sense that one has a feeling of it.

The Greek word used for dishonesty is **αἰσχύνη**. To be able to

pronounce it, we have it as **aischýnē** (aischune — ahee-skhoo'-nay).

The main point of **aischýnē** is not just one having feeling of shame but one being put to shame, *disgrace*, that is, the *put to shame and the confusion of one being put to shame*. And this brought about by divine judgment.

If we commit an act of dishonesty, we are putting ourselves to shame, we bring disgrace upon what we represent as ambassadors of Christ.

God cannot be mocked by our dishonest ways. We are the ones who suffers the disgrace our dishonesty brings.

Galatians 6:7-8 says that *we should not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

For dishonesty to be established, it has to be measured by the standard of God's words.

In **Daniel 5:25-28**, the ways of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, were evaluated by God and they were found not worthy of honour; they were indeed shameful. He was put to shame.

And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of

each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: you have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

So, when we talk about dishonesty, it goes beyond one having a feeling of shame but it is about one being put to shame, exposed and disgraced.

For one to be and remain a true Christian, one has to renounce everything and anything that is regarded as dishonest by God.

Since we are to renounce everything about dishonesty, it therefore means that it is a serious matter and we must not treat it with humour or lack of due respect. Dishonesty is toxic. It is poisonous to human life and to our Christian living.

Nothing in dishonesty can ever be pure, be of good report, reflect modesty or be praiseworthy.

FORMS OF DISHONESTY

Dishonesty manifest itself in many forms. Some of the forms, are lying, cheating, stealing, fraud, participating in “get-rich-quick” schemes or scams, employees not fulfilling the proper requirements of their jobs, debtors not fulfilling their promises to pay their debts, bribery and so on.

In April 2021, a former lecturer, economist and business woman, *Maimuna Ahman Pategi*, made a strong statement about dishonesty during a special prayer session in remembrance of selected family members and friends, in Abuja.

She claimed that apart from bad leadership, criminality and other social vices bedevilling the Nigerian society,

dishonesty is topmost as 99.9percent of the populace are guilty of it.



She said the problem was not only with the government but also with the people who determine the kind of governance that they get, as every leadership is a product of the society.

According to her: *I worry about my grand children because 99.9 percent of Nigerians are dishonest and that's why we are finding it difficult to win the war against corruption. The way a civil servant can be so rich and even take his children abroad for studies and does so openly is disheartening. Nigerians want to cut corners, even those of us that are educated are not left out.*

This indicates that dishonesty is not in short supply in our world, and in our nation. This also indicates that since we (as members of the church) are also part of the nation or society, then dishonesty exists within the church.

The world is engaged in dishonesty and sometimes we (Christians) pick up these dishonest practices.

Let's have some insight into these forms of dishonesty, so we can appreciate the dangers of dishonesty.

Lying

Lying is any act, statement, or word intended to deceive in order to

profit from that deception. The intent is always to deceive.

Lying can include misrepresenting or distorting facts in order to mislead a person, omitting key information to deceive someone, and exaggerating the truth in order to give a false impression.

Even if the liar does not succeed in deceiving another, he has still lied because he intended to deceive.

The purpose of a lie is to gain some advantage—to get something for oneself or for another.

Business organizations lie on their capabilities to secure a contract. Business organizations lie by failing to disclose a material fact that a reasonable investor would consider important in making an investment decision.

People lie on their age and qualification to get a job; People lie to win a potential suitor. People lie on their income tax reports so that they will not pay their taxes in full measure. Some workers lie that they are sick or give false reasons just to get a day off.

Brethren lie about why they did not come to church services. People lie to guard against embarrassment or harm.

Proverbs 6:16–19 says that the Lord hates seven things. One of the seven things is lying. Lies make the list twice - *a lying tongue and a false witness who speaks lies (Verses 17 and 19)*. Lying is not something to be ignored.

Colossians 3:9a says that we should not lie to one another. **Ephesians 4:25** says we should put away lying and speak truth....

Ananias and Sapphira lied, they were exposed, put to shame and they were punished with death

(Acts 5:5,10). **Revelation 21:8** says that all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death

Many critics would want to justify lying. Such have made strong arguments to support lying for the purpose of trying to help others (to save someone's business or job) and lying to protect others (to save someone's life).

Like Jesus commanded, we should always pray that *we should not be led into temptation, but be delivered from the evil one (Matthew 6:13)*. This is one reason, God wants us to pray all the time, pray fervently and pray for one another. His wisdom will direct us in life-and-death situations.

However, it is important to state that, in saving of human's life - Jesus and His inspired spokesmen could have instructed the early church to avoid persecution and death by lying for each other or by denying their own faith in Christ, but they didn't.

In fact, to those first-century Christians who were suffering (or were about to face great tribulation), even to the point of death, Jesus declared, *be faithful until death [even to the point of death]*, and I will give you the crown of life" **(Revelation 2:10)**.

Other critics have tried to use records of personalities in the Bible, who lied, as a justification for lying.

Every lie, told by persons in the Bible, does not in any way justify lying for anyone in the Old Testament times and certainly not in New Testament times and this generation is not exempted.

The Bible records of individuals who lied confirms to us that such individuals were human beings with

the same nature like ours. They were not super-humans. As humans, they could choose to lie, hate, steal or abide by God's laws.

Also, in every generation, God will always commend an individual for a righteous act. This does not mean that God condones the bad things such an individual would do or has done. God is always fair and never partial.

God explained His fairness to the Israelites in this regard, in **Ezekiel 18:25-28** - *yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair. Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.*

Peter also confirmed the impartiality of God when he said that *in truth, he perceived that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him - Acts 10:34-35.*

God cannot lie (**Titus 1:2**). It is impossible for God to lie (**Hebrews 6:18**). God has never lied—He has never even made an “honest mistake.” God by His nature and word, condemns dishonesty.

So, if God is always truthful, and if His Word teaches us to be honest, then how can a faithful child of God ever believe we have a God-approved license to lie? We do not have the right to lie – no one does.

Lying is sinful, no matter the circumstance, situation, condition, time, location or personality involved. Whoever lies, has committed dishonesty.

Cheating

Students have always been tempted to cheat at school: to copy from other students, to share answers on examinations, or to plagiarize by presenting as their own work something that was written by someone else. Majority of students think nothing is wrong with cheating as long as they do not get caught. The student who does so commits dishonesty.

Stealing

Stealing is taking anything that belongs to someone else (without consent) in order to profit from it.

If we take something that belongs to another (without consent) and fail to return it, we have stolen.

People who take items from stores without paying for the items, have stolen. People who rob others have stolen.

When we slander and gossip a person, we have stolen the person's reputation.

When a student copies another's work and presents it as his own, he is both stealing and lying. He has stolen another person's ideas and then lied by saying that they are his own.

When we fail to pay our taxes in full measure, we have stolen from the government.

People who embezzle government funds, convert government properties and sell, convey, or dispose of any record,

voucher, that is of value issued by a government, for their own personal gain, have stolen. This applies to workers in private organizations and churches.

When we rob God in our offerings, we have also stolen.

When we induce someone to part with money or property on false pretenses, we have stolen from the person and we have oppressed that person (this is an act of fraud).

When an employer refuses to pay his employees their due wages, he has stolen from the employees and has oppressed them (this is also an act of fraud).

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 says we must *not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you. Proverbs 14:31a* says *he who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker.*

Fraud is a type of stealing. Fraud has gained strongholds within the internet. Fraud is condemned by God's words.

Stealing is an act of dishonesty and was not encouraged by God's words. **Ephesians 4:25** - *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

Not Fulfilling Job Requirements

If an employee does not labour to the best of his ability for the agreed-upon salary, and only labor when he or she is being closely supervised, such

an employee has committed dishonesty.

It has been established that some employees do not fulfill the requirements of the job, including the requirement to be on time and to work the full amount of time the employer expects. Some are lazy in doing their jobs. This is dishonesty before God.

Such dishonesty was not encouraged in **Ephesians 6:5-6** - *bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*

Get-Rich-Quick Schemes or Scams

Anyone (student, worker, employers, parents, couples etc.) who initiate and/or participate in "get-rich-quick" schemes (betting, yahoo-yahoo, hacking of accounts, bribery etc.) or scams (ponzi schemes), is guilty of dishonesty because such schemes are scams and are motivated by greed, built upon fraud, and based on falsehoods.

Misrepresentation of One's Worth

Misrepresentation of one's worth is a form of dishonesty. This case usually applies to people who want to borrow money. They will not misrepresent their true worth, to enable the creditor-to-be determine if they can meet the conditions.

And when they have signed an agreement, they are unable to fulfill what they have agreed to do.

Hence, you see people, in most cases, unable to pay what they had borrowed.

This means that they have lied by not keeping their word and have stolen by depriving the real owner of the use of the assets that were borrowed.

Also, when one who tells himself or herself that he or she is in good condition spiritually when he or she is actually “dead in sin,” he or she becomes guilty of dishonesty.

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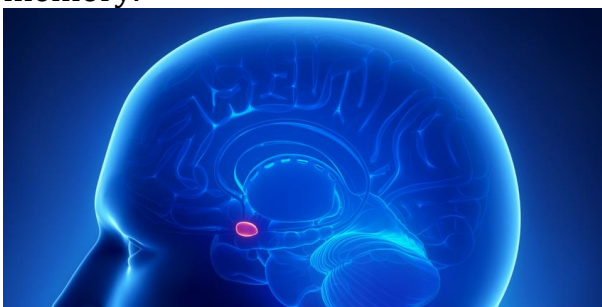
When the truth comes to light about our dishonest ways, actions or lifestyle, we are put to shame and disgrace. However, there are dangers attached to every dishonest acts.

DISHONESTY AFFECTS OUR BRAIN

Amygdala is a region of the brain primarily associated with emotional processes.

The name amygdala is derived from the Greek word amygdale, meaning “almond,” owing to the structure's almondlike shape...

The amygdala is part of the limbic system, a neural network that mediates many aspects of emotion and memory.



[The amygdala, shown here in red, adapts to dishonesty.]

New research in neuroscience offers a window into the brain, and it shows that moral choices like dishonesty do have observable effects on our *Amygdala*.

These effects reinforce some of our long-held ideas about dishonesty,

and they explain why lying is such a dangerous slippery slope.

A team of researchers at University College London and Duke University set out to find out what exactly goes on in the brain when we tell a lie.

They devised a task in which study participants could lie in order to receive money and observed them.

This observation suggests that participants initially felt very bad about the lies they told.

But over time, as participants lied again and again, these areas of the brain showed less and less activity.

When lying no longer stirs up negative feelings, we are able to increase the magnitude of our lies.

Then the additional, larger lies further deaden our sensitivity to the act of lying, and the slippery slope continues.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle noted that we are what we habitually do.

Whenever we do something that is sinful, inappropriate as dishonest that benefits others or save our faces, it makes us to have fewer negative feelings.

The next time we're tempted to lie, let's keep our amygdala in mind, because our choices do not just shape the outside world, they also shape our inner world—the world of our minds, characters, and emotions—in ways we are only just beginning to observe.

DISHONESTY DESTROYS TRUST AND SELF-RESPECT

Relationships are built on trust. When two people trust each other, they feel safe and secure. But trust does not happen overnight.

People build trust when they spend time together, engaging in honest communication and acting unselfishly.

Trust can be shattered, however, by just one act of dishonesty. And when trust has been broken, it can be very difficult to rebuild.

An employer or supervisor at work can encourage us to lie about something relating to work. If we accept and lie, we have lost our self-respect before such employers or supervisors.

They may give us a momentary reward, but deep in their mind, they know we are dishonest and would do something more dangerous to destroy the company too, if given the motivation too big to reject.

Employers don't like to hire workers who have a reputation for being lazy at their work or come to work late, or work only they are being watched. Many employees have lost their jobs because of such dishonest ways.

When we are deceived by someone we trust, we feel hurt and betrayed and that trust becomes lost. It becomes very difficult to restore that trust.

Warren Buffett, whose entire business arguably rests on the trust his investors have in him to manage their money responsibly, said *it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it*.

If we practice dishonesty and the world gets to know about it, they will find it difficult to believe that we are truly followers of Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:21 says that we must *provide honourable (honest) things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*.

Following this principle will enhance our efforts in winning the world to Christ.

DISHONESTY DESTROYS PEACE OF MIND AND GOOD CONSCIENCE

We might find ourselves in business organization, where honesty is often shoved aside for the sake of gaining wealth.

The popular slogan could be *a little dishonesty won't harm if it promotes wealth*.

Truly, we may gain wealth by our involvement in bribery, fraud, stealing, lying.

Such wealth is stolen wealth and they will give us evil conscience. Also, we will not have peace of mind.

Each time, we thinking back over my times of dishonesty, it will never be satisfying to go to sleep each night knowing that God is not pleased with me.

If we lie to or for our work places, we will also not have peace of mind.

DISHONESTY BREEDS DISHONESTY

A study by Robert Innes, a professor of economics at the University of California, found that "dishonesty is indeed contagious."

Thus, dishonesty could be likened to a virus—the more contact you have with a person who is deceitful, the greater your risk of being "infected" with dishonesty yourself.

1 Corinthians 15:33 says that we should *not be deceived: "evil company corrupts good habits."*

OVERCOMING DISHONESTY

How can we avoid falling into the trap of dishonesty?

We need to watch out for the so-called “little” forms of dishonesty. For example, small lies tend to lead to larger lies, in a way that is impossible to stop or prevent.

When we observe small lapses in our individual integrities, it stands to reason that we may do more serious *dishonorable, immoral or sinful* things in the future, particularly if we never receive godly rebuke or punishment that would help us repent from it.

This is why our Lord, Jesus Christ emphasized in **Luke 16:10** that *he who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.*

This also applies in dishonesty - *whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.*

To avoid, prevent or overcome dishonesty:

- We need to build our consciences and minds with God’s words to be heavily prone to feeling guilt, when we have acted dishonestly. People with high levels of guilt-proneness are less likely to start down the slippery slope to dishonesty.

Training of our consciences and minds with God’s words, was one of apostle Paul’s target, when he stated that *we should not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).*

Unless we train our minds and consciences to accept the highest standards of godly living, we will never be able to

grasp the truth of what God requires from us.

- We need to build integrity with small acts of honesty.
- We should not underestimate the power of telling the truth, even about small, seemingly irrelevant things. Doing so consistently helps us maintain a keen sensitivity to dishonesty, and it may just help us make the right choice under pressure.

CONCLUSION

Dishonesty is a terrible sin. There is never a justifiable reason to be dishonest. No justification for dishonesty has ever been accepted by God.

As we strive to be godly, we must be resolved to put away dishonesty, we must be honest with ourselves, and with others, all day and every day.