Sermon Topic: Honesty VS Cutting Corners by Mr Rufus Chan (20 Nov 2016)

Sermon Text: Acts 5:1-11, Joshua 2:1-24

Character formation is important as it helps us deal with everyday issues.

# 1. WHITE (The good route)

- Honesty is grounded in the character of God.
- God is honest, therefore, we should be honest.
- Honesty is highly valued by God. There is no place for sin in the purity of God.

## 2. BLACK (The bad route)

- Dishonesty is used by the devil as a tool. The devil fills our hearts with it (Acts 5: 1-10)
- God uses the word "Abhor" a very strong word to show how He feels about dishonesty.
- Ananias and Sapphira: They were stricken down by God after being dishonest. This was the only instance that God had stricken someone down in the New Testament. This shows the severity of dishonesty.
- Why do we struggle, even though the Bible clearly tells us that it is a serious sin?
  - It is because we rationalize. Rationalization shapes our decision to be dishonest.
     We know God's standards, but when we start to rationalize is when we start to sin.
     e.g. "I deserve it because I've worked so hard / the company is so rich, they can afford it"

"Cheating has nothing to do with morality, or getting caught or how much money is to be gained. It has to do with rationalization. Most people, he found, think of themselves as good people who deserve to have something that they have not earned, so they cheat a little"-Dan Ariely

- The boundaries of what is cheating/lying starts to be pushed more and more outwards when we rationalize.

### 3. GREY (The confusing route)

- Devil creates confusion in grey areas areas where the Bible is not clear whether it is black or white. The devil uses deception and incorrect rationalization in these areas, to try and battle for our moral positioning.
- Rahab and the 2 spies (Joshua 2:1-24):
  - Rahab lied to protect God's men. Was she right, or wrong? Some people say that
    the decision to lie was right as the ends justify the means, or it was the lesser of 2
    evils
  - o However, one way to look at it is that Rahab was honoured for her faith, and not remembered for her ethics. Further, even if Rahab did not lie, perhaps God would have still saved the spies in His sovereignty.
  - o Moreover, God sometimes uses sinful people/sin for His Glory to defeat the Devil (beat him at his own game).

4. God offers grace for all who fail in the area of dishonesty. His grace is offered to us no matter what we do or respond. However, it is not cheap grace because Jesus Christ had to die to offer this grace to all. God doesn't expect us to be perfect, but to break bread with Him and grow more in His likeness.

## 5. How to deal with areas of dishonesty:

- a. Forming convictions in our **Head**. Take every thought captive to obey Christ.
- b. <u>Confess</u>, repent, and return to the Lord. *When the Heart is pure and honest, the Holy Spirit can dwell within and transform the nature of the individual, ennobling it and refining it.*
- c. **Hands**: Responses can be <u>rehearsed in advance</u>. Think in advance about what to say/react when different situations happen. "Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny." Warren Wiersbe
- d. <u>Pray</u>: That God takes over our thoughts even when the devil enters to test us, that we will be stronger. Pray for Wisdom and discernment to deal with situations we don't know how to deal with. God has granted and clothed us with righteousness. Pray that God helps us want to be upright and desire the highest standards of integrity.

Ultimately, we need to walk closely with God to know His heart and hear His voice.

Our goal is to be more and more like Jesus. If the situation is grey, let us skew more towards making a white decision. If life was an exam, don't aim to just barely scrape through and get to heaven.

#### **Reflection and Discussion**

1. Read **Joshua 2:1-24 and Acts 5:1-11**. In what way(s) was the action of Rahab different from Ananias and Sapphira? Why would God honor one and destroy the other? What does this say about God? What does it say about us?

2. In what ways are we cutting corners and being dishonest?

<sup>&</sup>quot;Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." Philippians 4:8

