

Come and Become pt. 9: Honest to God

-Intro: Honest to God story....

- this cute practice began as a way for the parents to politely push for the truth
- there are many reasons why kids and even people in general are dishonest:
 - save face. -to avoid trouble. -to impress. -to avoid uncomfortable conversations.....

-but what started off being said by mom and dad ended up being used by the child when people didn't believe her

-i cannot telly you how many times I heard,, "I mean it, honest to God, I wouldn't lie about this"

- the Idea became "If say honest to God, you have to believe me".

-this is cute and sweet but it paints a somewhat scary picture

-first of all it is ripe for manipulation

-saying honest to God gives you leverage, that you CAN exploit....

*-secondly If you have been talking all day and only said Honest to God a few times,,,, **what is the value of everything else you said?***

-As problematic as Honest to God could be I almost wish there was a system like that we could impose on society.

-for our government. -for bosses: is the company able to give me a raise? Honest to God>>.

-for people we ask out: are you available for dinner on Friday night..... :). Honest to God.....

-But it is not just "people out there". It's us to.

-if there was a society wide "honest to God" how often would WE have to correct what we say?

-how often do we say things "just so" or do we leave out pertinent details to skew how it comes across?

-maybe we are not telling blatant lies,,, but what if our statements all came with a built in "honest to God" percentage rating.....

-especially if our intentions were considered....

-Recap:

-We have been talking through the Sermon on the Mount which kicks off with the beatitudes in Matthew 5.

-IN the beatitudes Jesus basically says “are you: spiritually poor, sad, broken, weak, do you ever feel you just lack faith, or are not “god’s kind of person”? Good NEWS! God is inviting you to be a part of what he is doing in the world”

-So we come to God just as we are,,, but then we must refuse the temptation to try and FIT his teaching around what we already do....

-that was the sin of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day

-that is still a trap WE fall into

-that is why we find selective ways of explaining how our words are technically not lies, even though our intention was not to communicate truth.

-This is part of the sermon on the mount because it is something we are all guilty of.

-So we accept God’s mercy and forgiveness for us right where we are. But we need to be honest about where we are and about what God’s expectation is.

-face the gap between expectation and reality,,, his grace is enough for that gap

—once we face it we are free to lean into his Grace but also his power to make his expectation a reality in our lives.

-that is how we live fuller lives

-that is how we escape the corruption of this broken world

-Matthew 5:33-37 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ 34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

The Ancient Jews developed their own version of Honest to God.

-Example: *they would say , “I swear by God himself, this is true.”*

-they making God their witness in the transaction

-borrowing God's credibility

-like a co-signer

-If you did this, what you said had better be absolutely true.

-like signing a legal document you were bound to what you said if you swore by God

-That is where it all started, but over time they created many less binding oaths.

-the intent was to make people think you were naming God as a witness but to not actually name him

-swear by heaven, or the temple, or the ark of the covenant

-what people were trying to do with these lesser vows was to get that person to trust them and agree to whatever you wanted them to agree to,, BUT they also wanted a backdoor for themselves if they needed it.

-if they did have to back out of the agreement or failed to follow through, they could say,
“TECHNICALLY, I didn’t actually swear by God.”

-so even though I didn’t do it,,, I am still NOT A LIAR

-That is how this whole thing got started, but eventually they ended up with a complex verbal obstacle course.

-precisely how people said things determined the trustworthiness of your statement

-swore by your head 20% reliable

-swore by your spouses head 10%.....

-swear on the temple 50%

-the Ark itself 75%

-Heaven 85%

-swear on God 100%

-I thought Honest to God had the potential for abuse..... This is a mess!

-Jesus condemned this whole system.

-Jesus says, “none of this is necessary, Just tell the truth and then people will believe what you say when you say it”

-This sounds silly, but honestly we are not that different.

-We may not have the elaborate oaths, but there are varying degrees of truthfulness to our statements.

-sometimes we just flat lie

-usually there is some shred of truth, but we frequently try to frame that truth in such a way as to paint a mental picture for people that is not,,, all that accurate

-picture we are trying to imply with people is usually better than reality

-the funny thing is that often those who would admit to just lying are more honest than the person who tells partial truths

-the first type is only lying to another person

-the second type is lying to themselves and the other person

-Jesus is condemning this system of oaths because it makes people’s words meaningless.

-we have definitely seen that in our culture today where we don’t really believe anything anybody says.

-But Jesus is also condemning the system of oaths because it is born from a desire to control other people.

- rather than presenting information and allowing you to be a Free Individual, and make your own decision
- the oath sought to bypass the Independent will of the person you were dealing with
- it sought to apply weight to your argument to force it through
 - rather than it being a question someone has a choice in,,, you make it seem that there is no other option for a THINKING or MORAL PERSON
 - Has anyone ever asked you for a FAVOR,,,, but by the way they phrased is and explained the situation,,, your only Choice was to **Help Them or feel like a person who punches puppies for fun.**

*-This is essentially an attempt to use words to **herd people like cattle.***
-it's manipulation

-At its core this is the Imposition of our Will on other people through how we say what we say.

-Jesus was not ok with his followers using their words in either way.

-Jesus was proposing another way and we will call that Honest and Grace Filled Speech

-Honest, Grace Filled Speech: words that are true in reality and intention; and words that honor the freedom and capacity of others.

Honest and Grace Filled Speech is difficult when we are playing God.

-There are 4 active characters in life:

-me -fellow men and women -God -satan / evil

-Each one of those characters influences outcomes in your life.

-1. you have a role, there are things within your control that you have impact on...

-you can change your life by changing what you do

-you can change your life by changing how you think

-you can change your life by changing who you surround yourself with

-2. other people have a role

-when you interview for a job,,,,, if you are not the only applicant, then it is not totally up to you whether or not you get the job

-maybe you did all you can do but someone else did better.....

-as other people exercise their independent will, it has impact in your life, and this is how god designed things to work

-3. God has a role as an internal guide, but also externally, sometimes God moves things on his end to effect our situations

-sometimes God will guide you through your mind and heart into the things he has for you

-sometimes he will change circumstance to give you good things

-4. Satan/ evil ,,, plays the role of opposer/// a destructive role....

-God is the only one who has the right to Override human characters in the story. (because he is the author)

-He is God,,,, this is his world, his plan, his power

-When we lie or use words to manipulate situations, we are playing God.

-We are trying to Override the other Human characters we share stories with.

-Lying is blatant form of it: In lying you are seeking to usurp someone else's right to respond to reality.

-when you wrong someone and then lie to cover it up,,,, you are taking away their right to chose how to respond. (maybe they would have mercy ... but they will never get that chance if you lie)

-Manipulation of the truth is less blatant but it serves exactly the same purpose.

-you are trying to frame and control how someone perceives you or some situation

-you are leaving certain parts out because you want them to respond a certain way

-in that situation you are trying to Choose for People.

*-You have created a **CATTLE GATE** with words and trying to herd them through*

-those cows are not tied up, but they don't have to be, there is only one place they can go.

-Regardless of what you say or how you say, this desire to control is evil.

-Jesus said "let yes mean yes and no mean no, anything else comes from the evil one"

-This is actually worse than playing God.

-God really allows the free exercise of your will

-who has ever wanted to do something they knew was wrong??? And God in love may have put a few speed bumps in front of you to get your attention,,,, but ultimately you chose to do it and HE LET YOU????

Recognition of God's Sovereignty and Trust in his Goodness make us capable of Honest, Grace Filled Speech.

-Jesus tells his audience that they are swearing by things that they have no sovereignty over.

-so their oath means nothing anyway

-you cant swear by heaven,/// the earth //// even by your head, you cannot make one hair change colors.... (or grow for some :)

-what Jesus is saying is essentially this: if I apply for a loan and I list YOUR house as collateral,,,,, I have no authority to do that,, I cannot promise your house

-so what they are saying is pointless anyway

-We overstep our bounds when we try to control in such ways.

-Sovereignty is God's territory.

-maybe God wants you to get that promotion, but you have to trust HIM to make that happen

-you do your part,,, you work hard,, give it your best and trust him with the results

-dont try to manipulate or even lie to control it

-do your part and then trust him

-when you want someone to do something for you

-dont sit around forever thinking about how to say things just right to make it so they almost have to say yes,,, that is manipulation

-make the request and leave them with a real choice to help you or not

-when you have wronged someone, don't lie, don't manipulate

-tell the truth,,, be remorseful

-but DONT try to control the situation through dishonesty or how you frame it

-let that person chose to give you mercy and forgiveness

-that is between them and God,,, but it is their free right to choose it,,, don't take that from them

-Speaking the truth and refusing to leverage manipulation requires us to REALLY BELIEVE God is in control.

-if God is in control then what really matters for the quality of your life is God's blessing of you

-question: Do I really believe that I can lie or manipulate my way into a more blessed existence than God's Favor will bring?

-Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

-If we will trust that God can build more out of our Integrity and Obedience than we can build with leveraged words, then God will make our paths straight.

- he will direct
- he will provide
- he will help us overcome
- he will be responsible for us

-This will make your life better but it will also:

- make you pleasing in God's site
- it will make your life a target for Greater Levels of Blessing
- it will cause your life to paint a more beautiful picture of Jesus
- it will make you like Honey rather than Vinegar to the people you share life with.....

-This change will not come through just trying harder.

- You must learn to recognize when you are trying to be God

-then STOP

- Then you have to trust that he is in control and that he has your best interests at heart.

-if you trust him to make your life what you need it to be, then you will not feel such pressure to use words the way you have.

-Closing:

-If we fill our speech with grace and truth, God will fill our lives with blessing and goodness.