

Mailing Address:
PO Box 797
Molalla, OR 97038

Pastor Dale Satrum



Phone: 503-829-5101
Fax: 503-829-9502

Truth Vs Lies: Which Do You Follow? (Part 5)

Intro: Video – Avoid the Bull. This is what this entire series has been about...Avoiding the bull...oney! Let's avoid some more lies today.

Lie #5: The End Justifies The Means. The end result justifies the process. Does the result justify the actions? If the final product is good, the process getting there doesn't matter.

- Summarize story – Acts 5 – Ananias and Sapphira – The book of Acts is a history of the early church. The church is a few months old – it's already a mega-church!

I. The Progressive Nature of This Lie

A. Begins With A Legitimate Desire

Acts 4:34-35 "There was no poverty among them, because people who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need." (NLT)

1. There were 1000's of people in Jerusalem who had given their lives to Christ. This meant they were excommunicated from the synagogue / family / business. They had no way to survive.
2. Therefore, the believers who had money / resources / property knew they had a responsibility to help take care of those who had nothing. They wanted to meet the practical needs of people. – Good desire!
3. Many times this is where it begins. We see a need / have an honest desire / want to help / feel a responsibility / and we are compelled to do something. So far so good!
4. So you're thinking, "What's wrong with that?" Nothing! It's what happens after this that get's us in trouble!
5. Many people think that because they want to fulfill a legitimate need, they can accomplish it however they want. NOT TRUE! God is not just concerned with the outcome. He is also concerned with how you got there!

B. Motives Become Mixed

Acts 5:1-2 "There was also a man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira,

sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, but he claimed it was the full amount... ” (NLT)

1. Now, the motives are mixed. Sure Ananias was being generous, but his motives were not only about meeting people’s needs, but also about looking good to the Apostles and other people. He wanted to appear more generous than he really was...more spiritual. (Genuine compassion mixed with the flesh.)
2. The issue was not the fact that he didn’t give the full amount. The issue was that he wanted to appear more generous than was reality. He wanted the recognition. His generosity became about himself not others.
3. How easy is it for our motives to get mixed as we move ahead meeting legitimate needs and / or desires. Over the years, I’ve seen my share of this play out in the context of the church. People always “tip their hand” what their real motives are. Is it about them or about the need?
 - Some of Foothills guidelines do this. (101-201-301 requirements) The requirement of 6 months before leadership position.
 - I’ve had people threaten to leave if their desires are not met
 - I’ve had people threaten to stop giving their money...
 - I’ve had people promise to give money as long as there are strings attached to it. (Their strings)
 - People who refuse to allow others to help them in ministry. They just can’t turn responsibility over to others. WHY? It’s about them!
4. Once our motives start becoming about us, we slide even farther.

C. Deception Becomes Intentional

WHY? Because you recognize / believe you cannot accomplish the end result by being honest. OR, you don’t want to pay the price that honesty will require...Therefore, you intentionally deceive. No one will know!!!

Acts 5:2 “He brought part of the money to the apostles, but he claimed it was the full amount. His wife had agreed to this deception.” (NLT)

1. Here we have premeditated deception. It was planned out. They were in this thing together. They didn’t accidentally lie, they now justified the lie. Besides, who’s it going to hurt anyway?
2. Please understand, it wasn’t about the amount. It was about the deception. Once our motives are mixed, we can start justifying a lot of wrong behavior to get to the end result.
3. This deception is in two directions. We first have to deceive ourselves that this is acceptable behavior. Then, we deceive others around us. AND, it’s all intentional. We know what we’re doing.
4. This plays out everywhere in our culture. Dishonesty is acceptable if it gets me to the end result I want.

- Trying to buy a car for my daughter – Talking to a guy on craigslist about this car – explain (air bag deployed / replaced passenger door)
** Have you ever sold something without being fully honest?
 - Political process: It's OK to be dishonest if it gets me re-elected
 - Being dishonest on your taxes – justify not paying – bigger refund
 - Being dishonest on a job application
 - Being dishonest at church...presenting yourself in such a way to others that is NOT reality to appear more spiritual / better than you really are.
5. Where have you been justifying dishonesty for the sake of the end result?

D. The Final Result Becomes the Obsession (Process no longer matters)

Acts 5:4 "The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us, but to God." (NLT)

1. Notice that Peter didn't mention the amount...or the end result. Peter confronted them about the process. They had justified a deceptive process. He points out to them that the reality was they were trying to deceive God not men. How could you believe the end justifies the means!!!
2. This is what happens when we walk down this road. We become so obsessed with whatever the end result is we can believe the process in getting there is not important. As long as the end result is good, that's all that matters. Not True!
3. This lie is like all the others; it leads to bondage and negative consequences. Ananias and Sapphira discovered this. The blessing of God is not in this type of process.
4. We have a culture that is obsessed with the end result regardless of the process. As believers, it is sometimes difficult not to get drawn into this thinking.
5. We have churches today so obsessed with reaching unchurched people that they have avoided anything that may scare them away. Things such as asking for commitment / sacrifice / serving / giving / or even avoiding the Gospel.
6. In our attempt to be culturally relevant and reach people, we can embrace a process God wants nothing to do with! In fact it offends Him!
7. Personally, are you justifying some wrong behavior because of some expected result? Just think about the logic of this...I am going to do something I know is wrong in order to experience something good.
 - God's world does NOT work like this!

II. The Directional Nature of Truth (How truth keeps us on course.)

A. Begins With A Legitimate Desire

1. It could be a legitimate desire to help people / meet needs / serve in a ministry /
OR find a new job / improve your financial situation / work on a relationship /

sell some property / The list could be endless.

2. The desires themselves are not evil / wrong / But if there is no objective standard to follow as we pursue these things, we tend to get off course. We try to have them fulfilled in the wrong way...our way
3. Are we willing to trust God with all of our desires? If we believe God doesn't care about our desires, we will try to scheme our own way to have them met. We will focus only on the result not the process.
Ps. 37:4 "Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desire." (NLT)
Who gives you your desires?
4. So many things about the Christian experience comes down to what you believe about God. I see so many believers taking their lives into their own hands because they're just not convinced God is that good.
5. Will you trust God with your desires? There not wrong. Desires for intimacy / companionship / fulfillment / significance / hope / meaning / finances / Can you trust God with those desires today?
6. Can you place your desires in His care instead of your own?

B. Motives Must Stay Pure

Prov. 16:2 "All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD." (NIV) Motives are important to God. They are inspected by God.

James 4:3 "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." (NIV) Wrong motives hinder God's involvement in our lives.

1. Once we allow the process to become all about us, we're off track. Our motives have become self-centered instead of Christ centered. It's all about getting my desires realized instead of Christ's desires realized in me.
2. So how do I keep my motives pure?
 - Humility: If there is an absence of genuine humility, the focus of our lives usually becomes all about us. Pride takes over!
 - Prayer: We have to be willing to expose our motives before God and allow Him to show us where we're off track. Are we willing to submit to His will for our lives? Humility and prayer.
 - Patience: A willingness to wait on God and allow Him to provide for you. Sometimes God will purposely delay answers just to see if we trust Him. He will delay answers to develop character in our lives. If you don't believe in the process, you take matters into your own hands.
3. Whatever your desired end result might be (job / position / finances / relationship / ministry / How are your motives?

C. Commitment Must Be To Truth (Regardless of the outcome)

Ps.119:160 "All Your words are true; all Your just laws will stand forever."

(NLT)

Eph. 4:25 “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” (NIV)

1. Here’s a tough principal to embrace. We must have a commitment to truth regardless of the outcome. Results are important but NOT at the expense of what is true.
2. There is no way to guide us on this process unless we embrace truth at three distinct levels.
 - We must embrace God’s word as true. This is the objective standard. Therefore, what God says I will commit to. Even if it doesn’t benefit me in the short-term. God’s truth is not optional.
 - We must be truthful with ourselves. Self-deception gets us all in a lot of trouble. We can all justify wrong behavior. We can all make excuses why we can’t change course.
 - We must be truthful with each other. We must consciously put off falsehood towards each other in every form. Stop trying to keep up appearances / stop being deceptive to gain an advantage / stop withholding information when we know full disclosure is expected.
3. Unless we embrace truth at all three levels, we will automatically start justifying behavior that we believe will give us the result we want.
 - **Illustrate:** Parking Lot with Bowling Alley – We challenged you to do the right thing regardless how we felt. Look what God did!
4. What is your commitment to truth? Only if it immediately benefits you? Only if it’s not painful? Only if it gets you the desired results? OR regardless!

D. The Process Has Priority As Much As The Product

I Thess. 2:11-12 “...we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” (NASB)

1. I really like the phrase “walk in a manner worthy”. Walking implies a process. We are in this life moving forward on a journey with Jesus. Jesus has a destination for us, and He is using the journey to get us ready for the final destination.

Phil. 1:6 “And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished...” (NLT) See...process!

2. We need to understand that the process is as important to Jesus as the final product. God values the process. He is using a process to transform us. Therefore it is impossible for the end to justify the means.
3. We need to learn to value the process. We need to learn to trust the process. We need to not want to skip over the process. If you disregard the process, you’ll miss what God has for you.

4. Share about how Foothills came to be. It was a painful process. I would have NEVER chosen it. That I would be required to be out of the ministry for 8 months – Not because of anything I did wrong – wash windows / struggle financially / feel spiritually lost / emotionally crushed / YET, this was God’s process for me. Look at what I would have thrown away!
 5. Don’t throw away the very thing you desire the most. Trust God with the end result by trusting Him with the process. Walk with Him in a manner worthy of who we are as followers of Jesus through the process.
 6. Where have you fallen victim to this lie? What areas of your life are you embracing, “The end justifies the means.” Where are your motives mixed / where are you justifying dishonesty / where are you not trusting God with the end result...your desires?
- As I invite you to pray this morning, will you ask the Lord to show you where this lie may be playing out in your life? Will you choose to reject it?