

Some Indirect Ways of Lying

by J.R. Miller

The sermon highlights various indirect ways of lying, including tone of voice, exaggeration, and self-conceit, and emphasizes the importance of honesty and truthfulness.

Scripture: Exodus 20:16, Psalm 101:7, Proverbs 6:16-19, Proverbs 10:18, Proverbs 12:22, Proverbs 19:5, John 8:44, Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9, James 3:5-6

Topics: "Truthfulness", "Self-Conceit"

Description

J.R. Miller addresses the various forms of untruthfulness, emphasizing that lies can be conveyed through tone, emphasis, and even statistics. He categorizes lies into three types: white lies, black lies, and statistics, asserting that the intention behind the words is what constitutes a lie. Exaggeration is highlighted as a common form of lying, where individuals embellish the truth, often driven by self-conceit. Miller illustrates this with the example of a young man whose self-importance distorts his perception of reality, leading him to misrepresent conversations and events. Ultimately, he suggests that such exaggeration can lead to a disconnect from the truth, as self-conceit clouds judgment.

Transcript

There are many forms of untruthfulness. One may be by a tone of voice, or by an emphasis, so playing with the words he uses, as to make them give an impression altogether different from that which the same words would give if written or printed. It is said that figures do not lie -- but figures are oftentimes so arranged that they do lie flagrantly. Someone has been attempting a sort of classification, and says that there are three kinds of lies:

white lies,

black lies,

statistics.

The essence of a lie, is in the intention which the person wishes others to take from what he says or does. He may juggle with words as he pleases and claim that he is perfectly truthful; but if he has intentionally left a wrong impression upon those to whom he has been speaking, he has lied!

One too common form of lying is exaggeration. The narrator tells the truth -- but tells more than the truth. He clothes his commonplace statements in such elaborate drapery that they are scarcely recognizable.

Plain prose becomes fascinating poetry, as it flows from his unctuous lips. It is perilous for people with more imagination than conscience, to allow themselves even the smallest license in the way of exaggeration. Men have been known to become such slaves to the power of exaggeration, that they could not relate the simplest fact truthfully! If something has happened twice -- they will report it as having happened ten times. If three men were hurt in an accident, the three will become a dozen when these exaggerators tell it. They always use superlative adjectives.

A special phase of exaggeration, is that in which things are colored by the self-conceit of the narrator. He sees everything as related to himself and as affected by his opinion of his own importance. The result is that all the attainments and achievements of others, are seen by him through diminishing lenses -- while all that he himself does, is looked at through magnifying glasses.

The vagaries of self-conceit in this direction, are almost incredible. The writer knew a young man who seemed honestly to think that he immeasurably surpassed all other men in knowledge, in wisdom, in experience, in genius. He talked glibly of the greatest men, and was ready, without a suggestion of humility, to criticize and disparage them. Judging from his freedom in speaking of men, and their abilities -- there was not a position anywhere in the land, which he could not have filled far better than it was filled by its present man.

Another peculiarity of this man's self-conceit, was that he would always surpass, out of the depository of his own vast personal experience -- any feat or achievement that any other person might recount. The only basis for his distinguished achievements, was a luxuriant imagination, inspired by conscienceless self-conceit.

The same tendency led this young man so to misrepresent what others said to him -- as really to misrepresent them and practically falsify their words. Especially was this the case when the conversation had reference to some other matter in which he himself was concerned. For example, he called one day on a prominent gentleman and sought an interview, when he laid before him a scheme in which he very much desired this gentleman's aid. At least he hoped for a strong endorsement and for practical encouragement. He reported to his friends that he had been most cordially received, that this busy man had given him nearly two hours of his valuable time in the middle of a morning, that he had listened to him interestedly, asking him many questions concerning the enterprise, that he showed remarkable familiarity with the scheme, regarding it as wise and hopeful, and that he was ready to identify himself with it, backing it up, no doubt -- although he had not actually subscribed -- by a large amount of money. When this gentleman was told what his interviewer was reporting -- he replied that the story was absolutely false. He remembered receiving the young man's card one morning and admitting him to his office, where he listened for fifteen minutes to what he had to say. Then his only reply was, as he ended the conversation, that he would think the matter over.

Just what the psychological processes in the young man's mind were, it is difficult to say. The charitable view is that he thought he had made a profound impression upon the gentleman's mind, and that he really believed that the statements he had made regarding his attention and readiness to join in the enterprise, were true. It is scarcely to be supposed that he deliberately lied. His self-conceit had played a trick on his own conscience.

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