

Truthfulness

DARRELL DELANEY

Imagine you are at a crossroads, where one simple choice could either maintain or shatter the trust of someone you deeply admire. You are faced with a decision to either speak the unvarnished truth or weave a convenient falsehood. How would your choice ripple through your relationships and integrity? Join us on this episode of *Groundwork*, as we journey through the contours of truthfulness in the Christian life. We will explore how this virtue is not merely about speaking facts, but is interwoven with integrity, trust, and a reflection of God's own character. Stay tuned as we uncover pivotal instances where truthfulness shapes our lives and faith, next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in part five of our six-part series on Christian virtues; and we have covered compassion, humility, gratitude, and generosity; and today we are going to talk about truthfulness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And our final program will be on forgiveness; and as we have said in the previous programs, these are virtues that we have done in this series that are not in the fruit of the Spirit; not the big three of faith, hope, and love; but these are virtues that come principally in Paul's letters, but in other places in the New Testament, too. So yes, as you said today: truthfulness. So, we...as followers of Christ...we need to tell the truth. We need to be truthful people. We need to be known for being truthful people. It means, you know, basically that we walk our lives...we lead our lives...in honesty, sincerity, and integrity; and hopefully, others see us that way. We become known as somebody who is trustworthy.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; you know, the truth, of course, is the opposite of being false, and we want to be genuine; we want to be factual, in accordance with things. As far as integrity goes, we want to carry out these principles. We want to be full of truth; and as a Christian, it means we align with who God is and his character and his nature. It is not just about, you know, agreeing with facts like gravity or things like that, but we are called to live as Christ has lived; and let's do a little bit of a study on this as we go into scripture, and talk about God's nature of truthfulness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

There is an interesting passage in Numbers 23:19: God is not human, that he should lie; not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? So, it is an interesting line there in Numbers, because it sort of says: Well, God isn't human, and that is why he doesn't lie. The implication being: Humans...we lie. We lie a lot. We do make promises that we don't fulfill. We do say we are going to do something, and then we don't do it. Sometimes that is a mistake, you know, we forget or something, but other times, you know, we sometimes make a promise just to make somebody feel good, or to get our way, but we really don't intend to follow through on it. Well, that is a lie.

DARRELL DELANEY

Unfortunately, we have been guilty of that. Paul picks this up in Titus, where he talks about God's character. He says: ^{1:1}Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— ²in the hope of eternal life, which God, *who does not lie*, promised before the beginning of time...

So, he makes it clear, even in his greeting in this letter to Titus and the Church, that God's character is that he does not lie.

SCOTT HOEZEE

If he says it, he means it. In Hebrew, there is almost no distinction between a word and a deed...they are almost the same word; and so, when God says it, it is as good as done. That is not true of us all the time. We do know people who are like that, you know; if they say they are going to do, they are going to do it. You can rely on it; it will get done. You don't have to worry about it. Of course, we know some other people who are, like: I will be following up with you...I will double-check that you followed through on what you said you are going to do. You never have to do that with God. God's word and God's action are the same; one and done with God.

DARRELL DELANEY

So shall my word come out of my mouth and never return to me empty, but accomplish what I have called it to accomplish...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Isaiah 55 [verse 11]

DARRELL DELANEY

I love that verse because it shows God's character. Another verse is in Hebrews 6, where it literally says: ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is *impossible* for God to lie...

So, not only is it that he doesn't lie, but it is literally impossible for him because it goes against his very nature.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; being truthful...we have been defining it...basically, being a truthful person means that you are a transparent person, right? And your life lines up with the facts of the universe—your life lines up with reality. Well, God defines reality...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God creates reality. So, God cannot not line up with his own reality. So, God's character is exactly truthful because, again, for God, word and deed are the same thing. When God promises it, he will fulfill it. He has never, ever, made a promise that he has not or will not yet ultimately fulfill.

So, not surprisingly, as you said a little while ago, Darrell, that obviously the opposite of the truth is the falsehood, right? If it is not true, it is false. Okay, if God is true, who is the false one? John 8:44 tells us. Jesus is talking to some people who are opposing him:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is not truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

God is truth; the devil is falsehood...period.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Satan is the father of lies. That interesting topic there: father. So, when we see this word *father* I want us to think about how when we think of history or when we think of math, we think of Hippocrates as the father of modern medicine. We think of Archimedes as the father of math. The word *father* there is the progeniture and the originator of it. So, some people consider Newton to be the father of gravity, even though he discovered gravity, he didn't invent gravity; but now those things are common knowledge. We teach them in universities. The point I am making is that, the father is the progeniture, and we are not trying to be paternalistic in any way, but when we have said the father of modern medicine, the father of the information age, or things like that, those are the people that it originated with. Well, the *lie* originated with Satan in the Garden of Eden. He is the father of lies; that is where Jesus is going with that, because he is the first one who ever introduced lying into creation, and into humanity, and we have since run with it, unfortunately; but that is where that began. So, when you tell the truth, you align yourself with the Father...the heavenly Father; but when you tell lies, you align yourself with the father of lies, which is Satan, and I don't think anybody ever wants to intentionally do that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Jesus says in John 8...it is interesting that he says when the devil lies, he is just speaking his native language. It is like, lying, for the devil, is like English is for you and me. It is our mother tongue; it is our first language; it is how we express ourselves. Well, for the devil, it is just his native language. It is his mother tongue. This is who he is; this is what he does. Very, very interesting way that Jesus put it there: But he doesn't hold to the truth; there is no truth in him. Now, that is a strong statement. I mean, I don't think we know too many people, or have known too many people in history, about whom you could completely say: There is no truth in that guy; none; nada! I mean, even in deeply broken people, there is probably some truth. Not the devil, Jesus says. There is *no truth* in him. So indeed, Darrell, when we try to learn the devil's language, and we lie; we are aligning ourselves with the father of lies. Whereas, Jesus, and the scriptures, from A to Z—Genesis to Revelation—call us to align ourselves with God, who is the truth.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is true. In just a minute, we are going to go even deeper, to talk about this Christian virtue of truthfulness; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in our episode on the Christian virtue of truthfulness, and I thought it might be fun to do a little bit of a truth study here, because the Bible has plenty to say about truth and how to live truthfully; and we know that Jesus is our ultimate example of the embodiment of what it means to how to live, and how to conduct ourselves; and he has something to say about truth as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In his big, big prayer—sometimes called his high priestly prayer—in John 17, Jesus says this, beginning at the 13th verse, addressing his Father: “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they (the disciples) may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. (Now this, verse 17:) ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

So, there again, Darrell, you know, we have been saying in this episode, God and truth are synonymous—they are the same thing; and here, Jesus says that. God's Word is truth; sanctify them by that

truth; and in so doing, they remain close to God. The world will hate them, because the world hates the truth; but they are to be sanctified by the truth, and God's Word is truth. So, God: truth; Jesus: truth: I am the way, the truth, and the life. The same thing.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, that truth is the Word. That is really important. Not only that, but they are cleansed by that Word; they are redeemed by that Word. So, let's continue the study going into the...now, we went from truth to Word...and so, now let's look at what John 1 says. It says: ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³He

Now we have truth is Word and Word is God, but then, if you go down to verse 14, it says: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

So, now we have Truth: Word; Word becoming a person, being Jesus. So now, the truth...we need to understand that the truth is not just some abstract concept; it is not just some theory or thought or science; it is a person, and that person is Jesus. The Truth is Jesus. In John 14:6 Jesus says: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. So, no one comes to the Father except through me.

He wants to make sure that we know that we need a relationship with Jesus, who is the embodiment of God's Truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He was full of grace and truth: John 1:14. As we have noted on other *Groundwork* episodes, Darrell, my friend, our colleague, Neal Plantinga, has sometimes noted that Jesus was the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth; and Jesus is about the only one. Jesus has grace and truth, both up and running, one hundred percent...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Full bore, all the time. The rest of us struggle with that, right? We all know some people who are full of grace, but not so full of truth. You can serve them a dish that is really terrible. The food just didn't turn out, but they will say: Oh, I love it...I love it...I love it. It is like, oh, you know, they cannot tell you the truth to save their life. Then we also know some people who are full of the truth, and we wish they would shut up about it already, because, you know, this casserole stinks! Yes, they've got truth, all right, but they are mean about it. Have a little bit of grace. Jesus has them both up and running at the same time. Truth in service of grace; grace in service of truth; and that made Jesus reliable. You know, I always think that this comes up a few chapters later, in John 4, with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus tells her the truth: I know the truth about you; you have had four husbands; you are living with a man who is not your husband. The whole village had ostracized her because of her reputation. Jesus tells her that, and she is drawn into him. Why? Because she knows Jesus also has the grace to forgive her, right? So, when you are aligned with Jesus, and you are full of grace and truth, you will not put people off, you will draw people in just as Jesus did.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Jesus...it says the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. If our word becomes our flesh, then we will be able to dwell among the people who we speak to, but if our word does not become flesh, and we become liars, then we cannot even...we have to run from the people we dwell among. So, it is really interesting that if we embody grace and truth, as Christ has taught us, then we will live truthfully, and that will be something that God will be honored by, because we represent him; but if we are really honest, Scott, if we hear a person that says: I have never, ever told a lie, we kind of look at them with suspicion. I turn my head to the side and I say: Well, really? We need to make sure that we are transparent about the fact that we have lied, and we have made mistakes. God has made it clear in his Top Ten...I call it the Top Ten...it is the Ten Commandments, where he said: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor; and he makes it clear that he doesn't want us to live that way. The Heidelberg has a lot to say about that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, which is one of the great confessions of the Reformation. It is a doctrinal standard for some denominations, like the Christian Reformed Church. It has got a great section on the Ten Commandments; and here is what it says in question and answer 112: What is the aim of the ninth Commandment? (The one you just quoted: Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.) The answer in the Catechism: That I never give false testimony against anyone; twist no one's words; not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone rashly without a hearing. Rather, in court, and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind. These are the very devices the devil uses (We saw that earlier.) and they would call down on me God's intense wrath. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it (and now this:) and I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name. To guard and advance my neighbor's good name. Darrell, this is a brilliant take on the ninth Commandment in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and I think social media has killed this. Social media has killed our ability to guard and advance my neighbor's good name, because we gossip, we slander people on Facebook, people on Twitter. We regularly join echo chambers of likeminded people who have *no* desire to tell the truth, but they are very, very intent on slandering somebody, or caricaturing somebody, or criticizing somebody; and you know, Darrell, what do we do when we lie about someone or when we lie to someone? Well, we basically say: I am going to deprive you of your connection to reality. I am going to create your world for you...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I will tell you what you need to think. Whether it is true or not, I am the dictator of your reality; and God says: No, I am the one who creates reality, and you go along with it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Of course, Satan knows that when we lie, we eat away at our credibility and ability to speak the truth of God's Word. So, if we lie and we align ourselves with Satan, who is the father of lies, on natural things, why would people believe us when we speak about heavenly things that we consider to be the truth, and convicting to our souls? We kind of eat away and ebb away at our own credibility to be able to speak into those things, when we are actually supposed to represent Christ, because 2 Corinthians 5 says we are Christ's ambassadors, as if he were making his imploring through us. So, if he would never lie, and his character is to tell the truth, then our character should be to do the same.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Unfortunately, we have seen it, Darrell, that when the Church aligns itself with maybe a high-profile pastor, who has been convicted of telling lies, and the Church defends him, or we align ourselves with politicians or movements that don't always tell the truth, you know what the first reaction of society and the world is? They don't believe the Gospel anymore. They don't believe the Church can speak the truth about anything anymore. So, as you just said, you know, when we go along with lies, we undercut our connection to God, and we undercut our ability to be respected, even when we are telling people that Jesus loves them, and Jesus died for your sins. They don't believe that because you don't tell the truth about other things. So, lying has great, great ripples; and we want to talk a little bit more about that, as well as practical ways to embody truthfulness. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Scott, we have been talking about the importance of the Christian virtue of truthfulness and the way we represent Christ in our attitudes and actions because of it; and now, we want to get into some practical applications as we close out the program.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And to set that up, let's go to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 4, beginning at verse 17, where Paul writes: So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. ²⁰That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Now here, verse 25): ²⁵Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

There is that thing, Darrell, I said just a little while ago in the previous segment, when we lie to people, we say you don't deserve to know the truth. I am going to create your world for you; I am going to dictate truth for you. You cannot do that to others, and here that is what Paul says: Speak truth to your neighbor. We are all members of one body. We are all sisters and brothers. We are all connected. So, don't lie to each other; don't try to cut other people off from Christ and from truth. Speak truthfully so that they can stay close to God and to Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

And not only that, Scott, it is the old self. When we do that, we go back to the old self. We put back on the old clothes, so to speak, and Paul says in these verses: When we are darkened in our understanding, we used to do that. We used to lie, we used to cheat, we used to step on people, we used to manipulate to try to get things to happen our way; but when we have taken off that old self and put on this new self, the new self lives in truth, speaks truthfully, and works in honesty and integrity. It is the opposite of what we used to be, and we are called to live this new life in Christ. He gives us the ability to put off falsehood and speak truthfully to our neighbors.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; so let's, as we close out this program, just think about maybe three things or so of why this is so important...why truthfulness is a virtue. The first reason it is important is we display the very character of God, right? We make ourselves transparent to God; we make ourselves transparent to Christ Jesus the Lord, so that people can see God in us.

We said just a little while ago in this program, Darrell, that one of the bitter fallouts—one of the bitter fruits of the Church aligning itself with people who tell lies all the time, is that they cannot see God in us anymore. They cannot even believe us that we are telling the truth when we say: You know, Jesus loves you; Jesus died for your sins. They don't believe that, because, well, we don't tell the truth about anything else, so, why should I listen to them even when they say those things? So, we want to display the character of God; the character of Christ Jesus our Lord; so that when we speak to people, they see God in Christ in us.

DARRELL DELANEY

And when we don't lie...I mean, it is really because: 1) God tells us not to, and: 2) We don't want to lie because it will align us with the father of lies.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

If we are supposed to be reflecting Christ's character, that is what we do when we tell the truth. If we lie, we reflect Satan's character, unfortunately, and a lot of us, I know, myself included, can think of times when we were lied to, and we were hurt from those lies; and the longer the lie was, the more painful it was. So, we shouldn't lie because it actually damages people, and we know the hurt because we have experienced that

when we deal with broken people and relationships; and we don't want to align ourselves with Satan.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Some people...and there have been some famous figures in history, and maybe there are some people we know that would fit this, you know...some people tell so many lies...well, for one thing, here is one of the things about telling lies, Darrell, you have to keep track of them all. It is a lot of hard work, right? It is like, what did I say to her? I know I didn't tell her the truth. What did I say? I have to remember. I don't want to contradict myself. It is easier to tell the truth; but you know, some people...sometimes it is pathological liars...they tell so many lies that eventually they come to believe the lies themselves. We know some people famously in history...you know, President Lyndon Johnson told a whopper of a story about his service in World War II and the whole thing was a lie. It was all exaggerated way, way, way over the top. He managed to get himself awarded a Silver Star he didn't really deserve, but he wore it on his lapel every single time he had a suitcoat on. Well, the people around him eventually realized: He believes it now himself. When you lie a lot, you literally cut yourself off from reality. You are living in your own bubble, and that bubble is not God's truth; and so, we don't want that to happen. So, we are truthful people because it displays the character of God; secondly, we are truthful people because we don't want to align ourselves with the father of lies, the devil; and third, our message becomes more powerful when we *do* talk about the things of God in front of our neighbors, as we just said. We don't want to become people who people just cannot believe us when we say anything, even when we say the truth of the Gospel.

DARRELL DELANEY

There is more gravitas to our words if we live in integrity. Words and actions match, like you said, the Hebrew words for word and deed are kind connected and intertwined there, and when your words and your actions align in the truth of God's Word and how he has called us to live, then your testimony becomes powerful. So...the enemy...he would love to discredit our testimony and take that away from us, and I pray that we would walk in the truth. We have also known we are imperfect, and we make mistakes, and even though sometimes in our best efforts we do white lies...what some people call white lies...what some of us call half-truths...or we try to "protect" people when we tell them, not what they want to hear or what we think that need to hear. Those things can become very tricky because they are all still considered lies in the eyes of God. I am so glad, Scott, that there are provisions in the Word for when we sin; not *if* we sin, but *when* we sin, Christ is able to give us provisions to find forgiveness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1) ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. That is good news. Here is the other thing, Darrell, that we can say in conclusion here: Our confession of our sins depends on our being truthful people! Untruthful people who say: I have never sinned; they cannot confess their own sins. So, we can be forgiven when we confess, but we have to be people of the truth, even to be good at confessing our sins; and by the Holy Spirit, we can be moved to just that place of grace and truth; thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we learn about the Christlike virtue of forgiveness. Connect with us now at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or to tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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Printed on July 16, 2025