

Weekly Study Guide

The week of April 24, 2016

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SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

Option 1: Spend a day observing the discipline of silence. Spend a whole day without speaking. In that time of silence, speak only to God. You can journal or pray, but if possible, let no words come from your lips. It's amazing what truths you can receive when you're not speaking! If this is not possible, you can:

- A. Spend a set amount of hours without speaking. (Let others know when are your silent hours.)
- B. Designate a "lie-free" day. Try to go 24 hours without speaking anything that is in any way untrue. What do you learn? What will God show you?

Option 1 & 2:

Regular habits of private Bible reading strengthen our relationship with God and teach us how to follow Jesus. In addition to the thematic exercise above, you can use this guide each week to lead you through relevant sections of the Bible.

Daily Readings

MONDAY

Matthew 7:24-29

TUESDAY

Matthew 8:1-17

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 8:18-22

THURSDAY

Matthew 8:23-34

FRIDAY

Matthew 9:1-13

SATURDAY

Matthew 9:14-17

Group Discussion

CONNECT

Have you ever told a lie, and then wondered why? In thinking about it afterward, why do you think you did it?

THIS WEEK'S LEARNING GOAL

That we might be changed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit from fear to love, so that we might respond to un-ideal circumstances with simple contented honesty instead of webs of deceit.

LEARNING FROM THE BIBLE TOGETHER

Usually when we think of the topic of lying, Biblically, we think first of the 10 Commandments God gave in Exodus 20. **Read Exodus 20:16.**

- Does anyone in your group have a translation that reads differently from yours?
- When you read this commandment, what comes to mind?
- What do you think it is telling you not to do?
- Why do think that is important to God for the sake of his people?

Jesus shows us not just the letter of the law, but the heart behind it—the heart that God wants to form in us as his people. **Read Matthew 5:33-37.** In Jesus' day, people often would exaggerate the truth and use a bit of deception in their dealings in order to get the best deal. However, when they used an oath, then they were bound to honor what they said.

- When Jesus says that for us yes should be yes and no should be no what is he saying about how our daily interactions should be with one another?
- In what situations are we tempted to answer “yes” when deep down we think in reality the answer is no?
- Have you ever had someone tell you “Yes, sure” and later you found out they meant “No, I can't do that”? How did that impact your relationship?
- What fear or hope do you think was at the root of that dishonesty?
- Have you ever had someone confess to you, “I thought I could do that, but it turns out I can't?” How did you respond to that honesty when it came as a confession?

The Good and Beautiful Life book talks about fear being at the root of why we choose to lie. Either we are afraid something bad will happen if we tell the truth, or we desire something to happen for us that we believe won't happen unless we lie.

- When people tell lies or ‘embellish the truth’ in a conversation, what do you think is the most likely reason why they do this?
- What kinds of things do they fear?
- What kinds of things do they hope to see happen through a lie?
- What security and assurance do we need to have in order to not fall into the temptation to ‘embellish’ our portfolios? Where do we find that security?

Read Ephesians 4:25 and 29. In the church Paul saw the cultural pressure to impress one another, and in these verses took the chance to paint a different picture of how life in the Kingdom works. Paul's rationale for not lying to each other came from the fact that we are all part of the same body.

Group Discussion (continued)

- How does truth telling increase intimacy and relationship in connection with each other?
- Verse 29 takes us a step further into not just telling the truth, but being careful to let our words not tear others down, but build them up. The same things can be conveyed in a way that kills the spirit and in ways that shows respect and concern for a person's growth. What stories could you share about positive or negative examples of this?

Martin Luther's explanation of the eighth commandment in the small catechism reflects this thought. Martin Luther said about the commandment "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"; "What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way".

- How does this definition take us a step beyond not lying?
- How would you want people to choose to think of you when they catch you on a bad day?
- How does the 'golden rule' help you discern the difference between not lying and speaking helpful truth?

Read Colossians 3:7-10. What does this passage tell us about who our God is, and what he wants for us as his people?

SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

Talk about the soul training exercise from last week. Did you practice it? If so, what did you learn? Then look at the soul training exercise for this week. When might you find time to practice it?

PRAY

Pray for the ability to forgive those who have been less than truthful with you, as you remember your own temptations to untruthfulness. Pray also for the courage, and freedom from fear that Jesus alone gives, to live a life of honesty and truth with others.