



HONESTY AND DISHONESTY

11:1; 16:8, 11; 17:15; 18:5; 20:10, 14, 23; 29:24

These **proverbs** deal with the subject of **honesty** and **dishonesty**, and it is a subject spoken of throughout the Word of God. Both are illustrated in the Word of God by the lives of men and women. One of the purposes of the book of **Proverbs** is *“to receive the instruction of wisdom”* concerning *“justice, and judgment, and equity”* [1:3]. **Solomon** prayed for *“wisdom”* in order to display **justice** or **honesty** in judgment [I Kings 3:9]. **Honesty** is *“the quality of being honest, to be free of deceit and untruthfulness, to be ethical, fair, and reputable, to possess integrity”* **Dishonesty** is *“to behave in an untrustworthy or fraudulent way, the intention to mislead, to cheat, or to take advantage of another”* **Honesty** has to do with morals, values, principles, and standards, while **dishonesty** is the lack of these things. A system of **honesty** was established by Old Testament Law [Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:15]. There were laws against taking advantage of the disadvantaged for personal gain, such as the poor [Exodus 23:6], the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless [Exodus 22:21-22], and servants [Deuteronomy 24:14]. **Solomon** in his wisdom warns against taking advantage of the disadvantaged [Proverbs 22:16, 22]. **HONESTY IS A STANDARD THAT GOD EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE TO MEET** [Micah 6:8]. **Dishonesty** and all that it includes (deceit, fraud, theft, bribery, falsehood, lies, embellishments, misinformation, misrepresentation, misleading, and pretense) was condemned [Leviticus 19:11-13; Deuteronomy 25:13]. The very character of the *“Antichrist”* is one of **dishonesty** [II Thessalonians 2:9-12]. **TO BE DISHONEST IS THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST!**

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is His delight” [11:1].

The truth of this is repeated in Proverbs 16:11; 20:10, 23]. The phrase *“false balance”* represents all **unjust** and **fraudulent** practices in dealing with any persons. A *“false balance”* speaks of all **unfair** and **unfaithful** actions. All that is included in **dishonesty** *“is abomination to the LORD”* He **detests** it, He **abhors** it, He is **disgusted** by it, He has an **aversion** to it, and holds **hostility** toward it. **THIS IS TRUE OF ALL FORMS OF DISHONESTY!** What is considered as *“good business sense”* by many is an *“abomination to the LORD”* On the other hand is *“a just weight”* which speaks of **honesty** and **integrity** and such *“is His delight”* The Lord is **pleased** with, He takes **pleasure** in, and He **loves** that which is represented by the *“just weight”* [Psalm 11:7]. The *“false balance”* and the *“just weight”* shows that **GOD IS A GOD OF DETAIL!** In Proverbs 11:2-6 there are some principles that will prevent a *“false balance”* (dishonesty). ❶ Humbleness [verse 2]. All dishonesty is the result of selfishness, and the desire of personal advantage. ❷ Integrity of purpose [verse 3]. ❸ A right estimate and view of wealth [verse 4]. ❹ Righteousness in heart [verses 5-6].

“Better is little with righteousness than great revenues without right” [16:8].

The word “*than*” in this **proverb** indicates a comparison, the comparison being between “*little with righteousness*” and “*great revenues without right*” and “*little with righteousness*” is “*better*” (more advantageous). There are two very important implications here that must be realized: ❶ Honesty (doing what is right and pleasing in the sight of God) does not guarantee wealth. This is seen in the phrase “*little with righteousness*” IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE BUT LITTLE IN DOING WHAT IS RIGHT. ❷ Wealth can be obtained through dishonesty. This is seen in the phrase “*great revenues* (income, proceeds, earnings, profits) *without right*” IT IS POSSIBLE TO INCREASE PROFIT IN DOING WHAT IS WRONG!

“He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” [17:15].

This **proverb** has reference to judicial injustice, which is a terrible abuse of God’s authority. Justice is required of civil rulers [**II Samuel 23:3**], as they are to be ministers for good [**Romans 13:3-4**]. When those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice (judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, defense attorneys, etc.) do either acquit the guilty or condemn the innocent, this defeats the purpose of government which is to protect the innocent and punish the guilty.

“It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment” [18:5].

This too, has reference to judicial injustice, (the perverting of justice), but is applicable to the private sector as well. The first part of the **proverb** teaches that it is not right, proper, or appropriate to receive or agree with the “*wicked*” (guilty), due to relation, position, or personal favor. The second part of the **proverb** teaches that it is also wrong to judge against the “*righteous*” (innocent), due to the fact that they have no personal relationship, and do not hold a high position, and to whom you owe no favor. The teaching of the **proverb** is that JUSTICE OUGHT TO BE DONE WITHOUT ANY RESPECT OF PERSONS [**Leviticus 19:15**]. *Jehoshaphat* instructed his judges correctly in this matter [**II Chronicles 19:7**].

“It is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, he boasteth” [20:14].

This has reference to **dishonesty** in buying. There is certainly nothing wrong with trying to find the best buy (that is part of being a good steward), but to do so in a dishonest way is sin! This has reference to the one who talks down (in a dishonest way) what they are attempting to buy in order to drive the price down, and then after the purchase is made there is boasting at the foolishness of the seller. THIS IS DISHONESTY! The same principle applies to the seller.

“Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel” [20:17].

The taste of food gained through dishonest dealings, may at first seem “*sweet*” (pleasant, delightful and satisfying) but eventually it is as unpleasant as eating “*gravel*” THIS IS A WARNING AGAINST THE SHORTSIGHTEDNESS OF DISHONESTY!

“Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul” [29:24].

The phrase “*Whoso is a partner* (associate, accomplice, accessory, helper) *with a thief*” (he who steals and takes away another man’s property) is a warning against any such partnership. There are many ways in which one can become “*partner with a thief*” such as employment with a dishonest employer, and such as receiving or buying stolen goods.

The subject of honesty, dishonesty, justice, and injustice is a subject that all are faced with in the varied circumstances of life. It is not circumstances, apparent outcome, or personal advantage that dictate honesty, and justice but “*Thus saith the Lord*” It is always right to be honest and just, and therefore always better. The “*wisdom that is from above*” instructs one in honesty and integrity!