



Gleanings

by Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.

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Wisdom

Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

Solomon Pro 22:4 (NIV)

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Contact Us

www.StrategiesWork.com

Gerald@StrategiesWork.com

972 473-8655

The Truth Sets You Free

How would you feel, if you knew that every time you interacted with someone, there was a 93% probability that they were lying to you? Psychotherapist and consultant Brad Blanton posits that we humans lie all the time. According to a *FastCompany* article ("Here's a Radical Idea – Tell The Truth" by Alice Van Housen in August/September 1997, pg 50), a survey of 40,000 people concluded that 93% lied regularly and habitually in the workplace. This implies that every time you talk with a sales person, your boss, even your friend, there is a highly probability that you are not getting the truth. What is worse, there is a high probability that you lie as well.

Blanton asserts that it is more than just lies by individuals; he claims that most organizations are managed by a series of delusional lies. Some common examples are: "*the customer is always right*"; "*I am not angry*"; "*everything is proceeding according to plan*". But according to Blanton, living in lies takes a huge toll in terms of stress, anxiety and depression.

If this is true, why do we do it? Van Housen quotes Blanton's answer, "Most people don't speak the truth for fear of the consequences". My interpretation of what Blanton means is that we fear the immediate reaction of others. However, the true consequence of lying is more than just the immediate reaction. The true consequence is both the immediate reaction and the action taken based on the reaction. For example, if a manager's reputation with subordinates is poor, but the manager's boss refuses to confront and instead tells the manager that he or she is doing well, what is the consequence? The boss avoided a potentially ugly scene, but the manager is still ignorant of his or her true performance. In fact, the lie may embolden the manager to accentuate the bad practices thinking that this is what the boss wants.

So assuming that one wishes to break free from the bondage of lying, how does one do it? Blanton offers three practices:

- Tell the truth compulsively
- Tell the truth immediately
- Tell the truth repeatedly

How does one take the sting out of telling the truth? Blanton asserts that one should be specific with one's comments. In other words, don't use general words or hyperbole, such as *you always* or *you never*.

What is the result of a life style that tells the truth? Blanton claims that one will have more satisfying relationships and be more productive at work.

It is amazing that Blanton, a new age psychotherapist, would be preaching the gospel of truth as if he discovered something new. In fact, he has not discovered anything new. He is simply pointing out a principle of the universe. It is found in the Ten Commandments from the Bible. It is a principle that Jesus spoke, "...If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32 NIV). Jewish King Solomon said, "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free. (Pro 19:5 NIV). Just as lying produces bondage, living in truth brings freedom personally and in organizations. Freedom sets the stage for productivity and excellence, which brings peace and contentment in life.



For information on Strategies@Work, LLC and a bio on Dr. Gerald Chester, please go to the web site:

www.StrategiesWork.com



Contact Us

www.StrategiesWork.com

Gerald@StrategiesWork.com

972 473-8655

Does Performance Trump Character?

Pete Rose is attempting to get his lifetime ban from baseball lifted so that he can be admitted to the Baseball Hall of Fame. He readily admits that he bet on baseball games, but claims that he never bet against his own team. Rose's effort begs the question - what matters most, personal character or performance on the field? Or stated another way, does his athletic performance exempt him from personal character standards?

Former Dallas Cowboy Coach, Jimmy Johnson, stated that he treated each player individually. His perspective on a player was based, to some degree, on the player's performance. The implication was that top players were given more latitude relative to breaking rules than other players.

A common comment spoken by many managers, business owners, and executives is, "Do whatever makes money". This reflects a perspective that values money over the methodology for making the money. It is the same issue that major league baseball is facing with Pete Rose. Does performance trump character and values? Or in more popular parlance, does the end justify the means? For many the answer is yes. However when money drives the decisions of an organization, quality is at risk. So consider the following question. Would you like to buy a product or service from an organization that puts money ahead of quality?

Boasting

Recently while testifying before a congressional committee, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan was asked the question, "Who should get the credit for the current low interest rates - the Bush Administration, Congress, or the Federal Reserve?" Mr. Greenspan displayed deftness and sensitivity in his response as he indicated that none of the options presented deserved the credit. He went on to state that the low interest rate environment is a function of low inflation.

I was impressed with Mr. Greenspan's ability to refrain from reacting to a question that reflected little understanding of the monetary system. It does not give me much comfort to know that the people making the laws for this country are so ill informed about the relationship between interest rates and inflation. Furthermore, the congressman who asked the question showed little understanding of the Federal Reserve's view of financial policy.

What was the congressman trying to accomplish with such a question? Sad to say, it appears that the congressman's primary interest was boasting rights. Who has the right to brag about the low interest rates that are enabling low mortgage rates?

It bothers me that those who are making the laws of the land are concerned about getting credit. Solomon wisely wrote the following proverb, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips." (Pro 27:2 NIV). Wouldn't it be wonderful to have representatives in Congress whose only concern was the best interest of the American people? If we had such representatives, they would not be concerned about getting credit, but focused on just and righteous laws that bring blessing to the land. In doing this well, they would be praised.