

Heart Attitude #2: “Living an Open and Honest Life”

Video clip suggestion: The Incredibles - The scene where the mom finds out that her husband is not on a business trip but secretly doing super hero missions. Why did Mr. Incredible feel the need to keep his missions a secret from his wife? What consequences can you see as a result from not being open in a relationship or even a friendship?

Learning Activities:

Trust Fall - What does it take to trust someone? Can you trust people that are not living an open and honest life with you?

Leading the blind - Blindfold someone and have someone else lead them around obstacles. How trusting are you with the person leading you? In relationships how trusting are you with people that are not open and honest?

Play “two truths and a lie” - Was it hard to choose the lie? Was it hard to come up with a lie? Why is it harder in a game than in real life?

Have questions passed around and answered to allow people an opportunity to become a little more open with each other. A list of questions is given at the end.

WEEK 1

1. Start with learning activity or movie clip and debrief.
2. Introduce the topic and work through presenting the material. Do not try to cover all the material all in one night if you do not have time. You can finish it next week.
3. Give an assignment to pick some of the questions in the “Not so Open” section to work through for next week. Challenge them to be honest.
4. Assign a verse to memorize that is discussed in this Heart Attitude.

The Issue

Do you remember that guy or girl in high school that was always trying to be like someone else and everyone knew it? They would buy the same clothes. Talk the same way. Have the same phones and even type of car. They were never the person they wanted so desperately to be. No amount of external glamorization or gadgets could make someone, someone else. Yet, that is exactly where we find ourselves in today’s generation. Everyone is trying to be someone else. We close off our lives and shut the door to who we really are. We are scared to let people see the real us. Maybe we are afraid of being rejected by parents or friends. Maybe we are secretly ashamed of our lifestyle and we do not want anyone to know. There is probably a whole list of “maybes” for why people live closed and less than honest lives.

People today are very image based. It is mostly all about how you look, what you say, and what you have that makes you popular or a “nobody.” So what do people do? They hide the truth about who they are. They lie to people and even to themselves. Our society has minimized the seriousness of lying and even conditions us to accept dishonesty as a way of life. Society has accepted the belief that anything is

“ok” if you are not caught. In fact, society has gone so far to say it is perfectly fine to lie if it helps a person. CEOs are stealing from their companies and pastors from their congregations. Sleeping around is just as rampant within the church body as it is anywhere else in society. The concept of accountability is all but a lost thought today. No one wants to be held accountable for his or her lifestyle. People do what they want to do when they want to do it. We can summarize this tendency into two different categories, 1) lying and 2) not being open.

Lying

Bill Hybels in *Laws of the Heart* has this to say about why we are so prone to lying. I feel he makes a good summary of why we lie.

“Many of us get caught up in lies—so caught up that we begin to adopt Satan’s role. In theory, we align ourselves with the God of truth, but in practice, we wear the hat of a liar. Why do we do it?

Sometimes we lie to impress people. We claim to be bosom buddies with important people we barely know to boost our status. We lie when we fill out job applications to assure ourselves a position. We lie about past accomplishments to win acclaim.

Sometimes we lie to get revenge. We are angry with someone, so we make up stories to discredit them. Sometimes we lie to make a profit. At other times, we lie for convenience. We make excuses for not lending assistance to someone, when really, we simply do not want to get involved. We say we will come to a party, when we do not intend to do so. We just do not have the courage to say no.

At other times, we lie to escape punishment. I probably could fill a book with the lies people tell policemen to avoid getting traffic tickets. And what parent doesn’t have a long list of “logical explanations” they’ve heard from a son or daughter who’s missed curfew? Professors too spend untold hours listening to heartrending (though untrue) stories of why an assignment was not turned in on time.

Yes, we lie to impress, to get revenge, to make a profit, for convenience, and to escape punishment. In short, we lie a lot!”

Do you find yourself struggling with lying? Maybe just those small white lies do not really hurt anyone. The honest truth is a lie is a lie regardless of how big or small it is and lying is a sin.

Not Being Open

The second category is simply not being open. In other words, there is a lack of vulnerability-based trust. People that struggle with not being open keep people at a distance. They do not want anyone to come in too close that they begin to see the “real” them. They do not want to have to admit that they do not have it “all together.” In reality people do not feel they are lying, they are just not being completely open. As in lying, people that struggle with not being open are trying to keep a public image of who they want those around them to see. They hide behind the veil of accountability but never lift the cover to reveal their struggles, hurts, and pains. In fact, people can live so long trying to cover up the “real” them, they lose track of where they really are. They do not know how to be open because they have become callous to what they have tried to hide. Here is a list of questions you can ask yourself to

see if you are open or closed. Pick some and work through them. Be honest with yourself. Honesty with yourself is the key to be honest with others.

1. When have you felt accepted?
2. When have you felt safe?
3. Who knows you well? Why do they know you well?
4. What have you learned recently about God?
5. What have you learned recently about yourself?
6. What are some things that you are struggling with right now?
7. What is getting in the way of you doing what you know God wants you to do?
8. What was the last thing you sensed God telling you to do? Did you do it?
9. Is there something you need to take immediate action on? What have you been waiting for?
10. Are you mad at anyone?
11. Has anybody hurt your feelings recently?
12. Did anybody break a promise to you today?
13. Are you worried about anything?
14. Whose failure would you secretly celebrate?
15. What do you think about God right now?
16. What do you think God thinks about you right now?

So what does the Bible have to say about living an open and honest life?

Eph. 4:25

“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

Paul commands us to do two different things in Eph. 4:25. Lay aside falsehood and speak truth with one another. Whenever we speak truth, the Spirit of God works, but whenever we tell a lie, Satan goes to work. Distortion and exaggeration are two subtle forms of lying that often go unchecked. What circumstances tempt you to lie?

Paul says not only to lay aside falsehood, but also to replace it with truth, especially toward other believers. As members of one another, we affect each other, and we cannot build each other up apart from truth.

1 John 1:7

“but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

The apostle John challenges us to “walk in the Light.” To walk in the Light means to be open and honest, to be sincere. You cannot walk in the Light without being truthful, without living an open and honest life, without being sincere. There are two benefits of living an open and honest life. One is fellowship with one another and the other is the cleansing of all sin. God cannot cleanse you from all sin, when you continually allow falsehood to be a pattern in your life.

Honest But Not Open

Is it possible to be honest but not open? Yes! Sadly, this happens a lot of the time. People will be completely honest about sin patterns in their life and not want to deal with them. Maybe that person is you or was you at some point in your life. God, through His word or through another person tried to show you that you were heading down a wrong path and that consequences are to follow. This is the type of person that if you ask them an accountability question they will tell you an answer. They are not going to give you anymore than what you asked for and they are not going to volunteer any information if you do not ask for it. Even when they answer you, their answers are short and closed.

They are honest. They are just not open. Being open means you have a vulnerability-based trust with the person who holds you accountable. Being open means you do not wait for your accountability partner to ask you the question hoping they forget. It means you willingly open up first knowing they have your best interests at heart.

Our first heart attitude is placing the interests of others above our own. This is an area where it comes into play. If we are truly being people that place the interests of others above our own, what reason do we need to feel we cannot be open? If you are the one asking the questions, are you being open? Nothing is worse than trying to open up to someone you feel is perfect. You are not placing their interests above your own if you never take a risk to open up. Again, it comes down to that image problem. Our walks with Christ take a huge blow when we are not open. What could be a situation freeing, life changing, heart healing point in your life turns into a yearlong or longer battle as you fight to keep your secret hurts and pains covered.

With all that being said, there is one warning. That is the warning of being too open. In other words, you are completely transparent about all your sins. Honestly, not everyone needs to hear all your dirty laundry just so you can feel better about getting something off your chest. Guys and girls are different, if you have not figured that out. We have different issues and problems. Guys do not need to know what girls are struggling with and girls do not need to know what guys struggle with either. So be careful. You can be open without giving all the dirty details of a situation. Finally, a good rule is guys talk with guys, and girls talk with girls.

The Consequences of a closed life

1. You will be found out. (Pro. 10:9)

You cannot live in a sin pattern and expect to not be caught. Your sin will expose you. So many marriages and families have been destroyed because a husband or wife tried to keep a secret life hidden. What could have been dealt with early on, ends up taking out more than just the two involved. Entire families and friends are hurt in the process.

2. Your relationship with God suffers. (Isaiah. 59:2)

You cannot have a relationship with God and live shamelessly in sin. Your heart will become hardened by sin. You will cease to hear God's voice. Your heart will become callous, and the closest relationship you can ever have will seem the farthest away.

3. Your relationships with people suffer.

Not only does your relationship with God suffer, but also so does your relationship with people. Where you once were placing the interests of others above your own, you will soon begin to think only of yourself. You will run over people and sell them out to keep your own hide from being caught. People become only a means of getting what you want. You will eventually lose all compassion as your heart becomes hardened.

4. God will not be able to use you for His purposes. (2 Tim. 2:21-22)

God cannot and will not use someone that is seeking out his or her own glory. What is sad is that many people from the outside can look as if they are having a thriving ministry only to be found out hiding a secret lifestyle. Their ministry is crumbled and all those lives they touched are wounded, many never to return to wanting to follow Christ. The worst part is that a person living in sin will not be at a place where God can use them. The opportunity God had in mind for you to be His instrument will be wasted and an opportunity lost to show the love of God.

The Benefits of an open and honest life

1. We build each other up in the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:15-16; Heb.10:34-35)

We are not meant to stand alone. Just as the human body has several parts, the body of Christ has several parts. God designed it so that we would have to depend on each other. Being open and honest within the spiritual body is like oil to a car engine. The oil allows all the parts of the engine to work together and move forward. Without the oil, the engine will eventually break down and cease to be functional.

2. You can walk securely without worry of what people will say about you or against you. (Pro. 10:9; Titus 2:7-8)

When you live an open and honest life, you can walk everyday a free person. You are not constantly wandering what people are saying about you.

3. You can tap into the incredible power of prayer and support from other believers as you deal with sin issues in your life that you could not do alone. (Eccl. 4:9-10; James 5:16)

Have you ever thought I am the only person that struggles with this _____? (Fill in the blank) Have you ever been encouraged when you heard someone talk about the same struggles that you have. Here is a news flash; we all deal with the same stuff. You are never the only person that struggles with a particular sin. When we are open and honest, we build each other up because there is unparalleled strength in numbers. We can gather and get each other's back. We can fight the fight from different directions because we are all placing the interests of others above our own. Sound familiar? It is the first heart attitude again. You do not need to look after your own interests when three or four other people are.

4. God will use you in ways you could never imagine. (Eph. 3:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:21)

Have you ever thought about the fact that the All Mighty God, Creator of the universe, Sovereign God over everything wants to use you to reach out to someone today? Where do we come away with the idea that God cannot? Or God could never do _____? Or whatever excuse we find. When we align our hearts with God and we focus on what He is doing, we jump on the most exciting roller coaster of our life.

WEEK 2

1. Start off with a learning activity or movie clip.
2. Review the consequences of having a closed life and the benefits of an open life.
3. Check memory verse.
4. Work through the Questions for Reflection given below.

Questions for Reflection

17. In Ephesians 4:25 Paul gives one of the practical applications that grows out of our relationship to Christ outlined in 4:20-24. What does he say we are to “put aside” and what are we to “take up”?
18. What are some benefits of living an honest and open life before others?
No one can really help you if they do not know the truth about you. One does not have to tell all about himself/herself to everyone, but we must be willing to be honest even about hurtful things. Lies, when told, need to be confessed and forgiveness asked.
19. Colossians 3:9 and Ephesians 4:25 give motives for truthfulness, what are they?
Why is truthfulness important?
20. Tell about a time that you remember lying about something. What were the circumstances and why did you lie? How did you feel later?
21. Distortion and exaggeration are two subtle forms of lying that often go unchecked. What circumstances tempt you to lie?

Get to know You Questions to use during an activity

Set 1

1. What is your full name and is there any particular history or significance to your name, i.e., were you named after someone or does your name have special meaning?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is the earliest memory you have?
4. What was a particularly special “growing-up” place for you, i.e., a place where you had special experiences? It might have been a favorite house, a special room in a house, a backyard tree house, your grandparents’ home, etc.
5. Who was your first friend? Tell us about him/her.
6. As you reflect on your life, can you identify a particularly significant “marker event” or a particularly significant period in your life which had an important impact-positively or negatively-on you?
7. What was the last important transition in your life? Are you going through any transitions currently?
8. What was a person in your life who provided a pattern of encouragement for you?

Set 2

9. If you could meet anyone in history, who would you like to meet and why?
10. Who is someone that you admire? Why?
11. What is your favorite food?

12. What is one famous landmark that you would like to visit? Why?
13. What is one goal in your life that you want to accomplish before you die?
14. Do you have a favorite movie? What is it and why is it your favorite?
15. What is your most embarrassing moment?
16. What is a challenge in your life that you have or would like to overcome?
17. What is your favorite dessert?
18. What is your most cherished possession?
19. What is one area in your life that you are very proud of?
20. Talk about your favorite pastime.
21. Tell about your favorite relative.
22. What is your favorite thing about the US?
23. Do you have an exciting memory from childhood? What is it?
24. What is the most beautiful place you have ever been to?
25. What do you like to do for fun?
26. Tell us about your favorite book?
27. What kind of music do you like?
28. Talk about a tradition in your family that is important to you.
29. If you could vacation anywhere in the world for two weeks, where would you go?
30. What is your favorite sport and what do you like about it?
31. Tell about your favorite pet.
32. Tell about your family.
33. Tell what you think people like about you most.
34. Tell about a hobby that you have.
35. Tell about a good friend you have had in your life
36. Have you ever won an award? What was it for?
37. What do you like to watch on TV?
38. If you could be a part of any event in history, what would it be and why?