

Research Article

Teaching About Honesty Based on Characters Viewed From the Bible Perspective

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Abstract: The Bible teaches much about wisdom. It could even be said to be a book of wisdom. One of the wisdoms it teaches is honesty. The biblical definition of honesty encompasses various aspects of human life, including relationships with oneself, others, and God. Given the breadth of the discussion on honesty, the author limits the discussion to the book of Proverbs, the person and teachings of Jesus, the writings of Paul, and the story of honesty in the life of Joseph. In the Bible, honesty is a highly emphasized moral value. Honesty is not merely about not lying, but also encompasses sincerity of heart, truthfulness in words and deeds, and integrity in all aspects of life. The Bible provides numerous examples and teachings about the importance of honesty, both in human relationships and in our relationship with God. Honesty is not only about avoiding lies, but also about doing what is right and according to God's will.

Keywords: Bible; Honesty; Philosophy; Teachings; Truth.

1. Introduction

Quoting the academic paper "Developing National Cultural and Character Education," Prof. Dr. Robert Sibarani, MS, in his book "Local Wisdom," writes that honesty refers to behaviors carried out to establish oneself as someone who can be trusted in words, actions, and work (Astrid et al. 2025). Honesty means a harmony between thoughts, words, and actions that demonstrate the truth. The Wikipedia encyclopedia defines honesty as a moral attitude (in words and actions) that embodies the valuable attributes of truth, integrity, unity between outward actions and the heart, and an upright attitude, which also means the absence of lies, deception, and theft. Webster Dictionary defines honesty as "fairness and straightforwardness of conduct, adherence to the fact (sincerity), uprightness of character or action; implies refusal to lie, steal or deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust, responsibility, or pledge (Sinambela et al. 2023). It can be said that honesty is a moral behavior or attitude, one that encompasses words and actions characterized by honesty, integrity, and truth (Susanto and Baskaraunto, 2021). An honest person does not lie, behaves without a mask, and is not hypocritical; they show their true self without falsehood and act consistently. Thus he can be trusted. Human history clearly demonstrates through biblical teachings that the seeds of dishonesty have existed since the fall of mankind (Laia et al. 2025). When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree, they chose to hide. They had no desire to come to God; instead, God took the initiative to seek them out. Dishonesty became an ingrained part of humanity at that time, and has been passed down to their descendants to this day. It's fair to say that honesty is rare and expensive. The loss of honesty leads to distrust between individuals. A crisis of trust ensues, leading to social distance within society. Given the critical nature of this issue of honesty, it's crucial to foster character education from an early age. This honesty is not only problematic in the secular world, as previously mentioned, but also occurs within the Church. The Church, which should be a place to shape and cultivate Christian character values, one of which is honesty, is inevitably tarnished by the

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actions of individuals within the church itself, both congregations and leaders. Problems such as non-transparent financial management, dishonesty in giving offerings, dishonesty in admitting mistakes, even dishonesty in pulpit ministry, and many other cases are commonplace in the church. Honesty is key in business. Without it, a business will not survive (Rantesalu, 2020).

Therefore, entrepreneurs face the challenge of consistently building trust with consumers through honesty. Moral behavior that is not based on honesty loses the meaning of moral values themselves. If moral behavior loses its value, it is certain that other moral behaviors will also lose their value. Therefore, honesty is one of the foundations or foundations that must be applied for moral behavior to have value. Therefore, if a good deed is not based on honesty, it is hypocritical. In addition, honesty has an influence on the values of tolerance and self-awareness. Discussions about truth and justice have been serious topics since the early days of Greek philosophy. The issue of justice encompasses various fields, including ethics, philosophy, law, and even social justice. Many believe that just or unjust actions depend heavily on power and strength. While being just seems simple, implementing it in everyday life is certainly not as easy as it seems. The meaning of justice for humans is so important that it has given rise to the concept of inherent rights of every individual. Philosophers and jurists are continually interested in formulating the meaning of justice, which is often cyclical and fraught with major problems in the context of law and legislation. Justice can only be understood if it is positioned as a state that law seeks to achieve. Truth is God's standard of right and wrong; every human law must reflect divine law. Throughout history, Christians have deviated from God's truth and justice, leading to the destruction of civilization. Satan has played a role in changing the rules and creating chaos for Christians (Gulo dan Lawalata, 2024). When a nation legalizes evil and deviates from God's law, it invites His wrath and judgment.

2. Method

The research methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach with a literature study. The main focus is to explore the Biblical view of honesty, which is examined through texts in the Book of Proverbs, the teachings of Jesus, the writings of Paul, and the life story of Joseph. This study identifies the concept and teachings of honesty in the Bible and analyzes how these values can be applied in the daily lives of Christians. The research employs textual analysis methods to examine and interpret Bible verses related to honesty and suggests how these principles can be applied in today's social and moral context. The data used consists of Biblical texts as well as secondary references related to the topic of honesty and Christian ethics.

3. Result and Discussion

The Concept of Honesty in the Bible

Many terms are used in the Bible to refer to honesty. These terms refer to a right heart, integrity, pure motives, not telling the truth but being truthful, being honest and forthright, sincerity, purity of heart, pure motivation, not faking or being hypocritical, moral goodness, the quality of sincerity that is evident in a single purpose or motivation, and having no hidden agenda (Wong dan Senjaya, 2024). It can be said that honesty is a behavior, in both words and actions, that aims to convey the truth. These qualities are essential aspects of God's nature and His intended purpose for those whom He calls to be His people (Sinaga, 2024). True honesty means saying and acting truthfully based on God's truth, based on God's attributes, not based on truth that we build ourselves. In the Bible, honesty is an important value related to truth, integrity, and a right relationship with God and others. Honesty is not only about not lying, but also about living truthfully, acting according to God's word, and having the right motives in all things. The Bible emphasizes that God is truth, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. Honesty means living according to the truth taught in the Bible, not according to worldly standards. The Bible teaches that honesty is part of obedience to God. When we are honest, we show that we respect God and His word. Honesty creates healthy and trusting relationships. Speaking the truth and acting honestly are expressions of love for others, because honesty builds trust and harmony in relationships. Honesty is an important value that must be maintained and applied in our daily lives. By living honestly, we will gain the trust of God and others, and live in peace and joy. Honesty in the Bible is a fundamental value emphasized in numerous stories and teachings. The Bible teaches that honesty is part of a righteous and God-pleasing character. This includes being honest in

words, actions, and motives, as well as avoiding lying and deceit. Honesty is a key value in biblical teaching and is part of a character that is pleasing to God. By practicing honesty, we build strong relationships with God and others and demonstrate our integrity as followers of Christ.

Honesty in the Book of Proverbs

As the name of the book suggests, the sayings in this book are written in the form of proverbs. The Bible's book of Proverbs places great emphasis on the importance of honesty. Verses in Proverbs teach that honesty is a commendable and blessed quality, while dishonesty is a despicable act and leads to destruction (Sualang, 2019). Quite a few verses in the book of Proverbs talk about honesty, both explicitly and implicitly (Marri et al. 2025). The author will only quote a few of them. The honesty discussed in the book of Proverbs concerns honest speech, not speaking lies, and a tongue that speaks the truth. However, the book of Proverbs also speaks of upright, correct, and blameless behavior as part of honesty. Furthermore, living with honesty will lead to a life blessed by God (Purba dan Widodo. 2023). Verses that talk about speaking truth, not lying, and being honest include: Proverbs 8:7, "For my tongue speaks truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips." Proverbs 8:8, "All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked." Proverbs 10:11, "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals wickedness." Proverbs 10:21, "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding." Proverbs 10:32, "The lips of the righteous know what is pleasant, but the mouth of the wicked knows only deceit." Proverbs 12:17, "He who speaks the truth speaks what is just, but a false witness speaks deceit." Proverbs 12:19, "Lips that speak truth endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." Proverbs 15:28, "The heart of the righteous weighs his answers, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." Verses that talk about honesty leading to life or peace, a life blessed by God include: Proverbs 2:7-9. (7) He provides help for the upright, a shield to those whose walks are blameless, (8) He guards the paths of justice and guards the way of His faithful ones. (9) Then you will understand righteousness, judgment, and uprightness, and every good way. Proverbs 10:16 "The wages of the righteous lead to life, but the earnings of the wicked lead to sin." Proverbs 10:30, "The righteous will not be tossed about forever, but the wicked will not inhabit the land. Proverbs 11:4, "Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." Proverbs 11:18, "The wicked gain vain gain, but he who sows righteousness has a sure reward." Proverbs 11:19, "He who holds fast to true righteousness leads to life, but he who pursues evil leads to death." Proverbs 16:13. "Righteous lips are pleasing to the king, and he loves those who speak honestly." Proverbs 20:7, "Blessed are the children of the righteous who walk in integrity." Proverbs 21:21, "He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, righteousness, and honor."

Honesty in the Teaching and Life of Jesus

Jesus taught about honesty. Honesty is an important value taught and exemplified by Jesus in the Bible. Jesus emphasized the importance of speaking the truth and acting in accordance with it, both in word and deed. This is evident in His firm teachings on the importance of honesty in daily life, as well as His example of always remaining true to the truth. Matthew 5:37 states: "Say 'Yes,' 'Yes;' say 'No,' 'No.' Anything more than these comes from the evil one." Jesus also taught about using money honestly. "More than that, Jesus taught to be honest in using money and to be faithful starting from small things (Luke 16:9-13). Jesus not only taught about honesty, but He lived an honest life. He was called an honest teacher by those who heard His teaching, even by those who opposed Him. The Pharisees sent their disciples along with the Herodians to ask Him, "Teacher, we know that You are an honest man and teach the way of God honestly, and You fear no one, for You do not show favoritism. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (Matthew 22:16; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:20-21). Jesus knew the motive behind this question. They were asking with a cunning intention to trap Jesus (Luke 20:22). In contrast to Jesus' honesty, the scribes and chief priests had impure motives when they asked Jesus. Luke 20:20-21 tells us, "The scribes and chief priests were watching Jesus closely. They sent spies to him, pretending to be honest men, so that they might trap him with questions and hand him over to the authority and power of the governor." This story reveals words motivated by impure intentions. Jesus calls Nathanael an honest man despite his ignorance of Jesus' character (Hutabarat et al. 2024). Nathanael spoke the truth, was frank, and did not speak false words. John 1:47 records Jesus' response about Nathanael, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him: 'See, here is a true Israelite, there is no falsehood in him!'"

Honesty in Paul's Letters

The Apostle Paul also spoke extensively about the importance of honesty. In Paul's letters, honesty is a prominent theme. Paul encourages believers to live truthfully, to put off the "old self" of deceit, and to put on the "new self" that reflects Christ, who is truth itself. This means speaking truthfully, acting honestly, and living with integrity, both in personal relationships and in service to God (Liu and Tangkin, 2023). In Philippians 1:10, Paul states about a holy and blameless life. Philippians 1:17 talks about sincerity and pure motivation in preaching the Gospel. Paul advises a servant to be sincere in serving his master, not only in front of his master but also when he is not with his master (Colossians 3:22). Masters should be advised to be fair and honest towards their servants (Colossians 4:1). In the words of Paul giving advice, "Stop lying to one another, for you have put off the old man and his ways" (Colossians 3:9). In relationships with fellow church members in Rome, we are asked to show pure love, not pretend (Romans 12:9). Titus was advised to be honest and serious in his teaching (Titus 2:7). It can be concluded that in all his letters Paul teaches about honesty as a character that should be possessed by people who believe in the Lord Jesus (Manalu et al. 2024). He discusses honesty in the context of the life of new humans, people who have believed in Jesus Christ (Manik dan Saragi, 2023). Not only in words but also in actions, and even the motivation behind the actions taken. 6(10) And I say to you: Make friends with dishonest Mammon, so that if Mammon cannot help you any more, you will be accepted into the eternal tabernacle (Malik, 2019). (11) "Whoever is faithful in small things is faithful also in great things. Moreover, whoever is unrighteous in small things is not righteous also in great things. So, if you are unfaithful in the matter of dishonest Mammon, who will entrust you with the real treasures? (12) And if you are unfaithful in other people's treasures, who will entrust your treasures to you? (13) A servant cannot serve you, an out-sider. Because then he will hate one and love the other, or he will be loyal to one and ignore the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon (Gulo, 2023).

Yusuf's Honesty

Joseph is an example of a biblical figure who lived a life of honesty. He was honest in his words and actions from his youth. He was a frank speaker and never lied. The story of Joseph in the Bible (the Book of Genesis) demonstrates his honesty through several significant events. First, he remained honest and faithful to God despite being sold into slavery by his brothers. Second, he resisted the temptation of Potiphar's wife and chose to maintain his integrity, even though it meant imprisonment. Third, in his role as a high-ranking official in Egypt, he demonstrated honesty and justice in governing the country. The story of Joseph begins in Genesis 37. When Joseph recounted his dream, he told it truthfully, not to boast. He told it with pure motives. He had no intention of boasting before his father and brothers. He was telling his dream. However, this was seen by his brothers as an act of self-aggrandizement. When he became a "servant" in Potiphar's house, he worked honestly and with integrity, so he was given authority over his entire household (Genesis 39). When Potiphar's wife invited him to "sleep" with her, he chose to honor the trust Potiphar had placed in him and chose to obey God, even though it risked him being imprisoned. Joseph spoke frankly and did not hide the truth when interpreting the dreams of the king's cup-bearer and baker (Genesis 40). He did the same when interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41). When he was appointed to a high position in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, he carried out his duties with integrity. He did not engage in corruption, collusion, or nepotism. He was upright. When famine struck Canaan and his brothers confronted Joseph, there was no hatred, anger, or even a desire for revenge in his heart (Weni et al. 2021). He also spoke frankly about his feelings to his brothers, even though he had previously kept his identity a secret from them. His high position did not allow him to act as he pleased (Ardila 2013). Joseph still asked Pharaoh for permission to allow his family to stay in Egypt because of the famine. Joseph's story shows clearly that he was an honest man. He is pure in heart, straight in his behavior. He is a person of integrity and trustworthy. Words and actions are not contradictory.

4. Conclusion

From the explanation above, in the Bible, honesty is not merely a matter of words or the use of the tongue to speak the truth. Honesty also involves a correct way of life and thought patterns, resulting in a lifestyle worthy of praise, respect, and trustworthiness. Honesty encompasses our entire way of life, including all our words, thoughts, motivations, and actions in our relationships with ourselves, others, and God. Honesty is integrity, meaning that what

we say corresponds to what we do. Church teachings instruct us to reflect God's word and act truthfully and honestly, guided by our awareness and love for our faith. Therefore, honesty and truthfulness are attitudes of the heart that reflect on our understanding of God's word (Tobeli, 2015). Honesty is not just about big things; it also concerns small matters that we might consider trivial. Moreover, honesty is not just about self-interest; it also concerns our responsibility to others and God. Honesty must be practiced in every aspect of our lives: at home, at work, in our community, and even in the church. Many offers and temptations can lead us to choose dishonesty. If we lack integrity, we will easily compromise when tempted or pressured, sacrificing our values of honesty.

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