

# "The Key to Closeness"

By Allan Pole



Theme: Honesty is the key that opens the door to intimacy.

Text: Proverbs 12:22

Here's a thought: Mark Twain observed, "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."

A confidential security checklist used by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the organization in charge of airport screening in the U.S., was recently published. Its Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) guidance, used by staff to root out potential terrorists, lists a total of 17 "stress factors", each of which are worth one point, 15 "fear factors", worth two points, and six "deception factors", worth three. If a traveller scores four or more points, they should be referred for selective screening, according to the instructions (from [www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/travelnews/11503843/How-to-spot-a-terrorist-according-to-US-airport-security.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/travelnews/11503843/How-to-spot-a-terrorist-according-to-US-airport-security.html)).

The 17 stress factors are:

1. Arrives later for flight
2. Avoids eye contact with security personnel
3. Exaggerated yawning as the individual approached the screening process
4. Excessive fidgeting, clock watching, head-turning, shuffling feet, leg shaking
5. Excessive perspiration inconsistent with the environment
6. Face pale from recent shaving of beard
7. Facial flushing while undergoing screening
8. Faster eye blink rate when individual requested to submit to screening procedures
9. Increased breathing rate, panting
10. Obvious "Adam's Apple" jump when requested to submit to screening procedures
11. Protruding or beating neck arteries
12. Repetitive touching of face
13. Rubbing or wringing of hands
14. Strong body odour

15. Sweaty palms
16. Trembling
17. Whistling as the individual approaches the screening process

The 15 fear factors are:

1. Bag appears to be heavier than expected or does not suit the individual's appearance
2. Bulges in clothing
3. Cold penetrating stare
4. Constantly looking at other travellers or associates
5. Exaggerated emotions or inappropriate behaviour such as crying, excessive laughter or chatter
6. Exaggerated, repetitive grooming gestures
7. Hesitation/indecision on entering checkpoint
8. Individuals who are seemingly unrelated but display identical dress or luggage
9. Powerful grip of a bag or hand inside the bag
10. Rigid posture, minimal body movements with arms close to side
11. Scans area, appearing to look for security personnel
12. Shows unusual interest in security officers and their work routine
13. Displays arrogance and verbally expresses contempt for the screening process
14. Wearing improper attire for location
15. Widely open staring eyes

And the six deception factors are:

1. Appears to be confused or disoriented
2. Appears to be in disguise
3. Asks security-related questions
4. Does not respond to authoritative commands
5. Maintains covert ties with others
6. Repeatedly pats upper body with hands

While security officers look at the outward appearance the Lord looks at the heart, as reflected in Proverbs 12:22: The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful. NIV

You can be:

**Detestable to the Lord or  
Delightful to the Lord**

You can be:

**Detestable to the Lord**



While our culture selectively tolerates and embraces 50 shades of grey when it comes to the truth and lies, King Solomon calls us back to black and white with this strong word, “detests”, which literally means in the Hebrew “disgusting, abhorrent or abominable.” In other words, the Lord declares lying lips to be an abomination!

Humans are the only species on the planet that have the ability to tell the truth and to lie. This is because we were created for relationship with the Lord and with each other. Disobedience *and deception* were at the core of the separation and shame that Adam and Eve suffered when they ate of the forbidden fruit, tried to hide from God and justified their actions (see Genesis 3:1-13). Truth and justice are in the heart of God and define His character, which is why the Holy Spirit is grieved when we speak of and treat others with dishonour (see Ephesians 4:30).

A 2011 study by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada found that at least one quarter – 26 per cent – of Canadian small- and mid-sized firms had been the victims of at least one instance of workplace fraud the previous year, losing at least a collective \$3.2 billion. The most common types of fraud were “misappropriations” of inventory, assets and cash. (From [www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-managing/human-resources/why-more-employees-are-stealing-from-you/article5609168/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-managing/human-resources/why-more-employees-are-stealing-from-you/article5609168/))

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Rarely a week goes by without a news report of a politician who has been caught misusing their government expense account or inappropriately authorizing the allocation of funds to departments or individuals.

My experience has been that a number of small business people offer two prices to their customers:

1. Cash price with no G.S.T. and no receipt.
2. Cheque, debit card or credit price with G.S.T. and a receipt.

How much of this cash goes unreported on income tax returns every year?

There is another subtle but sinful form of communication that is all too common in our personal and business relationships – flippant and unfulfilled promises and commitments. Whether you promise to be somewhere at a certain time or to complete a job by a certain day it is important to honour your word. Stop and consider Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:37, “Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” NIV

We have all heard about marital infidelity but have you heard about *financial* infidelity?

A survey of 2,035 American adults by the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) shows that one in three people admit to lying about money to their partner.

For most of the couples, the financial lies took a toll on the relationship. Three quarters (76%) of those who experienced financial infidelity said the lies affected the relationship in some way, with almost half (47%) admitting it caused an argument and one third (33%) reporting that it had resulted in less trust in the relationship.

Ten percent of respondents said that the deception ultimately resulted in divorce. A July 2013 study out of the Kansas State University found that arguing about money is the top predictor of divorce, regardless of the couple's income, debt or net worth. (From [www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/10/financial-infidelity\\_n\\_4762387.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/10/financial-infidelity_n_4762387.html))

Lies and deception do serious damage to our relationships with the Lord and with other people.

You can be:  
Detestable to the Lord or  
**Delightful to the Lord**



In contrast to the abomination of lying lips, Proverbs 12:22 says that the Lord takes delight or finds favour and pleasure in someone who tells the truth. Speaking and acting truthfully puts a smile on God’s face!

We seem to have missed the point of relationship with God and with people in

1 John 1:5-7:

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. NIV

The answer to this question might seem obvious, but *do you really want to be close to God and to people?* Don't answer too quickly because there is a price to pay for such closeness. You need to be brutally honest with yourself, with God and with others. You and I can easily deceive ourselves into thinking that we are "good" or "nice" people because we compare ourselves with others and conclude that we are on par or better than others. We are called to walk in the light of Jesus by living truthfully and we are called to ask forgiveness when we lie and do not live by the truth.

The Bible refers to Abraham as God's friend (see James 2:23). What a great honour! It should come as no surprise that God's friend would speak and act like he did in the midst of a military victory and an offer of reward by the king of Sodom in Genesis 14:22-24:

22 But Abram [later known as Abraham] said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath 23 that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' 24 I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me - to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share." NIV

Abraham lived with the realization that the Lord saw every financial decision that he made. I don't get the impression that Abraham felt this was a burden but that he valued closeness with God more than *anything* or *anyone* else and that he did not want to hurt this relationship.

Another by-product of honesty and transparency is referred to in John 8:31-32:

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." NIV

Being honest with yourself allows you to address issues that others might have seen for years. Being honest with others can bring reality (and conflict) to relationships. Being honest with the Lord like the writers of Psalms may just make you a man or a woman after God's own heart. The truth will set you free!

One mother reflected on the importance of honesty when she wrote:

My son Zachary, 4, came screaming out of the bathroom to tell me he'd

dropped his toothbrush in the toilet. So I fished it out and threw it in the garbage. Zachary stood there thinking for a moment, then ran to my bathroom and came out with my toothbrush. He held it up and said with a charming little smile, "We better throw this one out too then, 'cause it fell in the toilet a few days ago."

It is important to note that we are tempted regularly to be dishonest – whether it is in obvious or subtle ways. It is not a sin to be tempted but it *is* a sin to give in to temptation. When we lie, cheat or steal we deny the existence of the Lord and we exhibit a lack of faith in His justice and provision.

James E. Faust concluded, "Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving."

The Ten Commandments do not come from a controlling god who is on a power trip; actually, they protect and enhance the relationships we have with the Lord and with other people. This is why God directed Moses to direct the people with these commandments in Exodus 20:15-16, "You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour." NIV

I have felt the pain and sense of betrayal that come when someone steals from me and/or lies to me. I am committed to forgiving such sins but it still takes time to restore trust. Forgiveness can be granted instantly – even when someone does not ask forgiveness – but trust and genuine relationship may *never* be restored.

Honesty builds foundational credibility for your testimony as a follower of Jesus Christ. Many people with whom I do business know that I am a follower of Jesus and a pastor. I am keenly aware that by treating them well and by paying my bills in a timely manner I can speak with them about the Lord and life with integrity.

In chapter 8 of "Your Money Counts", Howard Dayton asks his readers to prayerfully review this checklist for honest behaviour:

1. Do I report all income on my tax returns, and are all my tax deductions legitimate?
2. Do I care for the property of others as if it were my own?
3. Do I have the habit of telling "little white lies"?
4. Do I ever misappropriate office supplies, stamps, or anything else that belongs to my employer?
5. If I am undercharged on a purchase, do I report it?
6. Do I look out for the interests of others as well as my own?

Ask God to show you any other dishonest behaviour that should be changed, especially in the grey areas. Ask a close friend to encourage you and to hold you accountable to be honest.

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