

I was in the advertising business and, unfortunately, as in most businesses it's hard to collect all that is coming to you. In this particular case, a client in Batesville, Arkansas had not paid his invoice for several months. Even after repeated promises on the phone that he would take care of it immediately, and the highly creative comment, "the check is in the mail," the money was not forthcoming.

So, I made a trip to Batesville, walked in the man's office and asked him for payment. To my surprise he opened his checkbook, wrote out the check and handed it to me. After receiving payment I just couldn't resist asking him about the repeated times he had told me, "the check is in the mail." I should have been ready for his answer, but I have to admit, I wasn't ready at all. His answer was, "I'll tell you what ever I have to on the phone as long as it will keep me from actually paying my bill." At least he was honest about his dishonesty!

Time was when a man's word was his bond. Time was when you could shake a man's hand and it was as good as any written contract. Time was when not telling the truth or putting your own special spin on something was as looked down upon as being disrespectful to your school teacher or skipping church services. Time was when the word integrity was a part of everyone's life and everyone knew what it meant. Time was...time was...time was...!

I know of few today who actually expect politicians, for example, to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Spinning the facts to suit one's own purpose has become a way of life for many. Stretching the truth and telling "white lies" seems to have become the rule rather than the exception. Take the business man who expects his secretary to say, "the boss is not in right now" when he most definitely is in. Consider the citizen who fudges a little on his taxes because "I pay too many taxes now, and besides, they won't be able to prove a thing." Think about our children in school when they explain to the teacher, "the dog ate my homework." No doubt we are rapidly becoming a people with an integrity crisis.

Two thousand years ago a man lived and taught something totally different. By today's standards he would be considered a troublemaker. In fact, he was considered a troublemaker in his day too. He actually expected people to be honest, to have integrity, to say what they meant and then to do what they said. When the crowds couldn't take his teachings any longer, they killed him.

This man, Jesus, taught that people who follow him and wear his name "Christ-ian," are called to be different. It is amazing that being "different" today means keeping your word, being honest, and being people of integrity. Jesus said, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no," meaning you need to be honest in

everything you do.

How honest are you? You might check for yourself then next time a telemarketer calls and you're tempted to say, "I'm sorry, there's nobody here by that name."

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