

Let Your Yes be Yes and Your No, No

By Bobby Schuller

Be at peace with the truth. Be at peace with the fact that you can't save the whole world, but you can save a couple. Be at peace that you can't take a hold of every single opportunity that comes your way. Be at peace with your imperfections. Be at peace with your limitations. Be at peace with the fact that you're not where you want to be yet. Today we're going to talk about living every day at peace and not having to lie, deceive, hide or pretend in order to show a better version of ourselves. Today we're going to talk about not lying. You don't need to lie. You don't need to exaggerate, you don't need to hide because God's going to get you where you need to go, but he loves you just as you are.

Look, there's nothing worse as an adult than getting caught in a lie. I know you don't lie and you've never fibbed or anything, or even worse, gotten caught in it, but some of us have. I remember when I was a kid, one of the first times this happened to me where I had to carry the heavy burden of a, not a lie, but something that was deceptive. I went to Ambuehl. It was in San Juan Capistrano. And they had this system where they would give you like these little golden tickets. They were awesome. They were called golden eagles. And if you collected ten of them, you'd become an honors student and they would have you in front of the school, and your parents would get a bumper sticker, and it would say "my son" or "daughter," but son in this case, "is a honor student at

Ambuehl Public School.” And then they wouldn’t want to put it on their car because they would think they’re bragging and you’d say you have to, I worked so hard for this.

So I wanted to get one of these honor student things. And so I started collecting these little golden eagles. If you got ten, you got the full kit and caboodle. So I was at like seven. I was picking up trash after school, I was saying compliments to kids I didn’t like. I was doing all sorts of nice things, going the extra mile, especially if a teacher was watching I put my best foot forward. I was so close. Then one day I decided to make a rock throwing shooting range against a wall and it was so good. I was throwing rocks against this wall, I was throwing fast, I was throwing hard, and some silly teacher decided to walk into my throwing range, which I thought still to this day, can’t you see? What are you doing?

So I didn’t see her. I was a bit of a nutty professor, even back then. And I’m throwing these rocks against the wall, and thank God I didn’t hit the poor lady, but I almost did and that was enough for her to be very angry and she gave me a demerit. I know. It’s very sad. Demerit means you lose three golden eagles, effectively bumping me down to like four. After all this progress. And the worst thing about the demerit is you had to get it signed by one of your parents.

Now I grew up in a divorced family, and there are some really negative things about it, but there are some positive things about having

divorced parents, too. One is you get extra Christmas and birthday presents. Double, in fact. But the other, when you're a kid, you sometimes feel like maybe your parents are playing you against each other. I don't know if my parents did that. It certainly felt that way sometimes. But then you learn to kind of turn it around. You learn to use that to your advantage. And both of my parents were very cool, very sweet good parents, but I would say my dad was slightly stricter of the two of them. He really worked hard with me in school, and we would always do math problems together, and he was really a great coach, but I was also a lot more scared of what my dad would think about this demerit than my mom so I got my mom to sign the demerit.

And I thought I am going to hide this from my dad and I remember for days carrying it around. I didn't technically lie or anything, but carrying this burden around of having a demerit and hiding it from my dad. But what I didn't know is they mail it back to your house. I come in one day and I'd been carrying this around for days, just like what if he finds out, what is he going to do to me? I walk in and there is my dad holding the Ambuehl Public School demerit. Now my plan, of course, I was just going to get 13 and say I got ten, and then make it even out. Didn't work. So my dad, he goes, what? I don't even care. It's not a big deal. I threw rocks all the time when I was kid, who cares. And I thought oh my goodness. Oh thank goodness I'm through this. But it ended up not being a big deal, right?

And what I want to say this morning is that getting caught in a lie, especially when its hiding something, is so much worse than just coming out with whatever it is that you're hiding. And as children, we're supposed to sort of learn that. We're supposed to learn that. But as one church girl said, 'a lie is an abomination to God, and a very present help in a time of trouble.' And that's the other thing we learned when we were kids. So as we become adults, we sort of learn to not necessarily lie but not tell the whole truth, or exaggerate, or hide things in order to put our best foot forward to others.

And I just want to say that if you hear anything I say this morning, hear this: the truth, even if it's raw and not well done and tactless, the truth is always better in the long run.

I want to say to you this morning that we all sort of think our identity needs to be supplemented. We have this temptation that as we compare ourselves, we were talking to Sarah about this earlier today, compare ourselves to the wide array of intelligent, successful, beautiful, young people out there, people that are farther along than we are, have done more than we've done, there's a strong temptation to supplement our identity. You don't have to do that. I'm so proud of you. And most of the images that you're seeing are fake anyway. I think we already know that but we don't feel that.

And I want to say today you don't have to exaggerate, you don't have to hide, you don't have to play it safe, and you don't have to worry

about what your opinion will do to other people. Share it anyway. You don't have to worry about the fact that you need something. Tell people you need them because living an honest and a vulnerable life is the only way to truly feel alive.

We lie a lot, unfortunately. There was a study that was done by Robert Friedman at the University of Massachusetts, and he proved in a lab that on average people meeting for the first time lie two to three times every ten minutes in a conversation. And we all go oh that is so bad. I would never do that. Now of course most of the time when people do this, he calls it - it's like a social lubricant. And they're not bad lies, they're like little white lies. They're the little things we do to make it kind of move along. It's usually one of two. The first kind is like we do it to kind of boost our ego a little bit. You say ah, I run ten miles every week to keep those lbs off. You ran ten miles once twenty years ago, this kind of thing.

Or we do it in order to protect the other person's dignity. You can't stand her shoes. They are so ugly. They are really standing out. How did you take orange and black and silver and red and glitter and you say to her, I love your shoes. Where did you get them? Where can I get myself a pair of those fantastic shoes? Those are wonderful. It's three times, right there.

So we do this. We do this. And yes it's morally wrong, it is. But the bigger reason to not do it is that it's bad for your soul. Every time we tell

these little white lies, or we hide things, or we play hide and seek with the people we do life with, we're training ourselves to be hidden people. We're training ourselves to play it safe. We're training ourselves to not have courage and to hide the hardest parts of our lives and as we do that, we become more isolated and lonely and that's not good.

Why do we lie to people, or why do we hide, or why do we exaggerate, or why do we bend the rules? Well, we lie in our very busy lives. Sometimes we lie because we just don't want to go to whatever it is; to Aunt Suzie's birthday. We just don't want to go. We don't want to go to Joe's, I don't know, Joe's retirement party, or whatever it is. Or your sister's wedding, or whatever. And you just don't want to go. But you should. So you make up something, right? We lie because we don't want to be embarrassed. We lie because this thing in our life is different than what we think another person sees in us.

I had a very, very good friend and she always put her best foot forward for me because I was a pastor. And one time I caught her smoking. And she said oh, now you know I smoke. I said I always knew you smoked. I don't care. And she said, I know, I just didn't want YOU to know. And yet at the same time, I really in a way loved that she said that. I thought it was just such a sweet thing to say to me.

But the irony is that so often we want people to be closer to us by hiding the things we don't like about ourselves, and you don't need to do that. You're lovable just the way you are. You're doing so great. You don't

need to beat yourself up. I'm so proud of you. And so you don't need to hide and you don't need to lie.

And sometimes we lie because we want to get there faster. We want to break the rules. We need to catch up with the rest of the world so we cheat. And sometimes we lie because we're just compulsive in our behavior. We all have that friend, don't we; the guy or that gal that lies even when they don't need to. I remember sitting in college, we had this friend who was so compulsive with this type of stuff. We're sitting around in college, a lot of the students are science students, and someone says.. and they're like working on their homework so giving them the wrong answer means he's going to like get it wrong on his test. And he's like how far is the moon from the earth again? And this guy says 25 miles. The moon is like.. I think its two hundred and eighty seven thousand miles from the earth. I don't know if that's right so don't write that down here. I think it's something like that. It's not 25 miles that I do know. And he kept fighting over it! No, its 25 miles! But sometimes we do it because it becomes we feel safer being fake than we do being real.

Today, friends, I want to encourage you to be at peace with the truth. Why do we lie? We lie because we're not at peace with the truth. We're not at peace with the fact that we're not where we want to be yet. We're not at peace with the fact that we haven't quit smoking. We're not at peace with the fact yet that we haven't sorted out all of our addictions or struggles. We're not at peace with the fact yet that we haven't tackled

our anger issues, or whatever it is, so we hide. We pretend. And yet we shouldn't be a vulnerable with everybody. You got to be vulnerable with the people who love you or you're always going to feel lonely. And you've got to be honest, and you've got to shoot straight, you've got to be at peace with the truth. And when that happens, so much energy and life and joy is going to come into you, you'll thank me. Because even though it takes a lot of courage to shoot straight with people, and to be honest in everything, it's so worth it in the long run. People will trust you more, and you'll get away with being overly honest. Trust me, I do it all the time. I've said some of the dumbest things sometimes, but people just.. they're okay with it. They're not okay with it, but they get over it.

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus teaches us.. I'm sorry, put it back on the screen again, "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, do not break your oath but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made. But I tell you do not swear at all either by heaven for its God's throne, or by the earth for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head for you cannot make even one hair white or black. But simply let your yes be yes and your no, no. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one." Let your yes be yes, and let your no be no. Anything beyond this, it comes from the evil one.

Now this whole idea of oaths, by the way, was a religious loophole. In Jesus' day it was like; there was this one verse in the bible that says

you got to keep the oaths you make to the Lord, and what happened is in Jesus' day as religious traditions do, people came up with this idea well I only have to tell the truth when I swear. And then it was like well I only have to tell the truth when I swear an oath to the Lord. And so people, when they wanted to trick others, instead of swearing by the Lord, they would swear by something holy. I swear by Jerusalem. I swear by heaven. I swear on my head. And then when the person would say you broke your oath, they would say whoa, whoa, whoa, what oath? It's not really an oath unless you swear by the Lord, but I swore by heaven. Sorry. It's like when you're a kid and you'd like I didn't shake on it. And then other people started doing and yet people still kind of do this today, anytime somebody is trying to say something to you you don't believe, and they keep saying I swear, I swear, I swear, what they're saying is my character is not good enough to carry what I'm saying, so I'm going to swear to augment it. Don't trust people that swear a lot.

So the Quakers took this idea and they really, in a way, took it to extreme but I kind of like it. I like extremes. And they decided I'm not going to do oaths in court anymore because I'd rather be in contempt of court than in contempt of heaven. So I will always tell the truth as Quakers. So they wouldn't swear on the bible because they always wanted their yes to be yes, and their no to be no.

And the other thing the Quakers did is, you may be surprised to learn this, they invented the price tag. Yeah, Quakers. It's not just

oatmeal. They invented the price tag, too. And back in the day, until the Quakers came around, you had to barter for everything. You never barter anymore. I mean have you ever gone to like some exotic market somewhere in Mexico or Elvira Street or you to this land you go back and forth for a long time. I've only got a dollar. Oh but this cost me \$15 but I have to pay for my dinner and this back and forth. So much drama. So much lying. And you guys are just vying over like how much am I going to pay for this ninja star? So it ends up being like two dollars and forty cents and you walk away with your ninja star, and that's how everything used to be, over a gallon of milk, over everything. And the Quakers said enough of this. We're putting a price tag on stuff. Just tell us what it is. No more games. No more drama. Everybody say thank you Quakers.

And what the Quakers believed, and what Jesus was teaching was you just need to shoot straight; to shoot straight with people. Let your yes be yes. Let your no be no. Be you! Be you. When we are at peace with the truth, when we are peace with who we are, only then are we given the gift of the ability to make progress in our lives.

So for Jesus, as he's teaching on this, he lives this out. Jesus speaks truth to power. Jesus speaks truth to his disciples. I want you to hear this. You need to hear this. I made a slide for it just so you would. There isn't anyone Jesus didn't disappoint. If you want to live a life like Jesus, you're going to disappoint people and you're going to disappoint people a lot because you can't please the Lord and please people at the

same time. People pleasing is not loving people. There's a big difference. And to do what God's called you to do means you're going to have to say no sometimes. No to things that are good. No to opportunities. No to things that are noble. No to things that are an honor to you. You have to say no in order to say yes to the highest calling, sometimes, and that's really hard.

Jesus was at peace with the truth himself, and that's why he was disappointing so many people because he knew what he was called to do. Judas was a true believer. We often think Judas was out to get Jesus from the beginning. He wasn't. Judas was one of Jesus' most passionate disciples but he wanted Jesus to be a military leader, not a pacifist. And a lot of people speculate that the reason Judas took the money is he thought that by the Pharisees going and arresting Jesus, Jesus would use his divine super powers and finally take up arms. But he didn't. He laid his life down. He lived out his sermon a hundred percent. I think that's why Judas was so riddled with guilt. So Jesus disappointed everybody all the time but he had to in order to do the best for them and the best for God.

So unfortunately being vulnerable about your imperfections, confessing your sins, saying no to things you don't have time or energy for hurts. It's difficult. The truth hurts but the truth will set you free. Shoot straight with people, and you do. See so much of it is this idea that people will pull away from us if we're honest with them, if we share with

them our opinions or tell them that we need something from them. We'll push them away. But we won't. When you're vulnerable and honest with people, especially about your sins and your mistakes, you draw people to you. You draw people closer to you. It's hard to be around perfect people and I've said this a lot, it's a lot easier to hang out with sinners than it is with saints. The truth hurts but it will set you free.

I think one of the number one reasons for Christians that we lie is because we don't want to hurt people. Whatever mistake it is that you're carrying, you're like man if they know about this, they're really going to feel hurt about it, or even more importantly, like you just feel like a lot of pressure to do a lot. You feel like it's not the servant thing to do to tell my spouse or my parents or my kids that I have these needs, so I'm just going to bury them and hide them. You say my opinion is negative so if I share it, I'm being a negative person. That's not true. I can't be honest about the fact that I feel upset about this thing cause that will hurt their feelings. Well that's not true, either. Well maybe it'll hurt their feelings, but they'll live, they'll be okay. And especially we struggle to say no because the thing we're being invited to is so good. But you can't do everything. You can't and still have the energy to do what God has called you to do.

Too many of us say yes when we don't have a yes to give. By the way, it's okay to have empty spaces in your life, so we need to become experts at saying no. See a lot of us are fine at saying no, we're really

good at saying no, or we say no a lot, but we're really bad at it, huh? A lot of us say no a lot, but we're really bad at saying no. We're really hurtful, we don't have any tact, we don't have any compassion. You got to become good at saying no in a really sweet loving way. And let me tell you, that is a skill. The more vulnerable you are in your no, the more you're going to draw people closer to you. Your life is a bit like pigs eating at a trough. Or have you ever been like at a farm, you see pigs weaving their way into the trough. There's all these pigs packed in and as one pig squeezes in, another like just pops out. It's very cute, actually.

And that's what your life is like. As people come to you asking for things, needing things from you, other things get popped out. And if you're not controlling that, you're going to lose control. You're not going to be able to choose what pops out of your life. And so many of us, we're saying yes so often we don't have time for naps. If you don't have time for naps, you're saying yes too much. Taking naps is a very Christian thing to do. Jesus is like napping all the time. The guy took a nap on a boat in a storm! And they were mad at him. They were like are you crazy? You're on a boat in a storm and we're going to drown. None of us can swim and you're napping. There he is disappointing people again with his nap.

In all truth though, we need big gaps in our life of rest. You don't have time to relax, to nap, to have fun. That is the place where God speaks most to us is in our time of rest. Rest is the birthplace of vision. It's when we step back from life that we're able to analyze it and get a

new idea, a fresh perspective, a positive idea. Tired eyes can't see a bright future. We have to become the kind of people who are not packing our lives full of things all the time because we're so afraid of hurting people's feelings. So become an expert at saying no. Get good at it so that when you have a yes to give, it counts and you're not exhausted.

I remember Andy Stanley and his wife Sandra Stanley. They started a church in Atlanta. It's probably the biggest church in America. And as a pastor's wife, she was under immense pressure to say yes to everything. And by the way, things she wanted to do; things that were good. Speaking at a women's conference and going to all these events. But she felt like God had called her to be a mom first and to be a great mom. And so there was this battle within her like I have to keep disappointing all these people by saying no.

She was reading Nehemiah, and in the story of Nehemiah, Nehemiah is on the wall and he's building, and all these people keep asking him to come down. At one point they ask him four times in a row, come down. And every time Nehemiah says the same thing. He says "I am doing a good work and I cannot come down. I am doing the good work and I cannot come down. I am doing a good work. I cannot come down."

And so she would write these on post-it notes and put it like by her phone, and on her bed, and every time she was feeling guilty or shame

that the fact that she said no so much, she would say I'm doing a good work. I cannot come down. I have to put my children first.

And if God's called you to do something, you have to be okay with the fact that you have to say no to great opportunities and sometimes you have to say no to people you love. Man, I've had to learn that. I have to say no all the time to my closest friends. I've got a big ministry, and a special needs kids, and a wife to love. That takes a lot of time. But you know we worry so much about hurting people's feelings, but I can tell you they'll live. They'll be okay. Just shoot straight with them. Just shoot straight with them. Just tell them. Tell them what you're feeling. You think it's going to push them away? It's going to draw them closer. It's going to draw them closer.

I believe extreme vulnerability brings extreme freedom and joy. Being truly you, being at peace with the truth of your imperfections, with who you are and what you're struggling with is going to make you a freer, more joyful, more alive person. You're going to feel so alive the more vulnerable you are, even about your sins, your mistakes and your flaws.

Many of us we're asked about something in our lives and we're tempted to exaggerate. You're on a date with some girl and you know I think I lied to Hannah the first time I met her about how much I could bench press, because I didn't know. How much do you bench press? I think I was like: my weight. I bench press my weight, because I knew

that was good, but I didn't even know how much I weighed at the time. It was a big mess. I did enroll into a weightlifting class later.

But you find yourself in these situations. I want to teach you the ten second rule. Ten second rule says this: you have ten seconds to fix a lie with no drama. Ten seconds. The second you say something, the clock starts ticking. So somebody invites you to something that night. Hey, let's go see a movie tonight. It's going to be so fun and you really don't want to go. You don't have anything going on, but you just need some time to yourself and you say I've got a doctor's appointment. It's like at 11:00 in the morning, but you've got a doctor's appointment or whatever. You got ten seconds. The clock is ticking. Are you going to fix it or not? And then in that ten second period, you have enough time to circle back and say actually I don't have a doctor's appointment, but I just need some time to myself tonight. I hope you understand. I was looking forward to some popcorn and Netflix and I just want tonight to myself. Is that all right? And let me tell you, people are going to appreciate that; that you're not like making something up; that you're just honest with them. And if your friend keeps pressing you, just hold your ground. They're going to live. They'll be fine. Hang out with them some other time. Tell them you love them. Tell them you appreciate them. Tell them you want to see them, just not tonight. Tonight it's Netflix all by myself.

So for all you introverts out there and I'm not one, just shoot straight with people. And more importantly, shoot straight with people

about what's going on on the inside. I know life is hard. I know you've been through a lot. And when we go through spiritual theological disappointments and confusions, when we go through hardship, go through loss, sickness, or angry about something, we so often are so tempted to push it down and to think that we have to walk alone on that thing because we don't want to push others away or hurt people or be a burden to others. You don't have to go it alone. Be vulnerable. Be vulnerable. If being vulnerable pushes your friends away, they're not your friends. If being vulnerable means that people are distanced from you, they were never close to you in the first place and you'll realize that when you become vulnerable. You'll see that in that time that's what friends and family are for is to help each other with their burdens. You've done that for others let others do it for you.

So often in life being vulnerable about your past, some of us are hiding something; we're really ashamed of something we did in our past. For some of you, hiding stuff that was done to you that you're ashamed of. Maybe you were abused as a child. You don't have to hide that. That was not your fault and you don't have to carry that alone, and you certainly don't have to be embarrassed by it. In all of the things that we go through in life don't go it alone. Be vulnerable, and be at peace with the truth, and in your vulnerability and in your courage because it takes a lot of courage to be vulnerable about these things, God's going to carry

you through. I am so proud of you. I am so proud of you. And God is proud of you, too.

You say God's not proud of me. I want you to know he is. God sees all the stuff in your life and that's what grace is about. God loves you just as you are and not as you should be. And I want you to know that I believe in you, that God believes in you, and you're never too far gone to get back on the right path and to fulfill your destiny. But the only way that happens is when we have courage, when we're vulnerable, when we start shooting straight with people and we stop hiding, we stop feeling like we got to carry things alone. You don't have to go it alone. I'm here for you, this church is here for you and God is there for you. The more honest we are, the more freedom and energy we have in life.

You are loved and you're doing better than you think. Be you just as you are, not as you should be and you'll get one step closer to where you want to be. That's a promise. Truth is always better in the long run and it hurts but it'll set you free. Amen?

Father, we thank you for this opportunity to be in your house. We love you. Lord, we carry so many burdens. We don't have to. And we ask that in Jesus' name these heavy weights would become like balloons when we just let them go into the sky. And Lord you would hold us and carry us. Forgive us, renew us, give us the courage to be honest with people. Lord, we love you, in Jesus' name, amen.