

An Honest Program

“Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him, and thus falls into disrespect towards himself and others. Not respecting anyone, he ceases to love, and having no love, he gives himself up to passions and coarse pleasures, in order to occupy and amuse himself, and in vices reaches complete bestiality, and it all comes from lying continually to others and to himself.”

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*



Father Zosima, an elder and spiritual adviser in the novel, speaks these words to Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, the father of the brothers. The gist of the dialogue is fairly direct and obvious. Fyodor Pavlovich is also a very appropriate character to receive the lesson (now is the time to maybe put **The Brothers Karamazov** on your reading list, if it hasn't been there before). What happens when we lie, especially to yourself? We lose the capacity to understand others or even love. Without love, all manner of trouble befalls us; its reflected in our behaviors. Honesty is crucial for redemption, as is love.

What does it mean to work an honest program? Well obviously it means don't be dishonest. More importantly, it is a rigorous process in which we are not dishonest with ourselves. It is almost not so much that we ONLY don't lie to others, but that we give ourselves the same regard we give to the people around us. We have to honor ourselves in our reflection and self talk. The risk is losing the ability to respect or love ourselves or others. Zosima is simply communicating that honesty is a path towards love and a way to avoid the pitfalls of unwanted behavior.

Bill Wilson, one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, wrote,

“The problem of honesty touches nearly every aspect of our lives. There are, for example, the widespread and amazing phenomena of self-deception. There are those rather dreadful brands of reckless truth-telling, which are so often lacking in prudence and love. Then there are those countless life situations in which nothing less than utter honesty will do, no matter how sorely we may be tempted by the fear and pride that would reduce us to half-truths or inexcusable denials.”

This small passage from a Dostoevsky novel strikes at the consequences of love lost. What other ways could a lack of honesty affect us or others? What are the benefits of working an honest program? What happens to us when we self-deceive? There is always time for exploring deeply into who we are and telling the truth, and most importantly telling ourselves the truth.



Honesty

Reflection 1:

List five words or thoughts that come to mind when you think about the word "honesty".

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

For each word in the first list, come up with a word or thought that is opposite of what you wrote down.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Reflection 2:

How many of the above ten items would you say are part of who you are? Are they easily recognizable?

Open discussion: How do you know? How precise can you get? Can you think of examples? Are you willing to talk openly with others about any of these? Are you willing to talk openingly with yourself about what you see in you?

Reflection 3:

What does it mean to have a "program"?

Can you think of at least a few aspects of a "program" that you currently employ in your day-to-day life?

Open discussion: What kind of program do you use presently? What kind of of personal program would you like to have in the future? What would be your ideal program for life?

Reflection 4:

Open discussion: How does honesty relate to your vision of a personal program that will suit your needs? How crucial is it to your program?