

Who Gets Hurt?

Dub McClish

It is not unusual to hear all sorts of dishonesty and everyday cheating justified by the lame excuse, “Nobody got hurt.” Abe Lincoln did not so reason. Remember the time he allegedly walked seven miles to repay two cents he had overcharged a woman while he was working as a clerk? Examples of common dishonesties abound in our times. Is it all right to take some of our employer’s merchandise for personal use? After all, he owns a big company and won’t even miss it. Besides, if I don’t get caught who will it hurt?

What about a student’s schoolwork? What does it hurt if, on a test, a writing assignment, or even on homework, he/she cheats to make a passing grade—if one doesn’t get caught? It does no harm either to the teacher or the school. Out of all the millions of tax forms e filed each year and the billions of dollars collected, surely the IRS won’t miss a couple of hundred dollars worth of cheating on my tax returns! Others reason that a “little” padding on their insurance claim won’t do any harm. After all, the insurance company deals in millions of dollars every year, and one claim is only a drop in the bucket. Teenagers often fall into the trap of thinking they can take a side trip or two, although they have been instructed by their parents to “come straight home” after school. What will it hurt if I don’t get caught? “No harm, no foul,” right?

True, such cheating and/or theft may not hurt the employer, the insurance company, the school, the IRS, or the parents (although in many cases it does hurt all of these in some way). Even if I immediately hurt no one else, the cheater, hurts himself or herself. The cheater forgets God’s immutable law: “...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). When one proves unfaithful in “little things” he advertises his lack of trustworthiness in “big things” (Luke 16:10). Paul sternly commands, “Let him that stole steal no more” (Eph. 4:28). A cheating student steals answers, a sneaking, disobedient child steals authority given to his parents, and one who “fudges” in his business affairs steals money. They are all in the same class and are foolishly destroying their own worth and honor. James Cockrell describes them:

Such a person is woefully immature as a human being. He is also cutting his own stupid throat. In an age when man is reaching for the stars, this person still lives in the Dark Ages. This person is a skulking pickpocket; and worst of all, a cipher, a zero, a nothing.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, February 26, 1987, of which I was editor.]

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