

Pain and Agony for a Stupid Lie

(Example from Arun Ghandi, the grandson of Mahatma Ghandi)

One Saturday my father had to go to town to attend a conference, and he didn't feel like driving, so he asked me if I would drive him into town and bring him back in the evening.

...Since I was going into town, my mom gave me a list of groceries she needed, and on the way into town, my dad told me that there were many small chores that had been pending for a long time, like getting the car serviced and the oil changed.

When I left my father at the conference venue, he said, "At 5 o'clock in the evening, I will wait for you outside this auditorium. Come here and pick me up, and we'll go home together."

I said, "fine." I rushed off and I did all my chores as quickly as possible—I bought the groceries, I left the car in the garage with instructions to do whatever was necessary—and I went straight to the nearest movie theater. In those days, being a 16-year old, I was extremely interested in cowboy movies.... I got so engrossed in a John Wayne double feature that I didn't realize the passage of time. The movie ended at 5:30, and I came out and ran to the garage and rushed to where Dad was waiting for me. It was almost 6 o'clock when I reached there, and he was anxious and pacing up and down wondering what had happened to me. The first question he asked me was, "Why are you late?"

Instead of telling him the truth, I lied to him, and I said, "The car wasn't ready; I had to wait for the car," not realizing that he had already called the garage.

When he caught me in the lie, he said, "There's something wrong in the way I brought you up that didn't give you the confidence to tell me the truth, that made you feel you had to lie to me. I've got to find out where I went wrong with you, and to do that," he said, "I'm going to walk home—18 miles. I'm not coming with you in the car." There was absolutely nothing I could do to make him change his mind.

It was after 6 o'clock in the evening when he started walking. Much of those 18 miles were through sugarcane plantations—dirt roads, no lights, it was late in the night—and I couldn't leave him and go away. For five and a half hours I crawled along in the car behind Father, watching him go through all this pain and agony for a stupid lie. I decided there and then that I was never going to lie again.

I think of that episode often. It's almost 50 years since the event, and every time I talk of think about it I still get goose bumps... Anything that is brought by fear doesn't last. But anything that is done by love lasts forever.

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