

# Bribery / God hates bribery

**Grace:** 'Ben! I'm really disappointed with you! You didn't pass your math exam! What happened?'  
Ben's father was very upset.

Ben was fifteen and had been one of the top students in the class, so his family was shocked by the news.

Ben's eyes were wet. He said, 'The exam was not difficult. I knew all the answers. I don't understand at all!'

Suddenly, his father's face changed. He was quiet for a moment, then he asked, 'Ben, did your teacher ever ask you to give him something? Like a bribe?'

**Tammy:** Hello, and welcome to Women of Hope. I'm Tammy, and Carol and I are so happy to be together with you again.

**Carol:** Yes we are. And we are excited to have a guest with us today, a special storyteller. That was Grace's voice you just heard, and she's is going to tell us Ben's story. Welcome, Grace.

**Grace:** Thanks Carol, it's good to be here. Yes, Ben's father just asked him whether his teacher ever asked for a bribe.

Ben thought about it. 'Well, about a month ago, he told us to bring \$50 and give it to him quietly, and not to say anything to the headmaster. I asked mother, and she said that it was not good, and I couldn't give him anything. Some of the others did, but I didn't.'

His father became angry, and grabbed his hat as he headed to the door. 'I'm going to the school to talk to the headmaster.'

Later he told Ben, 'I talked to the headmaster. Then he called your math teacher and demanded to see all the exam papers. You answered all the questions correctly...100%! You did pass. He said that he would correct the record and deal with the teacher.'

Congratulations for passing the test, Ben! I'm sorry to say that bribery is very common here, it's part of our culture. That means that people often give money or things to others so that that person will do something dishonest that they want them to do, and not do their job honestly. We see bribing happening every day, and it eventually destroys a community. If people give bribes or take bribes, you can never trust them to tell the truth or to do the right thing.'

'No,' Ben replied, 'I don't trust or respect that teacher now!

A week later, Ben and his father were travelling on a bus. The bus seemed to be going very fast. Suddenly, the driver braked hard and swore as the bus pulled to the side of the road. Ben's father told him, 'There's a policeman standing in the road, and he waved his hand to tell the driver to stop. He was speeding, so now he will have to pay a fine.'

Ben could hear the driver talking to the policemen. They wanted to charge him for speeding, and for the broken light at the back of the bus. But then the driver handed them some money, and got back into the bus and started driving again.

'Oho!' said Ben's father. 'Instead of the \$500 fine, he paid the police \$250 into their pockets. And now he goes on his way without going to court, without fixing the light, without slowing down. The government doesn't get the money from his fine to repair the roads. And the people on this bus will not trust the police again. Paying a bribe makes things easier for the driver, but not for anyone else.'

Further along the road, they stopped for several people to get on the bus. They were all talking angrily. 'We came here to watch our team play football. Our team is very good, and they should have easily won the game today. But someone bribed the umpire, so that he made sure that our team lost. That umpire kept cheating our players, so we lost, just because the other team gave money to that umpire! We're very angry!'

Ben listened to the story and thought again about how unfair bribery is. The team had worked hard to practice and to play well, but they didn't have any hope of winning the game because someone had bribed the umpire. It was easy to understand why these people were disappointed and angry.

At last, they arrived at their town and went into a shop to buy a drink. Just as they lined up to pay, two big security men grabbed a young man who was stealing some things from the shop and putting

them in his pockets. Ben saw the young man give some money to the security guard. The guard took it, and they released his arm so he could go free. He still had the stolen things in his pockets, so the shop had still lost money, but the guards had extra money in their own pockets.

'Father,' said Ben, 'those guards are not doing their job well at all! The shop still loses the things, and the guards are making money! They are not helping the shop at all! Oooo, bribery is a bad thing!' The man next to him said, 'Did you see that? That's just the way it is here. It's our culture.' But Ben thought, 'No, I won't accept that. It's wrong, and it will destroy our country!'

**Carol:** What do you think about the story so far? Do people give bribes in your community? Is it part of your culture?

**Tammy:** And if your community or your culture is known for bribes, do you think that's a good excuse to be part of bribery? Let's think what happens when there is bribery. One person tries really hard to do something well, but some lazy person gets all the rewards... by bribing. So the one who tried so hard thinks, 'Why bother trying? All my hard work ended in failure. And I was cheated out of my reward. So why should I try so hard anymore.'

**Carol:** People lose their energy, because they lose hope. They don't care anymore and become lazy. They think, 'If you can only pass exams by bribing, why study hard? If you can only win a bid for a work job by bribing, why try to give excellent service? If you can escape arrest for any crime by bribing, why obey the laws? If you can bribe the traffic police, why bother keeping your truck in good condition, paying for good tires, brakes, and lights? If you can bribe security guards, why not steal anything you want? Why bother trying to be honest? Why bother trying to do a good job? Why bother doing anything?' And then, if people can't trust the police, they take matters into their own hands, and the law means nothing.

**Tammy:** I think there's more to this story, isn't there Grace?

**Grace:** Yes. On the way home Ben's father told him some things he saw in his work life. He said, 'Once I worked with a book-keeper named Fred. Fred said that there was a problem in his accounts. There was a large amount missing, and he would have to pay that money from his own bank account if he couldn't find the mistake or find the receipt. So he decided to write out a false receipt for that

amount and asked me to sign it with a forged signature. He promised, "I will get you a big discount at my brother's shop if you sign this for me. You have to help me! No one will know."

I knew that Fred was trying to bribe me, and it would have been good to get those discounts! But I told Fred I wouldn't do it and he should tell his supervisor about the problem.

Then Fred got angry, and told lies about me. I was very unhappy when people didn't want to sit with me for lunch, and didn't want to talk to me. Finally, Fred wrote a false name on the false receipt himself, and put it with the other receipts in his book. But the supervisor found the false receipt and Fred was fired.

The supervisor told me, "We don't know yet if Fred stole that money, but he was dishonest in how he dealt with the problem."

Ben's father went on, 'Another time I heard about someone in the Human Relations office who was interviewing people for a position. That man demanded that any girl who applied for the position had to have sex with him, and any man applying had to give him money. One of the girls was brave and reported the situation, and the man was fired immediately! The boss was very angry with him, because he gave the company a bad name, and he certainly wasn't interviewing people properly to find capable, honest workers.'

Ben's father continued to tell Ben: 'Ben, I want you to think very seriously about this. You will find many situations where it would make your life easier to give a bribe. A bribe might get you better treatment in the hospital, or a better job, or get your papers processed quickly. Are you strong enough to not pay bribes, and just work hard and honestly? And if people offer you bribes to get your help, or your vote, or to help them get away with something wrong, can you resist the temptation?'

Ben thought about this. Right now, he thought bribes were very unfair, and he could see how much they damaged his community. But he knew he could be tempted to do what everyone else did, to make his life easier. He thought about his final exams to get a place at university. Would he give a bribe to make sure of his place? How would you advise Ben?

**Tammy:** Thank you for that story, Grace. I think we can all see that bribes are bad for our community in many ways. But many times we have to decide whether we will be part of it. We might think, 'Oh,

it's not much money and it will be easier to just pay the bribe. One more doesn't matter.' But every time we do it, we're making the problem worse. And it's hard to respect yourself if you're being dishonest, whether it's giving bribes or taking them. Think about the ways you might be tempted to give or take a bribe.

**Carol:** Welcome back to Women of Hope. We've been talking about bribes, and how they can destroy a community. You might think, 'Oh, that's just the way we do things around here.' But let's take a moment to read from God's word, the Bible, and see what *God* thinks about people who bribe.

**Tammy:** God gave many laws to his people to help them live in good ways. Some of them are known as 'laws of justice and mercy' (Ex 23:1-9) and one of them says, 'You must not take bribes, because bribes blind your eyes to what is evil, and they cheat people who have done no wrong.'

**Carol:** One of the inspired proverbs says, 'A king who is just makes his country strong, but a man who takes bribes destroys it.' (Prov 29:4) We can see from our stories today that, that's true, can't we?

**Tammy:** Yes; and the prophet Isaiah wrote: 'The Lord says, 'Everyone loves a bribe and chases after gifts... so I will turn my hand against you...' (Isaiah 1: 23 and 25) ...'Woe to those...who say wrong is right because of a bribe and cheat people who have done no wrong!' Are you getting an idea of what God thinks about bribery?

**Carol:** I'm going to tell you a story from God's word, the Bible.

Long before the Lord Jesus was born, God called Abraham to worship and obey him. He promised to give him many descendants, and promised that he would bless all nations through him. Abraham's descendants became the people of Israel. We've heard the stories of how they became slaves in a foreign land, and God rescued them in a mighty way and gave them their own land to live in. They settled down there, and were very prosperous.

But do you know what happened? They forgot the first commandment that God gave them - 'You shall have no other gods besides me'. They saw people around them worshipping other gods, idols made by craftsmen, instead of worshipping the true God who created the heavens and the earth. They married men and women who worshipped these idols. And they thought perhaps they would be

safer if they sacrificed to the old spirits of the land as well; sometimes they even sacrificed their children and took part in evil ceremonies. God sent many prophets to warn them not to do this. He said he would punish them if they continued to turn away from him. Many times he forgave them, but they still kept doing this.

A time came when the land seemed safe and prosperous, so the people felt sure that God was happy with them. They *said* they worshipped the Lord, and they travelled for religious festivals to the traditional places of worship. They made sacrifices to the Lord's name, and gave money offerings for the temple. In fact the richer ones were very proud of this and boasted about it. (Amos 4:4-5) But God wasn't happy with them at all. I'll explain why.

Some of these people used God's holy *name*, saying: 'This is the temple of the Lord,' but their *idea* of God was all mixed up with the beliefs of the people around them. They liked the nice building, and the music and the ceremonies, but they didn't actually love God or obey him. (Jer 4:4-8) They were really just superstitious; they thought that *they could bribe God* with animal sacrifices and special gifts, and then do just whatever bad things they liked. Imagine thinking you could bribe God!

**Tammy:** Sometimes people still think that God will reward them if they give money to the church; or they make promises, to try to persuade God to do what *they* want. That's almost like trying to bribe God, like those Israelites did with their sacrifices. God isn't like that. We can just tell him what we need, because he loves us.

**Carol:** So let's go back to this story from the Bible.

Remember I said that the people in ancient Israel took on some of the beliefs of the pagan people around them. They weren't really worshipping the one true God, who made heaven and earth. How did God know that? He could see how they *acted*, and they weren't obeying the really important things God showed them. Listen to what God said through the prophet Amos. He said, 'You trample on the poor man and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them. Though you have planted lush vineyards, you won't drink their wine, because I will come like a fire that burns up the rubbish. Because *I know*... I know you oppress good people and take bribes, you make sure poor people do not get treated justly in the courts.' (Amos 5: 6, 11-12)

**Tammy:** Wow! What were they doing? They were building beautiful big houses, but they got the money to pay for them by cheating poor people. These poor people, good people, couldn't get treated fairly in the courts because the rich ones were bribing the judges.

**Carol:** Yes, and this made God very angry. *God loves justice and mercy*, he is holy. These rich people loved *money* and had *no mercy*; in fact they used their power to get more money from the poor. Do you ever see that in your community? Have you ever done that yourself?

**Tammy:** Can you see what happens? We can't just make up our own ideas about God...he already showed us what he is like through Jesus, and in the Holy Bible. When we have wrong ideas about *God*, we get wrong ideas about how *we* should act. We need to understand that God loves the poor, he loves mercy, and he is always just and faithful. Then we can see that he wants *us* to be just and honest, and not to use bribes. He wants us to *help* those who are poor or in trouble, not cheat them. He wants us to be honest like he is.

**Carol:** We've talked a lot about bribery today, and how bad it is. And we know from God's Word, the Bible, that He hates it because it goes right against his nature and his character. Let's ask God to help us to be as fair and honest as he is, and to show love and mercy just as he does. Think how different our communities would be if we learned to act like God wants us to!

**Tammy:** I wonder if sometimes we're tempted to give bribes or take bribes because we worry about our future. Sometimes we see that people around us seem to get on well by being dishonest. But remember, God holds our future, and he loves us. We need to trust him to care for us, even when things look difficult. Will you think about that, when you're tempted to give or take a bribe?

**Carol:** We care about you and would love to hear from you. Maybe you have a question about something you heard today or you would just like to write to us and share something about your life. It would please us to hear from you. You can contact us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.... The address: [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org). That's [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org).

**Tammy:** If you have missed a program or would even like to hear one again you can do that on our website [twrwomenofhope.org](http://twrwomenofhope.org) that's [twrwomenofhope.org](http://twrwomenofhope.org). or by visiting our Facebook page. ”

**Carol:** Remember, you can always ask God to help you to be as fair and honest as he is, and to show love and mercy just as he does. Goodbye, my friend, and may God bless you and your family today.

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