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## Should We EVER Lie?

**Colossians 3:9: (NASB) Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.**



Lying. Okay, we know it is bad, but is it really always a bad thing? From a parent's perspective, it is one of those things that is perched at the top of the "never do this" list of moral and ethical behavior. With children the boundaries are clear and easy to define, because as we show them the difference between honesty and dishonesty we reinforce what it means to take the high road, to be trustworthy and to be an honest and dependable friend. But what about the myriad of circumstances that arise as we become adults and begin to live in a world that is not awash in a bold contrast of right versus wrong but instead is overwhelmed with delicate shades of gray - with value judgments, personal rights and the fine line of being offensive? Are "little white lies" always wrong? What about only telling part of the truth - does that constitute a lie as well? Can lying ever be good?

To get a true biblical meaning of lying we need to look at a wide scope of biblical morality starting with the Old Testament.

**The last six of the Ten Commandments are all about how we are to treat one another: Exodus 20:12-17: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor** - this directly deals with lying, but we will find all the Commandments deal in some way with telling the truth. The sweeping approach of the Commandments is based on respect. The first four Commandments are about respect for God; the last six are about respect for those around you.

**With this theme for morality set, we go further into the details: Leviticus 19:11-16:** Cheating as a motivation is an important part of this subject. The Bible does not go into detail about telling a little white lie so as not to make someone feel bad. *The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning* - Do not oppress anyone or take from them. A lying, cheating attitude is warned against. *You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind* -Have respect for others and their personal experiences. *I am the LORD* - this phrase occurs three times in these verses. God is saying, "Listen to what I am telling you about how to treat each other." In relation to judgment, the Law in Leviticus says *you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great*. Justice should be applied regardless of status. So far, we see that lying is much more than just speaking an untruth - it is about cheating on a lot of different levels. This is mutual respect reiterated with a more detailed approach. Lying is often based on the fear of being caught, being discovered or of being "less than."

**Where does God stand on this respect and honesty issue? Proverbs 6:16-19:** Lying is directly involved in two of seven things the Lord hates and easily implicated in the other five. One could make the argument that all seven have something to do with being deceptive or dishonest.

There are many who seem to find great joy in trying to find what they believe to be contradictions in the Bible, especially when it comes to moral issues. We will look at two such Old Testament accounts here to see if God rewards lying. Did Israel's midwives lie to Pharaoh? If they did then did God bless their lie?

**The context of how Israel got to Egypt and their original honored state: Exodus 1:8,13-22:** Fear not only provokes lying; it also provokes dark and evil plans. The Pharaoh at this time was afraid of the people becoming too large a slave population that could eventually overthrow him. Notice there is no recorded answer given by the midwives. What would YOU do? Would YOU murder the innocent newborns because the king said so? *17But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. They could not in good conscience take the lives of those newborn children because they feared (revered) God. They saw God and His principles as a higher authority than Pharaoh. There was a clear decision to be made which would stand for righteousness and life and perhaps have consequences of personal punishment and even death.*





A lot of time would have gone by between verses 17 and 18, for the King was watching and his plan was not working: <sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, why have you done this thing, and let the boys live? <sup>19</sup>The midwives said to Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them. When confronted, they give an answer - it is general and yet specific. They do not address individual experiences; they merely state what happened the majority of the time. Technically they are not lying but they are not telling the whole truth.

The stated fact: The Hebrew women were really strong. This was plausible from all the hard labor they were subject to for generations. It would be unlikely that every single Hebrew birth at this time was that easy, however. So while they may not have lied, they likely did not tell all of the truth either - is this a good thing? <sup>20</sup>So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. <sup>21</sup>Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. <sup>22</sup>Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.

Pharaoh must have believed the midwives, as he gives up on the original plan and spreads his fear and anger to his own people instead. God overlooked the partial truth and blessed the midwives. Telling part of the truth for the protection of life was not considered a lie.

Consider from a practical perspective when children are very young and need to be told certain things. They are told only the part of the story appropriate for their age. This is what is best for the child and what they can handle with their limited experience and immaturity.

In our next Old Testament example, the enemy of Israel is in the land of Jericho. Israel sends spies to look at the land, as God is directing them to settle there.

**Joshua sends two spies to Jericho and they come upon Rahab:** Joshua 2:1-14: Rahab was not of Israel, therefore her background was not founded in the principles of God’s Law. Rahab’s occupation as a prostitute was one that was shrouded in darkness, gray areas and half-truths. <sup>4</sup>But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. So far one could argue that this was true but not complete. Maybe she did not know exactly where they came from? <sup>5</sup>It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them. <sup>6</sup>But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof. <sup>7</sup>So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate. Rahab pulled the classic deception - “they went that-a-way!” She purposefully misguided the authorities. This certainly fulfills the definition of a lie, but where does it stand relating to what God hates - a lying tongue and a false witness who utters lies? Was she trying to hurt her own people by protecting them? Rahab’s intention was obvious - protect the strangers from capture, but why?

She knew these Hebrew men represented God who was real, powerful and working with them. Her idol-worshipping culture feared this God because they heard of the great battles won in His name and knew they would be the next city to fall. Rahab was fearful and lied to protect these men. Clearly the end was a good result, but how she did it has to come into question.

Rahab knew of God and His deliverance of Israel and BELIEVED in God based on her very limited observations and experience. Her belief was deep enough to put her own life on the line and she asks to be spared as a result.

**God blesses Rahab:** Hebrews 11:30-31: Rahab was honored for her faith, not her lies! Rahab did the best she knew how within her culture and knowledge. God was able to deal with her. Once she become a convert, she would have been held to a higher standard.

Now let us look at the New Testament view of lying.

These serve as motivational factors that determine our standing before God when we are in the gray areas of life: 1 Peter 2:21-23: Our highest and most reliable example is Jesus who had no deceit in his words. This means there was no deceit in his heart - he was solely about God’s truth, God’s plan and God’s love. He was honest even under immense pressure.



**TRUTH CHECKPOINT**  
Always honor God above all, knowing His character of justice, mercy and love.



**TRUTH CHECKPOINT**  
Always do the best you know how to follow God and in time more will be revealed.



1 John 1:5-7: Hypocrisy is lying by not living up to the standard you said you would.

There is a choice. For Christians, there is an absolute dividing line between light and darkness and we choose a side. A fundamental part of lying is ego. The greater the ego, the greater the propensity to lie. Ego breeds fear. Fear breeds lying. Lying breeds godlessness and godlessness breeds sorrow.



White lies turn a little gray the next time and so on. You end up with different shades of white. 1 John 1:8-10: *We make Him a liar* - If we are saying we have not sinned, this means God lied when He said in Romans 3:23: (KJV) *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

For us to publicly walk in a lie of being in the light while still in darkness is to make God a liar. That is an ego issue that must be changed to humility. Jesus was humble and did not make mistakes. How much more humble should we be in our everyday experiences?

James 3:13-18

**TRUTH CHECKPOINT**

Always firmly uphold the highest scriptural principles in your communication.

**Is purposefully withholding some information a form of lying?**

**God did not tell His chosen everything:** Mark 13:31-33: God did not reveal the time of Jesus’ return to even Jesus himself.

**Jesus did not tell his followers everything:** John 16:12: Why would God keep the details from Jesus himself and why would Jesus keep the details from his closest followers to himself?

Just like withholding details from a child, you tell them only what they can bear and what is appropriate for their best benefit. God and Jesus withholding those particular pieces of information served a higher and nobler purpose, and in the end it was better for everyone. This was wisdom, not lying. God gives veiled prophecies that we often do not know what they mean until they have been fulfilled. Why? We have to commit ourselves to wanting to know God’s will, which is revealed to us in stages. The question of “when” is always longer than we would like it to be, and that can be discouraging.

**Is not answering someone a form of lying?** Matthew 26:59-64: Jesus never did answer the question, but he did give the high priest a prophetic glimpse of the future.

John 19:8-11: Here again, Jesus did not give an answer but instead defended God’s power, telling Pilate to be respectful.

**The context of our theme Scripture:** Colossians 3:5-17: **Be dead to your past actions:** All of these things we are dead to can be summed up in one word - idolatry. It is idolatry that brought sin, it is idolatry that feeds our fears and egos and it is *idolatry that makes lying comfortable*. That means putting a god in our head that is not THE God. When we do not have the principles of THE God in our head, our path will not be straight. “I am a changed person by the grace of God, through Jesus.”

**Put aside your past feelings:** Keep those past emotions at arm’s length by devouring an understanding of Jesus - who he is, what he did and where his footsteps lead. You can put your feelings far enough away from you where they no longer affect you or override your life.

**Fully embrace equality in Christ:** Bask in the beauty of being equal under Christ just as any other true Christian. By embracing this truth, we let go of fear, protectiveness and the temptation to lie.

Keeping a high moral standard in front of us greatly reduces the likelihood of cheating and lying. We have the responsibility to “let our light shine” and live with integrity. This will be contagious and rub off on others.

There is hope in this world of lying and cheating - YOU are that hope! Let your light shine. Show godly principles and see what can happen!



**TRUTH CHECKPOINT**

Always be deeply honest about what you stand to gain or lose by revealing, hiding or falsifying certain details of life.



**TRUTH CHECKPOINT**

When privileged to be in a position of influence, ALWAYS apply the practice of withholding information only with the utmost care. Be 100% sure that ego is irrelevant, your motivation is pure and the highest and most godly outcome for the other party is paramount.



**TRUTH CHECKPOINT**

Always - when choosing silence - be sure it is the voice of godly behavior and obedience that is present in that silence and not a voice of spite, arrogance or revenge.



**Fully engage the qualities of Christ:** There is no better way to destroy ungodly thoughts and words than with the crushing weight of goodness, godliness and brotherly love. If we brought these qualities with us everywhere and made them obvious, lying would drain away.

**Adorn yourself with the benevolent love of God:** This highest form of love sweeps away any leftover fragments of an old and broken life that was mired in sin.

**Allow Christ's peace full and unfettered access to your heart:** This peace, given time and authority, will overwhelm and eliminate fear and restlessness.

**Permit the words of Jesus to take up permanent residence in your heart and mind:** By so doing, we are able to be continually reminded of the power of Christ in our lives so our focus stays strong.

**Be thankfully transformed!** To get out of the habit of lying even a little bit, check yourself with the Checkpoints we reviewed but also realize all of the blessings you receive are a gift and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!

We should never lie. If we do, there is forgiveness but we must be responsible to attempt to transform ourselves. We rely on the power of God by putting His principles of godliness in front of us, reminding us that truthfulness, respect and integrity make up a wonderful life in Christ.

*So, should we EVER lie?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*