

The Importance of Telling the Truth, Always



FOR THE FOURTH TIME THIS MONTH, THE COMPANY owner had been down in Janet's office expressing his frustration with her work. Now he was upset about a project report she hadn't finished. Mindy couldn't help hearing the discussions in the office; her desk abutted Janet's office. Still, she tried to busy herself so she wasn't eavesdropping.

She thought she heard her name once, but dismissed it and went back to work. About two minutes later the owner opened Janet's door and asked Mindy to step in. Mindy was nervous, as the owner was known for his temperamental outbursts, and it often didn't matter if you were an innocent bystander. He would simply rant at everyone nearby.

He didn't even let her sit. "Janet tells me you're the hold-up on the Perkins project report." There was a challenge in his voice, an invitation for Mindy to leave her boss hanging out to dry.

Trouble was, Mindy wasn't the hold-up. Janet hadn't finished plugging in the numbers so Mindy could pull the

report together. As the owner stared Mindy down, she caught a pleading look out of the corner of her eye from Janet.

Mindy's mind raced. She liked Janet, and Janet was an excellent person to work for. More to the point, Janet had given Mindy this job when she wasn't fully qualified, and then had patiently worked with her to make her qualified.

"Well?" the owner barked, getting impatient with the silence.

"Should I lie?" Mindy thought to herself.

What should Mindy do?

(In real life, "Mindy" was also a Christian who had been sharing Christ with "Janet," a New Age fan. The answer she gave had a major impact on their relationship. If she lied, what do you think the effect on their relationship was? If she didn't lie, what do you think the major effect was?)

Scripture Passage

Exodus 20:16

Exodus 23:1-7

1 Peter 2:12

Matthew 15:17-19

John 8:44

Psalm 58:3

Proverbs 19:5

Psalm 63:11

Ephesians 4:25

I Corinthians 13:1

Ephesians 4:29

Proverbs 3:3

James 3:5-6

I Peter 4:11

James 3:17-18; 4:8

Study

“Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak falsehood to one another; with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.” Psalm 12:1-2

Truth is one of the hardest mountains to climb, and there are a lot of unseen crevices we fall into as we seek to be truthful. Whoever came up with the oath in the courtroom sure had it figured right, though. Now more than ever, we need to see truth through God’s eyes if we are to uncover the subtle moments when our commitment to it wanes. “...So help me, God” is an important part of a Christian worker’s commitment to uncompromising honesty.

Do you believe in levels of lying? Little white lies? Have you ever...

- stretched a point on your resume?
- fixed a speeding ticket you know you deserved?
- called in sick when you weren’t?
- given the boss an answer that wasn’t true?
- cheated (even “a little”) on your income tax?

Like other sins, lying and other forms of dishonesty creep into the “acceptable behavior” category of life. Acceptable to the world, that is, but not to God. Even our legal system has made averting “the whole truth” a skill to be admired when defending the rights of the accused.

Are there times when it’s acceptable for Christians to lie? This age-old debate is entertaining, but it always leads to the inevitable worst-case scenarios discussions, missing the real point. The journey of our faith should never be a focus on when it’s acceptable to break a rule, but rather on how important it is to keep that rule.

Author’s note: Many mature theological Christians believe there are instances when absolutes collide; in other words, when two or more of God’s laws conflict and a Christian is forced to make a choice between them, as in lying to protect a life. Others, including the author, believe there are rarely (some of us say never) moments when absolutes collide, but rather are moments when finding the right path is more difficult and may entail consequences. Choosing between absolutes can invite us to play God. This is an interesting and useful sidebar discussion, and if you’re a group leader, you might find it useful to let the group wrestle with these thoughts.)

But back to the task at hand. List times when you’re encouraged to lie at work.

Now talk about ways you handle these situations.

As humans, we look for the loopholes rather than understanding the importance of the rules before us. The rest of this study is designed to assault the idea that lying is a harmless sin. What do the following passages reveal about God's view of lying?

Exodus 20:16

Exodus 23:1-7

1 Peter 2:12

Matthew 15:17-19

John 8:44

Psalms 58:3

Proverbs 19:5

Psalms 63:11

What do these verses teach us about truth telling?

Ephesians 4:25

I Corinthians 13:1, Ephesians 4:29, and Proverbs 3:3

James 3:5-6, I Peter 4:11

James 3:17-18; 4:8

We take truth lightly in many areas of our lives, including the workplace. Our commitment to truth and honesty is a reflection of our relationship with God. Truth at the water cooler, truth in our memorandums, truth in our advertising claims, truth in our disclosures to customers, truth in our reports to regulatory agencies—all these and more speak volumes about the impact of Christ on our lives.

Lying is not a victimless sin. Those who pay the price are those watching us for evidence of something more important than profit and loss. And each time we lie the image of God in His creation suffers, too. We must be committed to truth because it honors Him.

For further study, we invite you to visit us at www.marketplacenetwork.com and examine more articles and writings on the place for truth in our working lives.

For further consideration

The verses below are placed here as continuing reflections on this study. While groups are certainly invited to use them in their sessions, we hope that you will go home and read this passage as an exercise in encountering your Bible in private.

Proverbs 30:7-9

What are you going to do this week to tackle areas of dishonesty in your life?

Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- We must be focused on telling the truth, not in finding loopholes when it's acceptable to lie.
- God takes an extremely harsh view of lying.
- Even small lies damage our credibility and our testimony of the effects of Christ in our lives.
- Small lies almost always lead to big lies.
- We spend immense energy protecting even the smallest lies.
- Truth is a vital part of our working relationships with coworkers, vendors, customers and investors.
- Truth by itself is never enough, though. Truth must be expressed with sensitivity and compassion.
- God wants to help us be truthful.
- Truth glorifies God. Dishonesty destroys us ... and sometimes others.