

3. What is wrong with lying? What results from lying? Why is it better to be consistently truthful?⁶



📖 “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.” (*Proverbs 20:17, ESV*)

📖 “Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.” (*12:19, NIV*)⁷

4. Is *not* telling the whole truth always wrong? Is it *always* wrong for a Christian to lie or use deception regardless of the situation?⁸ Explain your answer.

Reflection/Application

- Do you lie in any way? Do you twist the truth? Do you keep your promises? Are you honest, reliable and trustworthy? Are you completely truthful? Evaluate yourself in light of the Bible.
- If you are a Christian, apply Colossians 3:1-10 by God’s grace. If you are not a Christian, the most important thing is to know *the* Truth (see John 14:6). Do you need to receive Him?

Is it Ever Okay to Lie?

- ☺ Christians disagree on this question. Key passages in the debate are Exodus 1:15-21 and Joshua 2:1-7. Though the midwives lied (*Exodus 1:19*), God blessed them (*1:20-21*). Though Rahab lied (*Joshua 2:4-5*), she was commended for her faith (*Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25*). To support different views, Christians interpret and apply these passages in different ways.
- ☺ So what about lying to save a life? Lying is wrong, but allowing someone to be killed is also wrong! A moral conflict is apparent. There are three main views concerning this question.⁹
 - Lying is always wrong in any situation. A moral conflict does not really exist. There is always a “third alternative.” Christians must not lie, but trust God to provide a way out.
 - Lying is always wrong, but it may be the lesser of evils in some situations. In a moral conflict, Christians must choose the lesser of the two evils, and then confess their sin.
 - Lying is not necessarily always wrong. In rare situations, it may be okay to lie to achieve a greater good. Moral conflicts do exist, but there are higher and lower moral laws.
- ☺ While this is an important question, such “lying” situations are not typical. Thus, regardless of which view is held, the main point should be repeated: “Do not lie.” “Put off falsehood.”

⁶ Think about how lying affects one’s integrity (honesty, trustworthiness) and relationships.

⁷ Truthfulness stands firm because it aligns with the ‘God of truth’ who is the eternal. Truth stands forever. But lying is exposed as falsehood, and falsehood has no real foundation, so it falls away. Falsehood leads to destruction.

⁸ Christians disagree on this question. There are three main views (see ‘Is it Ever Okay to Lie?’). McQuilkin argues that ‘the Bible does justify deception in three categories: inconsequential social arrangements [e.g., humor, games, casual social greetings], war [e.g., the ambush in Joshua 8:2], and in opposing criminal activity.’ (Robertson McQuilkin, *Biblical Ethics* [Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995], 439). Also, cultural differences may influence one’s view on this question. In the attempt to preserve relational harmony, the Easterner may not be completely forthright in ‘telling it like it is,’ while the Westerner may be direct and ‘brutally honest.’ In any case, all Christians should be truthful, reliable and trustworthy, consistently keeping their promises, and consistently loving others (*Romans 13:9*).

⁹ For further study of these views, search using the terms unqualified absolutism (non-conflicting absolutism, third alternative view), conflicting absolutism (lesser-evil view), and graded absolutism (greater-good view).