

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Rev. Dr. Deborah Crawley, Teacher
Sis. Tammi Brown, Asst. Teacher

PROTECTING GOD'S HONOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS "LYING AND TELLING THE TRUTH"

Exodus 20:16 NKJV

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

A. THE MEANING OF THE COMMANDMENT

The specific focus of this commandment is a false witness that someone would give in a courtroom situation (see similar wording, Deut. 19:18; Ps. 27:12; Prov. 14:5; 25:18). In addition, this false witness is borne not against a stranger but against "your neighbor", whom you should know especially well and whom you should love (Lev. 19:18).

But this commandment is not intended to prohibit only this specific kind of false speech (false testimony against your neighbor in a courtroom). Therefore, it seems appropriate, under this commandment, to consider the question of lying and truthful speech in general.

B. A DEFINITION OF LYING

- a. **The Need for a Precise Definition.** Discussions of lying often suffer from a lack of precision in defining at the outset exactly what is being discussed. In a narrow sense lying includes only verbally affirming something you believe to be false.

Lying is affirming in speech or writing something you believe to be false.

- b. **Things Not Included in Lying.** Several related acts are not included in this narrow definition:
- i. **Silence.** This is saying nothing, so silence is not exactly an affirmation of anything; note Jesus's silence in Matt. 26:63
 - ii. **Nonverbal actions intended to mislead or deceive someone.** An action is something that happens; it is neither true nor false like a verbal affirmation.
 - iii. **Ironic statement especially in humor.** These are not truly affirmations when understood rightly.
 - iv. **Hyperbolic.** Hyperbolic statements are not intended to be taken as literally true; they use impossible exaggeration for rhetorical effect: "I might say it took me forever to write this chapter."
 - v. **Unintentional falsehoods.** For example, you may be misinformed and then affirm something that is actually false. But this is not something you believe to be false, so it does not fit the definition of lying given above.

c. **Deceptive Actions Are Not the Same as Verbal Lies**

Some may argue against this narrow definition of lying, saying for example, "Deceptive actions are the same thing as lying". But this is not a careful statement. Deceptive actions are in some ways a similar to lying (their intent is to persuade someone to believe something untrue) and in some ways different from lying.

For example, actions are ambiguous and can have various meanings, while verbal affirmations ordinarily are not ambiguous. Also, the Bible treats deceptive actions and false affirmations differently, as we will discuss. And lying involves a contradiction between what you think to be true and what you say, which does not occur in deceptive actions. The differences are important, and show at least that the two categories should be analyzed separately.

C. Numerous Biblical Statements Condemn Lying

1. **Extensive Biblical Testimony.** The Bible has numerous passages that prohibit or condemn lying in the sense of verbally affirming something that you believe to be false. These passages condemn false speech (seeing it as

characteristic of sinners who are far from God) or approve the truthfulness in speech (seeing it as characteristic of righteous people).

Ex 20:16

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. NKJV

Job 27:4

My lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit. NKJV

Ps 5:6

You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. NKJV

Ps 12:2

Neighbors lie to each other, speaking with flattering lips and deceitful hearts. NLT

Ps 58:3

The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. NKJV

2. **The Mention of “Neighbor” in Exodus 20:16 Does Not Narrow the Application of the Ninth Commandment or the Many Other Passages about Lying.**

D. THE CHARACTER OF GOD AS THE BASIS FOR NOT LYING

1. **God Cannot Lie.** The Biblical commands against lying are ultimately rooted in the character of God, who never lies.

Num 23:19

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" NKJV

Prov 30:5

Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. NKJV

This, then, is the ultimate reason why lying is wrong: it makes us unfaithful image bearers of God. The New Testament tells us “therefore be imitators of God as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1), and when we speak truthfully we rightly portray God as one who speaks the truth. But if we lie, we are not rightly imitating God’s own

truthful speech. If we lie, we are falsely portraying God as one who lies as well, and that dishonors him.

2. **Jesus Never Found It Necessary to Lie.**

E. THE NARRATIVE EXAMPLES OF LYING IN SCRIPTURE DO NOT OVERTURN OUR CONCLUSION THAT LYING IS ALWAYS WRONG.

1. **Rahab's Lie.** It is admitted by all that Rahab lied to the men who were looking for the Hebrew spies. (**Josh. 2:1-7**)

The question is whether this passage or later passages that mention Rahab show that God actually approved of Rahab's lie. A careful examination of the context is important. It shows that Rahab was a prostitute who lived in the Canaanite city of Jericho. There is nothing in the historical context to indicate that she had any prior instruction in the moral standards required by the Law. She should not assume that scripture intends to hold up an untrained, uninformed Canaanite prostitute as a model of ethical conduct. The text does not give us warrant to draw this conclusion.

2. **The Hebrew Midwives in Egypt.** (Ex. 1:15-21)
3. **Elisha's Statement to the Syrian Soldiers.** (2 Kings 6:18-22)
4. **Other Passages Reporting Various Kinds of Deception.** (1 Kings 22:19-23; 2 Thess. 2:11)