

New Vision

My Big Fat Mouth • Tell the Truth and Nothing but the Truth • Proverbs 12:22; Ephesians 4:22-25 •

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Main Point

The Lord detests lying, and if we are His followers, we will be known as those who tell the truth.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some examples of how lying is excused—if not celebrated—in our culture?

Do you think lying is a problem for believers? Why or why not?

Share a time when choosing to tell the truth cost you something.

Lying is as old as humanity. The very first sin was the result of Adam and Eve believing the lies of Satan. Everyone is tempted to lie at some point. Even though the Bible frequently and firmly condemns lying, a few stories in the Bible seem to present lying as acceptable in certain situations. Today, many of us find lying an all-too-convenient way of navigating difficult situations, and we may even view it as the noble or right thing to do in certain situations. So how are we as Christians supposed to think about lying? In this study, we will look at where lying comes from, how God feels about lying, and a few things we can do if we struggle with lying.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Proverbs 12:22.

Generally speaking, what are the various motivations for lying?

Lying is often a form of self-preservation, but there are many motivations that lead to deceit. Typically, these motivations are superficial: we lie to make ourselves look better than we are, to gain some advantage in life, to avoid conflict, to “politely” avoid helping others, or to avoid the inconvenient consequences of our actions (e.g., making false excuses for being late to work). These scenarios are essentially about maintaining our personal comfort, and there is little argument as to whether God would ever approve of these. But some situations are more complex.

Is there ever a time when lying is acceptable? When? Why?

In the Book of Exodus, the Hebrew midwives, charged with killing Hebrew baby boys, lied to Pharaoh when asked why they had not done so—and God showed them favor (Exodus 1:15-21). Rahab the prostitute is listed among the faithful and righteous because she feared God and lied to the king of Jericho to protect the Israelite spies (Joshua 2; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). There are many other biblical examples, but it is important to note: God never commands anyone to lie or calls it acceptable; these situations are extremely rare and don't give us license to lie in our daily lives.

This passage reveals how God feels about lying. If God detests lying, then what can we infer about His heart?

| Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:22-25.

How are lying and deceit characteristics of the old self?

What sins usually accompany lying? How does lying ultimately destroy both us and those around us?

If lying is part of the old self, then why do believers still lie?

Paul said that the new self is created to be like God in “righteousness and purity of the truth” (v. 24). How are “righteousness” and “purity of the truth” related? Why do you think truth is described as “pure”?

In verse 25, what reason did Paul give for speaking truthfully to one's neighbor?

In Romans 6, Paul wrote that our old self has been crucified with Christ and that we have been set free from sin. So whenever we lie, we are drawing from the habits of that old, dead self. In Christ, our new self is created for righteousness—to be in right relationship to God and others—and holiness—to be set apart for God's purposes. Since God is the God of truth, there is no way for lying to put us in a right relationship with Him. Lying also destroys the unity of the body of Christ that Paul encouraged. We cannot expect to be effective witnesses for Christ with truth and lies coming from the same mouth.

| Have a volunteer read John 8:44.

When dealing with sins, why is it important to remember who the leader of all sin is? How does knowing that the devil is “the father of lies” (v. 44) help us discern the truth more clearly and live more honest lives?

| Have a volunteer read 1 John 2:1-6.

Did John think it was possible for people to be completely without sin? How do you know? If he didn't mean that a person could be without sin, what was his intent?

John was realistic with his assessment of the Christian faith. He recognized that there was no middle ground with Jesus—there is either darkness or light. You either know Jesus or you don't. To that end, John knew that habitual, unrepentant sin could not characterize a true follower of Jesus. This was an important point to make in order to counter the false teachers of the day who believed that behavior had little to do with what they believed.

According to this passage, what is the evidence that we know God and that the truth is in us?

While obedience can never merit salvation, those who truly know Jesus and are known by Him are profoundly changed. They desire above all to walk in the way Jesus walked, so that even when they sin, they are quick to repent and turn again and again to Christ. The simple truth is that if God commands us not to lie, then we as His followers have to trust Him enough to obey that command.

Read 1 John 1:9. Since all of us are tempted to lie at some point, and all of us have failed in this area at times, what is the good news John gave us in this verse?

Even the greatest saints in all of Scripture failed many times. Peter himself lied three times about knowing Jesus, and yet Jesus forgave and restored him. Praise God that there is forgiveness in Christ!

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What lies do you need to confess and repent of?

To whom do you need to make amends for the lies you've told them?

How does being people characterized by truth give us more credibility when sharing the gospel with others?

Pray

Spend some time praising God that your old self is dead through Christ's sacrifice that you can now walk in righteousness and holiness. Thank Him that you don't have to lie to protect yourself, but can walk in the freedom of truth from here on.

Commentary

| Proverbs 12:22

12:22 The devious, those who turn aside from what is right, are detestable to God, offensive, abhorrent, an abomination; they virtually turn His stomach. He will not pay them any attention except to punish them (15:8; 16:5; 21:27; 28:9). But with the upright God is a friend, an intimate counselor (15:22; Job 29:4; Ps 25:14; 55:14).

| Ephesians 4:21-25

4:20-21 Paul pictures the truth totally in terms of the Messiah, who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6).

4:22-24 The apostle often described who believers already are, while also pointing to what they should strive to become. The practical paradox is that while freedom from sin's eternal penalty is already ours, freedom from the former way of life (a life of sin) comes only through our daily quest for obedience and purity. These are lifestyle commitments that every believer is called to make.

4:25-32 Paul offered five examples of what living the new life means in the context of relationship with others. All of the examples include a negative command, a positive command, and a spiritual principle on which the commands are based. At the base of all of Paul's commands is a God-centered spiritual foundation.

| John 8:44

8:44. The conduct of the Jews points to who their father is not, God, and who their father is, the devil. The devil is then contrasted with Jesus Christ. The devil is called (1) a murderer, (2) a liar, and (3) the father of lying. However Christ came down to earth (1) to bring life, (2) to reveal truth, and (3) to give mankind power.

| 1 John 2:1-6

2:1 Jesus' death was not the end of His ministry but the move to a new phase. Now He serves as our advocate or helper and mediator at the Father's right hand.

2:2 Jesus' perfect obedience and sacrificial death satisfied God's just demand for sin to be punished (propitiation). But His punishment was for others, not for Himself. The phrase for those of the whole world does not mean the salvation of all people. It does mean that, in keeping with God's promise to bless all the nations through Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:3), Jesus' saving death extends the offer of salvation to all nations.

2:3 John taught an understanding of Christian faith that includes profound assurance, not just the "maybe" of spiritual optimism.

2:4 The words His commands mean the same thing as “His word” in verse 5 and Jesus’ example in verse 6 (“just as He walked”). The true follower of Jesus is not just a talker but a doer (Jms 1:22).