

New Life

Bible Study Lesson

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #4 – LYING

DAILY READINGS:

- Monday: The first liar was the devil (Genesis 3:1-5; John 8:42-45).
- Tuesday: Lying is against God's nature (Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 32:4; Titus 1:2).
- Wednesday: What does the Bible say about lying (Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 6:16-17; Ephesians 4:25)?
- Thursday: Lying comes from the heart (Matthew 12:34; Matthew 15:18-19; Acts 5:1-4).
- Friday: You must speak the truth (Zechariah 8:16-17; Ephesians 4:14-15).
- Saturday: Ask for God's help with lying (Psalm 25:5; Psalm 119:29; Psalm 120:2).

MEMORY VERSE: *"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."* —Ephesians 4:25

"Everyone Lies"

Studies have shown that the majority of people tell about four lies every day. These studies also reveal that about 60 percent of adults lie at least once during a ten-minute conversation (Statisticbrain.com/lying-statistics/). Lying comes so naturally to many people that they do not even realize they are doing it. One expert said: "Lying has long been a part of everyday life. We couldn't get through the day without being deceptive" (Leonard Saxe). The use of lie detector tests, laws against lying (perjury, defamation, false police reports), and punishments for lying are some of the means used to try and stop people from telling lies. Yet, for too many people, lying has become an acceptable way of life.

Sadly, even many Christians believe that sometimes it is acceptable to lie about trivial matters, when in danger, to avoid hurting someone's feelings, or to get out of trouble. Often lying is called something else to make it seem less offensive: half-truths, white lies, shading the truth, whoppers, or fibbing. Regardless of what one might call it, this is perhaps the devil's most deceptive tool.

Is Lying Ever Justified?

The very first example of lying is found in the Bible story of Eve speaking with the serpent. When the serpent told Eve, "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4), he was telling her that what God had said was untrue. This was the devil's first (but not last) lie. According to John 8:44, "he is a liar, and the father of it." Lying can include words or silence; it can include actions or remaining completely still. The definition of lying is "the deliberate act of deviating from the truth." Lying takes in intentional falsehoods and deceptive actions.

Are some lies less serious than others? Is lying acceptable if everything turns out all right in the end? There is an old saying, "The end justifies the means." What does that mean, and is it true? Shouldn't someone tell a lie if the truth hurts? If someone tells a lie and no one knows or gets hurt, is that okay? These questions are often used to justify the desire to lie or to excuse lies if they work for a supposed good. The best source to answer all of these questions is the Word of God. Because lying is such a deceptive tool, it is best to look to the "God of truth" (Deuteronomy 32:4) for the answers.

The ninth commandment, found in Exodus 20:16, says, "*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*" In other words, do not tell lies or accuse anyone falsely. According to the Bible, lies come from the heart (Matthew 15:19; Acts 5:4), and God hates "*a lying tongue*" (Proverbs 6:16-17). God wants His people to speak the truth. The importance of the truth is stated many, many times in the Bible. Proverbs 30:5 says that "*Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*" Jesus said that not only was God's Word the truth, but He was "*the truth*" (John 14:6) as well. This is quite a contrast to how Jesus described the devil: "*He . . . does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him*" (John 8:44 Amplified Bible). With such emphasis placed on truth in the Bible, can the Christian ever be justified in telling a lie?

Forms of Lying

The devil will try to convince you that a half-truth is sometimes necessary. What should you do if telling the truth will get you into trouble? How should you answer a question when the truth will most likely offend? Is it considered lying to deceive someone by shrugging your shoulders or changing your expression? Wouldn't it be better to pretend to agree with people to avoid an argument? Some people believe in "situational ethics": whether or not something is a lie depends on the outcome of the situation. However, this could change from one person to the next, with some believing that certain untruths are acceptable and others determining that they are not. This takes the standard for what is lying out of God's hands and places it in the hands of people. (Read Judges 21:25.)

If any form of lying is acceptable, when does it become unacceptable in God's eyes? How many white lies can you tell before you get in trouble with God? God is a God of "moral absolutes." His standards do not change based on your circumstances, the outcome, who you are, or your good intentions. He will not tell one person to obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 27:10), while allowing someone else to slip by. God is unchanging (Malachi 3:6), and His Word is unchanging (Isaiah 40:8). Regardless of the reason or what you might call it, a lie is still a lie.

Consequences of Lying and How to Overcome It

The article *Small Fibs Lead to Big Whoppers* describes a study that shows how the brain becomes "desensitized with each successive falsehood. The more we lie, the less the brain responds." Lies have a way of multiplying. Soon one lie requires another to prop it up, and it becomes difficult to keep track of all the lies. Truth needs no propping up. However, telling lies can result in greater difficulties than keeping your story straight. The Bible is full of examples of the serious consequences of lying. Consider the reaping of Jacob, Jezebel, Gehazi, Peter, the old

prophet in Bethel, Ananias, and Sapphira. Lying destroys reputations, influences others to do wrong, causes people to lose respect and confidence in someone, and (most serious of all) separates you from God.

If you find that you are telling lies (by whatever name you might call them), is it because you want people to think the best of you or to try and make yourself feel better or to keep out of trouble or out of loyalty to friends or out of habit? Do you tell lies to yourself, saying, "I'll do that later" with no intentions of actually doing it? To understand your motives for lying, it is best to evaluate what is entering into your heart, "*For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*" (Matthew 12:34). Fill your heart with God's truth (Psalm 119:11), learn to hate lying as God does (Psalm 119:104, 128, 163), guard your lips (Proverbs 13:3), and refuse to take part in lying (Exodus 23:7; Proverbs 4:24). Most important, ask God for help. There will be times when telling the truth is very difficult; there will be times when you are asked questions and you cannot tell everything you know. There is a "*time to keep silence*" (Ecclesiastes 3:7). You need God's help to know how to handle these situations.

Lies destroy friendships, marriages, and families. Lies also destroy the influence of the Christian. It has been said that perhaps so many people reject salvation because they are confused by its salesmen. While the world justifies white lies, half-truths, and fibs, Christians are held to a higher standard. Being truthful honors God. "*The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.*" (Proverbs 12:22).

1. What are some of the methods used to stop people from lying?
2. What are some other names for lying (that sound less offensive)?
3. Where is the devil's first lie found?
4. What was the devil's first lie?
5. What is the definition of lying?
6. Using the word "truth," describe the contrast between Jesus and the devil:

7. What are "situational ethics"?
8. What is the danger of considering some forms of lying as acceptable?
9. God is a god of "moral absolutes." What does that mean?
10. What are some ways (from the lesson) to stop lying?
11. What are some of the consequences of lying?
12. What does a person usually hope to accomplish by lying?
13. Is everything we speak that is incorrect a lie? Why or why not?
14. Are there ever good consequences from lying?
15. Why is the truth important?