
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Is it okay to lie on certain occasions?**

Let's begin by defining a lie.

When used as a noun, a "lie" is defined as: "A false statement deliberately presented as being true. Something meant to deceive or give a wrong impression."

When used as a verb, "lie" is defined as: "To present false information with the intention of deceiving."

In other words, a "*lie*" carries with it the intent to deceive or deliberately presenting something as untrue.

To illustrate: Suppose the phone rings and a man says, "I'm sorry, my wife isn't home." If the wife was home, but he husband did not know she was home, no lie was told. However, if the wife was home and the husband knew she was home, he just told a lie. He deliberately told an untruth with the intent of deceiving.

The scriptures teach lying is wrong:

Ephesians 4:25

²⁵ Therefore, **putting away lying**, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

Revelation 21:8

⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Yet, in spite of these passages of scripture, many people believe it is acceptable for a Christian to lie on certain occasions. In other words, they believe it is acceptable to intentionally tell something false with the intent of deceiving.

Here is the situation posed: Suppose you had lived during WWII, when Nazi soldiers were hunting down and killing Jews during the holocaust. Suppose also that you are hiding a Jew and a German soldier knocks on your door demanding to know if you have any Jews in your house. If you say yes, you know the Jewish refugee will be arrested and eventually killed. If you say no, you have lied, but in this case the lie is excusable and not counted as a sin.

As a matter of fact, a Bible story is told in the OT Book of Joshua:

Joshua 2:1-6

- ¹ Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.
- ² And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country."
- ³ So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country."
- ⁴ Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from."
- ⁵ And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them."
- ⁶ (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)

In the NT we read this:

Hebrews 11:31

- ³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

James 2:25

- ²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

So, the story of Rahab seems to confirm the idea in many people's minds that telling a lie on certain occasions is acceptable and, in fact, the right thing to do.

In order to harmonize scripture, we must be careful not to pit one scripture against another and then choose the passage we like. To be fair with the Bible, we must interpret passages in such a way that they harmonize.

Concerning Rahab, she was indeed justified, but not because she told a lie. She was justified because she placed her faith in God and did those things which faith required. She was **justified by faith** according to Heb 11:31 – she was not justified by a lie. The lie Rahab told was a sin and she was forgiven of the sin just like she was forgiven of harlotry and all other sins she had committed throughout her lifetime.

Now, here's the question people should be asking: Could Rahab have been saved by faith without telling a lie? Could she have simply told the king of Jericho, "I'm not going to tell you what I know about the spies." If she had said that, she would have been justified by faith without telling a lie.

In the same way, someone during the holocaust could tell a German soldier, “*I’m not going to tell you what I know about any Jew.*” Or they could say, “*Search my house if you want, but I’m not telling you anything about a Jew.*”

The point I’m trying to make is that the scripture clearly teaches lying is wrong and sinful. There is no situation given in scripture which justifies lying – not even the case of Rahab. When Rahab or anyone else is asked for information which they are not entitled to know, God’s people must learn to simply tell the authorities that they are taking their stand for God and they will not divulge any information which will harm an innocent person. Having said this, the Christian must be prepared for any negative repercussions, but no lie is permissible under any circumstances according to scripture.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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