

The Liar's Diet

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2 Samuel 16:1-4

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I was walking through Wal Mart the other day and noticed a man buying two large bags of dog food. "Is your dog a little hungry" I asked? He said, "No I don't have a dog, but I am thinking about starting the Purina Diet again, although I probably shouldn't because the last time I ended up in the hospital in intensive care. But on the bright side, I lost 50 pounds".

Curious, I asked what the Purina Diet was. He said that it was essentially a perfect diet and that the way it works is to load your pockets with Purina nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry.

I wondered if he ended up in intensive care because the dog food had poisoned him. He said no. But one day he stopped in the middle of a parking lot to scratch his fleas and a car hit him. That's about the time I knew he was lying.

Revelation 21:8 says **"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."**¹ And I'm thinking, "O great. Now I'm in trouble, cause I'm always telling stories just like the man at Wal Mart". Does that mean I'll find myself in hell? I've actually heard it said that a Christian cannot act in drama because they would be misrepresenting themselves, and therefore lying. And if that's true then I'm really in bad shape. I once played the part of Satan!

So when do lies become too big? Is there some formula to help us determine just how far we can go with a lie and still get into heaven? I've heard the arguments about lying. People mention the Germans who hid Jews in their homes during World War Two. They lied. And what about Rahab, the lady from Jericho? She lied about the Spies hiding in her house (see Joshua chapter 2), and yet is mentioned favorably in the New Testament (see Hebrews 11:31 & James 2:25). So are there times when it's okay to lie? Well, there are three things I'd like to point out that might help us as we wrestle with that question.

¹*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Re 21:8). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Turn to 2 Samuel 14. There's an interesting development in King David's life that speaks about lying, and about how destructive it can be. If you'll recall, Absalom had his brother killed (chapter 13), then runs and hides at his grandfather's house and stays there three years. He eventually returns to Jerusalem (chapter 14), but it will be another two years after that before he finally sees his father once again.

For the next four years though, Absalom plays the politician (chapter 15). He works the crowds that come to the palace. He gets people on his side and wins their favor. Then one day, four years later, he begins the revolt to overthrow his father's kingdom. But rather than allowing a battle to take place, David and his men decide to flee Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15:14). Some of David's supporters are allowed to come with him, while others are asked to stay.

In the midst of this crisis there have been a lot of people who demonstrate integrity and honesty. However, there are some who deceive and lie. And one particular lie I find very troubling. **Read 2 Samuel 16:1-4**

You may be tempted to think, "Wow, what a nice guy this Ziba is; caring for the king and his men". But it's what he says about Mephibosheth in verse 3 that I find quite slanderous, especially when you read 2 Samuel 19:24-30.

Have you ever been lied to? Have you ever had someone slander you? How did it make you feel? See, this is where the lesson on lying needs to begin. Rather than looking for permission or a set of guidelines on what kind of lies are acceptable and which ones are not, we need to ask ourselves how our lie will affect others. The lies Absalom told all those years he sat at the city gate were designed to tear down his father and build up himself. The lies Ziba told were designed to tear down Mephibosheth and build himself up in the eyes of the king. Absalom would destroy his father and the whole city just to get what he wanted. Ziba was only interested in gaining some land, not in David's safety.

First, I'd like you to think about the lie you're about to tell. Does it slander another person or tear them down? Then it is not acceptable. As a matter of fact, this kind of lying is one of the 6 things the Lord hates (**a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord in a family.** – Proverbs 6:19)² It shows that you're

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

merely concerned about yourself, and not the affairs of others. For those who say, “Yea, well Rahab lied”, I’ll point out that she lied out of a genuine concern for the safety of others. The people who hid Jews had the same attitude. As a matter of fact both Rahab and people like Corrie Ten Boom, who sheltered Jews in Holland, both put their own lives on the line for the welfare of others. But lying to harm, lying to hurt, or lying to destroy – these are the lies addressed as sinful in the Bible (see Psalm 52:4, Proverbs 10:18, 16:28, 26:20).

Secondly, I’d like to reverse the roles here for a moment. Let’s look at this through David’s eyes or Mephibosheth for a moment. What’s a Christian to do when they’ve been slandered? How are we to respond to those who do lie or gossip about us? What should we do when other tell lies that hurt and destroy? See, this is where it gets difficult. I know the temptation is to return the slander; to get caught up in a battle where we lie and slander back. But according to scripture, we don’t have that option.

If it’s wrong for someone to slander or lie about us, then it’s just as wrong for us to do it toward others. I appreciate the lack of retaliation by David and Mephibosheth. I think there is a valuable lesson here. In these two men I see demonstrated the same attitude we see in Christ as He was crucified. Attacked, lied about, and slandered, He responds by saying “Father, forgive them”. So too must a Christian resist the temptation to tear down even those who are out to destroy us.

Finally, Peter’s advice is to, **“Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.”**³ (1 Peter 2:12). If people hear nothing but truth coming from your mouth, if they never hear you slander or gossip, if they never hear you tear someone down, then you’ve already won the battle when they lie, gossip, or slander you.

Please remember that slander, gossip, and destructive lying is wrong. And please don’t allow these things to destroy your witness and testimony to others. Sometimes honesty and integrity are the only witnessing tools we have.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.