

## **How do Christians view honesty?**

Is lying absolutely wrong? Are white lies (lies told with good intentions) okay?

### **The Bible's standard for honesty**

#### **1. Motivation**

The Bible has very clear and specific standards for honesty. Matthew 5:37 says, "Let your statement be, 'Yes, Yes'; and 'No, No'; anything more than this is from the evil one." This verse implies that there are two hostile camps: on one side is God, who is faithful; on the other side is Satan, who is the father of lies. God and Satan are enemies and cannot coexist. Those who lie belong to Satan, and those who belong to God need to be faithful and honest. As far as motives are concerned, God's children must be honest and do not lie.

#### **2. Consequences**

Lies hurt trust and also hurt feelings. Lies also give others wrong information and images, causing them to have wrong perceptions. One lie leads to another lie, and when it can no longer be concealed, it may lead to more extreme crimes.

### **Some categories of lies**

#### **1. Lies that can be avoided**

- a. Lies that are intentionally false and distort the facts to frame others are called false witnesses in the Bible. This kind of lie has extremely problematic motives and brings harm to others, which is something Christians should never do.
- b. More common lies are those told out of personal weakness. This may be a desire to resolve difficulties more easily, but it reflects a lack of faith in God. For example, falsifying the population when applying for public housing, falsifying income when applying for subsidies, falsifying family income when applying for low-interest loans, etc., are all offenses against God. But our friends in the advertising and media industry, as well as those in politics, can easily become accustomed to false declarations and statements,

thinking that they are no big deal, but all of this is abominable to God. Lies can also be caused by a low self-image, pretending to be someone else in the hope of gaining recognition from others or gaining some benefit. Another kind of lie is to refuse to admit your own mistakes and weaknesses. Without the courage to face yourself, you shirk responsibility and blame others. If you do not have the courage to face your mistakes, you will not learn from them and therefore will not grow. The first step to growth is to admit your mistakes. How can you correct your mistakes if you do not admit them?

## **2. Lies of tacit assumption**

There is a kind of lies that is tacitly accepted by the public, assuming that everyone will not tell the truth. For example:

- a. Feints and fake moves in games: chess players will make a feint to the east and attack to the west, basketball players will use fake actions, football players will feint, all of which are expected. Its motive is not to hurt the other party, but it is just a preset action technique in the game to enhance the fun of the game and will not hurt the trust and feelings of both parties. This kind of falsehood is allowed.
- b. Exaggeration in recommendation letters is to be expected. If you write 80 points as 100 points, people who read it will also discount it by 20%. Sales person's recommendations are expected to be exaggerated. Whether such lies are allowed depends on one's own opinion. What if the other party really believes your recommendation letter? Research also shows that factual reporting is more convincing than glib rhetoric. Such exaggeration is not worthy of praise.
- c. Whether polite remarks or just following the trend are appropriate depends on the occasion. In a casual setting, you can be a little playful; but do not be too casual with your words, do not speak without thinking, and do not flatter too much, as this will reduce people's trust in you.

## **3. White lies**

Is it okay to tell a lie out of love for the benefit of the other person if it can help build up the other person?

It is hard to have an absolute answer to this. Emphasizing principles and emphasizing consequences will lead to completely different answers. One cannot be said to be more spiritual than the other. This is not a moral judgment. But one thing to note is that if a white lie is an inaccurate assessment of the other party's situation, it may cause harm to the other party.

Some wise words may not necessarily be false, but they can also achieve the same effect. For example, if someone gives you a birthday gift you do not like, you do not have to say, "It's beautiful! I like it!" Instead, you can say, "Thank you, you are really thoughtful. But there is no need to give me that next time." Or if a husband tells his wife about her poor physical examination report, he does not have to say, "No problem, everything is normal", but can tell her the truth and say, "Don't worry, I will protect you and love you!"

#### **4. Lies in extreme situations**

In an abnormal society and cruel situations, sometimes we need to make a choice between principles and consequences. If someone takes advantage of your honesty to harm someone, it is more valuable to lie than to be honest in order to save a life, because life is more valuable than personal integrity. This is the same principle as the story of the lying Egyptian midwife recorded in Exodus 1:15-21.

In addition, releasing false information during wartime can also be seen as a war strategy, tacitly approving assumptions and using deception as the basis for warfare. This is the reason why the prostitute Rahab was praised for deliberately concealing and lying in order to save the two spies of Israel.

In the political circle, partial confessions are often made, because personal speech not only represents oneself, but also represents the entire group. Truthful speech can shake the entire society and cause many people to panic and commit suicide.

But do not establish rules for normal circumstances based on decisions made in extreme situations. You should always maintain integrity. When making decisions in extreme situations, it is also important to be clear that there are no other viable options and to make decisions at a higher level of value.

## Summary

1. Examine your motives and do not intentionally hurt others. This is an absolute principle.
2. Try your best to avoid unnecessary lies and face all intimidation and challenges with God's grace.
3. You cannot be completely sure of the other party's tacit assumptions, and a well-intentioned lie may cause greater harm. Even if your motives are right, ask yourself if you really have to lie.
4. Respond with wisdom. Answering with words of wisdom can prevent lying.