

## What does the Bible say about lying?

The Language of Lying by Noah Zandan

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Reasons for lying are never-ending and our ability to lie is even worth studying about! As the video states, some lies are big and out front, some are quick and under the radar, and others we barely even register as happening or see it as a white lie (e.g. 'sorry, my phone died, stupid battery!').

At the heart of it we know it is good to dwell in the truth, and we probably remember Jesus talking about how important truth is – John 8:32: [Jesus said] and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. There is also talk in Matthew and James about swearing/oaths:

Matthew 5 -- <sup>34</sup>But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup>or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Let your word be "Yes, Yes" or "No, No"; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

James 5 -- <sup>12</sup>Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

So we should be straightforward and let our words speak for themselves out of our own integrity (people can trust what we say is truth), and definitely do not swear to God or to your mother or anything else. But what about lying specifically? What is the rule about lying according to the Bible?

Core Questions:

1. I know I need to be honest, stick to the truth, and let my words speak for themselves – what about lying specifically?
2. Is there a time when lying will result in a better outcome in the end (i.e. the ends justify the means?)
3. What if I am lying for someone else's benefit and not to boost myself or shield myself from an uncomfortable confrontation or truth?

Alright! We finally got into ethics! For the who-knows-how-few reading this we have now entered the theoretical space of discussing ethics. The conversation may all be theoretical, but how we act it out matters greatly; after all looking back to Matthew and James we find that our action and words are rooted in our hearts – the ethics we act out IS who we are as people.

Lying. If you want an easy answer just turn to the ten commandments and the answer would be NO, NO and always NO. – Exodus 20:16 -- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. In other

words no lying or deceiving or equivocating against a neighbor. Well who is my neighbor exactly? Jesus has an answer for you in the form of a story, a story about a Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

BUT, what if we are not lying against your neighbor but against an enemy or for the benefit of yourself or your neighbor. Would not the command to love our neighbor take precedent over a command not to lie against your neighbor? This is where people diverge sharply. Some say that when Jesus gives the Greatest Two commandments Matthew 22:36-40 that Loving God comes before Loving Neighbor and Loving God entails as priority to never lie. Others would say no, in order to honor God you must love your neighbor through actions as the actions are what define the love of God (Matthew 25). In other words, loving God is not abstract but instead concretely displayed by how you show love to your neighbor (and yes might include lying for their benefit or to save their life).

So where does that leave us? Well, you will get no definite choice from me, I think the only obvious takeaway is you do not lie to shield yourself from the truth. Lying as a form of love towards others is up for debate, but the fact that we must love our neighbors is not up for debate. What do you think? Do other texts found in Proverbs and Psalms clear it up at all? Pray this week that you will trust in the truth, love God and your neighbor, and let your yes be yes and no be no.