

Imagine yourself at church this coming Sabbath. Members are still arriving and pre-service fellowship is in full swing. You look up as a female member enters the room wearing an absolutely horrible-looking dress. Though modest enough, the color and style are all wrong for this lady. As she walks toward you in greeting and not wanting to say anything that would hurt her feelings, you compliment her on the dress. In other words, you told her what has come to be known as a "little white lie." After all, you might reason, no one was hurt and my heart was in the right place by not wanting to make her feel bad. As laudable as this may seem on the surface, is it practicing righteousness before God? Does the end justify the means? Does God "wink" at the white lie knowing that your heart and intent were in the right place?

I am here to tell you there is no such thing as a "little white lie." The ends do not justify the means if the means to that end was sin. I am here to tell you that good intentions of the heart do not justify breaking the Ninth Commandment. The study of so-called "little white lies" is a study in theology or how we use our educated human reasoning, common sense coupled with the in-dwelling of God's Holy Spirit to arrive at truth. We, as firstfruits, are being judged on what we hold as truth and the theology we invoke to arrive at that truth. All truth is Jesus Christ and we are in the Salvation Process to become like Christ.

I will now present you with several instances of theology that will utterly destroy the concept of the "little white lie" as being something acceptable to Almighty God.

The Degree of Sin Argument - bad theology

God does not speak of sin in terms of degrees. Lies are lies. Stealing is stealing. Adultery is adultery and murder is murder. One cannot have a harmless affair with another man's wife. If I leave my neighbor's car alone and just steal his TV, I am still guilty of stealing. Is there such thing as a "little murder"? Nowhere in God's Word do I find the terms "little lie" "minor lie", "little white lie" or "justifiable lie."

Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. –Lev 19:11. The phrase "deal falsely" means to deceive, deny, dissemble, fail, deal falsely, be found liars, (be-) lie, lying, submit selves. Telling the lady that the dress looks nice is dealing falsely with her. We are deceiving her into believing a lie--that the dress looks good on her. What if later, her best friend tells her that the dress is hideous and all wrong for her. You will "be found a liar" in her mind.

Telling her the dress looks good on her is not seeking her prosperity and success. If she bases her next dress purchase on your lie, you are now stealing from her by having her waste money on a lie. What if she decided to go on a date with a suitor or wear that dress to an important job interview? Your lie will have done the woman an injustice, harmed her prosperity and even her potential happiness.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. – Eph 4:25 We are to put away all lying. We are to speak the truth with our neighbor for we are members one of another. If you try on an item of clothing, look in a mirror and know at once that it is all wrong for you, would you wear it? Would you lie to yourself? Clearly you would not. So why lie to her?

Notice that God provides no loopholes in His Word. He states it simply and with all authority...speak the truth and lie not.

The "God looks on the intent of your heart" Argument [or the end justifies the means] - bad theology

One of the chief arguments or justifications for the little white lie is that God looks on the good intentions of your heart rather than your actions. "It is a little white lie," they say, "but you are being kind-hearted in not

wanting to cause a disruption or hurt her feelings by telling her the dress is all wrong." The one encouraging the lie is saying that the end justifies the means. "The lie is permissible because God is looking on your heart and will bless you for not wanting to hurt the lady's feelings." In other words, your kindness and love justify the lie on your lips.

Is this good theology? If it is, the reasoning should hold for all situations and with all known sins. Let us see if it holds.

Situation	Action	Intent	Sin
There is a poor and malnourished family, with young children in the neighborhood.	Lacking the means myself, I take some food from a local grocers loading dock.	I am preventing a family from starving to death. I am preserving their health and lives.	Stealing
A wife in the congregation is experiencing a failing marriage due to the fact she is frigid.	I enter into a sexual relationship with the lady to help her overcome being frigid and to have a healthy view of sex in marriage.	I am saving the marriage, bringing happiness to the couple.	Adultery and fornication
There is a known pedophile living in the neighborhood and the justice system lacks the evidence to bring him to trial.	I put hemlock in the man's afternoon tea.	I am saving countless children from rape and sodomy.	Murder

Do the ends justify the means in these cases? Is there anything wrong with the good intentions listed here? Have I not done the good works that the Bible speaks about? Clearly not. In each case I am sinning and showing a complete lack of understanding of the Word of God.

One more aspect of this element to consider is this idea of God looking on the heart and the good intentions of it. My Bible says that the heart is deceitful above all things:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? –Jer 17:9

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. –Mark 7:21-22

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. –Matt 15:19

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. –Prov 28:26

Finally...

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. –1 John 2:21. God's word is clear. NO LIE is of the truth. Regardless of our intent, no matter how laudable, we cannot lie. To tell the lady that the dress is pretty is a bald-face lie.

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. –Col 3:9.

The "allowable lies" of the Bible Argument - bad theology

Some, in attempting to use the "good intentions" argument refer to the Bible and the lies of Abraham and Rahab. Abraham lied to Abimelech in saying that his wife, Sarah, was his sister. His motive was to keep from getting killed. Some might think this justified, but as you read the account in Genesis 20, God had to intervene to keep Sarah from becoming Abimelech's wife. It is Abimelech who is incensed with Abraham for his lie. *"What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?"* (Genesis 20:9).

Then we have the case of Rahab of Jericho who hides the spies of Israel and lies to the authorities as to where they are. I have witnessed a number of people who reference this account and say that lying for the good of God and/or His people is justified. However, nowhere in God's Word will you see her praised for the lie. Nowhere will you find her lie justified. She is praised in Hebrews 11 and James 2 for her faith and sending the spies out the other way. Nothing about the lie. Most every commentary and Internet site I consulted on the subject admitted that hers was an unjustified lie. This can, in no way, be used to justify a little white lie. Notice some commentaries [*emphasis mine*]...

The falsehood to which she had recourse may be excused by the pressure of circumstances and by her own antecedents, **but cannot be defended.**
(*from Barnes' Notes*)

Rahab's expedient lie was a sin of weakness in one whose conscience was just beginning to be awakened out of heathen darkness. **A man of developed faith learns to answer without lying.** (*from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

The falsehood by which Rahab sought not only to avert all suspicion from herself of any conspiracy with the Israelitish men who had entered her house, but to prevent any further search for them in her house, and to frustrate the attempt to arrest them, **is not to be justified as a lie of necessity told for a good purpose.** (*from Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition*)

The "Mendacium Officiosum" Argument - bad theology

The type of lie we are discussing and which some are attempting to justify is the **mendacium officiosum**, or "officious lie," whose purpose is to achieve some useful end or to prevent some distinct harm. Examples might include a doctor misleading a terminally ill patient or a prisoner lying to enemy interrogators. We see this being applied to the lie of Rahab above. I could find no web site discussing the subject giving it justification. Religious scholars have wrestled with the lie of Rahab for centuries and virtually all come to the same conclusion: A lie is a lie is a lie and God is against all lying regardless of intent, motive or circumstance. Following is what I found at one Internet site discussing Lying and the Bible:

"Answer: Lying is all too common (Psalm 58: 3). Lying is usually defined as a falsehood that is designed to deceive. According to one study, 91 percent confess to regularly lying. This same study revealed that 45 percent see nothing wrong with lying. Lying started with the devil and often involves some truth ([Genesis. 3: 4, cp. 2: 17, 3: 3](#)).

"Lying is associated with all manner of sin. God has placed lying into the same circumstance as adultery, murder, sorcery, and idolatry ([Jeremiah. 23: 14, Revelation. 21: 8](#)). The Bible knows nothing of big and little or white lies. Those who set out to teach religious error are presented as liars ([Jeremiah. 14: 14](#)).

"The Bible contains examples of lying. Potiphar's wife lied regarding Joseph, Jacob's sons lied, Abram used deceit, and Rahab lied ([Genesis. 39: 14-18](#); [37: 31-36](#); [12: 10-13](#); [Joshua. 2: 4-6](#)). There are always terrible consequences associated with lying. For instance, Joseph was cast into prison. In view of [James 2: 25](#), some have tried to justify Rahab's lie. Hence, the doctrine of mental reservation and the expression mendacium officiosum (justified lie in course of duty). However, the Bible offers no justification for such lies.

"God hates lying. The scriptures are plain in pronouncing God's hatred of lying (Prov. 6: 16-19, 12: 22). God's people are to remove themselves from circumstances of lying ([Psalm. 119: 163, 29, 120: 2](#), [Proverbs. 30: 8](#), [Ephesians. 4: 25](#)). The rare word "abomination" is applied to lying ([Proverbs. 12: 22](#)).

"It should be of great comfort that God's truths contain no lie ([1 John. 2: 21](#)). People mainly lie out of fear and the desire for acceptance, we are told. These matters should not be predominant in the Christian (cp. [John. 12: 42, 43](#)). The fate of the liar is ultimate spiritual destruction and everlasting punishment in hell ([Proverbs. 19: 5, 9](#), [Revelation. 21: 27, 22: 15, 21: 8](#))."

The "Where do you cross the line" Argument - bad theology

If I were having a discussion with one who believed little white lies and thought them justified, I would ask a very important question: "When does the little white lie cross the line into becoming a full-fledged lie?" I would ask for some examples of little white lies and then ask for the worst little white lie that would be right at the line separating little white lies from full-fledged lies. Next I would ask, "Who is deciding that line?" Clearly it is not God. I do not see any scripture or biblical principle that would establish such a line. It would have to be the subjective choice of the one telling the lie. The bad theology here is the concept of drawing a line ANYWHERE when it comes to sin. God does not draw lines within the sin. The lines He draws are prior to the first possible example of the sin. This is why there are no little white lies. Sin is sin. The line God draws is between Truth and Lie or between Sin and No Sin. We have no authority to take that line into the sin and call everything on one side to be justified or okay to invoke.

That line, by the way, is the commandment that says, "Thou shalt not lie." [*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*-Ex 20:16].

The "abstain from all appearance of evil" Argument - good theology

In my Notebook piece, "[Abstain from all Appearance of Evil...a full immersion into its meaning](#)", we see that we are to abstain from all forms of evil. Metaphorically, if we are walking down a pathway and we see sin off to our right at about one-thousand yards, we are not to take even one step in that direction. We are to hold back from approaching it. We are to practice no form of the evil. Lying is an evil. It is a known evil prohibited by the Law of God. If there were such a thing as "little white lies" they would clearly be a form of evil. This is why the key word in the phrase is LIE.

If you justify and allow these little lies in your life, who is defining what a little white lie is? When and by what action does the little white lie become a full-fledged evil lie? Notice how this is described in Isaiah:

Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope. -Isa 5:18. Now notice the meaning...

The Chaldee translates it, 'Woe to those who begin to sin by little and little, drawing sin by cords of vanity; these sins grow and increase until they are strong, and are like a cart-rope.' The Septuagint renders it, 'Woe to those who draw sin with a long cable;' that is, "one sin is added to another, until it comes to an enormous length, and the whole is drawn along together. Probably the true idea is that of the ancient interpretation of the rabbis,

'An evil inclination is at first like a fine hair string, but the finishing like a cart-rope.' At first, they draw sin with a slender cord, then they go on to greater deeds of iniquity that urge them on, and draw them with their main strength, as with a cart-rope. They make a strong "effort" to commit iniquity. (*from Barnes' Notes*)

Sin is insidious. It is beguiling but harmful. It is the spreading of evil in a subtle and stealthy manner. All sin grows and therefore there is no such thing as a little sin. If I am justified in lying to the woman about her ugly dress, then I am justified to go through the congregation week after week and year after year telling hundreds and thousands of them.

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. –1 Cor 5:6-7

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. –Gal 5:9

How can one purge out the leaven and still tell "little lies"?

The "good and evil trees" Argument - good theology

In Matthew 7:15-20 we receive instruction on how to tell a good minister from an evil one. We learn of good fruit vs. evil fruit. We come to understand that the meaning of the word, "fruit" is "close adherence to scripture." We have [this study](#) posted at the EA site as well as in the [Menu-driven Bible Study](#) at this site. Notice the definition of good and evil trees in the text:

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. –Matt 7:18

This verse has linkage to the "little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" verses in 1 Corinthians 5 and Galatians 5 above. A good tree cannot have a "little bit" of sin.

The "pure religion" Argument - good theology

In my recent sermon, entitled, "[Affinity](#)" I discuss and [diagram](#) what pure and defiled religions are. The first scripture I reference is James 1:27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. – James 1:27

In the sermon, I define "pure religion"...

"Most skip right over the first part of this to focus on what comes after the comma, but notice what the commentaries say..."

[**Pure religion**] The phrase 'pure religion' means that which is genuine and sincere, or which is free from any improper mixture."

Pure religion is one devoid of improper mixture or impure elements. Sin is impure in ANY form. Take a good intention and mix it with a lie, even a so-called little white lie and you have an improper mixture. Your religion is defiled. Anyone with defiled religion will not be invited into the Kingdom of God. God's Word gives specific instruction on how to have pure religion.

The "Christ" Argument - good theology

Everything about the Salvation Process is developing the mind and character of Christ. We are to function like Christ. Therefore, in our relationship with brothers and sisters in the faith, we are to treat them the way we would Christ, Himself. Further, we are to do all things as if Christ is looking over our shoulder, scrutinizing every word and every deed.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. –Col 3:17

So the question is, if you were at services and Christ walked into the room in a hideous-looking robe [*God forbid*], would you tell Him the "little white lie"? Would you tell Him that He looked great in the robe?

The "I can read your mind" Argument - good theology

Taking the example of Christ a step further, we know that if Christ were on Earth and attending with the congregations that, as God, He could easily read your mind. He would see your reasoning, intent and the formation of your words even before you uttered them. Therefore, your little white lie about the robe would fail with Him. He would know you were lying. Shouldn't we treat our brothers and sisters the same way? That is, shouldn't we speak the truth as if the other person could see the reasoning, intent and motive for what we utter to them?

One who speaks the truth to the brethren would not have to be concerned with the fact that everyone in the congregation could read His mind. One thing is clear: Christ is constantly monitoring the reasoning, intent and motives of your mind.

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. –Matt 25:40

So what DO I say to the lady in the ugly-looking dress?

Long before I was introduced to the Bible, I learned an adage at the knee of my mother, **"If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all."** Good words for the firstfruit to live by. However, this is just the beginning. I will use the example of the lady in the ugly-looking dress to make my point.

The mission and Christian duty is at least two-fold. The first is immediate and the second more long-term. If it is your nature to greet the brethren with a compliment, then pick something you can be sincere about. Rather than offering a lie about the dress, look elsewhere for placement of the compliment. Some potential targets would be her hair, purse, shoes or her general radiance. If you do not readily see something to compliment, simply express gladness and joy in seeing her. Ask her about her week. Make queries as to her health, the home front or her job. Say anything, but let it be truth.

The more long term element to be addressed is the ugly-looking dress. Our mission orders come from 1 Corinthians 10...

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. –1 Cor 10:24

The word "wealth" here---and I am taking this from a commentary--- is "welfare" and is referring to anything and everything that pertains to his or her comfort, usefulness, happiness, or salvation-The sentiment of the

whole is, "when a man is bound and directed by no positive law, his grand rule should be the comfort and salvation of others." This is a simple rule; it might be easily applied; and this would be a sort of balance wheel in the various actions and plans of the world. If every man would adopt this rule, he could not be in much danger of going wrong; he would be certain that he would not live in vain. *(from Barnes' Notes)*

Therefore, rather than lying and telling her the dress is fine, which would ultimately be vain, we seek to improve her situation. Examples would be:

- 1] taking her aside and giving her encouragement in dressing better.
- 2] seeking out her close friend or a family member and having them give the encouragement.
- 3] buying the lady a new dress via a friend or family member. Especially if the lady lacks the means to buy a dress.
- 4] conducting a workshop on "Dressing for Success."
- 5] getting the lady information on dress--books and DVDs on the subject.

These could be done singularly or in combination. If the congregation is taught in the ways of seeking the other member's welfare, it would be conditioned to frank and sincere communication. The white lie is not sincere communication. It is a lie.

These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates. –Zech 8:16

What happens to liars?

The final destination for liars is made clear in the Word of God:

For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. –1 Tim 1:10

For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. –Rev 22:15

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. –Rev 21:8

I do not see a caveat here giving a free pass to lies that are coupled with good intent. God hates lies so much that He lists them with sorcerers, murderers and idolaters. They all receive the second death. I personally do not wish to be anywhere near a sin that receives the second death.

Let it not be published in any paper that God's church is allowed to lie in any form. Notice this article we posted the week I wrote this:

Hamas: We're Allowed to Lie

Israel National News

Hamas leaders spoke to the Arabic language Ash-Sharq il-Awsat newspaper recently and explained that as Muslims, they are allowed to lie. In an interview printed on Thursday, senior Hamas terrorists explained, "A

Muslim is permitted to say things that oppose his beliefs in order to prevent damages or to be saved from death.”

This approach, known in Arabic as “taqiyya,” was behind several Hamas leaders’ recent public expression of support for Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, they explained. Senior Hamas terrorists in Samaria, who were recently released from jail, publicly expressed disapproval with the Hamas takeover of Gaza and said they supported the PA forces. The sources quoted in Ash-Sharq il-Awsat explained that the Samaritan terrorists’ announcement was not a sign of dissent within Hamas ranks, but rather a permitted use of “taqiyya” to deceive Abbas and avoid prison sentences.

[Source](#)

I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love. –Ps 119:163

A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame. –Prov 13:5