

Satan, his wife, or Peter for his lie, although Satan was the biggest cheerleader in support for him.

TRUTH 4: Lying is a Sin (Acts 5:3-4). Renaming sins is common among sinners. Some call lying a misunderstanding, an essential tool for the job (i.e. salesman), a beneficial statement, or a “small” thing. One said, “We need to teach our children to lie. To lie judicially, and mercifully, but never maliciously.”[7] This author cannot think of ONE LIE that would be dormant from the malicious category. Peter does not sugarcoat the couple’s actions. Lying is a part of the sinful man (Colossians 3:9) and to lie places one on God’s abominable list (Proverbs 6:16-17; 12:22).

While lying is defined as an intentional untruth, what are some examples of lies in the common world?

- *Unfair business deals* (Proverbs 11:1).
- *False teaching* (Proverbs 30:6).
- *Exaggeration* (Numbers 13:33-34).
- *Slander* (Proverbs 10:18).
- *Deceiving oneself* (Galatians 6:3; James 1:22, 27; 1 John 1:8).
- *Breaking promises* (James 5:12).

Revelation 21:8 says that, “**ALL** liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Emp. mine, NO). Hell does not differentiate between white lies and black lies, small lies or big lies. To God, all lies are the same.

TRUTH 5: Many Consequences Surround Lying (Acts 5:5-6, 9-10). All sin brings consequences and lying brings both present day troubles and future day despair. Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives because of their lies. What consequences surround lying today?

Personal consequences. Lying hurts one on the inside. The moment one lies, he opens up himself to a number of afflictions with which he will have to deal. Some continually lie until they find themselves lying compulsively. Many physical problems arise from a life of deceit.[8]

Hell (Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15). Liars will

eventually be found out (Proverbs 19:5, 9). “The story is told of four high school boys who couldn’t resist the temptation to skip morning classes. Each had been smitten with a bad case of spring fever. After lunch they showed up at school and reported to the teacher that their car had a flat tire. Much to their relief, she smiled and said, ‘Well, you missed a quiz this morning, so take your seats and get out a pencil and paper.’ Still smiling, she waited as they settled down and got ready for her questions. Then she said, ‘First question--which tire was flat?’”[9]

Hurting others (Proverbs 25:18). Lying hurts others in many ways

- *Staining reputations.*
- *Physical problems* (1 Kings 13).
- *Trust issues.* Friedrich Nietzsche said, “What upsets me is not that you lied to me, but that from now on I can no longer believe you.”
- *Ruined relationships.*

Lying never helps, but it always hurts.

We do not want a reputation like the Cretians who were “always liars” (Titus 1:12). We do not want to be the person about whom it was asked, “how do I know he is lying?” Another responds: “His lips are moving.”[10] Are your lips moving in the wrong way (Colossians 3:9)? If so, speaking truth will help (Ephesians 4:25).

Endnotes

[1]<https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Lying/201418/>

[2]The Three quotes/statistics, come from:

<https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/lying-statistics>

[3]gbntv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Textual/19-Winton-Acts.pdf

[4]<https://apologeticspress.org/isnt-lying-permissible-in-certain-situations-5844/>

[5]Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome*, p. 53

[6]Tom Wacaster, *The Magnificence of Jesus*, Volume I, p. 370.

[7]Sermon from Steve Higginbotham who quoted the Reformer.

[8]See the following article:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pleased-meet-me/202001/the-truth-about-lying-and-what-it-does-the-body>

[9]<https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/l/lie.htm>

[10]Idea from: <https://fbcspur.org/liars-righteous-matthew-533-37/>

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Five Truths About Lying from a Lying Couple

Noah Olson

“A minister told his congregation, ‘Next week I plan to preach about the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I want you all to read Mark 17.’ The following Sunday, as he prepared to deliver his sermon, the minister asked for a show of hands. He wanted to know how many had read Mark 17. Every hand went up. The minister smiled and said, ‘Mark has only sixteen chapters. I will now proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying.’”[1] Austin O’Malley said, “A lie has no legs. It requires other lies to support it. Tell one lie and you are forced to tell others to back it up. Stretching the truth won’t make it last any longer. Those that think it permissible to tell white lies soon grow colorblind.” Another said, “Tell a lie once and all your truths become questionable.” Mark Twain claimed that If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.”

Lying has become a sinful norm in current culture today. Men lie compulsively, out of habit, or just when the situation demands it. Note a handful of statistics.

- “According to a study by the University of Massachusetts, 60% of people can't go 10 minutes without lying.”
- “A study by the University of Virginia found that people lie more often over the phone than face-to-face.”
- “Another study found that people lie more to strangers than to friends or family members.”[2]

Children may lie to their parents for fear of being caught in an act, men may lie to their bosses so they do not get fired, women may lie to their friends out of embarrassment, and friends may lie to one another to get out of something.

To lie is to tell a falsehood. The words “liars,” “lie,” or “lying” in Scripture come from the Greek word *pseudo* and Thayer says it means, “a lie...conscious and intentional falsehood...whatever is not what it seems to be...of perverse, impious, deceitful precepts.” Overall, to lie is to deliberately deceive another.

The text at hand is Acts 5. After witnessing others sell their lands and give their items (Acts 4:34-37),

Ananias and Sapphira desire to do the same. While they do sell, they keep back part of it all while claiming to bring all of it. Because of their lies, they both lost their lives. Ananias means God is gracious and Sapphira means beautiful. Bob Winton wrote, “They each wore a pleasant and beautiful name, but their actions and fate were ugly.”[3] God is serious about this tongue sin.

TRUTH 1: We Don’t Have to Lie, There are Other Alternatives (Acts 5:4). One of the many problems people have when sinning is thinking there is no alternative (i.e. they MUST sin). Peter; however, tells Ananias that his possession was his. He could have chosen to sell more or less. The problem was not in his selling, but in his deceiving.

Many try to justify lying. Maybe it is a boss who commands an employee to lie about a shipment, claiming it will be helpful for the company. Perhaps a student feels the need to lie on his test so that he can get a good grade. A mother in need of food may justify lying with “my children need to eat.” One said that we cannot let the ends justify the means (Proverbs 14:12; Romans 3:8). Instead, Ananias should have told the exact amount.

Instead of lying maybe we

- Give a more general answer.
- Be silent.
- Pulled attention elsewhere.[4]

It is better to tell the truth than a falsehood because a lie will only lead to more lies. While Ananias and Sapphira used lying as a crutch, our crutch should be the truth (Proverbs 8:7a).

TRUTH 2: Many Motives Precede Lying (Acts 5:1-2). Twice, Peter tells Ananias that his action was contrived in the heart. The couple’s first sin was not in their act but in their minds (Mark 7:21-22). John Ruskin said, “The essence of lying is in deception, not in words.” Lying is always preceded by certain motives like

- Embarrassment.
- Avoiding punishment.
- Pride.

- Social, physical, monetary, or educational benefits. One said that covetousness may have been their motive and they “probably wanted the same sort of benevolent reputation that attended Barnabas (Acts 4:37).”[5] They should have known that as riches fly away (Proverbs 23:5), so does lying (Proverbs 12:19). Lying comes from the inward man before it is manifested in the outward man. If we are not covetous, we will not lie to gain more. If not prideful, we will not lie out of embarrassment. If we have not done wrong, we will not lie to flee a situation. How do we fix lying? We fix our hearts.

TRUTH 3: Lying is from Satan (Acts 5:3). God is a God of truth (Isaiah 65:16; John 17:17) and it is impossible for God to tell a falsehood (Titus 1:2). If not from God, then lying must come from another source. Peter asks Ananias why Satan had filled his heart. While Satan enters many hearts (cf. Luke 22:3), he does not come in unless welcomed. While it was Ananias who truly made the decision to lie, the foundation of deceit came from the father of lies (John 8:44).

As serpents are sly and deceitful creatures, Moses records that the “serpent was...subtil” (Genesis 3:1; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3). The devil has been lying from the beginning. Sometimes he lies blatantly (Genesis 3:4), while other times the lie appears as a truth (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14). He has lied to men about happiness, deceived men into thinking sin is justifiable, and appeals to false truths to spread his agenda. He enjoys speaking against the truth and even used Scripture in an attempt to deceive Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan was truly the influencer in Ananias’ and Sapphira’s lying. He enticed them to lie to God! When we lie, we are speaking like the devil. Tom Wacaster said about the phrase “he speaketh of his own” in John 8:44, “this very aspect of the devil may give us some insight into the reason for his condemnation, namely that his lies arose from within, and not from any source outside of himself.”[6]

While lying does come from Satan, each person bears his own responsibility to resist the temptation to tell a falsehood (cf. James 4:7). Ananias could not blame