

Let's Put Away Lying

Introduction. Thousands of recent articles have revealed that New York Republican Representative George Santos lied about several aspects of his résumé. Among them, Santos stated that he graduated from Baruch College, although he never even attended Baruch. In fact, he holds no college degree. His work résumé listed Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, although he was never employed by either company. Santos furthermore lied about his Jewish heritage. He claimed to be a “proud American Jew” which he now has clarified that he is “Jew-ish”, rather than Jewish. As a result, The Republican Jewish Coalition has banned him from attending future RJC events. This past week he was in the news again for claiming his mother was in the World Trade Center on 9/11, but records showed she wasn't in the country.

Maybe the most egregious was lying about his marital status. He was once married to a woman. But now he's married to a man. In a recent apology for these misrepresentations, Santos referred to them as “embellishing my résumé”.

In an interview with Tulsi Gabbard on Fox News, Santos was pressed on his lack of integrity he admitted, “I made a mistake”. When she asked whether people could trust him in the future, Santos sought to justify his “mistake” saying, “Tulsi, I can say the same about the Democrats and the party. Look at Joe Biden. Joe Biden's been lying to the American people for forty years and he's the president of the United States. Democrats resoundingly support him”.

Our passage today is the simple, single verse of Ephesians 4:25. Our culture rationalizes lying by saying everybody lies. “Sure, I didn't tell the truth, but the other guy lies too”.

Consider the many euphemistic expressions we use to soften a lie: Embellishing; half-truth; pulling a fast one; polite prevarication; inventing facts; disingenuous; slightly dishonest; exaggerating; duplicitous; bamboozling someone; misstating; misleading; distorting facts; and, being economical with the truth.

All of these and others can be expressed in one simple word — lie. In their book *The Day America Told the Truth*, published over 30 years ago (1991), James Patterson and Peter Kim revealed some alarming statistics:

- 91% lie regularly, both at work and in their personal lives.
- 86% lie to their parents.
- 75% lie to their best friends.
- 73% lie to their siblings.
- 69% lie to their spouses.
- 50% feel free to call in sick to work when they are perfectly well.

I doubt that those numbers have improved substantially, if at all, in recent years. Lying is one of the most prevalent and damaging problems in the lives of not only the world, but Christians as well. It has become epidemic.

I. God's Attitude Toward Lying in the Old Testament

- A. God didn't excuse Abraham in Genesis 12:13.
 1. Abraham lied by omission.
 - a) Abraham told a half-truth.

- (1) Abraham and Sarah did share the same father, but they had different mothers (Genesis 20:12).
- (2) Yet, she was Abraham's wife.
- b) Abraham deceived the Pharaoh.
- 2. Abraham's lie demonstrated several facts about Abraham then:
 - a) His faith in God wasn't what it should've been (cp. Romans 4:16).
 - b) His respect for others wasn't what it should've been.
 - (1) He jeopardized the safety of Sarah.
 - (2) He jeopardized the lives of Pharaoh and his people (Genesis 12:17-18).
 - c) His value for himself wasn't what it should've been (Matthew 16:24-26).
- 3. Abraham's lie wasn't excused by God; in fact, God had to intervene to save everyone involved.
 - a) The situation didn't determine whether the lie was right or wrong; God's nature had already declared that lying was wrong.
 - b) What Abraham needed to do was repent (Genesis 13:3-4). God will forgive lying, but He won't condone it.
- B. Abraham lied by overt omission in Genesis 20:2-6.
 - 1. Abraham, a prophet of God, misled a very sincere man. On this occasion, Abimelech was more righteous than Abraham.
 - a) Abraham's lie put these people in danger.
 - b) Abimelech had a clear conscience and God knew his heart.
 - 2. Abraham's explanation didn't justify his lie (Genesis 20:11-13).
 - a) "I didn't think the fear of God was in this place".
 - b) "I only told a half-lie".
 - c) "I've told this story before".
 - 3. Abraham needed to repent to God and Abimelech (Genesis 20:17).
- C. Isaac lied overtly in Genesis 26:7.
 - 1. Isaac was walking in the footsteps of his father.
 - 2. The only difference was Isaac didn't have the half-truth that Abraham had.
 - 3. God condoned neither Abraham's nor Isaac's lies.
- D. God hates lying (Proverbs 6:17). And God's nature and Word will never change (Malachi 3:6).

II. God's Attitude Toward Lying in the New Testament

- A. As we've seen, God hates lying yet men lie to others (Genesis 27:24), to themselves (1 John 1:8), and to God (1 John 1:10).
 - 1. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus commented on honesty (Matthew 5:37).
 - a) Under the Law of Moses, a Jew was not to dishonor God by breaking any oath taken in God's name.
 - b) Under the Law of Christ, a person is not to dishonor God by any kind of deceit, dishonesty, or duplicity.
 - 2. God's Word tells the outcome of lying.
 - a) Temporally, lies destroy our lives (Proverbs 19:5).
 - b) Eternally, lies destroy our spiritual rest (Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15).

- B. Because God's nature and Word will never change (Malachi 3:6):
1. Man will never reach an intellectual zenith where God will excuse lying. Lying is wrong for parents, teachers, preachers, doctors, and politicians.
 2. Christians will never reach a spiritual zenith where God will excuse lying.
 - a) God's people are called to a higher standard. Our lives are to be controlled by truth. Because we belong to one another in Christ, we're to put off deceptive works of darkness.
 - b) Too often we lie to cover up something embarrassing or wrong. Maybe it's motivated by self-aggrandizement or spoken out of fear of people learning what we've done. Sometimes we lie to shirk personal responsibility. Or like Santos, we may lie for personal gain and professional advancement. Regardless, a lie is a lie. And it's sinful.
- C. Austin O'Malley wrote, "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 will not make it last any longer. Those that think it permissible to tell white lies soon grow colorblind".
- D. We don't have to be abrasive and unkind just to be people of truth. We can exhibit tact (Proverbs 15:1; 25:15; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:9).

Conclusion. Lies create conflict, raise suspicion, destroy trust, erode relationships, diminish reputations, wrong others, and alienate from God.

Let's not white-wash, minimize, or excuse lies. And remember that none of us are immune from this subtle, insidious sin. God won't ignore our lies; but He will forgive us if we repent. Live by the encouraging words of Paul and "speak truth" (Ephesians 4:25). God is a God of truth, and we should be people of truth. The obligation to speak truth is just as necessary for me as it is for you. This is a hard sermon for everyone, including me. Speak truth, follow truth, and obey truth — today!

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