

December 2002

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ARE THERE SOME SITUATIONS WHEN IT IS OK TO LIE?

Recently someone asked me if it is EVER acceptable before God for us to tell a lie? There are so many different situations and circumstances that life confronts us with, that maybe it is acceptable in some cases to lie? Or must we ALWAYS AND WITHOUT FAIL, under all circumstances, tell the truth?

What is the answer?

Before we look at what the Bible reveals on this question, I want to make quite clear where I am coming from.

CAN YOU IDENTIFY WITH THESE CIRCUMSTANCES?

For the past 30 years we have lived in various parts of South Africa. For the past almost 6 years we have lived here in Johannesburg, having previously also lived here for over 4 years. I myself also lived in Johannesburg in the 1950's and 60's for a period of 7 years. I don't believe that it is an exaggeration to say that Johannesburg is one of the "crime capitals" of the world. Crime is a major, major problem throughout this whole country.

Every week there are several bank robberies or "cash in transit heists", where 4 or 5 stolen cars are used to force an armoured vehicle carrying cash off the road with major shoot-outs. Murder is a huge problem, and features in most daily news broadcasts. Burglaries and robberies are commonplace. Car-hijackings are commonplace, daily occurrences.

One of the most serious crime problems faced in this country is the extremely high incidence of rape, with several baby girls under the age of one year having been raped in the past year. The problem is compounded by the rumour that was circulated amongst the largely illiterate rural populations that "sex with a virgin" is a cure for the AIDS disease, resulting in large numbers of girls being raped.

The rape problem is so bad that the government has launched a nationwide intensive anti-rape campaign in the newspapers, with public posters, and on radio and TV. In many cases burglars are not content to steal from a home; if they find a woman in the home, they will frequently also gang-rape her. Most rapes are never reported to the police. Of those that are reported, only a fraction end up in court. Last year 50,000 rape cases ended up being heard in South African courts with only a 7% conviction rate ... so in 46,500 of those cases the rapists walked away scot-free. (Statistics taken from a national current affairs broadcast aired today.) And the 3500 convictions represent only around 1% of all the rapes that are committed each year.

To give you some idea of the magnitude of the crime problem, the following is a partial list of crimes I am personally familiar with, where I personally know the victims.

- 1) Over the past 30 years our homes have been burgled and ransacked 4 times in 3 different parts of the country, with many things stolen from us in each case.
- 2) In the past couple of years criminals twice tried to steal our car by forcing a filed screwdriver into the lock of the driver's door. They didn't get the car open, but totally destroyed the lock in each case. My mother's car was also broken into on a different occasion.

3) A year ago a friend of ours was held up in his jewelry store for over an hour ... with a gun in his mouth for the entire period of time. The thieves totally cleaned out his store; and while he was not injured in the attack, he became sick from shock soon after this incident.

4) Within the past 2 months three friends of ours were involved in two separate car-hijackings. In the one incident the man was hit over the head with a gun, causing a head-wound, while his wife nearly had her finger bitten off by an assailant who wanted her ring. Her finger was bleeding. Their car was stolen, but later recovered. In the other incident our friend was knocked unconscious with a gun while his passengers were robbed.

[Comment: In today's Sunday newspaper, December 8, 2002, there is a very large headline that reads: "Shocking new crime trend hits the elderly: THUG BITES OFF GRAN'S GOLD RING", and the first sentence of the article reads: "Callous, well-dressed gangsters who prey on grannies living in the same road in Joburg have stooped to biting the wedding rings off their victims' fingers."]

5) About a year ago a young friend of ours was attacked at night by two unarmed men who tried to bite him to death, attempting to bite the blood vessels in his neck. He was robbed. His main concern later was the danger of AIDS, but he is fine now.

6) A young manager of a restaurant has been attacked 3 times in the past few years, the last time being less than 4 weeks ago. He was robbed, beaten and kicked in the ribs, with great financial losses in each incident.

7) Just over a year ago a friend of ours was attacked in a parking lot by someone with a hammer. Our friend was struck by a glancing blow to the head, which had been intended to kill our friend. The assailant then fled when help arrived.

8) Several years ago my step-aunt, at that time about 80 years of age, was brutally attacked and robbed. She survived the incident, but never really got over the shock and died less than a year later.

9) My step-father, who has been dead for some years now, had his business premises burgled repeatedly. In one case the thieves carried off a very heavy floor safe.

10) Another middle-aged friend was car-hijacked at night. At first the attackers discussed killing him, but later let him go in a remote area dressed in nothing but his underpants.

11) We live in a complex with 60 apartments, which has 24-hour security guards plus electronic access control to the in-building parking spaces for our cars. Yet in the past several years 2 cars were stolen right out of our building, with the thieves smashing the electronic gates.

12) All the apartment buildings around us also have 24-hour security guards. Yet in the past two years two elderly people in different apartment buildings around us have been murdered in their own apartments.

13) A few years ago a young man who owned an apartment in our building was repeatedly shot at point-blank range when he dropped off a passenger one night. He died.

14) About 15 years ago one man whom I had baptized, and whose pastor I still was at the time, was shot in the head. He miraculously recovered. About three years ago now he was shot again, and this time he died.

15) A few weeks ago our local shopping mall, about 300 yards from our building, was invaded by a

dozen armed criminals who indiscriminately robbed shops and shoppers before making their getaway.

16) Less than a week ago our local post office, located in the basement of that shopping mall, was held up and an undisclosed amount of money was stolen.

17) Another friend has been attacked and robbed on three occasions while walking home. In one case he was stabbed before he managed to run away.

18) A few years ago a church lady was shot and wounded in an attack on a farm. She survived.

19) A man I have played squash with was car-hijacked less than a year ago and given a karate kick to the face. He is lucky to still be alive, but he required over 3 months of repair surgery to his jaw and his teeth.

20) When we lived in Cape Town I paid my rental for the house to an agent at the end of every month. On one occasion I came to his offices about 60 minutes after he had been held up and all the cash had been stolen.

21) A young man in the Church (I was his pastor at the time) was brutally stabbed repeatedly and slashed across the face with something like a sickle, or at least a very curved blade, by attackers who stole nothing more than his US \$10 wristwatch (he had no money on him). He survived although his face was somewhat mutilated.

22) About three weeks ago, my mother's neighbour's son, a chemist whom I have met, was shot in the head by attackers. He is in hospital.

23) A little over a year ago a woman who was eight-an-one-half months pregnant was raped by burglars just a few suburbs down the road from us. She gave birth to a baby two weeks later. The burglars and rapists were later caught and identified, but got off on a technicality and laughed in the woman's face as they walked free out of court.

Need I go on ...?

These are all just cases of crime that I am PERSONALLY familiar with (except for the last case, where I do not know the woman personally). Probably most people in this country could cite a dozen or more cases of criminal activity that they are familiar with. Crime is an everyday occurrence in the lives of vast numbers of people here, including members of God's Church. I have taken the time to enumerate these things to make very clear that THE QUESTIONS I am going to present are REAL. They are not academic or hypothetical. They are questions that any number of people in this country could be facing on any given day.

[While that is another subject altogether, it goes without saying that asking God for His protection on a daily basis is one of the high priorities in our prayers here.]

QUESTIONS CRIMINALS ASK THEIR VICTIMS?

Okay, so crime is a major problem here. But it doesn't stop there. In very many cases THE CRIMINALS ask their victims questions, to extract further information. When they are unhappy with the answers they receive, they brutally beat or kick their victims. To keep silent or to reply with: "I am not going to tell you that" would probably result in being kicked to death. The victims must give SOME answer.

So the question is: When YOUR ATTACKERS ask for specific information to harm you or other people

even more, either physically or financially ... DO YOU TELL THEM THE TRUTH OR DO YOU COVER UP THE TRUTH WITH A LIE?

What would God expect you to do?

Consider these situations and questions:

1) You have been hit over the head with a gun by burglars, and you are lying on the floor of your living room, bleeding profusely from your head-wound. The burglars ask you:

- WHERE ARE YOUR CREDIT CARDS?
- WHAT ARE THE "PIN" NUMBERS FOR YOUR CREDIT CARDS?
- HAVE YOU GOT ANY MORE MONEY HIDDEN HERE IN THE HOUSE?
- DO YOU HAVE A HIDDEN SAFE SOMEWHERE?
- WHAT IS THE COMBINATION FOR YOUR SAFE?
- WHERE HAVE YOU HIDDEN YOUR CELL PHONE?
- WHERE HAVE YOU HIDDEN YOUR GUN?
- WHERE HAVE YOU HIDDEN YOUR WIFE'S JEWELRY?
- WHAT IS THE PASSWORD FOR YOUR COMPUTER?
- WHEN WILL YOUR WIFE / HUSBAND / CHILDREN RETURN?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER VALUABLES ... GOLD COINS, etc.?

You get the idea? They want information so that they can steal MORE from you. Do you feel that God requires you to tell these criminals THE TRUTH?

2) You are a woman alone at home at night with your two-year-old daughter sleeping in another part of the house. You wake up with a gang of burglars standing in front of you intent on raping you. They point a gun at your head and tell you to take off your nightgown.

A) The burglars ask: IS THERE ANYONE ELSE IN THE HOUSE? You are very much aware of the fact that quite a number of two-year-old girls have been raped in this country. So do you tell the rapists THE TRUTH, that your two-year-old girl is sleeping in another room? Or do you lie and try to cover up your daughter's presence in the house?

B) Would you plead with these criminals not to rape you by saying that you are menstruating or by saying that they would catch a venereal disease if they had sex with you?

[Comment: Some years ago the friend of a lady in the Church here narrowly escaped being raped by intruders into her house in the middle of the day, when she said that she was menstruating and pleaded with her attackers not to rape her. She was lying. Was it wrong before God for her to escape being raped by lying in this way?]

3) You are a cashier at a bank that is being held up by a gang of robbers. You manage to discreetly press the SILENT alarm button under your counter. Then one of the robbers points his gun at you and asks: "Did you just press the alarm button?" You know the man is likely to do something irrational, and in anger might very well pull the trigger. So do you tell him the truth, or do you lie and say "no"?

4) You are car-hijacked at night. Your attackers take everything ... your money, credit cards, house keys, car keys, etc.. They then ask you: "Where do you live? What is your exact address?" You realize that they now have your house keys, and if they kill you, then they can burgle your house at leisure, perhaps even murdering the rest of your family that is at your home. So do you tell the truth and give them your correct address, or do you lie and give them a totally false address?

The above situations are real for far too many people in this country. So the question for us as Christians is: Would GOD expect us to answer criminals in these situations TRUTHFULLY or would God approve of us deceiving such criminals by telling them lies?

I ask this because the person who had asked me the question at the start of this article, and who himself is the victim of a recent violent crime, mentioned to me that he had read a publication, published by one of the churches of God, which states that UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES is it ever right before God to tell a lie. And it worried this person because after hitting him with a gun, the criminals had asked HIM some of these very questions ... to try to steal even more from him.

Is this statement correct? If it is, then you would be forced to give rapists the information about where your little girl is hiding, you would be forced to give robbers the information about your private banking details that they ask you for, you would be forced to give intruders the information about how to inactivate certain alarms that they ask for. In short, you would be FORCED to truthfully give armed criminals the information they ask for.

So what is the truth here? What does God expect from us? Let's start off by looking at the most basic Scriptures on this subject, the ten commandments.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMANDMENTS

We understand that the ten commandments are really ten statements of principles, which are larger than the "letter of the law". Jesus Christ made clear in Matthew 22:37-40 that the ten commandments are nothing more than AN EXPANSION of the two great commandments ... to love God above all else, and to love your neighbour as yourself. The first four commandments show us HOW to love God, and the last six commandments show us HOW to love our fellow man.

Thus: we show LOVE to our neighbour by ... honouring our parents, not killing our neighbour, not committing adultery with his wife, not stealing from him, not bearing false witness against him, and not even coveting anything that belongs to him.

For anyone who insists that we must UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES always tell the truth, it would mean that someone who is faced with the situations and questions I presented above would ...

A) Be showing LOVE to a rapist by revealing where her little two-year-old daughter is hiding.

B) Be showing LOVE to the car-hijacker by truthfully answering his question about how to deactivate the satellite tracking device installed in his car.

C) Be showing LOVE to the gangster who has knocked him down by truthfully answering his questions about how to access his private bank accounts.

D) Be showing LOVE to the criminal who has attacked him and stolen his house keys by truthfully answering his questions about where he lives, who is currently in the house, where in the house valuables are hidden, etc..

E) Be VERY DISHONEST INDEED to claim that she was currently menstruating, if she was in fact not menstruating at all, simply because she wanted to avoid being raped by some depraved intruder.

F) Be showing LOVE to a crazed bank robber by, in response to his question, honestly admitting to just having pressed the silent alarm button.

G) Be showing LOVE to the burglar who has asked about hidden valuables or a hidden safe, etc., by honestly showing the burglar where the valuables and the safe are hidden and how to open the safe.

The commandments were given by God to teach us how to show love to our neighbour, and IF God really expects us to only speak the truth UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, then giving the criminals TRUTHFUL answers in all of the above situations would be "an expression of love" towards those criminals.

But is that what God really expects? We'll look at this in a moment.

But first let's understand something about the commandments.

Most of the commandments are all-encompassing, meaning that they apply to ALL situations. Thus:

- THE 1ST COMMAND "to have no other gods before the true God" applies to ALL forms of idolatry.
- THE 2ND COMMAND "to not make ANY graven image" also applies to ALL forms of "images" that are used for religious purposes.
- THE 3RD COMMAND "to not take God's name in vain" covers ALL possible ways of misusing God's name.
- THE 4TH COMMAND "to keep the Sabbath holy" covers the Sabbath completely.
- THE 5TH COMMAND "to honour our parents" covers our relationship with our parents.
- THE 6TH COMMAND "to not kill" addresses the whole subject of killing.
- THE 7TH COMMAND "to not commit adultery" protects the marriage completely from any consensual sexual intrusions by a third party.
- THE 8TH COMMAND "to not steal" covers all forms of stealing.
- THE 10TH COMMAND "to not covet any thing that is our neighbour's" covers the whole subject of coveting anything belonging to our neighbour.

But now notice a difference with the one command we left out.

- THE 9TH COMMAND "to not bear false witness against your neighbour" DOES NOT COVER THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF "LYING"!

The 9th commandment really focusses on A VERY SPECIFIC AREA of lying ... the area of getting

someone who is innocent into trouble by telling a lie.

Now consider:

God kept the 6th, 7th and 8th commandments very simple and direct: don't kill, commit adultery, or steal.

WHY did God not keep the 9th commandment EQUALLY SIMPLE by saying: don't lie?

WHY did God focus the 9th commandment onto a specific area of lying ... that being the area of lying in order TO GET AN INNOCENT PERSON INTO TROUBLE?

Yes, God certainly wants us to apply THE PRINCIPLES that underlie (no pun intended) all of the commandments to far more situations than those spelled out by the letter of the law. That is made very clear by Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 5, where He showed, for example, that the 6th commandment covers not only literally killing a person, but it also covers hostile emotions and attitudes towards someone (verses 21-22).

But WHY didn't God keep the 9th commandment as simple as the 6th, 7th and 8th? WHY did God address one specific area of lying in the 9th commandment? The 6th, 7th and 8th commandments had already set the precedent of being broad, general statements. WHY did God follow the very broad statement of "don't steal" with the, by comparison, rather limited statement of "don't bear false witness AGAINST your neighbour"? This limited statement obviously did NOT cover many forms of lying which don't involve getting a neighbour into trouble by lying about him.

I think we should recognize that there must be a clear reason why God did not make the 9th commandment as general a statement as the preceding three commandments. There must be a reason as to why God focussed this commandment on "not getting someone else unfairly into trouble", rather than focussing the commandment on ALL forms of lying by stating "you shall not lie". It is quite clear that WE OURSELVES almost automatically read Exodus 20:16 as if it did say "you shall not lie", yet God very specifically narrowed this commandment down.

Note also that God chose to use the words "FALSE WITNESS" rather than the simpler concept of "lying". A "false witness" is by definition ALWAYS aimed AGAINST someone. "Lying", on the other hand, is a far broader concept than "false witness".

So instead of reaching any kind of conclusion at this stage as to what exactly is covered by the 9th commandment, let's reserve our judgment until later when we have looked at more information that also has a bearing on this subject.

Let's now look at a concept that is mentioned by the Apostle Paul.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO USE GOD'S LAWS "UNLAWFULLY"?

Have you ever thought about this statement by the Apostle Paul?

But we know that the law *is* good, IF A MAN USE IT LAWFULLY; (1 Timothy 1:8 AV)

After his introduction, this is one of the first statements Paul made to Timothy. WHY did Paul say this? Is it possible to actually use God's law UNLAWFULLY, or in a way that is in fact CONTRARY TO THE LAW?

Yes, it is most assuredly possible to use the laws of God unlawfully!

And the corollary to 1 Timothy 1:8 is equally true ... if a man uses God's laws UNLAWFULLY, then the laws are "NOT GOOD" in the effect they achieve, because God never intended for His laws to be used "unlawfully". If God's laws are used "unlawfully" they achieve results that God never intended to be achieved.

I suspect that this is something many people have never really understood. Yet it, the idea that God's laws can indeed be used unlawfully, was a basic concept that Paul wanted to get across to Timothy. So let's carefully examine this question.

Paul himself had been a very zealous Pharisee before his conversion. And the Pharisees were notorious for using God's laws unlawfully! Paul knew this from firsthand experience. Notice the context of Paul's statement.

NOW THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT IS CHARITY out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: (1 Timothy 1:5 AV)

After in the previous verse warning Timothy to avoid religious arguments, Paul in this verse spells out THE PURPOSE for all of God's commandments. The word translated "end" really means: aim, purpose, intent, goal. Paul is saying that "THE AIM AND INTENT of God's commandments is to achieve godly love". And this is to be achieved with honest and upright intentions and a clear and sincere conscience.

This should be a Scripture all of us in God's Church have firmly etched into our minds, because this verse defines THE PARAMETERS within which we are to apply all of God's laws to every situation in our daily lives!

So let's understand this:

WHENEVER ANY OF GOD'S LAWS ARE USED IN AN ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING THAT IS IN OPPOSITION TO GODLY LOVE, ANYTHING THAT IS IN OPPOSITION TO A PURE HEART AND TO A CLEAR CONSCIENCE ... THEN THOSE LAWS ARE BEING USED "UNLAWFULLY"!

God's laws are only being used lawfully if their use is fully compatible with the aim and the intent that God determined for those laws to start with. The laws are never an end in themselves, and the letter of the law can NEVER be used to achieve a result that is in conflict with the basic intent that God established for the law.

Let's continue with Paul's comments.

From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; (1 Timothy 1:6 AV)

What is it that some had "swerved away from"? They had swerved away from THE ENTIRE PREMISE Paul had presented in the previous verse. Yes, they had swerved away from "faith unfeigned", and from "a good conscience" and from "a pure heart". And they had most certainly also swerved away from THE VERY AIM AND PURPOSE OF GOD'S LAWS! That is precisely WHY Paul makes the statement we have already looked at in verse 8.

Let's continue.

Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.
(1 Timothy 1:7 AV)

So here were men who desired to be ministers. They wanted to be TEACHERS of the law of God ...
AND THEY DIDN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THE MOST BASIC PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE LAW!

The next statement Paul makes explains this basic lack of those who desired to be "teachers of the law".
As Paul said ...

BUT we know that the law *is* good, IF a man use it lawfully; (1 Timothy 1:8 AV)

The word "but" is an adversative conjunction ... it introduces a contrast or a conflict. The word "but" tells us that the people in the previous verse did NOT do what Paul is explaining in this verse. The word "but" tells us that those people were using God's laws in ways that were NOT lawful.

So it is certainly possible to use God's laws "unlawfully", in ways God never intended His laws to be used.

Paul continues his explanation ...

Knowing this, that THE LAW IS NOT MADE FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, (1 Timothy 1:9 AV, verse 10 continues this list)

Do we understand what Paul is saying here?

"A righteous man" is someone who has made God's laws the foundation of his whole way of life. They are the standard for how he conducts his life. The word translated as "made" literally means "laid down". God didn't lay down the law for those people who are sincerely trying to please God by the way they live; God laid down the law for those who are rebellious and lawless and profane and perverse.

So in trying to apply God's laws to any conflict situation between two or more people, the key is always to apply God's laws TO THE PARTY THAT IS WICKED AND REBELLIOUS AND PERVERSE! You don't focus on trying to apply God's laws to the party that is innocent and helpless and trying to live God's way of life. You always apply God's laws to the aggressor and not to the victim. That is what God intended!

Anyway, Paul has shown that the law can be used in ways that are NOT lawful. I mentioned earlier that the Pharisees were notorious for doing this. Let's look at some examples of how the Pharisees used God's laws unlawfully.

1) Attempting to apply the Sabbath command to Jesus Christ healing people is using the command unlawfully, because it was never God's intention that this command would restrict Christ from performing miracles of healing.

2) Attempting to use the Sabbath command to restrict the distance one might travel on the Sabbath (i.e. the concept of "a Sabbath day's journey") is using the command unlawfully, because it was never God's intention that this command would restrict how far one might walk or travel on the Sabbath.

3) Attempting to use the Sabbath command to prevent people from picking something to eat out of a field (e.g. some ears of wheat, a few pieces of fruit from a tree, a few carrots out of the ground, etc.) is using the command unlawfully, because it was never God's intention that this command would prevent people from picking a few pieces of fruit or a few ears of grain for immediate consumption.

4) Attempting to use the Sabbath command to prevent people from appropriately dealing with genuine emergencies is using the command unlawfully, because it was never God's intention that genuine emergencies be ignored on the Sabbath.

5) Attempting to use the Sabbath command to prevent people from making simple everyday movements (e.g. prevent people from pressing the buttons on an elevator, have toilet paper that has already been PRE-TORN to certain lengths, prohibiting people from switching on the lights or the stove or the heater or the air-conditioner, etc., all things that one can find in certain hotels in Israel today) is using the command unlawfully, because it was never God's intention that this command would be applied to such simple everyday movements.

6) Attempting to apply the first command against having other gods to Jesus Christ (as the Pharisees tried to do) is using the command unlawfully, because it was never God's intention that this command would be used against His Son, who is also God.

7) Attempting to justify not helping one's own destitute parents by appealing to making contributions to the Church (i.e. "It is corban", see Mark 7:10-13) is using the law unlawfully, because God never intended contributions to the Church to take the place of the need to help one's own parents.

In all of these examples the unlawful use of God's laws by the Pharisees led to achieving results that God NEVER intended to be achieved by the application of His laws!

8) Jesus Christ said in Matthew 15:3-6 that the Pharisees TRANSGRESSED the commandment of God by adhering to their traditions, thereby making the commandment of God "of none effect" (verse 6). It follows that EVERY JUSTIFICATION the Pharisees used to make God's laws "of none effect" amounted to using God's laws UNLAWFULLY, because it was never God's intention that any traditions would sideline the basic intent of some of His laws. Mark 7:13 adds that Jesus Christ here also said to them: "and MANY such like things do you", showing that they applied God's laws unlawfully to MANY situations.

Similarly, it is quite clear that God NEVER INTENDED the Sabbath command to be applied to the activities the priests were required to perform on the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:5).

So how did it happen that the Pharisees applied God's laws unlawfully? What was the problem?

THE REAL PROBLEM HERE

The real problem is that many people will only look at what the letter of the law says and then try to apply it as best as they can. That's what the Pharisees did. But they forget that BEFORE God ever gave "the letter of the law", God ALREADY had an intention and a purpose in mind, God ALREADY had formulated a goal that He wants to achieve.

The purpose and intent of the law most assuredly came BEFORE the letter of the law was formulated by God. EVERY COMMANDMENT God has given has "an aim or goal or purpose or specific intent", called "the end of the commandment" in the KJV in 1 Timothy 1:5. And that goal and purpose for the commandment is without question MORE IMPORTANT to God than "the letter of the law". You see, it is easy to misunderstand and also to misapply "the letter of the law", as witnessed by the way the

Pharisees misapplied the commandments. But once we correctly understand God's real INTENTIONS for the commandment, THEN we are far less likely to use the commandment "unlawfully", we are far less likely to attempt to apply the commandment to inappropriate situations.

That's what Jesus Christ and Paul explained.

Jesus Christ made clear that THE INTENT came before the commandments, by telling us that all ten can be summarized by the original two commandments of Matthew 22:37-40. And Paul made clear in 1.Timothy 1:5 that that intent is to produce godly love out of a pure heart and with a good conscience. So Paul spelled out the parameters within which all of the commandments are to be applied.

People who MISS this real intent for all of the commandments will misunderstand and misapply the commandments. Thus the Pharisees misunderstood and misapplied what God means by "work" in Exodus 20:10 ("in it you shall not do any work"). And when it came to helping financially needy parents, the Pharisees misapplied making financial contributions to the Church as a substitute to "honouring" one's parents.

Similarly, to insist that some woman, who has been raped, must truthfully reveal further information to her rapist is UTTERLY ABSURD!!! That totally misses the purpose and the intent of the command to "not bear false witness against one's neighbour". It is totally and completely wrong before God to insist that THE VICTIM of a crime somehow OWES IT TO THE CRIMINAL to only give answers that are completely truthful ... so that the criminal can then inflict further harm upon the victim or upon other people!

To those who insist that victims of crime are still bound to only speak the truth to the criminals, who may be threatening to kill them or their families, I would quote Jesus Christ's words ...

BUT IF YE HAD KNOWN WHAT *THIS* MEANETH, I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE, YE WOULD NOT HAVE CONDEMNED THE GUILTLESS. (Matthew 12:7 AV)

So, in order to correctly apply God's laws, it is absolutely vital that we clearly understand WHY God has given a specific law or commandment, WHAT God wants that commandment to achieve, and THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES which very obviously fall outside of the parameters for that commandment, where the letter of the law should not be applied. This last point applies especially to the 4th commandment and to the 9th commandment.

Before we look more closely at the 9th commandment, let's first look at some biblical examples.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

1) ABRAHAM, the father of the faithful: The account we want to look at is in Genesis chapter 20, after God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It is also after the incident where Abraham had gone to war with his 318 armed servants and defeated the army of the kings who had taken Lot and the people of Sodom captive. So Abraham was already a military leader in his own right. Here is what happened:

Sarah was a very beautiful woman, and Abraham was afraid that some people might want to kill him in order to take Sarah for themselves. So he had asked Sarah to do him a favour ...

And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This *is* thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; AT EVERY PLACE WHITHER WE

SHALL COME, SAY OF ME, HE IS MY BROTHER. (Genesis 20:13 AV)

So because Abraham had told Abimelech, the king of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister, and also Sarah herself had told Abimelech that Abraham was her brother ... therefore Abimelech took Sarah for his harem. God then came to Abimelech in a dream and threatened to take Abimelech's life unless he returned Sarah to Abraham.

Now the point is this:

It is true that Sarah was Abraham's half-sister (Genesis 20:12), but she was first and foremost his WIFE! And without question Abraham's INTENTION in presenting Sarah as his sister was TO DECEIVE people about the fact that she was also his wife. In pretending that Sarah was an unmarried woman, Abraham had in fact brought "A GREAT SIN" upon Abimelech's kingdom (Genesis 20:9). Abraham acknowledged that his motive had been to deceive people about his real relationship with Sarah (Genesis 20:11-13).

You are familiar with this account. According to the spiritual intent of the law Abraham and Sarah both lied (Genesis 20:5) because they IMPLIED that Sarah was unmarried. But they most emphatically did NOT "bear false witness against their neighbour". God reprimanded Abimelech, who had erred because he was given false information, but NOWHERE DOES GOD REPRIMAND EITHER ABRAHAM OR SARAH FOR HAVING MISLED ABIMELECH!

It is true that Abraham's deception here got Abimelech into very big trouble with God, but it had not been Abraham's motive to get anyone into trouble. His real motive had been a fear for his life. When Abraham said ...

And Abraham said, Because I thought, SURELY THE FEAR OF GOD IS NOT IN THIS PLACE; AND THEY WILL SLAY ME FOR MY WIFE'S SAKE. (Genesis 20:11 AV)

... Abraham in effect THOUGHT he was in the company of (potential) murderers. Is that really any different from the woman who is woken up by a gang of rapists, or from the car-hijack victim who has been knocked down with a gun, or the person who is threatened with a knife? Abraham only THOUGHT the people around him were potential murderers; the people in these examples I have presented KNOW they are being confronted by vicious criminals.

There is not the slightest hint of any kind that God in any way reprimanded Abraham for the deceptive information he had given about Sarah, not even a gentle chiding from God. No, on the contrary; Abraham had to pray for Abimelech and his family for God to heal them (Genesis 20:17).

Why would God possibly have any less compassion on the victim of a vicious crime, who gives false information to his or her attacker? THE MOTIVE for giving a criminal false information is not to get the criminal into undeserved trouble; the motive is to avoid being further taken advantage of by that criminal. Providing false information under such circumstances is not a matter of "bearing false witness" against anyone. I don't think that Abraham's statements about Sarah, when he felt that he was surrounded by potential murderers, really fall within the parameters of the 9th commandment.

One point we might just briefly consider:

Can you lie by telling the truth? Yes, you can. As an old Yiddish proverb states: "Truth is the safest lie". Or, as a British civil servant, Robert Armstrong, said in an Australian court while giving evidence on behalf of the British government: "It contains a misleading impression, not a lie. I WAS BEING ECONOMICAL WITH THE TRUTH."

Have you ever been "economical with the truth" in order to create an incorrect impression in the minds of some people? Abraham was certainly "economical with the truth" when he told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister.

Now we can't really play smart games with God. If we intentionally create a wrong impression in people's minds by being economical with the truth, then we are in fact resorting to "the safest form of lying". And it is the context that determines whether this intended deception is wrong before God or not.

For example:

When people ask us about things that really are none of their business, things they have no right to know, then it is perfectly acceptable to be economical with the truth. If a wrong impression is created in their minds about things that are not their business, that is their problem and not ours. We could equally well have said "mind your own business" in such situations, but being economical with the truth may often be less offensive.

On the other hand, if you are a key witness in a murder trial, and you are deliberately "economical with the truth", thereby deliberately creating a totally different impression from the one that would result if you told the WHOLE truth, a difference between one suspect looking guilty or innocent, then you are MOST CERTAINLY "bearing false witness against your neighbour" if you are only economical with the truth.

When people ask me for personal information that is simply none of their business, and information I certainly don't want them to have, then I feel very free to be as economical with the truth as was Abraham, hoping to avoid them deducing the correct personal information about my affairs that I really don't want them to have. I will do my best to economically present the truth in such a way that they are likely to either know nothing or else to draw a wrong conclusion. I am a strong believer in the right to privacy. Yes, in such a situation my intent is to "blur their knowledge" about my personal affairs, which I don't for one moment believe they have a right to know. And I don't believe that before God I am doing something wrong when I protect my privacy in this way. My intention in such circumstances is to be "as wise as a serpent" and at the same time "as harmless as a dove".

I believe it is important for us to recognize that God did not in any way record any disapproval of what Abraham and Sarah had done in Genesis chapter 20.

Let's move on.

2) SARAH: We saw that in Genesis chapter 20 she also was economical with the truth. But let's look at another occasion. In Genesis chapter 18 God had said to Abraham that Sarah would have a son. Sarah had stopped menstruating some years earlier, and when she heard this prediction she "laughed within herself" (Gen. 18:12) because it just seemed impossible to her. So Jesus Christ asked Abraham: "WHY did Sarah laugh?" (Verse 13). Then Sarah became afraid and denied that she had laughed. Notice ...

THEN SARAH DENIED, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. AND HE SAID, NAY; BUT THOU DIDST LAUGH. (Genesis 18:15 AV)

What did Sarah do? She lied! She was afraid and told a lie. Now how did Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament, react to this lie, which was also motivated by fear? Did He punish Sarah in some way?

No, God did not punish Sarah for this lie. God only gave her a very mild correction, nothing more than setting the record straight. Now again, while Sarah had told a lie, she had NOT "borne false witness against anybody". She had tried to cover up some personal conduct, for which she was now

embarrassed, but that was NOT "false witness against her neighbour". And I don't get the impression that God viewed this lie as a blotch against Sarah's character.

3) ISAAC: He too told the lie that his wife was his sister, and in this case it was without question a lie.

And the men of the place asked *him* of his wife; AND HE SAID, SHE *IS* MY SISTER: for he feared to say, *She is* my wife; lest, *said he*, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she *was* fair to look upon. (Genesis 26:7 AV)

So Isaac told exactly the same lie his father had told before him. And Rebekah was certainly not his half-sister, so that excuse falls away. After they had been there "a long while" king Abimelech (a different man from the one in Abraham's time) observed Isaac and Rebekah, and he correctly deduced that they were man and wife. And he then confronted Isaac as follows ...

And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she *is* thy wife: and how saidst thou, She *is* my sister? And ISAAC SAID UNTO HIM, BECAUSE I SAID, LEST I DIE FOR HER. (Genesis 26:9 AV)

Isaac had exactly the same motivation of fear for his life, as his father Abraham had had before him. And while God chose to record the lie from Isaac, again there is no condemnation of any kind recorded from God. It seems as if this lie didn't have any effect on Isaac's relationship with God. There is no response in any way from God to this lie.

4) JACOB: We know how Jacob lied to his father Isaac, pretending to be Esau. Now Jacob was certainly punished for this deception, as he himself was later also deceived by Laban, when Laban gave him Leah instead of Rachel to wife. So we don't need to examine this case any further.

5) DAVID: David was fleeing for his life from Saul, and came to the priest Ahimelech. The priest was afraid and asked David why he was alone, i.e. without a military contingent accompanying him. Then David said ...

And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, THE KING HATH COMMANDED ME A BUSINESS, AND HATH SAID UNTO ME, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such and such a place. (1 Samuel 21:2 AV)

David was clearly lying. King Saul had not given him any command of the kind. But he was also fleeing for his life. Now David is reprimanded by God for various sins. But THIS LIE is never mentioned by God, as being something against David's character. WHY NOT?

Now consider:

When David was king, i.e. head of state, he decided to "number Israel". He wanted to know exactly just how big an army he could assemble if the need ever arose. This is recorded as one of David's major sins for which 70,000 men died (2.Sam 24:15).

But when David told an obvious lie while fleeing for his life, nothing is said, and nothing appears to have been held against David for this lie. Again though, this lie did not involve "bearing false witness against his neighbour". Why did God not censure David for this lie?

6) SOLOMON: As soon as David died, David's son Adonijah conspired to take the throne away from Solomon, who was still only a teenager. Adonijah laid the groundwork for a conspiracy by getting the support of Joab, who had been the commander-in-chief of the army, and also of Abiathar the priest. This ensured a backing from the army and also from the chief religious leader in the nation.

While it may seem strange to our modern way of thinking, one of the ways of cementing a claim to someone else's position in those days was to also take their wives. Now when David was old his servants had found him a young woman named Abishag, whom they had put into David's bed, though David never did have sex with her (see 1.Kings 1:1-4). So the third key component in Adonijah's conspiracy was to get David's last "wife" Abishag to be his own wife. With Abishag as his wife the people would more readily recognize his claim to the throne.

In 1.Kings chapter 2, in verse 11 David's reign is summarized, in verse 12 Solomon ascends to the throne, and in verse 13 Adonijah is already hatching his plot. Adonijah figured on Solomon's mother Bathsheba being rather naive and unlikely to see through his real intentions. But Adonijah also underestimated Solomon's discernment and understanding, and he figured that Solomon would hardly deny a request his own mother would make.

So in verse 15 Adonijah acknowledges to Bathsheba that all Israel had expected him to be "the heir apparent" to David. He then makes a show of accepting that Solomon was God's choice for king, and he just wants the LITTLE favour of being given David's last "wife" Abishag, a very pretty young woman, to wife.

Bathsheba is deceived by Adonijah's smooth talking and agrees to request king Solomon for Abishag on Adonijah's behalf. So Bathsheba goes to see her son Solomon. Solomon shows great respect for his mother (verse 19). Bathsheba then asks Solomon to agree to a request she has before she even makes the request. This is always a way of putting pressure on someone to give us what we want to have. Notice ...

Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; *I pray thee*, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, ASK ON, MY MOTHER: FOR I WILL NOT SAY THEE NAY. (1 Kings 2:20 AV)

So notice very carefully! Solomon has said VERY PLAINLY THAT HE WILL AGREE TO HIS MOTHER'S REQUEST!

Solomon has committed himself to fulfilling his mother's request before even hearing what that request actually is. Solomon has given his mother his word.

Then Bathsheba presents her request.

And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. (1 Kings 2:21 AV)

Solomon IMMEDIATELY recognized that Adonijah was plotting to overthrow him. Solomon immediately recognized the reason for WHY Adonijah wanted to have Abishag. Solomon also immediately recognized that Adonijah had been able to fool his mother Bathsheba into believing that Adonijah wanted nothing more than a pretty young woman. And he immediately recognized who the other key figures in the plot were. Solomon was a wise man, even in his youth.

So did Solomon keep his word? Did Solomon fulfill his mother's request?

CERTAINLY NOT!

And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ASK FOR HIM THE KINGDOM ALSO; for he *is* mine elder brother; even for him, AND FOR ABIATHAR the priest, AND FOR JOAB the son of Zeruah. (1 Kings 2:22 AV)

Not only did Solomon without the slightest hesitation break his word to his mother, he even had Adonijah immediately put to death! Solomon then told Abiathar "you are WORTHY of death" (verse 26), but spared his life. Joab realized that the conspiracy was exposed and fled for his life, but was then also put to death for his part in the conspiracy.

In a sense we can say that Solomon lied when he told his mother that he would certainly grant her request. So why did Solomon not hesitate to break his word? The answer is simple! The request fell outside of ACCEPTABLE PARAMETERS! It was really a request for Solomon to self-destruct, because if Adonijah had indeed become king, he would surely have put Solomon to death to remove any possible comeback by Solomon. And that kind of request was simply not acceptable.

There ARE parameters beyond which certain requirements don't apply! Adonijah was a criminal who was planning to overthrow the king who had been selected by God ... and trying to USE someone's word, which had been given in good faith to fulfill a request, to get that person to self-destruct very clearly falls outside of acceptable parameters. Similarly, to expect a victim to honestly give his attackers truthful information so that the attackers can cause more damage and perhaps even kill the victim, falls equally clearly outside of acceptable parameters.

I see no problem of any kind in Solomon having broken his word to his mother. No way was Solomon bound to fulfill his mother's request.

7) ELISHA: The king of Syria sent his army to capture Elisha. So Elisha asked God to smite them all with blindness. Now they were clearly seeking to capture ELISHA himself. But Elisha said to them ...

And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not the way, neither *is* this the city: FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL BRING YOU TO THE MAN WHOM YE SEEK. BUT HE LED THEM TO SAMARIA. (2 Kings 6:19 AV)

Elisha here did not speak the truth! He had the intention of leading them into a trap! He led them right into the capital of the king of Israel ... hardly the person the Syrian army was looking for. When the king of Israel asked if he should kill them, Elisha actually saved their lives ... and after being given food and drink, the Syrian army was sent back home.

Again, notice the word "but" in this verse. It shows that Elisha did NOT do what he had said he would do ... he did the opposite.

Yes, it was a warlike situation. And Elisha told a lie to deceive this foreign army. However, Elisha's MOTIVE for telling this lie was to spare their lives! Instead of perhaps "calling fire down from heaven to destroy this army", Elisha devised a way that would result in them peacefully, and of their own volition, going back to their own land. Elisha was not bearing false witness against anybody. And there is not the slightest hint that God disapproved of Elisha's deception here ... Elisha's motive was without question "pure".

8) RAHAB: When the king of Jericho's soldiers came looking for the two Israelite spies, Rahab hid them on her roof ...

And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I WIST NOT WHENCE THEY WERE: And it came to pass *about the time* of shutting of the gate, WHEN IT WAS DARK, THAT THE MEN WENT OUT: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. (Joshua 2:4-5 AV)

Rahab very clearly lied to the king of Jericho. Her motivation was fear and a desire to be protected when the Israelites would destroy Jericho. She was protected and ended up marrying a man of the tribe of Judah called "Salma" in 1.Chronicles 2:11, and called "Salmon" in Matthew 1:4-5.

Now twice Rahab is praised in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11:31 and in James 2:25. Notice how James recorded this ...

Likewise also WAS NOT RAHAB THE HARLOT JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? (James 2:25 AV)

Rahab had lied about which way the two Israelite spies had (supposedly) gone ... they were in fact still lying on her roof at that time. And James here actually recommends Rahab for her lie ... she could only send the Israelite spies out "ANOTHER way" because she had lied to the soldiers to get them to look for the spies in the wrong places.

THE LIE Rahab used to protect the two spies, coupled with hiding the spies and later letting them down by a rope from her window, was her most prominent "work" to justify her.

Rahab is not in any way censured for the lie she told. There is no hint that God in any way disapproved of the lie she told. The lie is clearly recorded, but no disapproval of any kind is shown. Instead Rahab is presented to us as an example of faith.

Why is no disapproval shown for the lie that Rahab told?

9) Jael, WIFE OF HEBER THE KENITE: Barak had defeated the army of Sisera, and Sisera fled on foot for his life. So he came to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite (Judges 4:17). So Jael went out of her tent to meet Sisera and said the following ...

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, TURN IN, MY LORD, TURN IN TO ME; FEAR NOT. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. (Judges 4:18 AV)

Jael was hardly being honest here to "the criminal" Sisera. She very clearly intended to kill him, and this she did once he had fallen asleep, as we see in verse 21 ...

Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and SMOTE THE NAIL INTO HIS TEMPLES, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. SO HE DIED. (Judges 4:21 AV)

When Jael clearly intended to kill Sisera, then her statement "fear not" was certainly a lie. She very

effectively deceived the man, lulling him into a false sense of security. Yet Jael is not in any way reprimanded for this deception. If anything, it was predicted when Deborah told Barak ...

And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for THE LORD SHALL SELL SISERA INTO THE HAND OF A WOMAN. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. (Judges 4:9 AV)

So Deborah said that God would use a woman to kill Sisera. OBVIOUSLY God did not intend for Jael to walk out to Sisera and say: "Come in and relax so that I can kill you". OBVIOUSLY it would require some form of deception for Sisera to come to have a false sense of security around Jael.

Was it wrong before God for Jael to deceive Sisera? I don't believe so. I believe that God intended for Sisera to be killed by a woman.

10) PAUL: When Paul was being tried before a Jewish council, he realized that the council consisted of both, Pharisees and Sadducees. And to appeal to one part of that group Paul said:

But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I AM A PHARISEE, THE SON OF A PHARISEE: OF THE HOPE AND RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD I AM CALLED IN QUESTION. (Acts 23:6 AV)

While Paul was here not lying, he was certainly being "economical with the truth"! He had left the sect of the Pharisees many years before this incident. He no longer identified with the Pharisees at all, and his view of their teachings is made clear in verses like Titus 1:10, where he wrote: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and DECEIVERS, SPECIALLY THEY OF THE CIRCUMCISION".

This is not meant as a criticism of Paul. I believe it was an excellent strategy for Paul to use under the circumstances, and in the same circumstances I myself would not hesitate to use the exact same approach. I don't believe that it was in any way wrong for Paul to use this approach. But it is a fact that he was being "very economical with the truth". He WANTED the Pharisees in that council to view him as a fellow-Pharisee, even though he had rejected the Pharisee way-of-life already many years earlier (what was that about having left "the dung" behind? Philippians 3:8). He WANTED the Pharisees in that council to assume that he believed what they believed ... but they obviously did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as Paul did.

Paul had done nothing wrong. He was being tried unfairly. So he divided the opposition with his very economical use of the truth. I believe that was a good tactic.

So to summarize this section:

David lied, Isaac lied, Sarah lied, Rahab lied, Abraham and Paul were "economical with the truth", Elisha deliberately deceived an army, Jael used deception, and Solomon broke his word ... AND NONE OF THESE PEOPLE ARE IN ANY WAY REPRIMANDED OR CORRECTED FOR THE LIES AND DECEPTIONS THEY EMPLOYED!

Their lies and deceptions and "economy of truth" and breaking of their word did not really involve "bearing false witness against anybody". It seems to me that it is THE CONTEXT in which their lies and deception took place that determined how God viewed these particular lies and deceptions.

Let's now take a closer look at the commands and laws that apply to lying.

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

Let's look again at the 9th commandment.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. (Exodus 20:16 AV)

In the Hebrew text this command consists of the negative particle "lo" followed by the verb "anah" (which means "to answer, to respond, to testify"), and then three nouns ("rea" meaning "neighbour, friend, companion"; "ed" meaning "witness, testimony, evidence"; "sheqer" meaning "lie, deception, falsehood"). The noun "sheqer" is formed from the root verb "shaqar" which means "to lie", showing that God could very easily have worded the 9th commandment as "you shall not lie", in line with the format of the three preceding commandments. But God obviously chose not to do that.

Green's Literal Translation retains these three nouns in its translation of this verse as follows:

You shall not testify a witness of falsehood against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16 LIT)

But in the Hebrew text these three nouns are in a different order, the noun for "neighbour" actually coming ahead of the other two nouns. This shows that the focus is on "the neighbour" (or friend or companion).

So the Hebrew text literally translated, but with the word order retained, reads:

"Not you shall answer (or testify) against your friend (or neighbour or companion) a testimony (or witness) of deception (or falsehood or lies)."

In the Hebrew text the first focus is on WHO you testify against, and the second focus is on WHAT you testify against this particular person. But in the typical English text our focus is first on WHAT you testify, and only secondly on WHO you testify against. So the English text presents us with a slightly different focus than the Hebrew text. This focus of the Hebrew text is correctly retained in Young's Literal Translation (YLT) of 1898, which places the noun "neighbour" before "testimony of deception", or "false testimony" as follows ...

Thou dost not answer against thy neighbour a false testimony. (Exodus 20:16 YLT)

Commandments 6, 7 and 8 are stated in a universal format, implying they are to be applied to all people. Commandments 9 and 10 turn the focus specifically to "neighbour" or "friend". For the 10th commandment this is easy to understand: we are most likely to covet the things people around us have, our friends and neighbours. Until our modern era of mass communications people didn't even know what people in other parts of the world had, so it was difficult to covet the things which people didn't know others had.

But why did God turn the focus to "neighbour" or "friend" for the 9th commandment, rather than a direct universal statement like "you shall not lie"? Does this perhaps have something to do with WHY we don't see any condemnation expressed for the lies and deception employed by Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and David and Rahab and Elisha and Jael?

I understand the 9th commandment to be a specific prohibition of the type of lying that gets other people

into trouble, by claiming they did or said certain things, which they didn't do or say, and vice versa. It is in the context of providing evidence for or against someone.

HOWEVER, the 9th commandment is certainly not the only injunction against lying. Notice how God worded His commandments in Leviticus chapter 19.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (Leviticus 19:1 AV)

In verse 3 God addressed the 5th commandment, followed by the 4th commandment. In verse 4 God addressed the 1st and 2nd commandments. Then God digressed to certain things about sacrifices and also about harvesting. Then in verse 11 God addressed first the 8th commandment and then the 9th commandment. Notice ...

Ye shall not steal, NEITHER DEAL FALSELY, NEITHER LIE ONE TO ANOTHER. (Leviticus 19:11 AV)

So while the 9th commandment itself does not use the expression "you shall not lie", we DO have this clear and direct statement in Leviticus 19:11 of "don't lie one to another".

In this verse the Hebrew verb for "lie" ("shaqar") is used with the "piel stem". The "piel stem" expresses "intentional or intensive action". So this verse clearly states: Don't lie DELIBERATELY or INTENTIONALLY one to another".

Let's have a look at what the New Testament has to say about this subject of lying.

NEW TESTAMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The Greek verb that is translated as "lie" in the New Testament is "pseudomai". It is used 12 times in the whole NT, and is defined in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament as: to deceive, to cheat, to show oneself deceitful, to play false, to lie, to speak deliberate falsehoods.

The Greek noun for "a lie" is "pseudos", and this is used 9 times in the New Testament. "Pseudos" means: a lie, a conscious and intentional falsehood.

A basic NT Scripture in this regard is John 8:44 ...

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for HE IS A LIAR, AND THE FATHER OF IT. (John 8:44 AV)

Satan is "the father of lies". Satan inspires people to lie.

When Ananias and his wife Sapphira lied and tried to deceive the apostles as to how much money they had sold their possession for, Peter said to Ananias: "why has Satan filled your heart to lie ...?" (Acts 5:3). Peter pointed out that they could have kept all of the money if they had wanted to do that. They lied and they paid with their lives for that lie.

Paul made the statement "I lie not" in several of his epistles (Romans 9:1; 2.Cor. 11:31; Galatians 1:20; 1.Timothy 2:7). Paul preached the truth and false teachers were spreading lies. He was referring

specifically to the things that he taught in the churches.

Notice also the instructions Paul gave ...

Wherefore PUTTING AWAY LYING, speak every man truth WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR: for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25 AV)

LIE NOT ONE TO ANOTHER, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;
(Colossians 3:9 AV)

With instructions like this we should always keep in mind the audience that Paul was thinking of when he wrote all of his letters. With these two instructions Paul was clearly thinking of the members of the Church (in Ephesus, Colossae, etc.) interacting with one another, of how they would treat fellow members of the Church. I think we can safely assume that when Paul wrote these instructions, he was NOT thinking of how any of them might respond if they were unfairly accused by people outside of the Church, where they might be forced to defend themselves in an open court situation. When Paul wrote these verses, Paul was not thinking of how he himself had been "economical with the truth" when he was forced to appear before a council of Jewish leaders (Acts 23:6 again).

I do not mean to imply that Paul would have encouraged people to lie when dealing with outsiders. Not at all. But we should recognize that we need to use wisdom and discretion, and we need to discern which course of action is appropriate for which circumstances. Paul himself used a different approach when dealing with an unfair accusation in front of a civil council, when compared to his approach in dealing with church members. And we wouldn't use the same approach in responding to vicious criminals, who want to inflict more harm and damage upon us, as we would use in dealing with people in the Church.

Let's see if we can summarize this whole subject.

IN SUMMARY

1) We can encounter a number of different situations in regard to speaking to people, including:

A) Being called upon as a witness in a dispute, or even in legal proceedings.

B) Communicating with fellow members of God's Church.

C) Communicating of our own volition and initiative with outsiders, without duress.

D) Facing questions from people wanting to know things that are not their business, seeking information we wish to keep private and confidential, information we have no intention of divulging.

E) Having to defend ourselves against unfair and unfounded accusations.

F) We feel we are in a hostile environment with potential dangers for us.

G) Being faced with criminals who want to force us to give them information for the explicit purpose of further hurting us or other people, either physically or financially.

2) The 9th commandment in Exodus 20:16 is directed specifically at the matter of being a witness in a dispute regarding things that someone said or did, or didn't say or didn't do.

3) The principle of this commandment can certainly be extended to apply to the matter of lying in a general sense. We are not to lie.

4) The New Testament makes the same point, that we are not to lie.

5) However, it is quite clear that both, Abraham and the Apostle Paul, were rather "economical with the truth" in certain difficult situations. They deliberately presented just enough of the truth to cause their hearers to draw incorrect conclusions. I believe this is a perfectly acceptable way to deal with certain situations. Specifically, I believe this is an appropriate course of action when facing questions in a hostile environment, when facing questions the answers to which are of a personal nature and not any business of the people asking the questions, and when facing criminals who are out to harm us in some way by extracting further information from us ... being wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

6) It is equally clear that some of the people, who are held up as positive examples in the Bible, told outright lies. This includes David, Isaac and Rahab. These lies did not involve testifying against anyone. Nor did these lies in any way involve the people concerned in denying God or their religious convictions. They did involve dangerous situations for the people concerned ... David was fleeing for his life, Isaac believed people might kill him for his wife, and Rahab would certainly have been put to death for treason by the king of Jericho. What stands out with all these examples is that no censures of any kind are recorded for the people who told the lies, even when the lies themselves are carefully recorded for us. There is no indication that these lies adversely affected the relationships between these people and God.

7) A basic principle we should always keep in mind is this: simply because people ask us questions, that does not mean that they are therefore entitled to the answers. Some things are of a personal nature. Some things are not their business. Some things may be "trade secrets" pertaining to our profession or work circumstances. Some information might be detrimental to our own welfare if it got into the wrong hands (e.g. crooks getting hold of our credit card numbers, etc.). We are never obliged to divulge this type of information simply because "people have asked us for it".

8) For the instructions the Apostle Paul gave, he had in mind situations where we freely communicate with others, be they members of the Church or be they outsiders. When Paul wrote Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:9 he was certainly not thinking of someone being forced at gunpoint to divulge personal information to a brutal criminal.

9) However, Paul did explain that some people use the law of God in ways that are not lawful, in ways that work against the very intent of the law. In those cases the effect of this unlawful use of God's laws will also be "not good".

10) The key to knowing whether or not God's law is being used lawfully is that a lawful use of the law is ALWAYS aimed at achieving godly love, a genuine outgoing concern. ANY use of God's laws that is for any purpose other than the achievement of godly love is therefore UNLAWFUL.

11) In situations where we have to defend ourselves from unjustified accusations, we need to be sure to always present the whole truth. That is not a time to be "economical in the truth", as an incomplete picture can only be to our detriment if we are indeed innocent.

12) When CRIMINALS ask us for information to use against us and against our interests, and when consequently our very lives are at risk, then we are really in the same type of situations Abraham and David and Isaac and Rahab found themselves in. To require me under such circumstances to truthfully give these criminals the information they want is to apply God's laws UNLAWFULLY, because the very intent of the criminals is to use that information to break God's laws ... by stealing more from me or by inflicting more harm on members of my family. Under those conditions I see no point in telling the

criminals truthfully how to steal money out of my bank accounts or where to find my wife's jewelry or how to access my home without setting off an alarm, etc.. Under those circumstances I will have no compunctions about giving the criminals false information. And I will do this in the knowledge that God is on the side of the victims and not on the side of the criminals. To oblige criminals under such conditions by giving them the truth would lead to results being achieved that God NEVER INTENDED to be achieved by the application of His laws.

13) Specifically, I believe that the matter of criminals trying to extract personal information from us falls outside of the parameters God had in mind for the 9th commandment. Criminals can NEVER use the laws of God to work FOR them and AGAINST the people who are trying to live by God's laws. That would be a totally upside down situation.

14) Therefore I see no problem in lying to criminals who are threatening me in some way, because those criminals have no right to the information they are demanding from me. And I have no qualms about misleading such criminals.

15) This is not to be construed as approval for lying in normal circumstances. If the criminals were not threatening violence of some sort or other, I would tell them: "That's none of your business"; but if they are threatening to shoot or stab or rape someone, then I would lie where I felt it was in the victim's interest to hide the true information from the criminals.

I realize that we may sometimes have a problem in the Church with some people being "rather casual" with the truth, something that is a fairly common problem in the world around us. That is something I have not addressed in this article. That is a different subject. In this article my concern has been to deal with the situations many people in this country, including even some members of God's Church, face on a daily basis.

NEVER FEEL OBLIGED TO GIVE CRIMINALS INFORMATION THAT THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE, IF YOU CAN POSSIBLY DECEIVE THE CRIMINALS IN SOME WAY!

Frank W. Nelte