

## Why CHRISTIANS Lie 2-8-15 AM

Mouth disease is addressed in James 3. In fact, we could make the case that the entire letter of James is about controlling our mouth, as that is a central idea from beginning (James 1:13, 26) to end (James 5:9,12) of the book. How do we sin with our mouth? We can consider: Lying; Cursing; Vulgarity; Boasting; Evil Speaking (gossip, spiteful speech). The original sin seems to be identified in Scripture (John 8:44) as lying, with Satan being the Father of Lies.

In regards to lying, the Bible makes multiple commandments to us about not doing so (Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 4:25). We also see numerous passages that speak of the consequences of lying, including Ananias & Saphira (Acts 5:1-11) and the Cretans (Titus 1:12). Scripture is thorough in addressing the evil of lying. So here is the question: do Christians still lie? Why to Christians lie?

Sadly, we do lie. We lie about what we think about someone; we say "I love my brother", but we lie by our conduct (1 John 3:17). We lie about how we conduct ourselves in the world when we proclaim "I don't drink or use vulgarity" but then we do those very things. We miss services for our own desires, then tell ourselves and others "I am not feeling well". Why do Christians lie? Perhaps we should view what are called the seven steps of lying

### Seven Steps of Lying<sup>1</sup>

#### **1. You lie.**

A single lie can become a match that lights a bonfire. Unless we confess the truth about our lie, we are probably on our way to Level #2.

#### **2. You self-protect.**

That is, you lie about having lied. If you lie about one thing, it is likely you will lie about another. As Budziszewski puts it, "Lies are weaklings; they need bodyguards."<sup>2</sup>

#### **3. You develop a habit of lying.**

A liar at this level might, just out of habit, lie about something trivial for no benefit.

#### **4. You self-deceive.**

You now believe the lies that you are telling others. We can lie so effectively that we even lie to ourselves. We self-deceive. It's important to understand that self-deception is self-imposed. To be deceived by someone else or shielded from the full truth is not the same as self-deception. Self-deception is a vice. At Level #4, a person enters into denial. He stops looking at his internal moral compass and therefore ceases to feel guilty anymore.

#### **5. You rationalize.**

Now you not only believe the lies are not lies, you justify the lies as a positive good. Now the lying is not just part of normal life, but a virtue—it helps the company grow, it saves jobs, and so forth. This is the type of thinking that contributed to the scandals at Enron and WorldCom, and to the 2007 subprime housing debacle. A lot of times the lie is justified for the sake of the institution or some other larger good. Level #5 lies happen in the personal realm too: "You don't understand," says the adulteress. "My husband and I never had a real marriage. We have had 30 years of cohabitation and child-rearing, but nothing like what I have with my new lover. He and I are experiencing love for the very first time. This is not adultery. It is love."

#### **6. You develop your technique.**

The main technique is to compartmentalize. You start isolating statements, ignoring what was said in other contexts. Level #6 liars are often found in the upper echelons of bureaucracy. A Level #6 liar might smoothly move from one constituent to another, saying each of these things, swearing in each instance that he is telling the truth:

"This institution is going to stay true to our stated core values."

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Steps of Lying*. Sarah Sumner. [Christianity Today](#), May 20, 2011

<sup>2</sup> J. Budziszewski, *Liar Liar* (Issue of World Magazine: "The first straw," Aug. 28, 1999)

"Please don't pay attention to our stated core values; those were written by a committee who no longer works here."

"Core values reside in people. It really doesn't matter what is stated on paper."

"Don't let those stated values stop you from giving; it's long been public knowledge that I myself disagree with three or four of them."

**7. You see it as your duty to lie.**

Level #7 lying flips duty on its head, making lying mandatory. For example, in a dysfunctional family that operates at Level #7, grown siblings might kowtow to a parent for the sake of keeping dark family secrets hidden. In organizational life, Level #7 executives repeat corporate lies and say to their lieutenants, "Beware of self-anointed whistleblowers; they are critical and self-righteous." Level #7 liars stone the prophets (John 16:2).

So how do we overcome this problem? First, you must quit lying to yourself (1 John 1:8). Second, since lying maybe second nature, you must learn to say nothing (Proverbs 21:23). Only then can you create a new habit, the habit of honest speech (Matthew 5:37).