

Lie for Me

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Due to a great famine, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. While they are there, his sons meet a powerful Egyptian ruler. Little did they know at the time, but this powerful ruler was actually the brother they had thrown into a pit and sold as a slave.

Their long-lost brother, Joseph, recognized them, and purposefully hid his identity from them. After accusing his brothers of being spies, he puts Simeon in custody, and sends them home. He tells them they will get no more grain, nor see their brother again, unless they bring back with them their youngest brother, Benjamin. When Jacob learns of this condition, he is very upset with his sons and is reluctant to let Benjamin go with them to Egypt.

Of course, all this is a condensed account of Genesis 42:1-43:5. However, it gives us some necessary background information for the verse we really want to discuss. Here it is:

Then [Jacob] said, "Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had another brother?"

Genesis 43:6 (Clarification in Brackets Mine)

If it is not obvious what Jacob is saying, let me make it clear. He is rebuking his sons, and telling them it would have been better for them to lie to the ruler than to tell the truth about their brother. In his mind, had they lied, he would not be in this mess.

What a lesson for this father (or any parent) to teach their children! The great irony of this scene is that years earlier Jacob's sons had lied to him about what happened to Joseph, and did so to avoid painful consequences.

Interestingly, Jacob is following a pattern modeled by his father and grandfather. You will recall that Abram asked Sarai to lie for him (Gen. 12:11-13). In fact, he did it twice (Gen. 20:1-2). Isaac lied about Rebekah being his wife. In each instance the lie was for the protection of their lives. It is important we understand the reason for Abram and Isaac's lies. Many believe it is okay to lie if it is going to protect someone. Their lies, even though they were for the protection of life, were sinful, and in the case of Abram's lies, brought painful consequences to others.

Thinking a lie will make things better, or that by it we will avoid painful consequences is common thinking. However, lies have a tendency to actually complicate matters. When the lie is discovered, it only makes things worse.

Scripture clearly demonstrates that lying is a sin (Pr. 6:17,19; Eph. 4:25), Let us not be deceived into thinking that lying will somehow make things better. This kind of thinking and rationalization is a lie of the devil (John 8:44).