



Lies and More Lies: Can Lying be Eliminated?

Is lying common in today's world? Is untruthfulness a predictable aspect of human nature? Can believers in Christ always be truthful? God's Word is the basis for answering these questions since it is the totally sufficient authority to deal with all challenges of life and relationships.

THE PINNACLE OF TRUTH

Truth should be understood in every culture and country of the world and should be grounded in the fact that truth is reality from God's, not mankind's, perspective. As stated in another WordTruth article, "Truth reaches its pinnacle in revealing God's very essence and associated dealings with mankind. Truth of this magnitude is perfectly revealed only by God through Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the Holy Spirit."

See [*Truth—The Measurement for All Aspects of Life and Relationships*](#)

AN EXAMPLE OF TRUTHFULNESS

As indicated above, the pinnacle of truth is revealed by divine sources bringing everything to light that is necessary for mankind to understand and respond beneficially to matters of eternal significance. In the everyday life of human beings, truthfulness also involves bringing everything to light on specific subjects in order for correct evaluations and decisions to be made. (Review the biblical basis for this statement at [*Truth is Personal, Not Merely a Concept*](#)).

From a practical perspective, humans can know "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" about a person or situation only when *all* significant information relating to that person or situation is brought to light. If some information is purposefully omitted or inadvertently overlooked, then a false conclusion is easily reached. In other words, we may assume a conclusion to be true when it is actually false if all the significant information needed to reach the conclusion is *not* brought to light.

Coroners, statisticians, computer programmers, disease control specialists, tax accountants, and geological analysts realize that they cannot know the truth in their fields of expertise unless *everything* significant to a specific conclusion is brought to light. In spite of the vast differences between these professions, they all have a common trait of needing to know everything possible about whatever they evaluate in order to reach a reliable, complete conclusion.

Most of us realize, however, that daily life does not parallel the demanding exactness of the above professions. Instead, everyday life often proves to be a battlefield on which people do not bring everything to light and, as a result, routinely sacrifice truthfulness on the altar of expedient lies.

EXAMPLES OF LYING (NOT BRINGING EVERYTHING TO LIGHT)

Lying, sad to say, has become a standard way to communicate for many people. For example:

- Politicians touted potential benefits of specific legislation but failed to mention its detrimental possibilities. By not bringing everything to light, the politicians lied.
Political lies are so prevalent and expected that supposed political experts are hired to "spin" lies in an effort to make them appear truthful. See ["Spin"—The Acceptable Lie*](#)*
- A dad asked his teenage son, "How was school today?" The son answered, "Just a routine school day" but failed to mention that he got in a fight and spent an hour in detention. By not bringing everything to light, the son lied.
- An employee, late for work, called a fellow employee to "punch in" the time clock for him. By falsifying his start time, the tardy employee lied because everything was not brought to light with regard to that day's work schedule.
- A market vendor sold fresh produce accompanied by a sign that said "Prices are Firm—No Lower Price." The vendor, however, sold produce for a lower price to local government officials who came to his display stand. By selling at a lower price than his sign indicated, the vendor lied.
- A major business corporation feared that the company's stock market price would be significantly reduced if reported profit fell below last quarter's report. In a book-keeping maneuver, some of the expenses associated with the current quarter were

pushed into the next quarter so profit totals would not be reduced. By not bringing everything to light in the quarterly report, the company's financial disclosure was a lie.

- A news reporter accurately related portions of a news story that buttressed his ideology but failed to report other aspects of the same news story that contradicted his personal agenda. The news reporter lied since everything was not brought to light.
- A pastor announced to the church family that Thursday and Friday are days he devoted entirely to prayer and Bible study. He asked not to be disturbed except for emergencies. In reality, however, the pastor routinely took Friday afternoons off for family activities and personal recreation. Because of not bringing everything to light concerning Friday's schedule, the pastor lied.
- The financial report of a missions organization had an expense category in the president's financial section labeled "local evangelism." Expenses under that category, however, were actually restaurant meal costs for the president and his guests. By not bringing everything to light with regard to the organization's novel definition of "local evangelism," the financial report was a lie.
- A husband told his wife that he was going to get gas for the car but did not mention that he planned to talk awhile with an attractive young lady who works there. Since everything was not brought to light, the husband lied.
- In producing a job evaluation of an employee she didn't like, a supervisor emphasized the employee's negative traits but purposefully omitted admirable traits. The evaluation was a lie because all traits were not brought to light.
- Votes counted in a local election numbered 21,000 even though there were only 19,500 registered voters in the county. The election results were verified as "correct" with no explanation given for the 1,500 "extra" votes received. Even though the inflated election results were accepted, the election was actually a lie (incomplete, possible fraud) since everything was not brought to light.
- A young woman's resume indicated she had earned a B.A. degree from an accredited private college when she actually was 6 credit hours short of graduating. Her resume was a lie, since she failed to bring everything to light concerning her educational qualifications.

PURPOSEFUL OMISSION OF TRUTH CREATES A LIE

Those who lied in the above examples may not think of themselves as liars since what they said was factually accurate. They told part of the truth. By *purposefully* omitting other aspects of the "whole truth," however, they did not bring everything to light so what they communicated was actually false. Those who lie by purposefully omitting part of the whole truth may admit to telling a "little white lie" or somehow attempt to rationalize why they did not bring everything to light. Any excuse for untruthfulness, however, is a self-centered attempt to minimize the failure to be totally truthful.

THE REASONS BEHIND LYING

Have you ever thought about the problem of lying or wondered why it is so prevalent? Do you realize that the Bible reveals the basic reasons for untruthfulness?

To begin with, God's Word states that Satan has the world (its system or order) in his power (1 John 5:19). Satan is also described as the father of lies (John 8:44). Additionally, Scripture states that all who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation are in the grasp of this satanic overlord (Ephesians 2:1-3).

1 John 5:19, We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

John 8:44 (*Jesus speaking to the Pharisees*), You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in (*has nothing to do with*) the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies [*Italics added*].

Ephesians 2:1-3, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

In addition to the satanic origin of lying, each person is inclined toward deception because of the Fall.

Jeremiah 17:9, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Romans 1:18, 21, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth . . . ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Satan, the father of lies, and those under his power effortlessly gravitate to untruthfulness like a compass needle moves

toward the North Pole. Apart from a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, every person's natural inclination toward being untruthful dominates over the more desirable characteristic of truthfulness. (See [Telling the Truth is Naturally Impossible](#))

This does not mean that everyone is untruthful all the time. Both Christians and non-Christians can be truthful in certain situations. For example, any person who witnesses an accident or a crime can report to authorities what was observed. Any person with sight can describe a beautiful scene of nature or relate the antics of children playing in a park.

On the other hand, Christians and non-Christians may lie in other aspects of daily life, especially when they desire to maintain a perceived advantage or escape consequences for self-centered behavior.

It should be noted that believing in Christ does not instantaneously remove one's natural orientation toward untruthfulness. In fact, the initial sin impacting the first church in history involved a married couple's lie (Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11). Other first century Christians could also be tempted to lie and were instructed accordingly about this sinful inclination (Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9-10).

Ephesians 4:25, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Colossians 3:9-10, Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

The frequency and ease of deception (not bringing everything to light) in everyday life does not validate the supposed usefulness of falsehood but, instead, highlights everyone's natural orientation to sin. Lying is such a basic fact of human nature that one person observed, "All those who state that they never lie . . . just did it again."

CAN ANYONE COMPLETELY STOP LYING?

There has never been a person in all of history who has not lied except the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sinless in every dimension (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:14-15, 1 Peter 2:22).

2 Corinthians 5:21, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 4:14-15, Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin [*Underlining added*].

1 Peter 2:22, He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

It is undeniable that all of us have lied at one time or another. It is not so easy to admit that each of us still lie, especially when our lying is not as prevalent as it once was. Some of us, however, continue to lie consistently and are not aware of it. Others lie but excuse it and do nothing about it. Still others lie very infrequently but recognize its evil and confess it as sin. Our perceptions and responses to our own lying may differ, but there are two things about lying to which we can all agree. None of us appreciate others lying to us or about us.

Since untruthfulness is not an admirable character trait, is it possible for anyone to stop lying completely at a specific point in time and then, from that time on, *always* be truthful in every aspect of life? The answer to that question is "no" . . . with one possible exception. That exception deals with a person having only a short time to live. In that case, a terminally ill person may not have an opportunity to be untruthful in the last days of life and may not be absorbed in self-interest but, instead, possess sincere and loving concern for family and friends . . . and then die. Except for that possible end-of-life situation, no one can purposefully stop lying at a specific point in time and then be completely truthful from then on.

To reiterate, except for Jesus Christ, no person has *always* told the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" in every circumstance of life. If such a person did exist, that person could potentially be perfect in every way (James 3:2-8).

James 3:2-8, For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind,⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison [*Underlining added*].

CAN FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST STOP LYING COMPLETELY?

James 3:2-8 (above) sheds some light on why is it impossible, even for a wholehearted disciple of Christ, to stop lying in every dimension of life and then *always* be completely truthful (perfectly conform to Christ) for the rest of one's life. On the other hand, a believer in Christ can make significant and consistent progress toward total truthfulness by faithfully growing in Christ.

A person begins life in Christ by being born again spiritually (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3) as a gift of God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9). As a result of this spiritual birth, a believer receives divine salvation and eternal life and is no longer under God's condemnation (John 3:16-18).

John 3:3, Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

1 Peter 1:3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ephesians 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

John 3:16-18, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

[See Life's Most Important Decision](#)

As a new spiritual creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), a believer in Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17) and is able to obey God's Word (John 14:15, 1 John 2:5, 3:24). Thus, a believer is progressively transformed to greater Christ-likeness (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Philippians 3:12-14, 2 Peter 1:3-8).

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

John 14:16-17, And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

John 14:15, If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

1 John 2:5, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him.

1 John 3:24, Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Romans 12:1-2, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Corinthians 3:18, And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Philippians 3:12-14, Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

2 Peter 1:3-8, His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As believers continue to obey God's Word, their spiritual maturity will increase (Hebrews 5:14) even though they know that Christ-like perfection will not be fully realized until they see Jesus face to face (Philippians 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2).

Hebrews 5:14, But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Philippians 3:20-21, But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 John 3:2, Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

See [Abiding in God ... a Necessity for Christ-like Development](#)

In the process of growing in Christ, a believer faithfully continues to put off deceitful self-centered behavior that characterized life apart from Christ and, in its place, faithfully exhibits true Christ-like behavior.

Romans 6:6-7, We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Romans 6:12-13, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

MATURING BELIEVERS IN CHRIST CAN PUT ASIDE A PRACTICE OF LYING

Christ-like growth is a process that continues throughout life, so it should be evident that the potential to lie would *decrease* in proportion to increased Christ-likeness. Put another way: growing in Christ results in less lying like the devil. To assume, however, that a believer will be 100% truthful apart from achieving absolute perfection in Christ-likeness is a conclusion that Scripture does not support, as James 3:2-8 (printed earlier) indicates.

God's Word reveals that believers still have the potential to sin from time to time but, by God's grace, they remain clothed in the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:8-9) and are never cast out by their Savior (John 6:37).

2 Corinthians 5:21, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Philippians 3:8-9, Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

John 6:37, All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

Thankfully, a believer's righteousness before Almighty God is not based on personal works but, instead, relies on the finished work of Christ (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Hebrews 10:12-14, But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

See [Good Works are not Good Enough and do not Work](#)

Even if lying leads to sinful consequences that are severe, God's divine power and resources are sufficient to restore believers to spiritual wholeness and to guide them back to a renewed walk in Christ. God's written truth, the Bible, is sufficient to deal with every aspect of life and relationships, which obviously includes restoration from sinful behavior (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Believers also have the benefit of other believers who are divinely equipped to restore one another (Galatians 6:1-2) and, as necessary, the local body of believers (the church) can be involved in the restoration process as well (Matt. 18:15-17).

Galatians 6:1-2, Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Matthew 18:15-17, If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

See [Church Discipline and Restoration Process](#)

Believers soon learn that they are prone to lie or to commit any other sin when they take their eyes off Christ, fail to obey Scripture and, instead, focus on the detrimental things of this world (1 John 2:16).

1 John 2:16, For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

When a believer sins, however, divine fellowship can be restored when one truthfully confesses one’s own sin(s) to the Lord. (1 John 1:8 - 2:2).

1 John 1:8 - 2:2, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. ^{2:1} My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The Bible also instructs believers to confess sins to fellow believers for healing to take place (James 5:16). Confession means agreeing with God about sin(s), a definition that, in itself, emphasizes bringing everything to light. Additionally, believers realize the importance of confessing sins committed against anyone (believer or unbeliever) in order to foster peace in relationships (Romans 12:18).

James 5:16, Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Romans 12:18, If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

As the above passages indicate, overcoming sin is part of a believer’s glorious privilege of growing in Christ . . . and helping fellow believers do likewise. If a person could become perfect in this life, then truthfulness (bringing everything to light) at all times and in every situation would result. Until perfection is attained, however, complete truthfulness across every spectrum of life is impossible for anyone to attain. On the other hand, greater and greater Christ-likeness automatically lends itself to a believer exhibiting increasing truthfulness. As a result, a believer maintains a credible witness for Christ and brings ever-increasing glory to God.

In spite of personal failures, believers in Christ can rely on the same promise the Apostle Paul stated to the Philippian church almost 2,000 years ago: “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). In spite of our moral and spiritual weaknesses, our Heavenly Father’s compassion for His children is constant as Psalm 103:13-14 says, “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.”

As long as “lies, lies, and more lies” are a way of life for so many people, believers who consistently live and speak truthfully are like a “light on a hill” that illumines the spiritual darkness pressing in from every direction.

Matthew 5:13-16, You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (*emphasis added*)

With Christ as your focus of life (Philippians 1:21) and depending on Him (John 15:5), remind yourself, “Lower the lie and brighten the light.”

Philippians 1:21, For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

John 15:5, I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

When personal truth grows dim, hasten to confess your sin(s), ask for forgiveness, learn from mistakes, make changes, and keep looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Hebrews 12:1-2, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

No one will completely stop lying in this lifetime; but every believer maturing in Christ can minimize its occurrence significantly and, thus, bring greater honor to the Lord.