

# How Honest Am I?

Honesty is a fundamental Christian value. However, honesty and truth are not interpreted quite the same in all cultures. What is a lie to someone of North American Mennonite descent may not be understood as such in another country. In some cultures, the unspoken implication of an untruthful statement is not interpreted as the untruth. Even in our culture, we sometimes sacrifice direct honesty to avoid an uncomfortable situation or offense. In some situations, being too direct or open is considered unnecessarily harmful. Most people appreciate honesty but recoil from truth that is only hurtful and has no practical, redemptive value.

Some people are so trapped by the fear of retelling events incorrectly that they are driven to mental anguish. These fears do not bother others, and they may permit sarcasm or casual untruths without a hint of regret. A Christian needs to respect the boundary between truthfulness and lies. Satan is the father of lies. Pilate asked what truth was. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). When we fall into lying or are caught in a lie, we must correct it appropriately and continue forward.

## Scriptures

Proverbs 12:22

Proverbs 16:16–19

Proverbs 26:28

Proverbs 13:15

Psalms 34:13

John 4:24

John 17:17

Ephesians 4:15, 25

James 5:12

Philippians 4:8

## Questions

1. Do we need to deliberately try to deceive for something to be labeled as a lie?
2. The four Gospels in the Bible have many differences in the retelling of events. How do you explain that to those who think that may be a sign of untruthfulness?
3. Is it proper to share our struggles honestly with everyone we meet?
4. Do we sometimes have trouble being truthful when asked about things that could cast us in a negative light? For example, if we did not enjoy an act of service but feel pressured to say we did.
5. It is common for some to say untrue things when teasing or joking with friends. If we believe everyone knows it is in jest, is it acceptable to be untruthful?
6. We seem to take a harder line on spoken lies than we do on not being completely honest with the government in our taxes or immigration issues. Is this double standard acceptable?