

Lessons from a Marionette . . .

*“Those who are given to white lies
soon become color blind.”*

—Source unknown

If your nose grew every time you told a lie, would you stop telling lies? Pinocchio was a wooden marionette who was given the opportunity to be transformed into a real boy on one condition—he had to listen to and follow his conscience. Every time he told a lie, his nose would grow.

Pinocchio struggles with his conscience. Time after time he is pressured to make a decision—tell a lie or be embarrassed—tell a lie or miss out on some fun. Each time, telling a lie seems like a better choice than telling the truth. Over time he deadens his conscience by repeatedly telling lies. Every time he tells a lie, however, his nose grows! Before he knows it, his nose grows to more than a foot long—he despairs that he will never be a real boy.

Maybe you, too, struggle deeply with a habit of lying. You have a sales quota to reach—the only way to close that deal is to make a promise you will never be able to keep. You have a deadline to meet and your reputation is at stake—you claim something is done when it is still on the drawing board. You have loved ones who would be hurt by the truth—you tell a lie to protect them. Like Pinocchio, you tell a lie because it is easy and seems like the best way out. In the end, however, your lies compromise your character and God-given identity. You cannot lie continually and expect to enjoy a life of faith in obedience to God’s will because . . .

*“You [God] delight in truth in the inward being.”
(Psalm 51:6)*

Examples of “Little White Lies”

- I can’t say: “I’m too tired to come over.”
—It will hurt Mother’s feelings.
I’ll just say: “I have other plans.”
- I can’t say: “I am depressed.”
—Christians are supposed to have their lives under control.
I’ll just say: “I have a headache.”
- I can’t say: “I really don’t want to date you.”
—It will hurt his feelings.
I’ll just say: “I’m going out of town.”
- I can’t say: “I forgot to read the book you gave me.”
—She will think I don’t appreciate her gift.
I’ll just say: “I haven’t finished reading it yet.”
- I can’t say: “I haven’t sent the check yet.”
—He will think I’m not going to pay it.
I’ll just say: “It’s in the mail.”
- I can’t say: “Dad passed out from drinking.”
—She won’t be my friend.
I’ll just say: “He stayed home today because he has the flu.”

*“No creature is hidden from his sight, but all
are naked and exposed to the eyes of him
to whom we must give account.”
(Hebrews 4:13)*

FEAR: A Surface Cause of Lying¹

Fallen Nature

- We have all been born with a sin nature. (Romans 3:23)
- We have a natural tendency not to trust God, who cannot lie. (Titus 1:2)
- We have a natural tendency to listen to Satan, the father of lies. (John 8:44)
- We have a desire to deceive ourselves—to hide from the truth. (Psalm 51:5)

Envy (Genesis 27:21–24)

- We have jealousy toward others.
- We have a desire to harm others.
- We have a desire for personal profit or material gain.

Acclaim (2 Chronicles 18:15–22)

- We want to look good before others.
- We want to receive praise and recognition.
- We want personal significance.

Refuge (Isaiah 28:15)

- We want to escape negative consequences.
- We want to escape being exposed.
- We want to avoid conflict.

“Having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”
(Ephesians 4:25)

Things to Know When Telling the Truth Is Tough!²

- **Know** that you cannot please everyone. (Galatians 1:10)
- **Know** that you are not responsible for everyone’s feelings. (Proverbs 9:7–9)
- **Know** that you can speak the truth in a loving way. (Ephesians 4:15)
- **Know** that you are not a perfect person. (Isaiah 53:6)
- **Know** that you are not accountable for how others respond to the truth. (2 Timothy 2:25–26)

Truth Is a Treasure

- I will seek the *truth*. (Psalm 51:6)
- I will choose the *truth*. (Psalm 119:30)
- I will live by the *truth*. (John 3:21)
- I will walk in the *truth*. (Psalm 26:3)
- I will obey the *truth*. (1 Peter 1:22)
- I will speak the *truth*. (Psalm 15:1–2)
- I will be faithful to the *truth*. (3 John 3)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life.’”
(John 14:6)

Key Verse to Memorize

“Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”
(Psalm 141:3)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Proverbs 6:16–19

Deliverance from Deceit³

- **Discover** God’s consequences for lying and His hatred for deceit. (Psalm 5:6)
- **Desire** complete honesty with yourself and examine your motives. (Psalm 51:6)
- **Determine** to be totally honest with God and admit your failures. (1 John 1:8)
- **Discern** your areas of personal temptation. Stop and think before you answer. (Psalm 141:3)
- **Decide** you want your life to reflect Christ, who lives in you. (Romans 8:29)
- **Depend** on the strength of Christ within you to enable you to change. (Philippians 4:13)
- **Delight** in the truth, which is more rewarding than lies. (Proverbs 28:13)

“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”
(Proverbs 28:13)

Know the Truth about Living with Lying

- Lying is hated by God.⁴ (Proverbs 12:22)
- Lying disrupts unity. (Ephesians 4:25)
- Lying affects others. (Proverbs 29:12)
- Lying compounds problems. (Genesis 20:1–18)
- Lying to others is lying to God. (Luke 15:21)
- Liars associate with liars. (Proverbs 17:4)
- Liars begin to enjoy lying. (Proverbs 19:28)
- Liars who pass off lies as “jokes” are deadly. (Proverbs 26:18–19)
- Lies are far-reaching and multiply sin. (Jeremiah 9:3)
- Lying is exposed with time. (Proverbs 12:19)
- Lying will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 19:5)

Related Topics . . .

- Communication:
The Heart of the Matter
- Ethics & Integrity:
The Same in the Dark as in the Light
- Guilt:
Living Guilt Free
- Habits:
Success in Self-Control
- The Holy Spirit:
Living Free in the Power and Peace of the Spirit
- Manipulation:
Severing the Strings of Control

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1. For this section, see William D. Backus, *Telling Each Other the Truth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985), 27, 28; Devlin Donaldson and Steve Wamberg, *Pinocchio Nation: Embracing Truth in a Culture of Lies* (Colorado Springs, CO: Pinion, 2001), 26–27; Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Keeping Your Ethical Edge Sharp: How to Cultivate a Personal Character that is Honest, Faithful, Just, and Morally Clean* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 90–91; Donna L. Shuurman, “Lying,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*, ed. David G. Benner (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 665; Jerry E. White, *Honesty, Morality & Conscience* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1978), 113, 172, 114.
2. For this section see Sherman and Hendricks, *Keeping Your Ethical Edge Sharp*, 158–64.
3. For this section see White, *Honesty, Morality & Conscience*, 79–81, 175, 202, 206.
4. Sherman and Hendricks, *Keeping Your Ethical Edge Sharp*, 93; White, *Honesty, Morality & Conscience*, 52–53.



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