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Does God Bless Us When We Act in an Unrighteous Way?

1 Samuel 21:8: (NASB) *David said to Ahimelech, Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent.*



When I was a kid and faced with the potential consequences for my actions (wait, they were not consequences - they were punishments!) there was often that moment every kid dreads. I had to tell my dad or mom what I did. They already *knew* what I did; they were teaching me to *own* what I did. At those fateful and fearful moments my dad would often say, "Tell the truth and shame the devil!" This was never easy to hear, for it reminded me that God is pleased with truth and the devil is pleased with lies. Even though lying seemed like a "get out of jail free" card it was really an "out of the frying pan and into the fire" card. Guidelines are easier when you are a kid. As adults, how well do we do when faced with the gray areas and the white lies of life? Do we have resolve? Is it strong? What is it based upon? Can God bless us when in those gray areas?

Hebrews 12:11: (NASB) *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

Scripturally, we will focus on a series of events in the early life of David while in his twenties. He was anointed by Samuel to be king but was still in service to King Saul. In this part of his life, David is a hero of Israel as well as a perceived threat to the king. David is *a man after God's own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14), but he finds himself in several very difficult situations and seems to, in many cases, *lie his way through them*. Is it okay to lie if you are in a tough spot?

David explains his fear for his life to his friend Jonathan, who also happens to be King Saul's son: David earlier slew Goliath; David is a military hero! David is a mighty warrior for Saul and for Israel. David had been in great favor with the king.

1 Samuel 20:4-8: David is sure Saul is trying to kill him and needs to flush out what Saul is thinking. He asks Jonathan to tell the king a made-up story. *He asks him to lie and Jonathan agrees!* It is important to remember that Jonathan is the king's son and David's superior. David tells Jonathan, *if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself.*

Jonathan agrees to David's request to tell the king this story. Is Jonathan party to a lie? Is God telling us it is okay to lie if you are in a tough spot?

Was David devious?

Proverbs 14:2: (NASB) *He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, But he who is devious in his ways despises Him.*

Was David wise? Proverbs 14:3: (NASB) *In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them.*

As a Christian, have an honest heart. Luke 8:15

We are, up to this point, only asking questions and not drawing conclusions. As we shall see in this next segment, what may seem to be an easy conclusion on the surface can have mitigating circumstances and unforeseen details that not only need to be noticed, they need consideration.

Back to David and Jonathan. They work out their plan and a way to communicate secretly. Both realize they are in danger of death and swear fidelity to each other.

Is the following righteous action or unrighteous action? 1 Samuel 20:13-17: Jonathan makes David promise to take care of his family if he should die. (The Scriptures show us later in Jonathan's life he dies an untimely death and David takes care of Jonathan's handicapped son.) The covenant of protection and care that these two men made was righteous and inspiring as it was based on the knowledge that David was God's chosen, it was based on being faithful to God's ways and it was based on protecting the sanctity of life.



The day comes when the feast begins. On the first day, David is not there but Saul says nothing, thinking he will show up soon. On the second day when David is not at the feast, Saul asks Jonathan about his absence and the made-up story and lie is spoken.

Is this a righteous action or unrighteous action? 1 Samuel 20:28-34: That was a lie! They both knew this was not true. Is this a righteous action? At the risk of sounding wishy-washy or even hypocritical, we are going to say *yes, it was righteous*.

Jonathan told a lie and here is Saul's reaction: ³⁰*Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?* ³¹*For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die.*

Jonathan now sees David's fears were justified and directly addresses the issue of Saul's rage: ³²*But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, Why should he be put to death? What has he done?* ³³*Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so, Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death.* ³⁴*Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him.*

How can Jonathan's lie be righteous? Is it because Saul was not in his right mind and it was therefore justifiable? Is it because it revealed truth? Is it because it kept David safe?

Proverbs 12:19: (NASB) *Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment.*

As a Christian, have an honest reputation. Act 6:3: The elders were overwhelmed with responsibilities and duties. The widows in the church were being neglected. The elders realized they needed to fix the problem and elected seven deacons to help with the widows' needs. They chose *seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*. As Christians, we must focus on building and keeping an honest reputation.

It really is easy to conclude we are setting up a double standard. Thinking about that, a double standard may not necessarily be a bad thing, but there is one big giant IF! This big giant IF revolves around hard, fast and immovable principles of righteousness. Stay within those principles and you will act righteously!

e are not advocating lying even though we said the lie David told was a righteous act.

Consider this example - Gideon and his "army" of 300 men create a massive military deception: Judges 7:19-22: This was a classic military deception. If they heard the trumpet, it meant the one with the trumpet had a few hundred men behind him. If they were surrounded by 300 trumpets and heard the noise of the pitchers being shattered, they knew they were about to be overrun. There was such confusion in the camp that they started fighting each other and they were routed by 300 men. This was a classic military deception and it was designed and sanctioned by God. Was this honest?

How did God's Law, summed up in the 10 Commandments, manage things such as war and lies?

Exodus 20:13-16: (NASB) ¹³*You shall not murder.* ¹⁴*You shall not commit adultery.* ¹⁵*You shall not steal.* ¹⁶*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

There was no "thou shalt not kill" - but there was "thou shalt not murder." Why? God set this Law up at a time of sin and at a time when the nation needed to protect itself. Killing was acceptable because it was a necessary tool of survival. There was no "thou shalt not lie" - but there was "thou shalt not bear false witness." Why?

- The Law was given to Israel as their perfect guideline for living in an imperfect and violent world.
- The Law was given so they could righteously prosper in their land.
- The Law was given so they could righteously defend their land and their lives.

The Old Testament was about responding to and vanquishing earthly enemies under God's guidance. The Law was there to help them protect themselves yet live in a godly way.



David was drawn into a war between God's anointed ones that David wanted no part of. He responded to Saul as if he were at war with him, using an appropriate military tactic, which is to deceive the enemy.

1 Samuel 26:9: Whenever David had the opportunity to take Saul's life, he did not do it because he said he would not raise his hand against the LORD's anointed.

We saw what David and Jonathan did. Does this mean we, as Christians, will be acting righteously by using deception as we deal with our enemies - the world, the flesh and the devil? NO! That is the temptation here. Ours is a different battle. Our battle is not about land or earthly peace, it is about faithfulness to a heavenly call and kingdom.

2 Corinthians 10:4: Notice the weapons are mighty, not us. We do not vanquish our enemies, we overcome them. John 18:36: Jesus had nothing to fear but he died as a result of the truth which he told.

The Old Testament was to fight and vanquish enemies.

The New Testament is to overcome enemies for the sake of the kingdom!

As a Christian, provide that which is honest. Romans 12:17

To say David employed a military tactic appropriately does not give us permission to use a military tactic in our lives. The context of our battle is entirely different. Dying for the sake of Christ is a glorious thing. If we are under the anointing, we are supposed to die. Different periods of time or ages mean different guidelines and responses.

As with anything that is not easily determined to be black and white, crossing lines that should not be crossed can happen all too easily. David was a man who did exactly that, and the result ended up utterly tragic for others. This next stage of his story is filled with lessons for us.

Some say, "If you only tell part of the truth you are lying." That is not true and too much too fast is overwhelming. People need time and ability to process things. You also should not tell something to a child who is not capable of processing things. Sometimes you need to withhold pieces of a story. Our Heavenly Father does that for us. He only reveals what we can handle for our level of maturity. Partial truths for the sake of someone's good is a good thing.

David continues to run for his life and out of his desperation comes another fabricated story: 1 Samuel 21:1-9: David tells another lie. Is this another military tactic? Probably. The question is, *is this acting in a righteous way?* David and the servants were hungry, and Ahimelech helps them. David protects Ahimelech by not telling him he was on the run from the king and tells him a made-up story or a lie. The priest trusts David's story and gives him bread. Success! *But is it righteous?*

David obtained a weapon by telling a lie. He was fed by telling a lie. David continues his fearful journey alive and well, *but is his condition based in righteous action?*

Word eventually gets back to Saul that David had seen Ahimelech. Saul seeks him out to question him and the priest tells the King he knew nothing of David's being pursued by Saul. Ahimelech defends David's character before Saul because he does not know Saul had gone mad.

1 Samuel 22:14: Ahimelech restates his own innocence and then Saul has Ahimelech and 84 others killed.

1 Samuel 22:20-22: David admits the unrighteousness of his military tactic. His desperation and lie put many innocent people in harm's way.

As a Christian, think on honest things. Philippians 4:8 Hebrews 1:9

The difference was monumental. The first story was told to his enemy to flush out his enemy's position. The second was told to a friend and a priest of God. David told the story to protect him, but by his own admission he also knew it would not hold up. This ended up being a well-intentioned wrongdoing. Acting in an unrighteous way has consequences. We are not perfect, and we will all make mistakes.



As Christians, what are we supposed to do with this? What do we do with David taking it too far? **First, realize Jesus acknowledged David's hunger and seeking of the bread as a legitimate action:** Mark 2:23-26: Jesus was drawing attention to the fact that it was okay to do something to preserve life. It was appropriate. What David did to get the food was not appropriate.

Second, realize David himself looked back upon his life and took note of his costly errors and used them as teaching tools for others. Psalms 119:25-32: When you have years behind you, you tend to look back over your life. Perhaps David as an older man is looking back on his life and reminiscing, and saying, I should have slowed down, thought more carefully, spoken more prudently and acted more resourcefully and knowing what I know now, I would have done it differently. God blessed David in spite of his mistakes because his heart always went back to God. He will bless our mistakes as long as our heart goes back to Him. He will not bless us *because* of our lies or deceptions. We are imperfect. That is why we have prayer and forgiveness.

Can God bless us when we act in an unrighteous way? Yes, He can. We are thankful for the wake-up calls when we do go down the wrong path and He straightens us out and pushes us in the right direction. Sometimes those can be the best growth experiences in our Christian walk.

As a Christian, speak honestly to all. 1 Peter 2:12

Unrighteousness happens. Get your heart focused back on God so you can do things that will bring praise and honor to Him.

*So, does God bless us when we act in an unrighteous way?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*