

Sunday, February 5, 2012

Lying

Lying is a very serious sin, which we ought to discuss. In that regard, I was presented with the following two questions:

First Question:

Sometimes my father causes me to lie when he says: "Tell the caller on the phone that I am not home." Do I obey him and lie? Or do I disobey him and not lie, which may lead me to get punished.

Answer:

1- First and foremost, the Bible teaches us that: "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" (Acts 5:29).

2- **Lying is not one of the characters of the children of God.** The children of God are the children of the faithful and the true witness (revelations 3:14), therefore they should always be faithful and true. On the other hand, the devil is a liar and the father of liars, and uses lies to lure people and brings them under his authority. For that reason, lying is one of the most serious sins that allow the devil to have a place within the heart, and consequently it becomes the beginning of a chain of wickedness.

3- **It is important to calmly and politely discuss this issue with your dad,** and to reach a mutual agreement on an acceptable form of answer for cases like this. For instance:

+ "My dad is resting now, and can be reached latter."

+ "My dad is currently busy and will return your call when he is done."

+ "My dad is unavailable right now, but you can call him in an hour."

+ "My dad is in his room and I can't disturb him, but I can take a message." Etcetera.

There are many responses that are not involved in lying, which can be agreed upon in advance.

4- When a lie is exposed, which is inevitable, **you lose people's trust and it reduces your values in their eyes.**

5- There is no such a thing as white lies or a black lies, all types of lies and exaggeration are sins, and the "*wages of sin is death.*" (Romans 6:23). □

6- **Clearly, in this case, the parents are causing the kids to stumble.** Here, parents cause their children to lie rather than carrying out the commandment of the Church on the day of their baptism, "*Sow in them beautiful qualities, sow in them righteousness and praise, sow in them honesty, love, and holiness, sow in them godliness, patience, and goodness...*" In general, whatever we harbor in our lives and homes will be planted in the lives of our children.

Second question:

Sometimes circumstances around me force me to lie, so I end up saying something other than the truth to deal with the situation. Is that wrong?

Answer:

+ Dear beloved, **there is no power in existence that can force us to lie.** Because, simply, there is no power in existence that can separate us from the love of Christ, or force us to break his commandment. If the love of Christ reigns over someone's life, he/she would never lie.

+ If telling the truth causes problems for someone, it would be better if we remain silent. In the mean time, we should quietly pray that God may give wisdom to our answers.

+ Perhaps we remember **the famous story of St**

Athanasius the Apostolic when the solders of the governor chased him down the Nile River. While the Saint was aboard the ship by the riverbank near one of the villages, the ship of the governor's solders passed by them. The solders asked: "**Have you seen Athanasius?**" St. Athanasius replied calmly while standing among the men aboard the ship: "**He is not far from you**". The soldiers hurried towards the south thinking that they are close to him, while the saint's ship headed north and was delivered out of their hands.

This was a wise answer and one that completely honest and truthful.

+ **One of the most critical actions that lead to lying is letting the thoughts of the devil to linger in one's hearts** until it completely controls it., whether they were thoughts of pride, impurity, greed, hatred, or envy. After the devil fills one's heart, he can easily cause man to slip in the path of lying which in fact the path of perdition as we saw in the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). In that story, St. Peter the apostle revealed to us the state of Ananias and Sapphira's heart when he rebuked them saying: "*Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie...*" Here we see the main reason that lead them to lie... The devil entered and filled their heart and began to use it together with the tongue to speak untruthful words. Therefore, the Bible draws our attention to keep our hearts sanctified to God, "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*" (Proverbs 4:23).

+ Let's also remember this fact: "**Lying doesn't save from harm**" even it provides a temporary fix, eventually things will get complicated. It is like a drug that offers a short-term consequence but after words, it destroys the whole life. We must not forget that lying is like drugs, if we do not repent from it, it becomes addictive and it leads our lives to ruin and destruction.

Fr. Yohanna Naseef
fyohanna@hotmail.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL