

The Lord Tells Samuel to Anoint David

1 Samuel 16:1-5

1 Samuel 16:1-5 - *"Now the LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.'*" ² *And Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.'* But the LORD said, *"Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'*" ³ *Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."* ⁴ *So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?'"* ⁵ *And he said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.'* Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice."

Background Notes

In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul was given one last chance to prove that he would follow and obey the Lord. Saul was told to completely remove the Amalekite people from the Land of Israel, because of their idolatry and because they ambushed the Israelites when they were traveling through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan. But Saul failed the test. He failed to kill Agag, the Amalekite king, and he kept the best of the sheep and oxen alive. When Samuel confronted him, Saul blamed his disobedience on the people -- he said that they wanted to keep the best of the sheep and the oxen alive in order to sacrifice them to the Lord!

At this point Samuel told Saul that obeying the Lord is better than sacrificing to the Lord! In addition, because of his disobedience, the kingdom would be taken from Saul and given to a better man: *"Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you' (15:28).* That "neighbor" and "better man" was, of course, David.

Saul had heard similar words of rejection back in 1 Samuel 13, when he deliberately disobeyed the Lord by not waiting for Samuel to conduct the sacrifice to the Lord at Gilgal. On that occasion Samuel said, *"You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you" (13:13-14).*

In 1 Samuel 16, the time had come for Samuel to anoint David as the new king of Israel because Saul is going to be set aside as king. David was only a teenager at this point, but Samuel was told to anoint him as the one who would eventually replace disobedient King Saul. The Lord directed Samuel to anoint David secretly. A question of biblical ethics

comes up in the conversation between Samuel and the Lord, and this will be discussed in our doctrinal points for this first section of 1 Samuel 16.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Bible never condones lying and deceiving.

When the Lord told Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the new king, Samuel said that King Saul would kill him when heard what Samuel had done. So, the Lord told Samuel to take a young cow with him and say, *"I have come to sacrifice to the Lord."*

Does that answer from the Lord bother you? Was the Lord telling Samuel to lie or be deceitful? No! The Bible never condones lying and deceiving. Samuel did indeed sacrifice to the Lord when he came to Bethlehem -- but he also anointed David. This was not lying or deceiving; it was simply keeping the anointing of a new king a secret from Saul, whom God had rejected as king. The Bible never condones lying or deceit.

You may wonder, "Well, what about the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1, who told Pharaoh that they couldn't drown the Hebrew male babies because the Israeli women were giving birth before the midwives could get to them! Wasn't that a lie?" No, I don't think so. I believe they were telling the truth! God was at work on behalf of the Hebrew slaves, and He was protecting them.

What about Rahab in Joshua 2 -- didn't she lie about the Israeli spies? Yes, she did, but God didn't tell her to lie, and God didn't commend her for lying. God could have protected the spies in any number of ways! When Rahab is mentioned in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11 and James 2, she is not commended for her lying, but for her faith in the God of Israel, and for her work of faith in taking care of the spies.

The Bible never condones lying and deceiving. The Bible doesn't teach "situational ethics." In that scheme of ethics, it's OK to lie if you think that it's the more "loving" or "kind" thing to do. And the Bible doesn't teach "wartime ethics" - that it's OK to lie in a time of war.

The Bible teaches what could be called "non-conflicting moral absolutes." The Bible teaches that there is always a right choice that can be made, and in making that choice, you won't have to break one of God's moral laws or choose the "lesser of two evils." Our Lord Jesus lived in this real world, and never broke one of God's moral laws, and He never chose the lesser of two evils. We are to follow His example.

Non-conflicting moral absolutes means that you will never have to steal in order not to murder, or murder in order not to commit adultery, or lie in order not to murder, and so on. The Bible teaches non-conflicting moral absolutes. The Bible never condones lying and deceiving.

2. The Bible sometimes condones secrecy and concealment.

Creative concealment is what's going on here in 1 Samuel 16. And notice -- this was not Samuel's idea. This was the Lord's command! The Lord told Samuel to deliberately conceal the fact that he was secretly anointing David, so that the proud and disobedient King Saul would not find out. This was not lying and deceiving – it was creative concealment, for the purpose of doing what was right and obeying God.

Here are a couple of contemporary examples of creative concealment. The Bible condones Christians meeting in secret in Communist or Muslim countries, and Christians can creatively conceal their meeting by making it appear like they're meeting for a birthday party. The Bible condones Christians taking jobs as English teachers in a country that is closed to the Gospel, in order to spread the word of Jesus *as well* as teaching English. This is not lying and deceiving; it's creative concealment -- in order to obey the command of the Lord to spread the gospel and disciple converts. The Bible never condones lying and deceiving, but the Bible sometimes condones secrecy and concealment.

If you would like to read more about this difficult and involved topic, go to our website (www.growingchristians.org) and look up the "Devotions for Growing Christians" essay on this chapter. It's entitled *An Exercise in Ethics*. I'm reading a couple of paragraphs from the second half of this essay:

"Lying is never justified, but the Bible does not require us to reveal the whole truth to everybody. Concealment of truth is only a sin when an obligation exists to reveal the hidden facts, or there is intent to lead astray into moral error. The Lord Jesus never lied to his enemies, but many times He did not give them straight answers, in order to conceal the whole truth. He purposely spoke in parables to conceal truth from the skeptics who had forfeited their right to know the truth. (See Matthew 13:10-13.) It would have been wrong for Samuel to lie to King Saul, but it was not wrong for him to conceal his full intentions. By way of application, parents should never lie to their children, but they are not under compulsion to divulge all the facts of a situation if their children do not need to know them. Parents should be careful, however, in the way they conceal the whole truth from their children. On the other hand, it is definitely wrong for a child to conceal activities, which his parents have a right or a need to know about.

"The same principle of not lying, but concealing the whole truth from those who do not have a need or right to know, was practiced in the divinely-directed ambush of Ai in Joshua 8. God cannot be accused of telling Israel to lie or practice deception just because the army of Ai mistakenly thought Joshua's tactics were the same as those he had used in Joshua 7. It is important to note in this case that God did not tell Joshua to stage an ambush by sending a fake peace delegation ahead of his hidden attacking forces. That would have been dishonest, because it was outside the generally understood and accepted rules of warfare. (For example, in the game of football, a "fake run" is misleading to the opposition, but it is not deceitful because it is within the rules of the game. However, carrying a second football to make the fake run is deception!) Similarly, the use of camouflage and feints in a "Just War" (another exercise in ethics) is not lying and deceiving, but the use of Red Cross symbols or white truce flags as decoys is outside the generally accepted "rules of the game." It is inherently dishonest and therefore deceitful.

“An exercise in ethics is not easy. Often we end up with more questions than when we started! However, such exercise is good for our spiritual health, even though all the “loose ends” are not thoroughly tied up. While not all growing Christians will agree, our conclusion to this brief exercise in ethics is as follows: The Bible teaches that lying and deceiving are always wrong, but not revealing the whole truth is sometimes right.” (www.growingchristians.org/dfgc/ethics.htm)

Practical Application

Remember, getting killed is not the worst thing that can happen!

Suppose you were a Christian during World War II in Nazi Germany, and you were hiding Jews in your attic. What should you do when the SS troopers came along with their guns, banged on your door, and asked, “Are you hiding any Jews?” Do you lie and protect the Jews, or do you tell the truth and get the Jews and you and your family killed?

What would Jesus have done? This is a legitimate question, and a good way to think through the problem. I don’t think Jesus would have lied **or** given the Jews up to the SS! He probably would have chosen a third option, as He often did in Scripture. When the hostile Jewish religious leaders questioned Jesus, sometimes He remained silent, or sometimes He answered with another question such as, “By whose authority do you ask me this question?”

For us, following the example of our Lord would be the right thing to do. But you may say, “Doing that would probably get us all killed!” But remember -- being killed is not the worst thing that could happen! Doing the right thing, to please the Lord and for His glory, is always the higher priority. Remember -- getting killed is not the worst thing that can happen!