

General Topics :: lying(talked with my professor)**lying(talked with my professor) - posted by wind_blows, on: 2010/3/13 16:03**

Hi

I have a writing assignment that really has got me baffled on how to begin. I am suppose to write a creative fiction piece that has the main character lying. The lie has to be justifiable and for the good of others. Is there even such a thing as justifiable lying? Isn't all lying considered sin according to the Bible?

Any help or thoughts on this??

in Him
ellie

Re: lying - posted by JoanM, on: 2010/3/13 16:59

Re. the Bible: I have heard others point to the midwives that failed to kill Hebrew children, David faining madness, Rehah and the spies and call that lying.

Re. the Assignment: Lying in love verses speaking the Truth in Love strikes me as a fruitful field for "creative fiction" that could have some redeeming value.

When I think about it, all lies connect to **self**-justification, an alternative to the justification that Christ provides. And every time I look into lying "for the good of others", I find things like the fear of man, the lack of Divine Love (in which to speak Truth), personal opinion and control, etc.

Re: lying - posted by IWantAnguish (), on: 2010/3/13 17:19

The reason this baffles you is because you are enrolled at a school that promotes the belief of situational ethics... a product of post-modernism.

There is no absolute right and wrong... everything depends on the situation. There is no such thing as truth.

You could challenge your professor based on these premises... stating that you do not look at life from the paradigm of situational ethics.

edit-- possible objections from scripture...

Rahab lied to the state authorities when they came and asked for the spies... yet God chose her to be a part of the lineage of Christ.

The Egyptian maids lied to Pharaoh regarding the Jewish women and their children... but God did not punish them for it..

Possible practical example in history...

Nazi authorities come to your house looking for Jews... you know that they will kill them if you hand them over... so do you lie? Or do you tell them the truth and allow murder to happen?

Re: lying - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2010/3/13 17:30

Dear Ellie,

It is a difficult question to answer. We know that no lie is of the truth. But is it ever permissible to withhold the truth or to distort it in some way that it may be mistaken by others, for the sake of others?

I think If we are asking these things from the point of view to satisfy a theological curiosity(I do not mean you are doing t his) then I would want to run away from such a question. I want no part of answering something like that.

I have heard about believers that have had to wrestle with these things in very real situations where the lives of their dear ones and their neighbors were hanging on their answers and where to say a true thing might have caused someone else to be tortured or killed. I remember one story of believers being questioned by the police as to where they were going when their gatherings were illegal. Their answer was that they were going to the house of their family, that their eldest brother had died and they were going to read His testament.

It is no theological trifle to ask a question like this, in situations like that.

God is the truth. We know that He is always able to judge when our words were right or wrong. No matter how we answer this question, we know that we always desire to tell the truth and we always desire to answer so that our conscience will be clear before God in what we have said.

Re: lying - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/3/13 19:04

Well I thought of a way around such a dilemma, express in your story that your Main Character doesn't know Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour, Lyes about something in a justifiable manner according to the world's standards, Then through the Witness of another in the story (a Christian) meets Christ Jesus and repents of lying. :) Just a thought you can take or leave it if you like. I do hope that it helps

God Bless,
Matthew

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2010/3/13 19:57

You could always look at Rahab and how she lied to protect the spies sent from Israel.

That's from the Scriptures.

Or you could look at modern day people who have to lie to authorities to protect missionaries or churches.

Hope that helps you with some material.

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Re: - posted by wind_blows, on: 2010/3/14 3:03

Thank you everyone for sharing your thoughts with me on this. I think I am coming to see that I am not meant to be a writer after all. I think its time to stop sitting on the fence and get moving:)

in Him
ellie

Re: lying - posted by Lysa (), on: 2010/3/14 11:06

Ellie,

What kind of writing have you wanted to do? Historical or modern religious romance, thrillers, 007 type stuff or biographical? Because truly if you have had a lifelong passion for writing, you cannot let this one class beat you but then on the other hand, if you've not have a lifelong passion for writing, it should be easy to let writing go.

Perhaps you need to put yourself in the shoes of the character... when and where and under what circumstances would you feel compelled to lie? But your instructor wants this lie to benefit the good of others or mankind.

I can think of one but it's not religious; I don't think everything has to be, does it? (huge grin)

Sometimes I work with handicap teenagers (& slow learners) and no one I know would dream of telling one student, let alone an entire class of teenagers that they will never be able to learn algebra or live alone; so am I or the teacher lying to them? I personally don't think so b/c we cannot limit the learning of anyone, if they believe the skies the limit, then maybe they'll learn to shop, cook, wash their clothes and balance their own checkbooks in order to take care of themselves and be productive! This is for the good of the student's, their families and the community.

Whatever you choose about your writing, God bless you in it!!

Re: lying, on: 2010/3/14 12:56

The topic of lying has been discussed on SI before, and you might like to look for the old threads.

I believe that mguldner has made a good point, in line with John 8:44. There is bound to be a way that you can tell a story as a narrator, getting inside the mind of someone who thinks it's okay to lie, and who justifies it to himself because within his (or her) own personal philosophy, lying is okay (the means) if 'the end' justifies it.

There is no reason at all why you shouldn't bring out this conflict with scripture, within your story, quoting 1 Cor 1:21 'For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God...' and Col 2:8.

In other words, instead of creating a character with the perspective he **believes** lying is okay, you can have your character lying to please another character, against a background of knowing scripture forbids it.

After he has lied, an alternative to him repenting, would be for him to slide away from God, the more he denied truth (Rom 1).

I had a Lutheran neighbour, once, who was doing a part-time degree in English. The class was asked to read a book the philosophy of which she found profoundly offensive, even though it's a classic, so, she asked the acting Head of Dept if he could give her something else, because of the religious issues, and he agreed. The actual Head of Dept was furious when he returned, but she was just extremely grateful not to be battling with hundreds of pages of junk, stuck her nose in the air and proceeded to come top of the class!

My point is, God will honour you if you honour Him. If the remit for your exercise does not specifically state that you cannot quote scripture, then go ahead and take some creative writing liberties.

Even if the remit states you have to write in the first person singular, as if it is you that is lying, there is no reason you co

uld not give an incontrovertibly fictional title, using words such as fantasy, dream, unlikely tale, alter ego and so on, to distance yourself from it. Or, you can simply begin or end it in such a way that it's clear it's not your story, but one told you by someone else.

These days (and for the last at least 50 years), there has been an academic onslaught against truth, which Christians find hard to negotiate. However, it should only make you stronger. Remember, the person reading loves to be lost in the meanderings of another person's mind. Basically, that is what fiction amounts to.

The study of much English literature is only an excuse to escape the bounds of legal decent and honest expressions of reality, into so-called freedom of speech, which allows every kind of pollution the writer permits to escape from his imagination in a manner palpable to others.

My first thought when I saw your leading post, was to suggest you retell Genesis 3 from the serpent's point of view. You can then slip seamlessly forward 4,000 years to the writings of Paul, and quote some of Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8, and 1 Cor 15 'as in Adam all die' for instance - in any order which suits your plan.

Then, your story will definitely take in 'someone' lying because he believes it will 'help' others - according to his own point of view, of course - and by explaining the truth afterwards, the extent of the lie will be highlighted even more boldly. You don't need to offer a running commentary. Just leave it all laid out as your 'story'. It is, after all, an exercise in creative writing, so, you can make the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as beautiful or plain as you like. After all, Eve had never considered that the fruit would be 'good to eat', so, maybe it was quite drab-looking.

You could also make as much as you like of the shock Adam and Eve must have had when their glory left them as a result of beginning to die.

One last thought: 'imagination', is about creating images - idols - which are worshipped instead of God. The Hebrew word can be translated 'stubbornness'. In other words 'when they knew God' (Rom 1) implies that no-one who tells a lie, really, deep down on their heart, actually believes it is true. *Telling* it (as opposed to *thinking* it, is about manipulating another into a false view of reality. If you're cunning, you could get an excellent mark for what you write. Nothing in the remit prohibits you from retelling another's story.

(Sorry for rambling a bit, but I hope this helps you get a handle on how to keep your inner integrity, while complying, and maybe beating the teacher at his own devices.)

Re: - posted by wind_blows, on: 2010/3/14 14:13

Hey everyone

First let me say thank you to everyone, I really am thankful for everyone being so willing to share their thoughts.

Lysa you asked what kind of writer I wanted to be. I always wanted to be a romance writer, along the lines of Jane Austen. Getting caught up in the characters, watching them grow and struggle with challenges, and heartaches, it has been a desire of my heart since I was first introduced to poetry when I was five years old. (sigh)

That is where the real problem is though, writing should not be the desire of my heart, only Jesus should hold that place. I am seeing that if I have a passion for anything at all, it should be for Him and His Kingdom. I do love to write, and I do get caught up in my characters and their world when I do write. Its easy to get lost in a place where I can resolve anything however I like. I can make the day cloudy and dreary, or I can make the sunshine bright and brilliant with only soft summer breezes to cool the air. The problem with it all is that its not real, my tales do nothing to draw others to Christ and they do nothing to further His Kingdom. They are frivolous and I am learning that many of my romantic notions probably do more harm than anything else because they set others up with expectations that can never be a reality. I have found the longer I sit in this class the more I feel drawn to the Lord to be about His Kingdom, truly being out there to live for Him. As I search my heart and look deeper I am realizing that my love for writing has been a way to feed into my own vanity and self nature. I wanted to be the author that made other young women sigh, and fall desperately in love with "My" characters. It has all been about self. For me at least at this time, walking away is the right choice and I really feel a freedom in Him in doing so. Letting go of this has not been as difficult as I would have thought it to be:)

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in Him
Ellie

Re: lying - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2010/3/14 22:26

Hi wind_blows...

Have you considered writing about a person who felt justified for lying...and was congratulated by others for lying due to some "greater good"...YET still felt an inner conviction that what he/she did was still wrong? Such a story could highlight the moral and spiritual dilemma of the soul for even the most "innocent" of lies.

I don't know what your instructor means by "lying," but you could talk about individuals who did something similar to Corrie ten Boom during the Nazi occupation of Holland. Ten Boom and her family hid Jews in a "hiding place" -- and participated in a type of "underground railroad" in order to protect them from the Nazis. As such, they obtained more ration cards than they were allotted. While this was not an outright "lie," it could be argued (by some) that this was a form of "deception" against the then-current (albeit evil) authority.

When I was a freshman in college, I was given an assignment by a professor to defend the concept of "homosexual marriage." I met with the professor and explained that this assignment went completely against the spiritual convictions of my faith. This professor didn't want to give me a different assignment. So, I politely let the professor know that if I was not assigned a different paper, then I would drop the class and explain to the administration of the university why I was doing so. The professor sat quietly for a few minutes...and then finally agreed to give me a different assignment. I was extremely grateful for this (and voiced it as such)...and it went a long way to opening a door to share Christ with this particular professor.

Anyway, I will be praying for you. Please let us know how it turns out!

Re: - posted by wind_blows, on: 2010/3/14 22:43

Hi Chris

I think you have giving a great idea to but its not just this assignment that has me questioning. This professor also gave an assignment that we are to go out find a trash dumpster, dig through peoples garbage and choose an item to then write a creative writing piece about. I did that assignment with a friends help but it just seems that these assignments are getting to be more "out there" to me. Just not seeing how any of this helps to further His Kingdom. I spent hours on the other assignment and in the end it just left me feeling empty and I know that the piece I wrote did nothing to point anyone to the Lord.(sigh)

I am going to meet with my professor tomorrow morning to talk with her.

thanks
in Him
Ellie

Re: - posted by PassingThru, on: 2010/3/15 7:54

Although the challenge is difficult, it may also be a good opportunity. The professor has given you the topic but can't force you to promote her view point on it.

You could for example, narrate a story of man who 'lies for the greater good', but in reality he is living in mental delusion. In his fantasies he is 'saving the world' while in reality he is causing others damage and grief. (I happened to see a portion of "A Brilliant Mind" while visiting family yesterday).

I think this would also be good stab at 'relative' thinking portraying it as a wishful fantasy in a madman's mind ignoring the absolute truth of reality.

PassingThru

General Topics :: lying(talked with my professor)

Re: - posted by Charles_R, on: 2010/3/15 14:11

Quote:
-----its not just this assignment that has me questioning. This professor also gave an assignment that we are to go out find a trash dumpster, dig through peoples garbage and choose an item to then write a creative writing piece about. I did that assignment with a friends help but it just seems that these assignments are getting to be more "out there" to me. Just not seeing how any of this helps to further His Kingdom. I spent hours on the other assignment and in the end it just left me feeling empty and I know that the piece I wrote did nothing to point anyone to the Lord.

I think I know what you mean. In high school, I participated in speech and debate. In speech classes, we had to do things like take a random object and give an impromptu speech telling "what" the item was, but we had to make up something imaginary. There were other such assignments as well. The result was that I learned to stifle the voice of conscience telling me that I would give account for every idle word (Matthew 12:36-37). What I did not learn was how to fulfill the command of Philippians 4:8

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

My pride certainly fed off of the competition. It was a little eye-opening, though, when I competed in "impromptu apologetics." (That meant that you were given a Scriptural/theological topic and had five minutes to create a speech about it.) For example, I remember distinctly an instance where I watched a competitor give a speech which strongly twisted a certain Scripture. I recognized in that speech a tactic that I had been taught--to get your judges' interest by coming at the question from the most unconventional point of view. I knew that the goal of gaining the judge's approval was beginning to take precedence over truth at times in me also. Debate was more rigorous. We had to be able to argue for and against the same issue on very short notice. An unfair advantage could often be gained by clever use of logical fallacies. It was usually difficult to debate with teams which did this, because it generally took more time to expose a fallacy than to create one. I also found myself looking back at some debates and realizing that I had definitely crossed the line. I'm not saying that all the debaters were dishonest; only that the temptation was there.

I learned some good things through speech and debate. I learned to be more willing to speak in public when needed, and to be more discerning, perhaps, of information thrown at me. On the other hand, I learned to act (so that I often was unable to tell whether I were being honest with the Lord or just acting, even in prayer); to speak without thinking of whether my words would be acceptable to God; to argue a position because I "can" instead of first determining what is true; to seek the approval of men; to trust my own strength; and, sometimes, to argue my point even if I were wrong.

I know that its not exactly the same thing, but the writer and the speaker face many of the same dilemmas. Both things can be done for the Lord or to gain the praise of men. Like speaking, writing has to take into account that ideas have consequences. Whatever you decide the Lord wants you to do, continue to "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33; also see Proverbs 3:5,6). Ask the Lord if this is something He wants you to do for His kingdom, or whether it is one of the "fond ambitions" that must "perish."

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be:
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, and hoped and known;
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own!

--words by Henry F. Lyte

Spoke to professor - posted by wind_blows, on: 2010/3/15 15:03

Hey everyone

Thank you Charles for sharing your experience with me. I do see a lot of similarities in what you shared.

I spoke with my writing professor, she wants me to take a day or two to think over my decision of dropping this class and giving up writing, but I don't really need to. After explaining some of my struggles with these assignments she told me that if I ever want to be a truly great writer then I have to be committed to what I am writing about. I have to be willing to detach myself for a time and be willing to write each character in such a way as to make them believable. I must think the way each one feels and thinks or my characters will be void of any real depth. She said when I write the story must take on a life of its own or I will never be able to draw my readers into the world I am trying to create. She told me, after all if your writing about a justifiable lie then I must do so in a way that makes people think that there are times when it is actually better to lie for the good of others. She said she understand my struggle but there are times in life that we have to step outside of our personal beliefs and come to terms with the fact that life is not black and white, that there are areas in between...

I can not say that my discussion with my professor made me think I should adopt a different attitude about my writing in order to accomplish the goal of being a great author. I just am not the same person I once was I guess. Knowing the Lord is so much more important to me than if I ever write the next great romance novel. Honestly I already have read the greatest love story ever written and I am in it. Jesus and His Bride what could be more captivating or demonstrate true, unselfish love more deeply than Jesus on the cross...

Just wanted to say thanks to everyone for all the help and support but I think I am going to drop this class and take up cooking:)

in Him
Ellie

Re: Spoke to professor - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/3/15 17:08

I am glad you came up with a decision, personally I love writing myself never been much into romance novels or anything but just writing journals and stuff like that. I have heard of and read a lot of good books that have touched many lives through a fictional story they portrayed the Story of Christ or some other part of Christianity and they are quite encouraging and edifying. If you haven't pick up a copy of Pilgrim's Progress written by John Bunyan. It's written in Old English and there are two parts to it so its important to get both parts, my dad bought a Modern English version that has both parts, its a gripping story that lays out a foundation of Christianity and yet still tells a beautiful story of a man and this Journey to the Celestial City, and then His Wife and her journey. There are certain styles of writing that can glorify the Lord and still be done in a way that the modern reader is intrigued by the story. I am currently reading a Story by Wendy Alec and its awesome keeps making me read late hours because I want to know what happens next (Chronicle of Brothers Series The First Judgement). I encourage you to keep writing but maybe not pursue it as a profession but for fun and for Christ's Glory.

God Bless,
Matthew

Re: Spoke to professor, on: 2010/3/15 17:49

Ellie, Thank you for sharing your decision. I was very encouraged by it. It made me think of a verse that helped me in a similar situation:

"be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"

another lesson learned from all of this :(- posted by wind_blows, on: 2010/3/15 17:59

Hey everyone

This decision has taken on another aspect that I had not even considered. I just got off the phone with my husband Jase . Since we were unable to see each other this last weekend(could not leave mom home alone) I did not really make the time to talk this decision over with him. When I did call him and tell him about what I decided, he was surprised(and I think maybe hurt) that I did not consult with him on this matter. It hadn't occurred to me to even do so. Since we have been apart I have just gotten so use to making my own decisions about day to day living. I forgot that as a wife I should be seeking his thoughts as well! I told him how sorry I was, he was not angry but he did ask me to be more willing to call him, talk with him and to let us make these kinds of choices together. He said he would have liked to pray for me and shared with me his thoughts instead of just hearing about it after things have already happened. I felt really bad about not talking this over with him, I need to start thinking about things differently again and remember this isn't just about me anymore . Jase is the most important person in my life and I don't want to exclude him.

I asked him if he wants me to just keep the class instead of dropping it, he said no he supports my decision and understands what I am feeling but he still wants me to talk with him more about these kinds of things. I told him I just didn't think of it as a big deal, he told me that if it involves me then it involves him and he wants to know about it. For someone like me who does not do well with change I feel like a lot is coming at me. I don't want to start second guessing myself not feeling as good about all this as I was a few hours ago:(

in Him
ellie

Re: another lesson learned from all of this :(- posted by HeedWatchmen (), on: 2010/3/15 20:14

Ellie,

I'm glad to hear that you had a good discussion with your husband. I'm glad that he supported your decision to drop this class. It does show that God is speaking to both of you the same way.

We do always need to remember that our husbands are over us and need to be involved in our decisions.

Praise God this can be a growing experience between the two of you, as well as in taking a stand for Christ.

Re: another lesson learned from all of this :(- posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2010/3/15 20:28

Quote:

-----he was surprised(and I think maybe hurt) that I did not consult with him on this matter.

Perhaps you could remind Jase gently that for over a year he did not care about any decisions, situations you were forced to deal with and so you got used to doing it on your own. Now that he is interested in you it will take some time for you to make this mental adjustment.

Just my thoughts...but I am glad he is showing concern for you - now.

Blessings,
ginnyrose

General Topics :: lying(talked with my professor)

Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2010/3/16 16:17

Quote:
-----Perhaps you could remind Jase gently that for over a year he did not care about any decisions, situations you were forced to deal with and so you got used to doing it on your own. Now that he is interested in you it will take some time for you to make this mental adjustment.

I agree with what ginnyrose said. I think you should remind him that it was his decision that you not be in touch with him for all that time. Though you should do so with a Christ like heart. Be careful that you don't take all the blame for everything on yourself, remember Jase is a person and he still needs to learn and grow in Christ to.

Give yourself some time to get use to the changes that are happening and don't let fear get in the way.

God Bless
mj