

BY KAREN J. FISHER

OF White Lies

Your friend asks you a question. You don't want to lie, but you don't want to hurt her feelings either. What do you do?

You're standing next to Sandra in the girls' bathroom fixing your hair. Sandra, who's about 15 pounds overweight, laments, "I'm soooooo fat!" After groping for something to say, you finally blurt out, "No, you're not."

You feel funny saying it, but then you think, Sandra isn't soooooo fat. She's just a little overweight.

According to a GROUP Members Only survey, most of you agree that saying Sandra isn't fat is a white lie. But what exactly is a white lie? Webster's Dictionary defines it as "a lie concerning a trivial matter, often one told to spare someone's feelings."

But is a white lie different from a regular lie? Half of you who responded to the GROUP Members Only survey believe a difference does exist. But another 47 percent don't see a difference.

Is it okay to tell white lies? About 39 percent of those surveyed think telling white lies is bad. But 48 percent say it depends on the circumstances.

The Bible never mentions white lies. And it doesn't differentiate between different kinds of lies. Leviticus 19:11 says, "Do not steal or cheat or lie." And Jesus calls Satan the "father of lies" in John 8:44.



If you look closely in the Bible, you can find situations where people lied. Look at Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Thank goodness God's punishment for lying isn't always that severe!

Or look at Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:2-42. Abigail's husband, Nabal, got David so mad that David planned to kill all of Nabal's men. When Abigail went to David, she could've said that Nabal misunderstood why David wanted bread, water, and animals. But instead, she told David the truth: Nabal was a fool. And Abigail brought David a gift to make up for Nabal's actions.

TELL THE TRUTH

I believe God doesn't want us to tell white lies. How many times have we told a small lie only to find ourselves covering it up with a bigger one? No matter how good our intentions are, a white lie has an evil element. It has a dark side. And we can't control that evil dark side.

Think about Sandra. You won't help solve her weight problem by telling her a white lie. And your lie can break down the trust between you.

So instead of "white lying" to Sandra's comment, you can:

- **Listen**—Help Sandra explore her feelings. If you say, "Sounds like you're frustrated about your weight," you give her a chance to say more about what she's feeling.
- **Give alternatives**—Instead of agreeing or disagreeing, help Sandra explore alternatives. Say, "If you want to lose weight, try our exercise class at church."

- **Tell the whole truth**—You may need to do more than agree or disagree. Disagreeing won't help Sandra and neither will agreeing. If you were once overweight, explain how you understand her problem. Show your support.

THINK ON YOUR FEET

Unfortunately, it's hard to think of alternatives when you need them. But you can learn to think on your feet. Try these ways to improve your truth skills.

- **Take your time**. Don't jump in with your first thought. If you think about what you want to say, your thoughtfulness will show. And Sandra

LIES: GOOD OR BAD?

What You Think
In a white-lies survey of teenagers, GROUP Members Only

- About 39 percent believe it's bad to tell white lies. Only 11 percent say it's okay.
- Ninety-seven percent admit telling white lies.
- About half say a difference exists between white lies and regular lies. Another 47 percent say there's no difference.

What Adults Think

- In a survey of adults, USA WEEKEND found:
- About 61 percent believe lying isn't a sin.
 - Of those who think it's okay to lie, most do so to protect someone else's feelings.
 - About 36 percent think other people lie to them at times.

will wait for your response.

- **Think about Sandra's situation**. Why is Sandra complaining about her weight? Find out how she's feeling. Ask questions.
- **Think about Jesus**. What would Jesus do in your position? Thinking of what Jesus would do may help you find the most loving, truthful response.

- **Pray**. You've taken time to think of a response. But you still feel uncomfortable. Before saying anything, ask for God's help. Then trust that he'll watch over your situation. Feel confident that you're giving the best response available, even if it's a simple yes.

- **Think again**. Sometimes you blow it. You realize you could've been more truthful. Review the situation. What other responses could you have given? Learn from your mistakes.
- **Say you're sorry**. Instead of looking for justification, ask for forgiveness. In our survey, one person says, "God doesn't like white lies, but he understands them."

That's true of all our sins. God knows why we do what we do. We may think some justifications are better than others. But these justifications don't erase sin. Only God's forgiveness can do that. ☒

Karen J. Fisher is a free-lance writer in Colorado.

WIPING OUT WHITE LIES

If 87 percent of teenagers in our survey admit to telling a white lie now and then, it will take practice to break the habit. Using suggestions from the article, how would you respond to these situations?

SITUATION ONE: Your parents give you the car for the night. They tell you not to let anyone else drive it. But you let your friend drive, and she backs it into a parked car. Your parents ask what happened.

You're tempted to say: _____
If Jesus were in this predicament, he'd say: _____
You pray: _____
And now you say: _____

SITUATION TWO: Your friend asks you to cover for him on Saturday night. He told his parents he's staying at your house, but he's actually going camping with his girlfriend. That Saturday night, his parents call to talk to him.

You're tempted to say: _____
If Jesus were in this predicament, he'd say: _____
You pray: _____
And now you say: _____

SITUATION THREE: Your big math assignment is due today. But you put it off and never did it. Your teacher asks if you lost it.

You're tempted to say: _____
If Jesus were in this predicament, he'd say: _____
You pray: _____
And now you say: _____