

- I. Jesus speaks truth to those around Him about themselves and about Himself
 - A. John 7:10-13 . . . But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. [11] So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" [12] There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." [13] Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.
 - B. Prayer

- II. Did Jesus Lie? Treating assumptions as assumptions rather than facts.
 - A. In vs 8-9, which lead up to vs 10, we read that Jesus told His brothers to go up to the feast themselves, and that He was not going to the feast because His time had not yet fully come. Then in vs 10, we read, "But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret."
 1. Upon reading these three verses, it is easy to conclude that Jesus lied to His brothers about not going to the Feast in Jerusalem. And of course, if Jesus lied, then it means He is not sinless, because lying is a sin. And if He is not sinless, how can Jesus be the sinless sacrifice for our sins, and how can He expect us to do any better?
 2. So what did Jesus do? Did He lie or didn't He? The reality is, based on the information we have – from this story – we cannot be certain one way or the other. It is possible Jesus lied to His brothers. And it is possible He changed His mind about going to Jerusalem after His brothers left. It is also possible that after His brothers left, God spoke to Jesus and told Him to go to Jerusalem, but in a way that would hide His identify from the crowds.
 - a. In other words, we cannot irrefutably conclude Jesus lied. To say we are certain He lied, we must assume He lied and treat our assumption as if it were a fact.
 - b. However, treating assumptions as if they are facts is often foolish, and therefore unwise. Consider, when you treat an assumption as if it were a fact, it often leads to mentally obsessing, speculating, anxiety, and even fearing what may not even exist. On the other hand, it can lead to holding out hope for what cannot be.

3. But treating assumptions as fact is more than foolish, it is often destructive to relationships in that it often leads to falsely accusing someone and thinking less of them, or even thinking the worst of them. And it often feeds unnecessary frustration, anger, distrust, and even resentment toward an individual or a group of people.
 4. Therefore, guard against treating your assumptions as facts, and that includes assuming vs 8-10 show Jesus as lying when there is insufficient information to prove it.
- B. But there is more to consider regarding the possibility that Jesus lied. John included this story in his gospel, which according to his own words he wrote to give his readers sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus is the Christ (*Messiah*), and the Son of God (both human and divine); and that believing we may have life in Jesus' name (John 20:31).
1. Given John's purpose in writing, it makes no sense for John to include a story that makes Jesus look like a flawed or sinful human, for such a human could never be divine or give us life eternal.
 2. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that John believed there was no reason to fear that this part of the story would make Jesus look like a sinful, and therefore flawed human being.
- C. And there is one more thing to consider. Is all lying sinful? Could it be that deception with good intent is morally different than deception with evil intent? In other words, does the intent behind what is said or the purpose for saying it make any difference in whether a lie is sinful?
1. I will leave the final answer to these questions up to you. But to help you decide, consider the following questions.
 2. Did God sinfully lie when He told Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac? Did Moses sinfully lie when he told Pharaoh the Israelites wanted to go three days journey into the wilderness to give sacrifices to their God? Did Rahab sinfully lie when she told the King's men that the Israelite spies were gone, when in fact she was hiding them in her home? Did David sinfully lie when he acted crazy before King Achish of Gath?
 3. Is it possible our post-Renascence, western-world, scientifically influenced way of thinking and deciding things gets in the way of discerning what is a sinful lie and what isn't?
 4. What makes deception or withholding truth a sinful lie?
 - a. According to the Mosaic Law, giving false testimony is a sinful lie because you are either lying to protect yourself, or to gain a

better reputation at another's expense, or to take advantage of another person for personal gain, or to unjustly harm someone in response to something you believe they did or didn't do.

- b. In the NT, we have the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to enrich themselves while trying to make themselves look better among their fellow Christians. And we can reasonably conclude that that kind of lying is also sinful because of God's response.
5. Therefore, if a lie is a falsehood for the purpose of deception, and the purpose of the deception is to harm another person in some unjust, selfish way, then surely that is a sinful lie. And if we give our word to speak the truth, such as in a court of law or when agreeing on a contract, and yet lie, surely that is a sinful lie. But what if we lie to save a life, or to protect the innocent from mistreatment, or to hid the truth until the truth is ready to be told, are these sinful lies?

III. Lives driven by fear are handicapped lives

- A. John 7:11-12 . . . So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" Obviously, the Jews were hoping to encounter Jesus at the festival, and they expected Him to be there, and especially so because He was a Jew.
- B. John 7:12 . . . There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray."
 1. What I want to point out here is that too often we either see and speak about a person or a situation as if it is all good or all bad, rather than holding a balanced view that recognizes the good that is there and whatever bad that is there.
 2. A balanced view of people and situations is an honest view. It is probable that even the worst among us have some good in them and even the worst circumstances have some good in them.
 3. My point here is to be careful of the "its all good" or "its all bad" extremes. Do your best to keep a balanced, honest view of people and circumstances – and deal with them or talk about them accordingly.
- C. John 7:13 . . . Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.
 1. Here in vs 13 we see that both those who thought Jesus was a good man and those who thought Jesus was leading people astray were so fearful of what the Jewish religious leaders might to do them for

publicly talking about Jesus that they expressed their views privately and quietly. Sadly, this is not a unique situation.

- a. In John 9:22, we read that the parents of the blind man whom Jesus healed were afraid to speak freely in front of the Jewish religious leaders because these leaders had made the threat that if anyone confessed Jesus to be Christ, they were to be put out of the synagogue.
 - b. And John 12:42-43 tells us that many of the rulers believed in Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Jesus, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.
 - c. My purpose in pointing out these three examples from the Gospel of John to show the power of fear to affect our behavior.
2. Therefore, for the rest of the teaching time I want to talk to you about fear. Why? Because fear is one of the most powerful forces in a person's life, whether it be good fear or bad fear, wise fear or foolish fear, rational fear or irrational fear. Regardless of the nature of your fear, once you bend to its will, you will think, choose, and act according to whatever it is you fear.

D. Fear has the power to direct our thinking, choices, and behavior

1. It is rare for fear to be all consuming, that is, to be the only or the dominate motivating force in a person's life. But it is common for one or more fears to be an ever present part of our lives.
2. The problem with fear is not fear itself, but the kind of fear we submit to or choose to give power to. As I have already said, there is good fear and bad fear, wise fear and foolish fear, rational fear and irrational fear.
 - a. If we give power to the fears that are good, wise, and rational, and if we use our intellect and faith in God to manage them in good, wise, and rational ways, they will help us live a more godly, more sensible, more loving, more peaceful, and more fulfilling life. This is the good side of fear.
 - b. On the other hand, when we give power to bad, unwise, and irrational fears, it is an indication that we have already set aside sound, rational thinking and trust in God, and that we are reacting to the threat – be it real or perceived – as if we are trapped in its clutches and must do whatever we can to get out. This most often leads to thinking, choosing, and behaving in ways

that are self-damaging, life-damaging, relationship-damaging, and faith in God damaging.

3. What I find intriguing is that most of us realize that a child's fear of the dark is baseless when he is in the security of his own home, in his own room, and with his parents in the next room. And yet some of us believe our bad, unwise, and irrational fears are as real as a child believes his fear of the dark is real.
 - a. It is my opinion that our weakness with these kinds of fears is not insanity, but distrust of God and the failure to put forth a sufficient effort to discern the difference between good and bad fear, wise and foolish fear, and rational and irrational fear.
 - b. It is sad that so many adults cling to bad, foolish, and irrational fears as if they are good, wise, and rational, and they do this to the harm of their faith in God and their relationship with others – especially those near and dear.
4. Now you may be wondering if this is a lesson in psychology or Biblical living. My response to such wondering is that the Bible addresses being afraid verses not being afraid, and discerning the difference between good fear and bad fear.
 - a. According to God's word, good fear drives you toward God and godly living. It strengthens your faith in God and increases your inward peace – even in the face of trials and tribulation.
 - b. In contrast, bad, foolish, and irrational fears drive you away from God and godly living. They war against trust in God. They feed anxiety and burden your mind with speculative "what if" scenarios. They prompt relationship damaging methods of self-protection. And they make it seem like money or power or control are dependable sources of security, along with other such things as these.
5. As an example of good fear, we have the Bible's exhortation to fear God. We read in
 - a. Psalm 19:9, "The fear of the LORD is clean (*cleans us up from the soiling effects of evil*), [and it] endures forever."
 - b. Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."
 - c. Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge."
 - d. Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil."
 - e. Proverbs 10:27, "The fear of the LORD prolongs life."
 - f. Proverbs 14:27, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death."

- g. Proverbs 15:33, “The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom.”
 - h. Proverbs 16:6b, “By the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.”
 - i. Proverbs 19:23, “The fear of the LORD leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.”
 - j. In other words, fear of God is good fear, and when you give it power, it influences and motivates your thoughts, choices, and behavior in good, wise, and rational ways.
6. Daniel is a good example of someone who put the effort in to discerning the difference between good fear and bad fear. When he was faced with being torn apart by hungry lions for praying to Jehovah, he chose the fear of God over the fear of the lions.
- a. In other words, Daniel did not allow whatever fears he might have had over being torn apart by hungry lions to change his reverence for God, his integrity with God, or his fellowship with God. He continued praying at his window in order to look east toward Jerusalem as he prayed.
 - b. We don’t know if Daniel felt any fear at the prospect of being killed by lions, but we do know that he did not give power to whatever fear he may have had in that direction. He continued to live a life of faith in God.
7. Just as the Bible speaks of good, wise fear, so it speaks of bad, foolish fear. For example, we read in
- a. Proverbs 29:25 . . . The fear of man brings a snare (*something that entangles and traps you, or we might say, damages and eventually destroys you*), but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.
 - b. Matthew 10:28-31 . . . Do not fear those who kill the body (*those who persecute or mistreat you*) but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
 - (1) Notice that faith is the alternative to fear
 - (2) [29] Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. [30] But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31] So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.
 - c. And in John 5:44, Jesus points out that seeking acceptance and approval from man, first and foremost, instead of from God, prevents us from believing in God, or living according to faith in God.

8. God is well aware of how strong and how destructive bad, foolish, and irrational fears are to our faith in Him, our thinking, our choices, our behavior, and our relationships. And in an effort to save us from ourselves and from distrust of Him in the face of fear-inducing circumstances, the Bible uses these exact words, "Do not fear," forty-three times. 37 are in the OT and 6 in the NT.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Once again, let me remind that all fear is not bad or foolish or irrational. There is good fear, wise fear, and rational fear which we should pay attention to, and live accordingly. And with this in mind, I want to read portions of some verses that talk about trusting in God.
 1. Psalm 62:8 . . . Trust in [God] at all times . . . pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for you.
 2. Psalm 115:11 . . . You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is your help and your shield.
 3. Proverbs 3:5 . . . Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.
 4. Isaiah 26:3-4 . . . The steadfast of mind [God] will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in God. [4] Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, [you] have an everlasting Rock.
- B. What do you fear? Are any of your fears foolish or irrational? Do any of your fears feed distrust of God? Do any of your fears motivate you to behave in a manner that damages one or more of your relationships? Have you examined yourself carefully and honestly enough to see if you are living according to any bad, foolish, or irrational fears?
- C. We are God's children, which means we are safe in His hands. If we are going to fear anything, as well we should, may we fear God, and may we fear any failure at NOT loving our neighbor as ourselves.

NOTE: Deuteronomy 6:1-6, where God follows His command to fear Him with His command to love Him.