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# Words of Truth

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## Is There Is A Difference Between A Lie And An Innocent Exaggeration?

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All Scriptures are inspired of God [God-breathed] (II Timothy 3:16-17). What that means is, when inspired men wrote or spoke it was God speaking through them (II Samuel 23:2, Job 32:8, Jeremiah 1:9, Matthew 10:16-20, John 16:13, I Corinthians 2:9-13, I Corinthians 14:37, Galatians 1:10-12, and II Peter 1:20-21).

The word of God is truth (John 17:17, Colossians 1:5, and I Thessalonians 2:13). God has never and will never lie. Notice how we know this to be true: *"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good... Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began... That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* (Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:1-2, and Hebrews 6:18).

What God says and does is a pattern for us to follow regarding how we live our lives (Matthew 5:48, Ephesians 5:1-2, I Peter 1:13-16, and I John 4:11). The Scriptures provide us with other examples to follow as well. Paul stated that he was/is an approved example to be followed (I Corinthians 4:16 and Philippians 3:17). That is qualified however with the fact that Paul being an example for others demands that he first be following the example of Christ (I Corinthians 11:1). Therefore, we look at the Scriptures and see Christ as an example to follow (I Peter 2:21-22) as well as other faithful men and women (I Thessalonians 1:6, II Thessalonians 3:9, Hebrews 6:12, and James 5:10).

We all know that we should never lie (Psalms 119:163, Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9, and Revelation 22:14-15). The question we are going to seek to answer is whether or not there is a difference between a lie and an exaggeration. In fact, we are going to study to see if there is an exaggeration that can be right while others may be wrong. So, following the examples of God the Father, the Son, and inspired men; is there a right way to make an exaggerated statement?

### Exaggerated Statements [Hyperbole] In The Bible

The inspired book of Job says this: *"Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net"* (Job 19:6). Did God literally cast a net around Job? No! The inspired book of Deuteronomy says this: *"Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven"* (Deuteronomy 9:1). The point is exaggerated to show that the walls they'd have to get beyond were large. The inspired Psalmist said this: *"I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my*

*couch with my tears*" (Psalms 6:6). Certainly, we know beds do not swim. The point was that he cried a lot at night. An inspired Psalmist made another exaggerated statement here: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Psalms 119:136). The inspired book of Judges says this: "*And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude*" (Judges 7:12). Is it to be taken literally that there were more camels than could be counted? Listen, God knows everything (I Chronicles 28:9, Psalms 44:21, Proverbs 15:3, Isaiah 29:15-16, Jeremiah 23:24, and Hebrews 4:13). Therefore He knew how many camels there were just as He knows how many hairs are on your head (Matthew 10:29-30).

Jesus taught to pluck out your eye if you are given to lust (Matthew 5:29). Yet, we know we should not literally do so (I Corinthians 6:19-20). The Bible says that the whole world followed Jesus (John 12:19). Yet, we know that was an exaggerated statement based on other Scriptures (Matthew 7:13-23, Matthew 22:14, and John 6:66-71). Jesus said the hypocrites of His day were swallowing camels (Matthew 23:23-24). Yet, we know that is impossible. Jesus was stressing that they should have paid equal attention to greater and lesser things (as perceived in their eyes). Paul said that none understood or sought after God (Romans 3:11). Yet, we know that is not literally true, for there are always a people who seek and understand (Romans 11:1-5). His exaggeration was to declare, as it had been in the past, that few were truth seekers. As with all of these statements (and millions more – hyperbole there); the speaker, intentions, and context have much to do with the meaning of the statements.

### **The Intentions Of An Exaggeration Matter**

Not all exaggerations are innocent. The spies sent out to examine the land Israel was to take for their inheritance exaggerated the size of their enemies (Numbers 13:26-33). Their intent was to discourage their brethren from doing what God commanded (Deuteronomy 1:28). The exaggeration had wrongful intent. That made it wrong (Joshua 14:6-9).

My wife once said that she had a mountain of laundry to take care of. Was she lying? No! Anyone hearing that statement realizes that there is not a literal mountain in our laundry room. People make exaggerated statements often to make a point (i.e. "My house is a thousand years old"). An exhausted individual might say: "I could sleep for a thousand years." Are you going to call them a liar because you know they won't live that long (Psalms 90:10)? We have to be reasonable!

### **Conclusion**

We rightly divide the word of God (II Timothy 2:15). When we study the book of Revelation we keep in mind that those things prophesied then already occurred based on Revelation 1:1-3. We have to apply the same reasoning skills when considering the statements people make. We should be cautious when judging the words/intents of others (Proverbs 18:13). There are serious implications there (Revelation 21:8). The Scriptures show us that obvious exaggerations are not lies. At the same time, we should all work hard to use acceptable words (Ecclesiastes 12:9-10) and to be as clear as possible when communicating with others (II Corinthians 3:12). We have to be aware that there are those out there seeking to "catch" us saying something that they can take issue with (Mark 12:13).