

Augustine defined lying basically as the disconnect between the mind and of what is being said. The Roman Catholic Church adopted his definition while the Protestants did not offer to improve on it thereby accepting it as the de-facto definition. I would like to raise the question: Is this definition of lying biblical? Why was it not fully embraced by his contemporaries and even that of many good Christians across the centuries after him?

Let us make a contrived situation and I would like to set up a realistic one but before that, let us think together about my assumptions first before I proceed. I believe that at any given moment, it is possible that there be a person misguided for varied reasons — be it insanity, psychological imbalance, abnormal upbringing, demon-possession, or simply, stupidity. In such state we can further assume the tendency of becoming murderous, thus we have an unreasonably misguided murderous person. It is easy to conceive that this person influence others to think like himself, and now, we have a band of unreasonably misguided murderous individuals. We can further think that this group depending on their collective interests to have mutual motivations that drive them. What we now have is a gang of motivated and dangerous individuals.

So here is our situation: You, having read this book, came to my house to discuss it more with me personally. That would be nice isn't it, and I would welcome that. Now this gang of dangerous individuals, I heard of, murdered one earlier that day. And they are knocking at my door asking that I would bring you out to them because they are on a mission to murder another one that day and that there was something about you that convinced them that that have to be you.

Now, what are the options that I have?

Let us see. (a) I would give you to them to be murdered, that's an easy one to make but would I do that? Or, (b) I would tell them that you have barely left and that they could still catch you if they act fast. It seems that I would do that second option and I believe I would. But the questions now are:

1. Have I lied to protect you from being murdered?
2. Since lying is a sin, do I need to repent (that is have a change of mind) and decide that if the same situation arise in the future again that I would give my guest (that could be you) to be murdered?
3. Was the devil enamoured when I committed the lie?
4. Was God's law violated when I saved you by the lie?

If we were to ask Augustine, he would answer positively to all our questions. There is no equivocation to Augustine that this is lying and that there be no exemption. For him, the right thing to do is for me to shut my mouth or if that seems to be suspiciously unrestrictive, perhaps to redirect the gang's attention by offering them a special tea or coffee or chocolates perhaps — or Philippine bananas, you know. I cannot say that I do not know of anyone coming to my house that day because that would be lying again, you see?

If we were to ask Aquinas, that wouldn't help either. On this issue of lying, Aquinas was a disciple of Augustine.

If we were to ask Kant, he could possibly answer us in two ways base on his Categorical Imperative. Firstly, he could reason that since lying cannot be excused in one situation to save a life (since if we allow one we would have to allow all lying and make it a universal law,) you would have no luck either. But secondly, he could reason that on this particular set of

circumstances, lying could be allowed to save your life, and that would not violate his Kantian ethics because lying can be made into a universal law only on such cases. Whew, that was better for you, isn't it? Kant wasn't as restrictive in his thinking than Augustine and Aquinas were. Was this because Kant was not a Christian? Well, not on that thought now since you would not let me off the hook. You could have said that I wrote the book on lying and it is for this reason that you came to my house to further discuss it with me, so what do I say?

Fair enough.

As I have suggested above, I would save your life. You are my guest and I would do everything to protect you. We Filipinos are protective of our guests, and as a Christian, I believe that it is my duty to protect you from unreasonable and misguided murderous individuals. In the name of Christ I shall protect you whether you believe in this book or not!

Ok, that was emotional, isn't it? Let us be sober now and consider these things slowly. Ultimately we have to ask: What does the Bible have to say on this subject of lying?