

## Doing a Little Creative Reshaping of Reality

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Genesis 27:1-29

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- I. “Hey, Jacob, c’mere,” said Rebekah to her younger son. “I just heard your father making plans to pronounce the traditional blessing on your brother, Esau. But I’ve got a better idea. Here’s what I want you to do.”
  - A. And Rebekah put a plan of deception in place. She devised an elaborate lie.
    1. She got two young goats from the herd, and prepared them just like Esau prepared his wild game—the text uses the term, tasty food.
      - a. Makes me think of the Greek gyros sandwiches that Jeananne and I used to order a lot at our favorite restaurant in Peoria.
      - b. Meat prepared with spices and garnished with a special sauce—tasty food indeed.
      - c. If that’s what’s in view here, I totally agree with Isaac.
    2. After she made the tasty food, Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau’s clothes.
    3. She covered his smooth skin with goat skin to make it feel like Esau’s.
    4. She sent him in to his blind father to pretend to be Esau.
  - B. Jacob then continued the deception.
    1. He lied as he wore Esau’s clothes and identified himself as Esau.
    2. He lied about how he was able to prepare the food so fast.
    3. He lied by letting Isaac feel the goat skin on his hands.
    4. He lied when he said, “I am,” when his father asked, “Are you really my son, Esau?”
    5. He lied by standing there and accepting blessing that belonged to brother.
  - C. What Rebekah and Jacob had done was “a little creative reshaping of reality.”
    1. “Reshaping of reality” is a term I’ve invented.
      - a. You know, it doesn’t sound too bad when you say it that way.
      - b. But what it really means is to tell a lie.
    2. You see, what you do when you tell a lie is to reshape reality in order to make it serve your interests better.
      - a. Of course, once reality has been reshaped—not reality any more.
      - b. It’s a lie pretending to be reality.
    3. But it’s so tempting—and often, so convenient—to reshape reality. It can make things work out a lot better for us, as it did for Jacob.
      - a. And so we smile, and act righteous on Sunday.
      - b. But come Monday, we may do a little creative reshaping of reality.
- II. Now the main reason people reshape reality is to gain an advantage.
  - A. There’s an outstanding example of this that happened in the sports world several years ago.
    1. While applying for his first coaching job, George O’Leary padded the record of his college football career to improve his chances of being hired as an assistant coach at Syracuse University.
      - a. And his reshaping of reality worked. He got hired.



3. Whereas someone else may report, “Hauled off and slugged him.”—A 9.
  4. Was it a 2 or was it a 9? Here we’re looking at misrepresenting the degree of something.
  5. The truth probably lies somewhere between a tap and a slug, but we misrepresent the degree in a way that supports the reality we favor . We turn a 5 into a 2 or a 9.
- D. Another major way we reshape reality is by giving alternate motives for why we did something or by assigning motives to other people.
1. We may claim, “I did it for this reason,” hiding the real motive— Classic is “I didn’t do it for the money. I did it for the principle of the thing.”
  2. Or we may report “She did what she did for this reason,” because that supports what we want to believe about her.
  3. There’s no question that misreporting our motive is a reshaping of reality but so is assigning a motive to someone without knowing for sure.
- E. Hypocrisy is a form of reshaping reality, leading people to assume you’re a person different from who you really are.
1. The word hypocrisy is based on the Greek word for play acting.
  2. There are people who play act by teaching SS class and being in church every Sunday, appearing to be most upstanding citizens...
    - a. But the rest of the week they’re angry, violent and unpleasant.
    - b. They engage in questionable business practices.
    - c. They treat family members in despicable ways including incest and domestic violence and abuse.
      - (1) The sad thing is that often no one will believe abused children and wives because their abuser turns such a delightful face toward the public.
      - (2) “Oh, he wouldn’t do that. You shouldn’t say such dreadful things about your father or your husband.”
    - d. Their whole smiling, public, go-to-church-on-Sunday face is a reshaped reality they play act covering over who they really are.
- F. One can even reshape reality by not saying a thing.
1. We can allow a false report to stand by not setting things straight.
  2. We can just shrug our shoulders when asked directly.
  3. That is joining in on the lie or misunderstanding by allowing a reshaped reality to stand without correcting it.
- IV. Using tactics like these is often justified by a claim that we live in a truth-optional world.
- A. “Everyone does it.”
1. “You got to do it to get by.”
  2. “You’re a fool if you don’t reshape reality to your advantage.”
  3. “It’s the way you compensate for how everyone lies to you.”
- B. But even though this has become the mind-set of many in our society, I’m not so sure that the world is as truth-optional as many people think.
1. What I’ve observed is that although we seem to live in a truth-optional world from the telling side, from the receiving side people resent being tricked. People resent being lied to.

- a. It's true that more people are getting away with reshaping reality .
      - b. That's because more people are doing it and it's prohibitive to do verification on everything. Besides, we want to believe people.
      - c. But people who are caught are often made to pay a major price as happened with George O'Leary.
    - 2. People want to know reality as it really is so that they can make accurate judgements for themselves.
    - 3. Even though our world appears to be truth-optional, there's actually sort of a double standard.
      - a. It's okay for me to lie to you, but not okay for you to lie to me.
      - b. It's okay for me to mess with your perception of reality, but don't you dare mess with mine.
  - C. And just as we human beings react strongly when we discover that someone has messed with reality, so does God react strongly.
    - 1. God hates to see people trying to pass off reshaped reality as truth.
    - 2. He has some strong opinions about that kind of behavior.
- V. To work at understanding God's opinions on this topic, I would like to build a three-point theology of truth.
  - A. The first point of this theology is that lying is part of our natural depravity.
    - 1. We are natural born reshapers of reality.
    - 2. *Jeremiah warns in 9:4, Beware of your friends; do not trust your brothers or sisters. For every one is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer. Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth. They have taught their tongues to lie; they weary themselves with sinning.*
    - 3. *And he says in 17:9, The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*
    - 4. We are natural born liars. We automatically default to reshaping reality in order to benefit ourselves.
  - B. The second point of our theology of truth is that God hates lying. He hates deception. He hates the reshaping of reality.
    - 1. *Proverbs 12:22 says, The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are truthful.*
    - 2. *In Psalm 101:7 the LORD states, No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.*
    - 3. God hates untruth so intensely because He is truth. He despises anything that is contrary to truth.
  - C. The third point of my theology of truth is that God calls us to absolute truth.

1. Peter says, *Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.* 1 Peter 3:10,
2. Psalm 15 asks, *LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?* and answers, *“The person whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his or her heart and has no slander on his or her tongue.”*
3. Paul says in Eph. 4:25, *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his or her neighbor.*

VI. So how does a Christian live in a “truth-optional,” “reality-reshaping” world?

- A. Well, we begin by insisting that truthfulness is not optional for Christians.
  1. We are to be people of our word. We are to be people of truth.
  2. There are two words that I like to use here to explain this trait.
    - a. The first is transparent—to be free from pretense or deceit.
      - (1) Means what you see is what you get.
      - (2) No shadowy places, no corners around which a surprise can be hiding. Everything is open to view.
    - b. The second is integrity—a firm adherence to a code of moral values.
      - (1) I have always considered my father to be the utmost example of integrity.
        - (a) His strict Menno upbringing taught him to operate according to the highest standards of truthfulness.
        - (b) That is exactly how he has lived his whole life.
        - (c) That was a problem a year ago when he had to fill out a nursing home satisfaction survey.
          - i) Immobilized by some yes-no questions.
          - ii) We’re hugely satisfied—but lost laundry a time or two and toe nails too long one time.
          - iii) I had to work to get him to realize that if you’re only 1% dissatisfied it’s okay to answer yes, that you are satisfied.
          - iv) Had a hard time saying yes because his integrity stumbled over that 1%.
      - (2) My dad is a man of integrity.
      - (3) And that is a trait we are all to have as Christians.
  3. Truth is not optional. We are to tell the truth.
- B. Now I know there are some gray and difficult areas in relation to telling the truth.
  1. What about those hard times when the fragile person trying so hard to be liked asks about how we liked her dreadful song, or when the Gestapo

officer knocks on the door and asks if we are hiding any Jews?

2. There are some sticky issues as we live in today's complex world.

3. But we dare not allow the difficult issues to get in way of basic principle that God hates lying and does not look kindly upon reshaping of reality.

VII. Our God is not a truth-optional God.

A. Now he knows our understanding of truth can be skewed by failures in our perception or that sometimes things are 99% one way and 1% the other way.

1. He can understand when our statements of truth and his awareness of absolute reality don't exactly match up.

2. He has lots of grace for human inability to get it right, even when we try.

B. What bothers God is when we purposely set out to reshape reality from what we know it to be into a pseudo-reality that is to our advantage and to others' disadvantage.

1. *God detests lying lips.*

2. He does not want to see any reshaping of reality among his children.

C. And that's the truth.