**Session 3 Supplementary Sheet**

***Is Lying Ever Okay for the Believer?***

Jen Wilkin is probably right when she said that the two Hebrew midwives were honoring a higher moral ethic when they lied to Pharaoh in order to preserve the lives of male Hebrew babies. But I think a word of caution is in order. In fact, the more I have thought about how blithely—almost gleefully—Jen excuses the midwives’ lying by saying, “they did not owe Pharaoh the truth,” the more alarmed I have become. Here are some of my concerns and some scriptures to chew on as we consider this issue.

* **Concern #1:** **God is all-wise and all-knowing. We are not.** Even though we “know” that, we can easily shrug it off and deceive ourselves into thinking that we know best in a given situation. For example, it would be very easy to convince ourselves that “a little white lie” is okay if we think it will benefit someone and use Shiphrah and Puah’s example to justify our actions. But it is rare to be in the situation that these two women were in, and we need to be sure that our own “higher moral ethic” is indeed higher. I am reminded of a time when the coaches of a peewee baseball team told their kids on several occasions that they had lost a game by only one point when in reality the team had repeatedly been skunked. Later on in the season, when the kids had improved and really *did* lose a game by only one point, they were completely demoralized when the coaches excitedly told them the good news. Their response was, “We *always* lose by one point,” and walked away with their heads hanging. So while the coaches thought they had a good reason for their “little white lies”, they realized that their lies had backfired on them. Telling the difficult truth in love throughout the season would have been far better.
* **Concern #2: Does the fact that other women in scripture “lied for a higher good” strengthen the case?** Jen mentioned Tamar and Rahab as two other women who lied and yet were blessed by God. I think we need to consider the fact that the Law had not yet been given during Tamar, Shiphrah and Puah’s lifetimes, so they would not have had to deal with the “thou shalt not bear false witness” issue. Rahab lived right at the time the Law had been given to the Israelites (or very shortly thereafter)—but she was a pagan Canaanite by background and would not have known the Ten Commandments. So I am not sure that we can use the lying of these four women as a reason to justify our own in some situation that seems to warrant it.
* **Concern #3: Is it accurate to say that we do not owe certain—presumably evil—people the truth?** Jen said that Shiphrah and Puah did not owe Pharaoh the truth because he himself was a deceiver and an evil man. However, I cannot think of any scripture to back this statement up. I would be very interested to know if any of you have some scriptures to bring to bear on this idea. What did come to my mind was something Christ said to His followers about the Pharisees. He told them that while they should not follow the *bad example* of the Pharisees, they should still show the Pharisees *respect* because “they sit in Moses’ seat”.
* **Example from a similar time in recent history: the Holocaust.** During World War II a number of believers put their lives on the line to rescue and/or protect their Jewish neighbors. They grappled with knowing what was the right thing to do when questioned about their neighbors’ whereabouts by the Germans: should they tell the truth or should they lie? Some were convinced that they should always tell the truth, no matter what, because the Ten Commandments clearly state, “Do not lie.” Others were equally convinced that it was okay to lie to their enemies in order to save the lives of their Jewish friends. What was interesting to me was hearing accounts of how God worked to protect the Jews even when the truth was told. For example, when German soldiers asked one very godly elderly woman, “Where are the Jews?” she answered, “Under the kitchen table.” The soldiers turned away in disgust, thinking her senile, because they could clearly see that there was nothing under the table but a rug. The rug, however, hid a trap door that led to a chamber below where several Jewish people were hiding.
* **So what about us? What should we do?** As I said earlier, probably none of us are in the position of either the Hebrew midwives or of believers in WWII Germany. Our lives are not on the line, at least not yet. But it would do well for us to think about this issue and reach our own well-reasoned conviction, based on our understanding of scripture. I personally am convinced that if our motive is to honor God, then He will honor us no matter which way our convictions lead us. And that was really the bottom line in the case of Shiphrah, Puah, and Rahab: each of them feared the Lord and wanted to honor Him, and that was why God blessed them.

**Some Relevant Scriptures To Consider**

* Exodus 20:16 – ***You shall not bear false witness*** against your neighbor.
* Matthew 10:16 – Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so ***be wise as serpents*** ***and innocent as doves***.
* Matthew 22:17-21 – “Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore ***render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”*** [Note that this exchange with the Pharisees is an example of Christ Himself being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.]
* Ephesians 4:25 – Therefore, having put away falsehood, ***let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor,*** for we are members of one another.
* Colossians 4:5 – ***Walk in wisdom toward outsiders***, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, ***so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.***