

**GOD AND INTEGRITY: A CASE STUDY OF
WALTER C. KAISER JR. AND
NORMAN GEISLER**

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The God of the Bible is sometimes portrayed as using and condoning deceit to achieve his purpose, especially when human life is at stake. Two evangelical scholars, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Norman L. Geisler, with a shared theological heritage, differ in their interpretation of Exod 1:15-21 and Josh 2:1-7, both of which address the ethical issue of lying to save life.

This dissertation not only refutes the claim that God uses and condones the use of deceit to achieve his purpose, but also clarifies the biblical argument for his integrity. The study provides answers to a number of questions. First, what causes divergent interpretations in the work of Kaiser and Geisler? Second, is it ever right to lie in order to save life? Third, does the God of the Bible who claims not to lie condone lies in any form? A biblical, theological, and philosophical inquiry is conducted in order to establish the biblical teachings on God's character.

In the first chapter, a historical survey displays the intensity of two opposing views and shows how scholars have pondered the moral issue of lying in general and lying to save life in particular.

In order to explain the underlying reasons for these two divergent views on the issue of lying as implied in Exod 1:15-21 and Josh 2:1-7, the second chapter determines the meaning of the word *integrity* in the Bible. After an overview of terms in both Testaments, the Hebrew word תְּמִימָה and the Greek word τέλειος, as related to God, his actions and/or attributes, are analyzed contextually, exegetically, and semantically. This chapter establishes that the תְּמִימָה means "without blemish or spotless" when it is applied to sacrificial animals, and means "whole, sound, healthful, flawless" when applied to God. The chapter thus concludes that God's integrity is flawless.

The third chapter extends the analytical scope of the word תְּמִימָה to certain attributes of God. A systematic analysis of the attributes of truthfulness, trustworthiness, holiness, and mercy are done both biblically and theologically. The analysis of these attributes together with the exegetical study of the word תְּמִימָה confirms that the God of the Bible is a being of integrity.

The fourth chapter makes available the reasons for both scholars' divergent interpretations by providing a report of their presuppositions, hermeneutical principles, and interpretations of the two texts under consideration. This report identifies the different presuppositions and hermeneutical principles at the genesis of their understanding of the texts.

The first part of chapter 5 presents an exegetical study of Exod 1:15-22 and Josh 2:1-7 and the second part critically analyzes both Kaiser's and Geisler's presuppositions and hermeneutical principles. The assessment focuses on internal consistency and consistency with the biblical material.

As their divergent views became increasingly apparent, this study concludes and posits that God is the being of integrity in whom there is no lie. He, consequently, does not use deceit to achieve his purpose. Accordingly, any attempt to use dishonesty or deceit to achieve one's purpose is biblically unwarranted. Kaiser's and Geisler's different interpretations of Exod 1:15-22 and Josh 2:1-7 provide just another example of how hermeneutical principles that are alien to Scripture may project a different view of God and morality.