136367 - The limits on a man’s lying to his wife and vice versa

the question

I know that lying is permissible in three situations: lying to one’s wife, lying for the purpose of bringing about reconciliation, and lying to the enemy (in war). Isn’t that so? But what are the limits on a man’s lying to his wife?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is a concession allowing one to tell lies in three situations, as is mentioned in the hadith narrated by at-Tirmidhi (1939) and Abu Dawud (4921) from Asma’ bint Yazid (may Allah be pleased with her), who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Lying is not permitted except in three cases: a man’s speaking to his wife to make her happy; lying at times of war; and lying in order to reconcile between people.” Al-Albani classed the hadith as authentic in *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*.

Muslim (2065) narrated from Umm Kulthum bint `Uqbah ibn Abu Mu`ayt (may Allah be pleased with her) that she heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saying: “He is not a liar who reconciles between people and conveys something good or says something good.” Ibn Shihab said: I did not hear of any concession being granted concerning anything that people call lies except in three cases: War, reconciling among people, and what a man says to his wife or a woman says to her husband.

What is meant by telling lies between spouses is lying when expressing affection and love for the purpose of maintaining harmony and keeping the family together, such as the husband saying to his wife: You are dear to me, or: No one is dearer to me than you, or: You are the most beautiful of women in my eyes, and so on. It does not mean the kind of lying that leads to undermining rights

or evasion of duties and so on.

Al-Baghawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Sharh as-Sunnah* (13/119): Abu Sulayman al-Khattabi said: These are issues in which a man may have to exaggerate in his words and go beyond what is strictly true, for the purpose of maintaining peace and warding off harm. A similar concession is granted in some situations, allowing something that is wrong for the sake of some hoped-for benefit. So lying when seeking to reconcile between two people means telling one of them that the other said something good about him, even if he did not hear him say that, intending thereby to bring about reconciliation. And lying in the case of war means pretending to be strong, and saying things that will encourage and inspire one's companions and cause trouble to the enemy. It is narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: "War is deceit."

What is meant by a man's lying to his wife is making promises to her and raising her hopes, and showing more love to her than he really feels, in order to maintain a good relationship with her and make her behave well with him. And Allah knows best.

Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah said: If a man apologizes to another man, saying nice things that are not accurate in order to please him, he is not a liar who is distorting the facts: "He is not a liar who reconciles between people." He said: His reconciling between himself and another man is more important than his reconciling between people.

It was narrated that at the time of `Umar, a man said to his wife: I adjure you by Allah, do you love me? She said: As you have adjured me by Allah, then no. He went to `Umar, who sent for her and said: Are you the one who said to your husband: I do not love you? She said: O Amir al-Mu'minin, he adjured me by Allah; should I lie to him? He said: Yes, you should lie to him; not all marriages are built on love, but people get along by virtue of Islam and ties of kinship. End quote.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Sharh Muslim*: As for a man's lying to his wife and her lying to him, what is meant is showing affection, making promises that are not binding, and so on. As for tricking one another in order to withhold their dues, or take that to which they

have no right, that is prohibited according to the consensus of the Muslim scholars. And Allah knows best. End quote.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Fat-h*: [The scholars] are unanimously agreed that what is meant by lying with regard to a wife and husband is lying in matters that do not lead to waiving of duties or acquiring that to which he or she has no right. End quote.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Sharh Riyadh as-Salihin* (1/1790): Serving an interest also includes a man's talking to his wife and a woman's talking to her husband in ways that increase harmony and strengthen the bond between them, such as if he says to her: You are dear to me, you are dearer to me than all women, and the like, even if he is lying, but it is for the sake of creating affection, and it serves an interest. End quote.

And Allah knows best.