

## **The Need to Turn from Lies**

~ Various Passages

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When I was in university, I had a part-time job as a carpet cleaner. We had contracts to clean apartment hallways and suites. We sometimes used a big time portable carpet cleaner. One day, I got to the end of a hallway and opened the door to the stairwell. I put the carpet cleaning unit out on the stairwell landing so I could finish the hallway. On the landing sat a fire extinguisher in a box case with a glass front.

I kept carpet cleaning and moving backwards toward the stair well. I kept pushing the carpet cleaning unit a little further back after I finished a section. But I didn't realize that I pushed it against the glass of this fire extinguisher box. Well, I was just about done and made one last push backwards on the cleaning unit. Suddenly I heard this big shattering sound. I turned to see the glass broken into multiple pieces.

I moaned with disgust. I didn't know what to do. I quickly moved the big glass pieces towards the base of the box. I pulled my unit away. My supervisor worked in a different part of the building. "I should tell him," I thought. Then I realized no one had seen this happen except me. So if I got out of there quickly, they might not connect me to the broken glass. I quickly cleaned the rest of the stairwell. Then I went

down to the next level to begin working on the lower hallway. If the building supervisor came along and saw the broken glass, he wouldn't know who did it. He might not even see it until later that day.

So I began to clean the lower level. Then the door at the far hall opened and in walked my supervisor. He came and checked on things. He asked how it was going. "Fine," I said. Then he left. I continued to clean while my stomach churned and thoughts swirled in my head. "What will they think of me if I admit this? Will they take the glass replacement cost off my pay check? Will they fire me?" I got about half way down the hall when I decided I could not do this. So I found my supervisor and told him what happened. He came and looked at it and moaned. He went to tell the building supervisor. "Finish the hallway and meet me in the truck," he scowled. So I finished, went to the truck and waited for my punishment. My boss came back and shared the building manager's frustration. Then he said, "You broke the glass before I came to check on you didn't it. Why didn't you tell me then?" He had figured out my scheming. I told him the truth. "I was thinking about not telling anyone and trying to get away with it. But I couldn't do it." He paused for a moment and then said, "Ok. Thanks for being honest. Let's get going." I didn't lose my job. I did learn some lessons about taking more care. I went home with a clear conscience.

Yet the temptation to lie to get out of an awkward spot shows up often in life. I suspect you might have had similar experiences. It doesn't help when we see others lie at home, work, school or on the team AND get away with it. It's hard to speak truth in a lie filled world.

Yet lying becomes a regular part of life for some including those struggling with addictions. Author Edward Welch writes this: "Addictions are so intimately joined to lies and deception that you will probably never find one without the other. Chances are that the addict has developed skill in coverups, white lies, blameshifting, or outright manipulative lies. If you have struggled with addictions, you have lied and if you have lived with an addict, you have been deceived. You wonder if you can ever trust the person again."<sup>1</sup> Yet it is not only addicts and their loved ones who struggle with the fall out of lies and deception. All of us face temptation to lie and deceive others. All of us can potentially experience the brokenness that comes with discovering someone close to us lied to us.

So today, we will spend some time thinking about lying and truth-telling. I'm going to tell you the main idea of today's message right up front. I'm doing this so you have time to think about it and

hopefully learn it. But I'm also doing this because it might take some convincing for us to agree with this statement. So here's the statement and then we'll talk about how we'll unpack it. **Since lying leads to darkness and death, trust God to live in the light instead.** Does lying really lead to darkness and death? We will explore the evidence for this claim. Then we will think about some lies we might believe that regularly impact us. Finally, we will consider how to move from lying to trusting God to live in the light.

**Does lying really lead to darkness and death?** Doesn't that seem like an overstatement? If you tell a little white lie to your spouse or parent or boss, no one is going to die because of it. "Honey, why were you 30 minutes late coming home? Oh, traffic was really heavy." But it wasn't. You actually stopped for a drink on the way home to calm down from a bad day at work. Or "hey son, I didn't hear you come in last night. What time did you get home?" Oh, it was 5 minutes before curfew." But it was actually 2 hours after curfew and your parents were asleep." "Did you get that email sent off to the client? Yes boss, I did it." But you actually forgot to do it. You will immediately send it when you get back to the office. So yes lying happened. But no one died.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward T. Welch, Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave, Phillipsburg, NJ, P @ R Publishing, 2001, 182.

Does lying really lead to darkness and death? Let's consider 4 things about lying from the Bible.

**One - Consider Satan – the father of lies.** The kingdom of Satan consists of lies. Listen to what Jesus says about Satan in John 8:44 “He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” When we lie, we speak Satan’s native tongue. We speak or live the common language in Satan’s kingdom. We probably wouldn’t put this on our resumes under languages spoken. “English; French; satanic.” Yet lies align with satanic statements.

**Two - Consider how Satan’s lies impacted Adam and Eve.** Satan started by lying about God. He basically said – “God is not good. God does not want the best for you. God will not follow through on his warning that you will die if you eat from that tree.

So they believed this lie. They disobeyed God. Then they hide from God. They did not step into the light. They found refuge *in darkness* away from God. After everything was unveiled, God pronounced sentence upon them which included death – a return to the dust of the ground. Lies led Adam and Eve to darkness and death.

Yet, we still might not see how a little white lie can lead to darkness and death. Well, say we get in the habit of telling little lies to get out of a minor tight spot. It seems to work. Then we’re cultivating a practice of lying to deal with bigger tight spots in the future.

Say a Mom asks her teenage daughter who is on the way out the door, “Did you clean the bathroom like you promised?” The daughter answers “yes Mom.” But she didn’t. She knows her Mom will get over it. And she gets to go out with her friends right away. Since there are no immediate consequences, she concludes that lying works.

She keeps up this practice and brings it into a dating relationship eventually getting engaged. She dates one guy she really likes this guy. But she keeps talking to another guy flirtatiously on social media. Her fiancé asks her if she’s talking to that other guy. “No, not at all,” she says. Her fiancé believes her. But then they’re watching a movie. They pause the movie while she goes to get some popcorn. Suddenly her phone on the couch beside the boyfriend, lights up with a notification. He looks down to see a text from the other guy thanking her for the long conversation they had last night.

The fiancé realizes she lied to him all along. Suddenly, their relationship is fractured and irreparably damaged. He breaks up with her. Her white lie habit led to the death of their relationship.

And lying can lead to darkness and literal death in the life of an addict. Some see the devastation brought on by their addiction. So they take their own life. Some grow hopeless about overcoming their addiction. So they live in darkness. Some lie and deceive their loved ones about their activities. The loved one finds out so that the relationship suffers serious damage. Lying can lead to life in darkness and death.

**Three - Consider God's response to a couple of liars.** Acts 5:1-11.

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Now we can look at that account and say God overreacted. "What is the big deal? The church got this huge blessing of money. So they lied about the exact amount of the land sale. It was overall a good thing." So there's two possibilities. Either God did overreact and compromised justice. Therefore, there's good reason to question his character. Or God responded with perfect justice and righteousness. The fact that He doesn't strike down other Christians who lie tells us more about God's great mercy. Our offense at God's response points to how much we minimize sin, especially lying. These lies directly led to death.

**Four - Consider how Satan's lies/deceptions impact us today.**

Here's one – "**God is not good. Sin is good.**" That's basically what he said to Adam and Eve isn't it. "God is holding out on you. He is a cosmic kill joy who demands slavish obedience or He will zap you. There is good out there that is better than what God gives." Adam and Eve believed this and humankind has suffered ever since. The statement "God is not good but sin is good" is a lie. The truth is, "God is good and works for our good," and "sin destroys." Yet we often believe this lie.

Here's another one. **You are good and occasionally do a bad thing.** I think that is a widespread belief today. Welch writes "At a deep

level, we believe that God is not as good as he says and we think we are better than we actually are. Instead of believing that we are sinners who sin, we tend to think of ourselves as good people who occasionally do bad things.”<sup>2</sup>

Now there is no doubt that external factors can influence us to do bad or sin. Genetics, a dysfunctional home life, an negative influential authority figure and unhealthy views of ourselves can all contribute to bad choices. But we must not say something outside of us caused all of our behavior. If we do, then we only need to learn skills to better cope with life.

But if the Bible is right and our root problem is sin, that’s a different matter. Then we need an external savior to rescue us from our plight. The problem is internal. The solution is external. This is the good news of the Gospel. Christ died for sinners. It is good news for people who sin. It is good news for desperate people. But nice people who occasionally do something bad may not see their need for a savior. I am good but occasionally do bad things” is a lie. “I am a sinner needing saving and forgiveness” is the truth.

Here’s one more lie. **It is hopeless and God does not care about my life.** This is a different type of lie. It shows up when life gets hard. It can be a combination of Satan’s whispers and our own despair or discouragement. If you’ve ever had thoughts like this, you’re not alone.

It happened to Moses. Moses says this to God in Numbers 11:14-15 – “I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now. In that outburst, Moses believes the lie that God mistreated him by laying an overwhelming burden on him. This lie led Moses to desire death. Yet God responds by providing 70 elders to stand with Moses and share the load. It was not hopeless and God did care about his life.

It happened to Elijah. God, through Elijah, defeated the 850 false prophets. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Elijah outruns the king’s chariot. This is a massive spiritual victory. But the next day, evil queen Jezebel sends Elijah a note promising to have him killed. So he runs away. In 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:4, Elijah says, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” Elijah wants God to

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 193.

kill him. Why? He believes the lie that it is certain that he will suffer the same fate as his fathers who were killed despite their righteousness. Therefore, God might as well just strike me dead now.” The lie led Elijah to desire death. How does God respond? He provides Elijah with food, water and rest. Then he gives him his next assignment. Jezebel would not win. In fact, Elijah would never ever taste death. “It is hopeless and God does not care about me” is a lie. The truth is **“God cares deeply about you and promises to provide for your needs.**

I think these four considerations give weight to the claim that lying leads to darkness and death. Yet we still lie. Welch writes “Lies offer temporary power over others and protection for ourselves. . . . Categories of lying behavior include; hiding; sneaking; blaming; manipulating; avoiding; changing the subject; rationalizing; giving your word but not doing it.”

So let’s go back to our main point for today. **Since lying leads to darkness and death, trust God to live in the light instead.** To live in the light means to live with no fear of exposure or uncovering of something wrong that has not been dealt with.

### **Why trust God so we can live in the light?**

**God is Truth.** John 1:9 - The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. John 14:6 - “I am the way, and

the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 17:3 – “And this is eternal life, that they know you, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” 1 John 1:5 – “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 1 John 5:20- And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” Jesus repeatedly says “I tell you the truth.” He has given us the Spirit of truth. John 14:17.

**It is impossible for God to lie.** Titus 1:1-3 - Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. r;

Hebrews 6:17-18 – “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. God is truth. Why trust God so we can live in the light?

**This good God calls us to, is to live and speak truth.** Exodus 20:16 -“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Zechariah 8:16 – These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace. Ephesians 4:25 – Each one of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor. Colossians 3:9 - Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices.”

We must plead for mercy and grace so we are not ensnared by lies. Welch writes “God speaks truth and calls us to believe him and follow him by speaking the truth ourselves. Satan speaks lies – he wants us to doubt the goodness of God, and he bids us to follow him in speaking and believing lies. Speaking truth instead of lies is not simply being nice. It is a declaration of allegiance. Truth is a telltale mark revealing you belong to the kingdom of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Since lying leads to darkness and death, trust God to live in the light instead. **How do we join God’s work in us to turn from lies and toward truth?** Here’s some different ways and maybe you can take one of these and apply it to your life. 1 - **Trust God and Depend on His power.** Regularly pray about our speech. We need to ask God to

help us see our lies. We need to adopt the posture of opening our lives to God’s transforming work in us.

**2 - Ask yourself, “Does my lying bother me?”** If it doesn’t, ask God to give you a heart for truth telling and courage to own up to your lies. Sometimes, we may not want to face this because so much of our lives or identity is based on a lie. So to face this seems huge. But lying leads to darkness and death. So trust God to live in the light instead. If your lying bothers you, God is working in your heart. He will give you grace to continue what he has started.

**3 - Preach to yourself the truth about lies.** “Lies are foolish. Lies are dangerous. All lies and deception flirt with Satan himself. Lies are malicious. They don’t seem to be against anyone. But they are and they hurt. They wreck relationships. Remind yourself about this.

**4 - Regularly ask the Spirit to search your heart and life for lies.** Here’s a couple of questions you might ask yourself. How do your private life and imaginations differ from your public one? What do you do in private that you would never want to be known in public? Or say you experience the distorted thinking lies like “It is hopeless and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 184.

God doesn't care about me. Challenge that thought by asking "Is that really true?"

**5 - When our deception is exposed, we confess it to God and others.** James 5:16- Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." Speak truth to God. But also to others. Welch writes "If we easily confess to God something that shames us to confess to a friend, we are thinking too highly of the opinions of people and not highly enough about the holiness of God."

**6 - Keep the fear of the Lord in view.** This doesn't mean we walk around afraid of God. It means we recognize that God sees everything all the time. God is at work for my good. Place it as the wallpaper on your phone; or computer or tablet. Put a little sticky note by your desk or by the place where you keep your TV remote or on your tablet/computer screen." It reminds us that we live publicly. It is our protection from lies. And it reminds us that God is at work for our good.

God is at work in our hearts to transform us from liars to truth tellers. So let us come to His table to confess to Him honestly. Then we can celebrate that Jesus paid the price for our sin and has opened the way up for us to leave lying behind.

For those of you who have been hurt by the lies and deception of others, I invite you to come to the Lord's Table remembering that God is the ultimate truth teller. Despite the hurts and pain caused by deception and lies, God never lies. It is impossible for God to lie. So we can still trust Him while walking through the lies and deceptions inflicted on us by others.

Since lying leads to darkness and death, trust Christ to live in the light instead.

### **Lord's Supper**

- To access the power of God to combat our lying, we first needed reconciliation with God. We also needed an awareness that lying goes against God and is the devil's native tongue. So we need rescue from this sin and our allowance for it. That is only possible through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. He atoned for our sin and enables us to enter into relationship with God as His child.
- Then they will be invited to confess lies to the Lord; resolve to admit it to others and depend on Him to turn from the lies to walk in the light.