

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT *TEN LIES SATAN LOVES TO TELL*

Christ nailed Satan with His observation that he is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). Martin Luther often called attention to the devil's modus operandi: he appears as a black devil to lure us into the pursuit of outright sin, but even more formidably he attacks us by appearing as a white devil, a seeming paragon of godly piety. Jones confronts ten of the white devil's lies that strike at the heart of our humanity, our relationship with God. Satan tries to kill us by separating us from God either through pride in our works or despair of God's forgiveness and liberation from sin. Jones's pastoral experience and skill emerge in his cultivation of the reader's competence in confronting and dismissing the fears and falsities that Satan cultivates through his lies. This book thus opens the way to peace and joy in the liberated life we have through Christ's death and resurrection.

Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb, professor emeritus of systematic theology,
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

In *Ten Lies Satan Loves to Tell*, Andrew bravely leans into the uncomfortable darkness and shines a light of truth. With wisdom and clarity, Andrew's words guide us to see the heart of God and the endless beauty of His grace. Page after page, Andrew boldly calls out the evil work of Satan, reminding us of God's kind love and encouraging us to remain steadfast in the hope of Christ until He comes again. This is an excellent book for anyone who follows Jesus.

Tanner Olson, author and poet, writtentospeak.com

As a gracious teacher and pastor, Andrew's heart shines through in this book, guiding us to a deeper understanding of God's rich truths. He shows us how living in fear means falling prey to Satan's favorite deceptions. Page after page, Andrew shows us the truth found in Scripture—our ultimate hope against the crippling fear Satan would have us embrace. This book powerfully reminds us that God's perfect love, shown in Scripture and through His Son, Jesus, can be our life's foundation.

Michelle Diercks, author, speaker, and podcast host

I really enjoyed this quick but deep read. Andy does a great job of breaking down ten lies and struggles that we all encounter. He not only gives us ways to combat these lies and live a godly life but also reminds us that we do not suffer alone, pointing us back to Scripture. All of this is rooted in the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, where Satan told the first and biggest lie that impacts us still today. Readers will connect instantly and be able to tackle the lies of Satan and this world with the truth: the Gospel.

Rehema Kavugha, Synod relations director, Lutheran Church
Extension Fund

Sometimes what you read is precisely the thing you need. In an age when many cannot tell the difference between lies and truth—or the mouths from which those two things emanate—this book is one we all need. With clarity and concision, demonstrating biblical depth and breadth, Andrew Jones exposes the core of Satan’s lies and shifts the focus from who you are to whose you are. In doing so, he helps us hear the voice of the One whose native tongue is not lies but truth, not death but life itself.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Borrasso, pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church,
Lexington Park, Maryland; adjunct faculty, Concordia University,
St. Paul, and Concordia University Texas



TEN LIES SATAN LOVES TO TELL

ANDREW R. JONES

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS



For my grandparents—Herman and Helen,
Milton and Marian—who each taught me the
undeniable power of telling the truth



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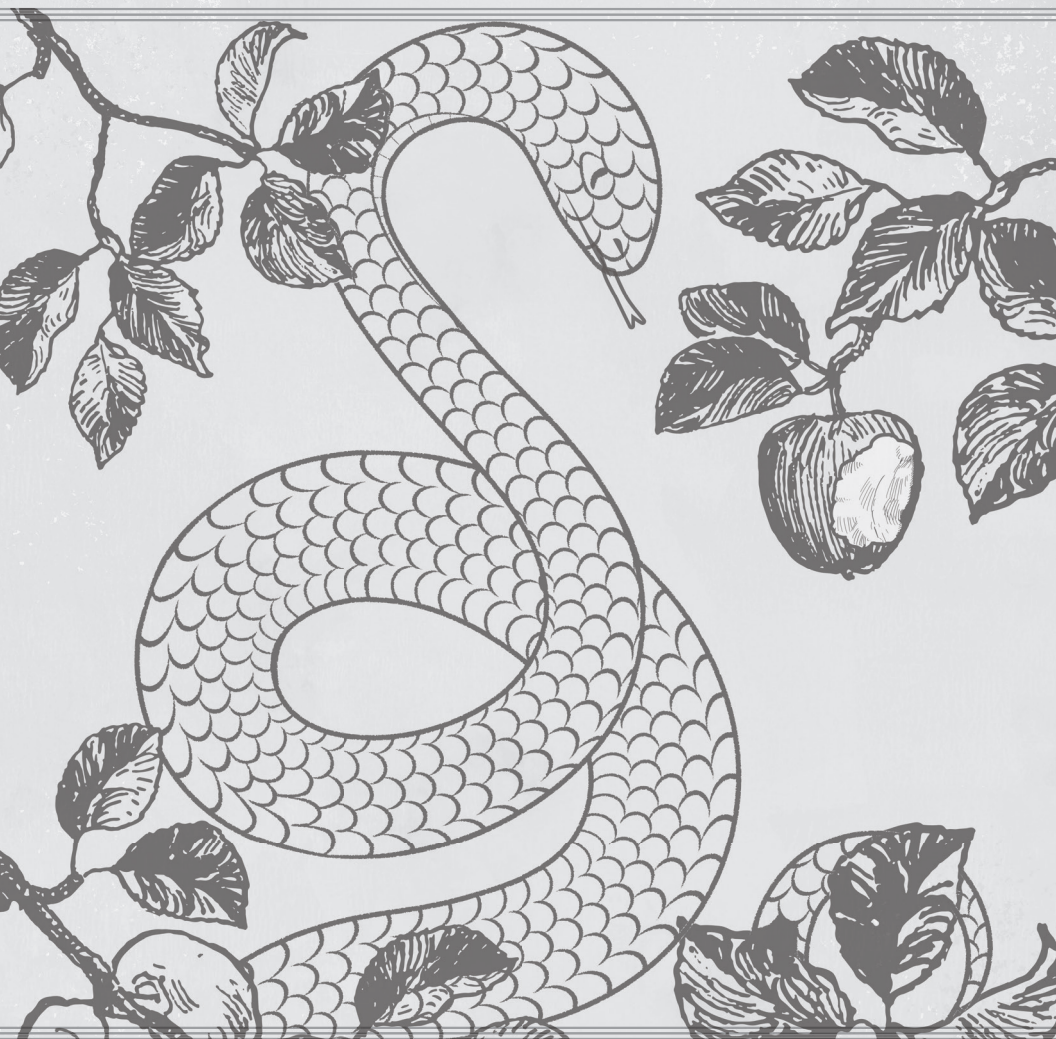
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INTRODUCTION

SATAN—THE FATHER OF LIES

Satan is real. Satan is dangerous. He is dedicated to dismantling God's kingdom and God's people. One of Satan's primary tactics is deception. In John 8, Jesus exposes Satan as "a liar and the father of lies" (v. 44). Every time Satan appears in the Scriptures, he is lying, deceiving, and seeking the destruction of God's people. Satan's ultimate goal is to lead God's people as far away from God as possible. Satan assaults us by leading us ever toward present and eternal suffering.

Lies are the inception of all suffering. Lies are at the center of humanity's fall into sin. Lies lead to death. Satan is ever at work against God, and oftentimes Satan uses his allies—sin and death—as tools in the war against God's people.

Each sin that you or I participate in is rooted in a lie we have believed about ourselves or about God. In this book, we will seek to expose some of Satan's favorite lies that assault us.

As we get started, I want to set some expectations for what this book is about and what it is not about. This book seeks to expose Satan's lies, to help people recognize those lies, and to lead people away from the influence of Satan's lies. This book seeks to lead people ever toward the truth of Jesus, His kingdom, and the promised eternal life that awaits God's people.

This book is not seeking to convince you that Satan is real. The words



*This book seeks
to lead people
ever toward the
truth of Jesus.*

of Jesus tell us that Satan is real and fighting against us in a cosmic spiritual battle. I trust that Jesus is telling us the truth, and I write from that perspective.

To that end, this is not an apologetics book. It is not meant to be used as a defense of the Christian faith against those who do not believe. This book is

a handbook for those who believe in Jesus. It is a resource meant to be used by God's people against Satan and Satan's lies.

Moreover, this is not a book of shame but one of encouragement. It is a book of realization, not one of pointing fingers and pointing out failures. It is a handbook for each reader (whether read alone or in community) to help extract God's people from the lies Satan tells them.

The ten lies this book highlights are lies Satan uses in the Scriptures and continues to tell even now. These are lies Satan has told me, lies Satan has told my family and friends, parishioners and students. This is a book about the lies Satan loves to tell you, dear reader. Yet, as I said, this book is not intended to shame you. It is intended to liberate you from Satan's lies

with the truth of Jesus. I would encourage you to read this book with an eye toward how Satan is lying to *you*, not how Satan might be lying to others. Think of this as looking at the log in one's own eye, not a matter of the speck in someone else's eye (see Matthew 7:1–5).

Ultimately, this book is my attempt to share with you all the contours of the logs I have been struggling to extract from my own eyes.

Furthermore, this is not a book about American (or any other) culture wars. It is not as if Satan has chosen to lie to some people and not to others. Satan lies to everyone. Our political preferences, denominational affiliations, and cultural heritages are not exemptions or protections against Satan. Jesus is our only hope and protection against Satan. While I will look at how Satan repeats his lies in our world today, political hot-button issues will not be talked about, even ones you may rightly care deeply about.

I do not address such topics on purpose, because the inclusion of such topics has two potential outcomes I wish to avoid. First, if I speak about a political issue pointing out the lies of your political opponents, Satan will tempt you to think you are exempt from that lie, when you are not. No one is exempt from Satan's lies. He speaks

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them to everyone, even to Jesus. Second, if I speak about a political issue and point out lies your political opponents are struggling with, it is unlikely that such commentary from me will assist you in loving your politically opposed neighbor. Calling out the lies of opponents often increases our own self-righteousness and encourages us toward division and hatred. Hate and division are also tactics of Satan.

This is a book about lies Satan has repeated for thousands of years, spanning numerous cultures and languages. As Jesus says of Satan, “When he lies, he speaks out of his own character” (John 8:44). Or as the NIV puts it, “When he lies, he speaks his native language.”

Satan has told innumerable lies to God’s people. The reason I have chosen to highlight these ten lies is that I see their origins from Satan’s own words and actions in the Scriptures. I see them repeated in the Scriptures, causing devastation to God’s people. And I see them repeated in our world today and in my own life. These lies attack God’s people as they seek to follow Him in faith.

THE CYCLICAL LIFE OF FAITH

The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119. Martin Luther held up Psalm 119 as a masterful example of the Christian life. Within the psalm, Luther saw a cyclical reality that trained God’s people for a life of faith. He labeled this journey with the Latin phrase *oratio, meditatio, tentatio*. That is, *prayer, meditation, and temptation*. As we enter God’s Word, we pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. We meditate on God’s Word by asking questions and listening with curiosity to what God reveals through His Word.

But after we have prayed and meditated on God’s Word, something happens that seems counterintuitive and counterproductive to our learning from the Lord and our life of faith: we are attacked by Satan. Luther writes, “For as soon as God’s Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his assaults will teach you to seek and love God’s Word.”

Satan seeks to drive us away from God and His Word with these attacks. But God uses Satan’s attacks to drive us back to Himself—to prayer and to Scripture.

Again, Luther insightfully shows us this, saying, “This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom.”¹

In this way, we see a pattern in the life of faith that Joseph articulates toward the end of Genesis. After Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, God raised Joseph up to save Egypt and many neighboring nations from famine. After the death of their father, Jacob, Joseph’s brothers still feared that Joseph would destroy them, so they begged for his mercy. But Joseph said this to his brothers: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20).²

Satan attacks and means evil against us, but God always intends for such attacks to drive us back into conversation with Him in prayer and into further meditation on the sweet comfort of His Word.

This cycle of prayer, meditation, and the assaults of Satan is a marked pattern in the life of every Christian. It is our cross to pick up daily and bear in faith until the return of Jesus.

While my first book, *Ten Questions to Ask Every Time You Read the Bible*, was about *meditatio*, meditation on the Scriptures, this book is a book of *tentatio*, temptation, the assaults of the devil. I believe the main weapon in Satan’s arsenal of assault is lies.

Satan lies to increase our suffering. Satan uses our suffering as a means to turn us away from God. God uses our suffering to turn us

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¹ The two Luther quotations are from *Luther’s Works*, volume 34, pp. 286–87.

² For further study on Joseph and this particular scene, I recommend Donna Snow’s *Meant for Good: A Study of Joseph* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2023).

toward Himself, to turn us toward prayer and praise, to turn us toward meditation on His Word of grace and truth.

SATAN'S CHAOTIC DESIRED OUTCOME

Satan wants us to abandon God's Word and to break every instruction and commandment God has given us. Many of Satan's lies are directly in contrast to God's Word of the Ten Commandments. The Second Commandment (by Lutheran counting) says, "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God."³ This seems a favorite of Satan's to break. Consider how Satan uses God's name in Genesis 3: "Did God actually say . . . ?" (v. 1). "You will not surely die. For God knows . . ." (vv. 4–5). Or in Matthew 4: "If You are the Son of God, . . ." (vv. 3, 6). Satan constantly misuses God's name by casting aspersions on what God says. Satan wants us to test God, to prove God wrong, to seize for ourselves a level of power and control that belongs rightly to God.

Luther asks of the Second Commandment, "What does this mean?" Luther's answer is "We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks."⁴ In German (the language Luther was writing in), the phrase translated as "use satanic arts" is more closely related to magic, conjuring, or witchcraft. Yet I like the phrase "satanic arts" here, especially since it is followed by "lie, or deceive," because of all the arts Satan uses, lying and deception are the most common and perhaps the least obvious.

As Commandments Two through Ten are each a variation on breaking the First, so all of Satan's lies draw us back to the first lie—you cannot trust God—and the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods."

3 Small Catechism.

4 Small Catechism, explanation of the Second Commandment.

In this way, we also see that the ten lies in this book feed into one another. If we cannot trust God (Lie 1), then God must not love us (Lie 7). If we deserve more (Lie 3), then we need to seize more control to get it (Lie 4). If we must save ourselves (Lie 8), then we need to cover up our sins (Lie 6). If we cover up our sins, our performance will be judged more favorably (Lie 2). And so on.

Satan does not operate in such a way that makes it easy to fight his lies and overcome them. Indeed, this book seems out of order no matter what order I choose. Satan is organized when it suits him and chaotic when it suits him. Satan isolates when it suits him and lies to entire communities when it suits him. Satan is silent when it suits him. Satan whispers when it suits him. And Satan shouts when it suits him. We should never assume that we fully understand Satan's tactics. This book is not comprehensive, nor can any book on the subject be so.

In Ephesians 6, Paul writes about the armor of God. One piece we hear about is the shield of faith: "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (v. 16). Shields in Paul's time were covered in leather that had been soaked so that if a flaming arrow hit the shield, the fire would be immediately extinguished.

Satan's lies are fiery darts, aimed with both deadly accuracy and scattershot chaos. Our faith in Jesus acts as a shield against these fiery darts. I would be honored if you considered this book a patch of soaked leather for your shield of faith.

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BUT ... HASN'T JESUS DEFEATED SATAN? WHY DO WE NEED THIS BOOK?

One of the most common questions I hear on this topic is related to a confusion about whether Satan is still dangerous to us. The apostle Peter writes, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Peter wrote those words a few decades after Jesus suffered, died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and was enthroned with all power and authority. Hence, we may ask ourselves, “Didn’t Jesus defeat Satan? Why is Satan still a problem today?” Yes, indeed, Jesus defeated Satan. Satan is a conquered enemy, just as sin and death are conquered enemies. Jesus forgives our sin by His death on the cross, but we still sin. Jesus triumphed over death by His resurrection, but we still die. We await a promised eternal life in the new creation that is free from sin, death, and the devil, but all three conquered enemies still harass us until Jesus returns.

For me, the best illustration of Satan’s actions today comes from *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. While the films leave this out, author J. R. R. Tolkien has a chapter toward the end of the series called “The Scouring of the Shire.” The wizard Saruman is a traitor. He betrays all his former allies and joins with the dark lord Sauron, only to be defeated by his former allies. His powers are stripped. His wizard’s staff is broken. Yet he remains dangerous. He still has his voice. And Saruman’s voice speaks deception and cruelty. Saruman makes his way to the Shire, the home of the hobbits, and enslaves them through nothing but lies and threats alone.

Scripture does not reveal how Satan’s power on earth is qualitatively different before and after the death and resurrection of Jesus. But Satan is defeated to be sure. He prowls around, roaring, lying, threatening. As one of my parishioners pointed out to me, lions who prowl

do not tend to roar. Prowling is an act of secrecy. Roaring is an act that reveals and terrifies. Satan prowls and roars in dissonant chaos. He still seeks to destroy us, devour us, and drag us into the abyss with him, further down and further away from the Lord. Indeed, that is the devil's fate. But Satan does so now only in prideful refusal to see the truth. Satan will not defeat God. Satan will not rule over the heavens and the earth. Satan lost the decisive battle on Easter Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead, just as Saruman lost when his staff was broken and his powers were stripped. But both Satan and Saruman continue on in their stories with their lies and threats and are still dangerous and capable of producing much suffering.

SATAN IN THE SCRIPTURES

There are a few places in the Old Testament where Satan is mentioned, but every author of the New Testament mentions Satan at some point in his writings. All told, Satan appears fewer times than you might think on the pages of the Scriptures. While his influence is prevalent throughout, he is not always named as the source of the calamity that is occurring. The places Satan speaks, however, paint a picture of his character and tactics that will serve as the basis for the ten lies we will discuss in this book.

Each lie's inception occurs in Genesis 3, in the Garden of Eden, as Satan tempts Adam and Eve into sin and brings about the fall of all creation. Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, as recorded in Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13, will be revisited several times throughout the following chapters, as will Satan's role in the opening chapters of the book of Job.



Satan lost the decisive battle on Easter Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead.

CONTOURS OF EACH CHAPTER

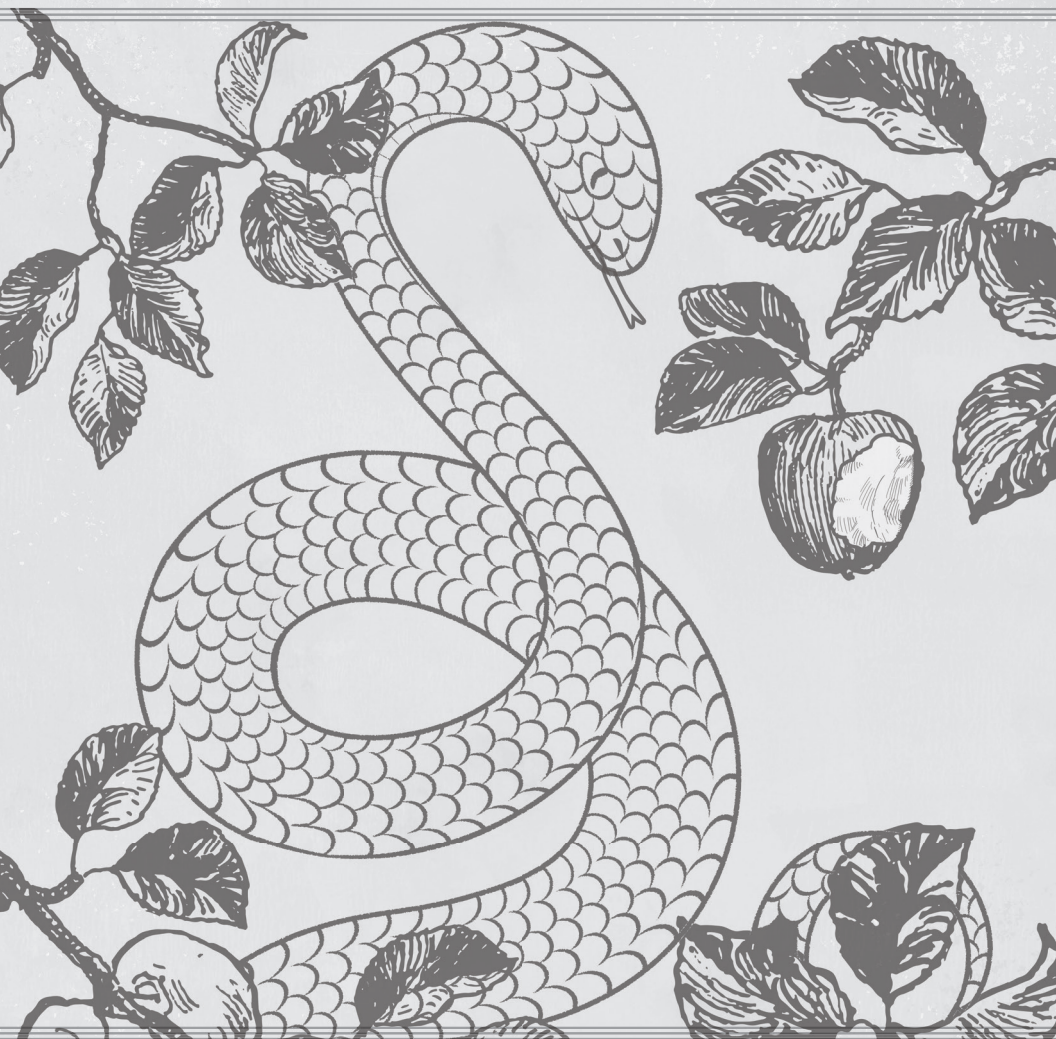
Each chapter of this book will be dedicated to exposing one of Satan's often repeated lies. With each lie, we will dig into that lie's origins. We will unmask the outcome Satan desires from this lie (which is why he loves to tell it). We will analyze the fears Satan preys on when using that particular lie. We will trace the repetition of the lie in the Bible as well as the repetition of the lie in the world today. But each chapter will turn to basking in the truth of Jesus. We will showcase God's desired outcome for us and our salvation. We will take comfort in God's love, which quiets the fears that Satan's lies prey on. Finally, the end of each chapter has questions for reflection and Bible passages for further meditation on the truth of Jesus.

As we begin this book of Satan's lies (*tentatio*), let us pray (*oratio*) and meditate (*meditatio*) briefly on a text of the Scriptures.

Lord Jesus, You came into our world to forgive sin, defeat death, and conquer Satan. As we embark on a journey to uncover Satan's lies, permeate our minds with Your truth so that we might live more faithfully under You in Your kingdom, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Take a minute to ponder the following Scripture passage.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:12–14)



LIE 1

**YOU
CANNOT
TRUST GOD**

Trust is central to our lives and relationships. When we trust people, we feel safe. When we do not trust people, we feel anxious and on edge. Consider how it feels to be riding in a car with a safe driver you trust versus how it feels to be riding in a car with an erratic driver whom you regret getting in the car with. Being able to confidently place our trust in others provides stability in life. If we lack trustworthy relationships, life will likely be chaotic and tumultuous. Satan desires such chaos in our lives. He focuses our distrust on the most trustworthy one of all: God.

SATAN IN THE GARDEN

In Genesis 3, the first words out of Satan's mouth are a deception. He casts doubt on God's Word as he says to Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (v. 1). This is misleading for a very simple reason: God did not actually say that. God gave Adam and Eve all the rest of the trees to eat, forbidding only the one that was not good for them. Satan knows full well God did not forbid all the trees. But Satan's intention is to cast aspersions on what God has said, to make God seem unreasonable and untrustworthy.

Eve defends God to Satan. She tells him plainly, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden" (v. 2). But there is one tree that Adam and Eve are not supposed to eat from. So Eve relays that information as well: "But God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (v. 3).

Satan seizes on Eve's defense of God and speaks another deceptive line that continues to cast doubt on God's trustworthiness. Satan begins, "You will not surely die" (v. 4). This is both true and false. Adam and Eve will die as a result of eating the fruit of this tree. They will be cast out of the Garden of Eden, be removed from their access to the tree of life, and die, returning to the dust. But they will not die right away.

In this way, Satan also seizes on the addition Eve relays to God's restriction. Eve's words "neither shall you touch it" are not recorded as part of the instruction God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:16–17. Satan has promised Eve that she will not surely die when she eats of the fruit nor when she touches the fruit. As Eve reaches out and touches the fruit from the tree and does not drop dead immediately, perhaps it makes Satan seem more trustworthy to Eve. Eve will not die as a result of touching the fruit, but she will die as a result of eating the fruit, just as God said. God remains trustworthy.

Satan continues, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Here Satan deceives with the truth. Eve's eyes will be opened. She will be like God in that she will know good and evil.

But notice the insinuation behind this truth. Satan is telling Eve that God is holding out on her. Satan is telling Eve that God does not have her best interests in mind. Satan is calling God a liar. Satan's overarching lie in all of this is that Eve cannot trust God.

Furthermore, Satan deceives not only with questions and half-truths but also with omissions. What Satan omits is that Eve is already like God in other ways that she will lose once she eats of this fruit. Like God, Eve is sinless. Like God, Eve is holy. Like God, Eve is perfect. Eve is made in God's image, after His likeness. But after she eats of this fruit, she will

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trust God.*



be sinful, cursed, blemished. She will still be God's creation, made in His image, but that image will be marred, distorted, veiled. Yes, Eve will gain the knowledge of good and evil and be like God in that one respect, but she will lose her likeness to God in so many other ways.

Eve is deceived into giving up all the ways she is like God in order to obtain one similarity she is missing, a similarity to God that she does

not need, a similarity that will not move her closer to God as promised but will only exile her from the paradise of God's presence.

SATAN'S DESIRED OUTCOME

Satan wants God's people to hate God. Satan wants God's people to be distant, detached, and disinterested. What better way to get people to turn away from God than to convince them that they cannot trust Him?

Are there people in your life whom you do not trust? How much time do you choose to spend with such people? Probably as little as possible. None, if it can be managed.

If we cannot trust someone, we feel anxious in that person's presence. We feel wary, guarded, and suspicious. We may even feel like we are holding in a breath. We feel relief when we leave the person's presence, like we can finally exhale. This is the opposite of the relationship God desires with His people. God wants us to feel relief and comfort in His presence, not unease. God wants us to trust Him and His Word, not be filled with fear, doubt, and reluctance every time we hear His name and His Word.



*Satan
cannot
keep God
away
from us.*

Satan cannot keep God away from us. God will always keep pursuing us, calling us back to Him. Satan's only hope to destroy our relationship with God is to mess it up on our end, to keep us turning ever away from God, because God will never give up on us. Satan's aim is to warp our relationship with God into one of silence, where God's Word falls on our deaf ears and

we speak no words to God at all. That is the fruit of distrust. That is the goal behind this lie: Distance. Silence. Hatred.

THE FEAR BEHIND THE LIE

Satan is the opposite of God. God's native language is truth. Satan's native language is lies. God is love. Satan is fear. First John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."

As Satan assaults God's people, he seeks to distort these words of Scripture and bring about his own distorted version: "Fear casts out love."

Behind many of the lies Satan tells us, our own fears lurk in the background. Satan preys on those fears. Fear is not necessarily sinful. I have a healthy fear of heights, which prevents me from putting myself in dangerous situations. But even such healthy fears highlight our weaknesses. I am afraid of heights because I am afraid to die. Perhaps you are afraid of rejection or being unloved or not having purpose. Such fears can make us vulnerable, as we often overcompensate to prevent our fears from becoming reality. Satan notices our vulnerabilities and seeks to attack those weak points with precision. Fear is one of Satan's favorite allies, which is not surprising. Fear often makes us want to hide. And if we are hiding, we are isolated. If we are hiding, we have distanced ourselves from God.

Consider what Adam says to God in the Garden of Eden after he and Eve fall into sin: "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). Fear causes Adam and Eve to hide, to flee from the presence of God. God, of course, comes looking for them. God, of course, finds them and repairs the relationships (even promising in that same chapter the ultimate repair that we know has arrived in Jesus).

I believe that the fear connected with the lie "You cannot trust God" is the fear of being wrong, the fear of being deceived.

A term that has come into common usage recently, and perfectly describes Satan's tactics, is *gaslight*. To gaslight someone is to manip-

ulate them by making them question and doubt their own memory, judgment, and intuition. Satan is the original gaslighter. One of the tactics gaslighters use is to accuse their opposition of the very thing they themselves are guilty of.

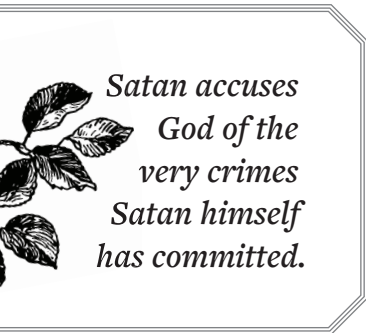
Imagine two children playing outside, and one breaks a window. The guilty one comes forward first and falsely accuses the innocent one saying, “Well, my friend broke the window.” When the innocent child arises and truthfully says, “No, I didn’t break it! You broke it,” it is already too late. One is the truth and the other a lie, but the truth and the lie sound remarkably alike. Indeed, the lie often sounds better.

Perhaps the guilty gaslighter speaks gently, calmly, maybe even adding that it was an accident in the accusation. But the wrongly accused truth-teller speaks with anxiety and indignation, for they have done nothing wrong and feel desperate to defend themselves. By comparison, the gaslighter seems reasonable, honorable, and sensible, while the wrongfully accused sounds petty and childish.

Satan is a liar. So how would Satan gaslight us about God? By calling God a liar. Satan deceives us by trying to convince us that God has deceived us. Satan accuses God of the very crimes Satan himself has committed.

Eve falls victim to Satan’s manipulation. I would invite you to put yourself in Eve’s position. Perhaps Eve is afraid of being mistaken, deceived,

wrong about what she believes, what she knows, who she trusts. In her entire life, she has never encountered someone or something that did not have her best interests in mind. Satan gaslights Eve by suggesting that God does not have her best interests in mind. Before Eve realizes Satan’s character, her mind



is opened to the possibility that God might not have her best interests in mind.

Satan pries Eve's mind open to the possibility that God might not be trustworthy. Satan preys on a fear he invented for Eve—that she might be wrong. Satan embeds the fear in her and then preys on it.

In your own life, how do you feel when you discover that you are wrong about something? How do you react? Do you get a bit defensive? Do you perhaps deflect the blame away from yourself and onto others? Do you get angry with whomever or whatever disappointed you?

Satan convinces Eve that she is wrong about God and the forbidden fruit. But after Eve takes and eats and gives some to Adam to take and eat, they realize that what they were wrong about was listening to Satan. God's Word proved true. Satan's word proved false. They were wrong to trust Satan.

When God comes looking for Adam and Eve and finds them hiding, their reactions to being wrong come out in their answers. Adam says, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). In being wrong, Adam blames Eve, and Adam blames God. Eve gave him the fruit. God gave Adam this woman. Adam stands defensive, afraid of being wrong. If you have ever heard of Luther or other theologians using the phrase "the old Adam," this posture of fear and self-justification is at the heart of that phrase. Fear turns human beings in on themselves. Fear makes us seek to protect what is most important. And sadly, so often what is most important to Adam and to us is nothing but ourselves. Adam takes the two things that should be the most important to him—God and Eve—and throws both under the bus to remove any perception of his being in the wrong.

THE LIE REPEATED IN THE BIBLE

SATAN IN THE WILDERNESS

The clearest case of this lie being repeated is Jesus' temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13.⁵ Matthew writes that immediately after Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, Jesus is then “led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1). The first word out Satan's mouth might be his favorite word: *if*. Satan begins his temptation by saying, “If You are the Son of God . . .” (v. 3). Why does Satan say this? Because God the Father had just proclaimed from heaven at Jesus' Baptism, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

Satan's use of “If You are the Son of God . . .” is just another way of saying, “Did God actually say . . . ?”

Much like with Eve, Satan wants Jesus to distrust God's Word. Satan tries to persuade Jesus to take things into His own hands. In effect, Satan is saying to Jesus, “You cannot simply trust God's Word that You are His Son. You should test that out. Prove it. Find assurance by using Your power, by testing God's Word. Turn these stones to bread. Jump off the temple. The actual Son of God could do such things.” We will talk about these lies more in depth in subsequent chapters.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus begins the parable of the sower with these words: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them” (Matthew 13:3–4). As Jesus explains this parable, He says, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches

⁵ Mark 1:12–13 also records the temptation of Jesus but does not record Satan's dialogue with Jesus.

away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path” (v. 19).

When God’s Word is proclaimed, the evil one (Satan) flies around, trying to devour the Word before it can take root. Satan snatches the Word away. He does not let understanding come to the heart where God’s Word has been planted. Satan prevents God’s Word from taking root in whatever way he can. Sometimes the hearts of those hearing are so hard that Satan’s work is already done. Sometimes Satan distracts with more pressing matters, preventing hearts from taking the time to understand. Sometimes Satan repeats this very lie that hardens hearts again and again: “You cannot trust God. You cannot trust His Word. Let me take that seed for you so you do not have to think about it.”

JEREMIAH

There are also several instances in the Scriptures where God sends His Word through one of His prophets but the prophet is not received by the people. The people do not trust God’s Word.

Jeremiah has many struggles getting God’s people to listen to God’s Word. On one occasion, God’s people are fighting against the Babylonians. As the Babylonians are about to destroy Jerusalem and exile God’s people, Jeremiah delivers this Word to God’s people:

Thus says the LORD: He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live. He shall have his life as a prize of war, and live. Thus says the LORD: This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and be taken. (Jeremiah 38:2-3)