

Series: Light in the Darkness
“The Necessity of Integrity”
Ephesians 4.25

Lying has permeated and saturated our culture. Many of the most-watched sitcoms today are chocked full of lies, and it’s been that way for decades. Just notice all the lies in “I Love Lucy” and “Andy Griffith.”

With a presidential election around the corner, we all pretty much *expect* to be lied to. Companies stretch the truth with their advertising. Who actually trusts the news media these days? Anyone? Fully?

It’s as if David wrote **Psalms 12:2** just yesterday: *Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.*

So many people are consumed with their weight and appearance, and within reason, there’s nothing wrong with that. But as believers, more than being concerned about losing a few pounds, we need to be consumed with controlling a few ounces...*that few ounces of tissue known as our tongue.*

James 3.8 states that “no human being can tame the tongue,” and that is especially true with regard to lying and deception.

“Therefore” (Eph. 4.25a) takes us back to the preceding context. In verse 17 we are clearly commanded to “no longer walk/live like the rest of the Gentiles/unbelievers live.” That’s partly because, at our salvation we “put off the old man” (v.22) and “put on the new man” (24). The FOUNDATION for the exhortations beginning in verse 25 is SALVATION. A saved soul = a changed life.

“The only reliable evidence of a person’s being saved is not a past experience of receiving Christ, but a present life that reflects Christ.” – John MacArthur

1 John 2:4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar.

So, having “poured the foundation,” Paul now “lays the concrete blocks” of application. He transitions from the lofty but necessary ‘school room’ where we ‘learn Christ,’ to the nitty-gritty of everyday Christian living.

“putting away lying”... That should be a perpetual part of our “putting off the old man.” Lying is a major subject in the Bible and deserves our serious and sobering consideration. Therefore, with the Lord’s help, I want to give you an overview of Scriptural teaching on lying and truthfulness, with the prayerful desire that the Spirit of God will use it to help us be the people of God he wants us to be.

God’s contempt for lying

Don’t ever forget this: **GOD HATES LYING!**

Proverbs 6:16–19 provides a list of seven things God hates. And while the list is not exhaustive, two of the seven are **“a lying tongue”** a **“false witness who breathes out lies.”**

Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD.

Why such hatred?

God is the Father of truth and Satan is the Father of lies!

God is the Father of truth...

It’s embedded in fact that He is perfectly faithful and true. It’s impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18); it’s totally foreign to his person and character.

Jesus: "I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life" (Jn. 14:6)

God is only and always truthful.

Satan, on the other hand, is the Father of lies, and rarely ever truthful...

John 8:44b The devil...does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Therefore, since God is the Father of truth and Satan the father of lies, and since Jesus is THE TRUTH personified, ***few things are more satanic and therefore dishonoring of Christ than lying.***

Our compulsion for lying

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." There is a propensity in ALL of us to be less than completely honest. We all have a bent toward dishonesty.

Let me again draw your attention to the **latter part of Eph. 4.22** where we are told to put off "the old man which grows corrupt ***according to the deceitful lusts.***" Our pre-salvation nature is continuously corrupted by deceitful desires. That is, desires that are bad because our hearts are deceived.

So, we all have a compulsion for lying because of sinful, deceitful desires. **Desires for what?**

(1) The desire to avoid consequences

This is at the root of many lies told by children, and unfortunately, it often carries over into adolescence, the teen years, and adulthood. We make a mistake. We do something wrong. We sin. And rather than owning up to whatever the failure might be, we lie to avoid the consequences.

In hopes of not being spanked, not being grounded, not losing our job, etc., we lie.

(2) The desire to maintain appearances

We can be so full of pride. We always prefer to save face.

Owning up to something could put us in a most embarrassing situation, and so we lie about it.

These first two desires are both illustrated in Matthew 21.23-27 [[This observation is made by John Piper]]. In this passage, the Jewish chief priests come up to Jesus as he's teaching in the temple and ask...

Matthew 21:23–25 "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" [24] Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. [25] The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" *[[And here's when the crafting of a lie takes place. We can see what desires go into the making of a lie.]]* And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'"

First, they wanted to "**maintain appearances**" with the people as being spiritual leaders. If they say John's baptism was from heaven, it will give Jesus the perfect opportunity to prove their inconsistency by asking, "Why then did you not believe him?" Therefore, their desire for the esteem of men and not wanting egg on their face causes them to not be truthful.

Now notice verses 26-27... But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." [27] So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."

Secondly, they can't answer that John's baptism is from men because the multitudes believe John was a prophet of God and so the people might get mad and stone the priests for downgrading John's authority! Thus, they wanted to **avoid the consequences** of such a position.

And so consequently, they lie. They are evasive, diplomatic, or we might say they were politically correct, and answer, "We don't know!"

(3) The desire to obtain advantages (especially financial)

To help meet the needs of the poor, Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and while giving the impression they were giving it all away, they kept back some of the proceeds for themselves and took the rest of it to the apostles. Peter said (in Acts 5:3, 5), "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" "And why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?"

The answer: Satan deceived Ananias into thinking that *it is more blessed to keep than to give*. And that's the opposite of what the Bible teaches (Acts 20:35).

A few days earlier, a guy named Joseph sold a field and brought the money to the Apostles (Acts 4:36-37). When his name showed up in the bulletin, Satan probably tempted Ananias with a desire for praise and prestige and convinced him to do the same.

Then during the process of selling the land, Satan probably suggested to Ananias all the possible expenses that might be coming up, not to mention all the legitimate pleasures that he and his wife Sapphira have gone without all these years.

So a deceitful desire gives birth to a lie. And Ananias dropped dead and so did his wife shortly thereafter. And great fear came upon the whole church. ***The lying tongue is an abomination to God.***

A mom writes about buying seasonal pool passes for her kids rather than daily passes on an as-needed basis. The pool passes are issued for specific individuals. You can't buy TWO and use them however you please for your THREE kids.

Oh, there's one other little rule: Any guest you wish to bring you must pay \$5 extra. This year I told the Lord I wanted to live completely by the rules and to trust Him with that. Though my family hardly frequented the place, I resisted the temptation to pass off one of the kids' tags to my granddaughter when she visited from out of town, or to my sister during her visit. I just kept plunking down \$5 on the counter for the attendant, while a perfectly good and unused tag sat on the counter at home.

The difference between me this year and last year is that God has shown me something about the spiritual life. I have come to see that **even the slightest dishonesty [defiles] the soul in some small way. It is not even the size of the lie but the spiritual realm it puts me in.** *It seems that there are only two possible places to abide in at any given time: God's kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness. Any untruth, however small and seemingly inconsequential, belongs to the darkness. And because it belongs to the darkness, we unwittingly put ourselves under the sway of the Evil One when we veer into his territory.*

The complexity of lying

Any believer in their right mind knows that **blatant lying** is wrong. But lying is much more subtle and complex. Let me quickly remind us of a sampling of its more subtle forms...

Flattery

Saying things to a person's face that you would never say behind his back. Flattery neither encourages nor honors people; it's a way of using people! It's the giving of insincere praise to gain some advantage over that person, and that's sinful.

Psalms 12:2 Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

Slander

Slander is lying about another's character or conduct. Satan slandered God's character and honesty in the Garden of Eden.

Proverbs 10:18b ... whoever utters slander is a fool.

Christians can be particularly susceptible, having side-stepped the "big" sins. While they are careful to avoid adultery, drunkenness, or stealing, they indulge a perverse delight in assaulting the character of others.

Exaggeration

More and more, we hear of people completing their resume and stretching the truth about their skills, experiences and/or education. Back in 2001 not long after George O'Leary had been named head football coach at Notre Dame, it was discovered that he had *never* played football at New Hampshire as he claimed on his resume.

Do you exaggerate when trying to sell your car or whatever else you might be trying to sell through Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace?

When trying to hire someone, do you exaggerate about the work environment, the benefits, the hours?

What a tendency we have to make things seem worse than they really are to make us seem more deserving of pity OR to make things seem better than they really are to make us look better than we deserve.

Gossip

Paul warned the Corinthians about quarreling, slander, and gossip (2 Cor 12:20).

Have you passed along any rumors this week? Spread any "juicy" information about anyone this week whether by phone or through some social media app?

It does not compliment you that people feel free to share their gossip with you. Let me remind you that those who gossip to you will gossip about you.

Carelessness

Many become "chronically inaccurate" in what they say. They do not lie deliberately but carelessly.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, "Accustom your children...constantly to this; if a thing happened at one window and they, when relating it, say that is happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from the truth will end." *Don't be guilty of the lazy lie.*

The consequences of lying

It harms the body (of Christ)

"Speak truth with your neighbor...for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25b; NIV: for we are all members of one body).

While we are to be truthful with all people, we are especially admonished to tell the truth to fellow believers, because we are all members of one body—that is, the “body of Christ.”

Our physical bodies cannot function properly or safely if each member of our body does not correctly communicate to the others. If our brain decided to lie to our eyes and feet, we might stumble out into oncoming traffic. If you’re eating with a fork, and your eye lies to your hand about where your mouth is, the hand may stab the eye.

When any of us as believers are dishonest, it negatively affects the rest of us—the whole body of Christ.

It damages relationships

Inject lying and deceit into a relationship and it will never be quite the same. Lying erodes trust and leads to major breakdowns in communication.

Deceit is like a cancer that eats not your flesh and organs, but your relationships.

Proverbs 25:18 A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.

Lying against someone is like a brutal assault; you end up bruising, piercing, or even murdering his reputation.

It may damn your soul

Liars—unrepentant, self-deceived liars whose lives are characterized by deceit—will not go to heaven.

Revelation 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, **and all liars**, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Revelation 22:14–15 Blessed are those who wash their robes [in the blood of the Lamb], so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. [15] Outside [the gates of the Celestial City] are...the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, ***and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.***

Concluding exhortations...

(1) Repent of your lying and stop it immediately.

Make no excuses. Make no attempt to shift blame. No finger-pointing. Simply but sincerely admit your sin and start obeying God.

If the Holy Spirit has used this verse to convict you of falsehood, confess it to the Lord and to those whom you have wronged.

(2) Commit now to not lie later.

Be resolved to the truth before you’re tempted to lie. In other words, you must decide not to lie before you get into a situation that hits you broadside.

If you are not sufficiently committed to telling the truth ahead of time, it’ll be much easier to get trapped into lying. *And don’t dare shrug this off and think you’re not susceptible.* Just ask Peter!

(3) Model honesty before your family and co-workers

Never give your spouse or children a reason to not trust you. Let your children see you maintain honesty even if it costs you.

If the phone or doorbell rings, don't tell your children to answer and say, "Daddy's not here."

If you ask your child to lie FOR you, how can you punish him when he lies TO you?

If you profess to be a Christian and your co-workers see you lying on the job or keeping quiet about the truth when it is to your financial advantage, you have no basis for telling them about the Savior.

If your boss or supervisor asks you to cover for him or her by lying, you need to be ready to graciously refuse and explain why. They may not like your response, and you may even be fired. But your testimony and the cause of Christ are worth much more than your job!

(4) Long to be like Jesus—lovingly truthful all the time

Even if it makes you look bad temporarily. Even if the consequences of your truthfulness are costly.

If Jesus is "THE TRUTH," shouldn't your life as one of his disciples be a demonstration of the same?

(5) Pray earnestly for personal integrity

Psalms 120:2 Deliver me, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.

Psalms 141:3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

Proverbs 30:8a Remove far from me falsehood and lying.