

OVERCOMING DECEPTION

Deception is the glue that holds every stronghold together. Let's recall a concept we discussed in the introduction of the book: **nothing is bigger or more powerful than God; therefore, anything other than Jesus Christ mastering the Christian's life can keep its grip only through pretension and deception.** Remember, **Satan is the father of lies** (John 8:44). **No truth is in him. However, his specialty is twisting a lie until it seems true.** The list of lies we often believe when we are held in a stronghold can be unlimited. Consider just a **few examples:**

- I can never be victorious over this compulsion. I've had it too long.
- I can't help the mess I'm in. I'm caught, and there's nothing I can do about it.
- It may be a stronghold, but I really need it to get by.
- I am absolutely worthless—nothing but a failure.
- I'm in control here. This is not controlling me.
- This isn't doing me any harm. I can handle it.
- I'll know just when to stop.
- After all I've been through, I deserve this.
- There's nothing wrong with this relationship. People just don't understand us.
- Everyone thinks these kinds of thoughts most of the time. I'm only human.
- God may work for other people, but He doesn't work for me.
- I'll just have to wait until heaven to get over this. Real victory is impossible on earth.
- God can't possibly fill the void in my life. I need something more.
- I am too emotionally handicapped to ever be OK.
- It's hopeless. I'm hopeless.

Sometimes we're very aware of tolerating or even fueling a lie. Other times, we are caught in such a web that we can no longer see ourselves or our situations accurately. **It's not always clear when we're being deceived, but one sure sign is when we begin to deceive.** **All you have to do to locate Satan in any situation is look for the lie.** How do we recognize a lie? Anything we are believing or acting on that is contrary to what the truth of God's Word says about us is a lie. Second Corinthians 4:2 tells us how to respond to such things: "Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God." This passage helps us identify **four of Satan's specialties that must be renounced and rejected by the believer in order for him/her to walk in victory:**

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1. Secrecy
2. Shame
3. Deception
4. Distortion of Scripture

As you consider each one, you can readily imagine how deception permeates all four and how interrelated they are. **Satan's plans toward the believer are always the antithesis of God's.** Our Redeemer wants to loose us from the closets of secrecy and bring us to a spacious place of joy, freedom, authenticity, and transparency. **Satan wants to keep us bound in secrecy where he can weigh us down in guilt, misery, and shame.** Oh, beloved, I know from experience that so much of the shame we experience is wrapped up in the secret. In fact, **the enemy knows that once we expose the secret places of our lives to the light of God's Word, we're on our way to freedom.**

I am not suggesting that the only way to be free is to stand up before our congregations and tell every detail of every sin we've ever committed or considered. The King James Version translates James 5:16 far more accurately than several of the other versions: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed". Some of the other translations say, "Confess your sins to each other . . ." The original word translated "faults" in the KJV and "sins" in the NIV is **PARAPTOMA**, which means "**fault, lapse, error, mistake, wrongdoing.**" Contrast 1 John 1:9 where we are told that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." The original word for sin in this verse is **HARMARTIA**, meaning **any way in which we miss the mark and any aberration from the truth.** The word is often "spoken of particular sins..." **James 5:16 refers to the confessions we make to others**, while **1 John 1:9 refers to the confessions we make to God.** Please notice the slight contrast between sharing our faults, weakness, and mistakes with others and confessing every detail of every sin to God.

A big difference exists between God and believers: He can always take it. He can always forgive it. And He can always forget it. Refreshingly, some believers can too. However, sometimes others can't take the gory details without stumbling over them. At times our own Christian brothers and sisters can unfortunately be some of our biggest obstacles in letting go of the devastating particulars of our past. Let's face it: **some believers have the maturity to help free us from our grave clothes, and others just keep picking up anything we dare to shed and handing it back to us.**

If we're going to live in freedom, we have no choice but to renounce every single secret place of sin in our lives to God, exposing even the smallest detail to the light of God's Word. This is the means by which God injects truth in the inner parts (Ps. 51:6). I have also found incalculable help and freedom in confessing details of my past sins and strongholds to a few other

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trustworthy, mature believers for the sake of accountability. There are a couple of people I really trust who basically know every detail of my life.

In my public ministry, whether in writing or in speaking, I make a practice of James 5:16 by sharing about my weaknesses and faults and giving a more general testimony of my past experiences in the pit of sin. I have not hidden the fact that God has delivered me from much shame and sin. I do not see, however, any way in which the body of Christ would be edified by every detail of my past. He may lead you differently, but I am at total peace in my own life with the balance of a general public confession of sin and a specific private confession of sin to God and a few others.

Living a consistently victorious life takes courage! But this courage leads to glorious, indescribable liberty! What relief awaits you if you really decide to let God's truth set you free... then keep you free. **Be willing to ask God on a regular basis if you are overlooking or denying a stronghold in your life.** Because of my past track record, I've had to learn to dialogue openly with God about areas of my life that are at risk: areas where I've been defeated before or circumstances that suddenly result in anger or insecurity. I also ask Him to help me discern the very first signs of Satan's deceptions in my life.

Let's reiterate, however, that **the most effective way to veer from deception is to walk in truth.** Third John 4 says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." **The wonderful news is: the joy that results from your walk in truth won't just be God's. It will be yours too.** As Christ said, "I have told you this so that **my joy may be in you** and that **your joy may be complete.**" (John 15:11)

Those who walk in truth will walk in liberty.

Father, this moment I am choosing the way of truth. I want to set my heart on Your laws. (Ps. 119:30) Help me to choose the way of truth the rest of my days.

Lord God, when You asked the woman in the Garden, "What is this you have done?" her response was, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen. 3:13) Just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, the minds of even those with a sincere and pure devotion to Christ can be led astray. (2 Cor. 11:3) Please help me always to be aware that the enemy will be up to his old tricks. Even the devout believer can be led astray if not held continually on the path by Your Word and keenly aware of Satan's schemes. Help me not to be deceived by the serpent's cunning.

Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths; guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long. (Ps. 25:4-5)

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Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for Your love is ever before me, and I desire to walk continually in Your truth. (Ps. 26:2–3)

Redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth. (Ps. 31:5) Help me to remember that nothing and no one can be redeemed without truth: the God of truth!

Do not withhold Your mercy from me, O Lord; may Your love and Your truth always protect me. (Ps. 40:11) Father, please help me learn how much Your truth protects me. Without it, I am vulnerable to the enemy and to my own flesh nature.

O God, send forth Your light and Your truth to my life. Let them guide me; let them bring me to Your holy mountain, to the place where You dwell. (Ps. 43:3)

We begin to recognize lies when we know the Truth.

Glorious God, in Your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility, and righteousness; let Your right hand display awesome deeds. (Ps. 45:4) I don't need to be afraid of truth. It is the key You will use to take me forth to victory.

Lord God, surely You desire truth in my inner parts; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place. (Ps. 51:6) Please expose to me the deeply embedded lies I've believed and replace them with permanently engraved truth.

Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. (Ps. 86:11)

Do not allow anything to snatch the word of truth from my mouth, O Lord, for I have put my hope in Your laws. (Ps. 119:43)

Lord God, You are near to all who call on You, to all who call on You in truth. (Ps. 145:18)

Father, Your Word exhorts us to buy the truth and never sell it, and to get wisdom, discipline, and understanding. (Prov. 23:23) Help me to understand that sometimes truth is costly but not nearly as costly as deception. Truth will never fail to return enormous dividends.

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