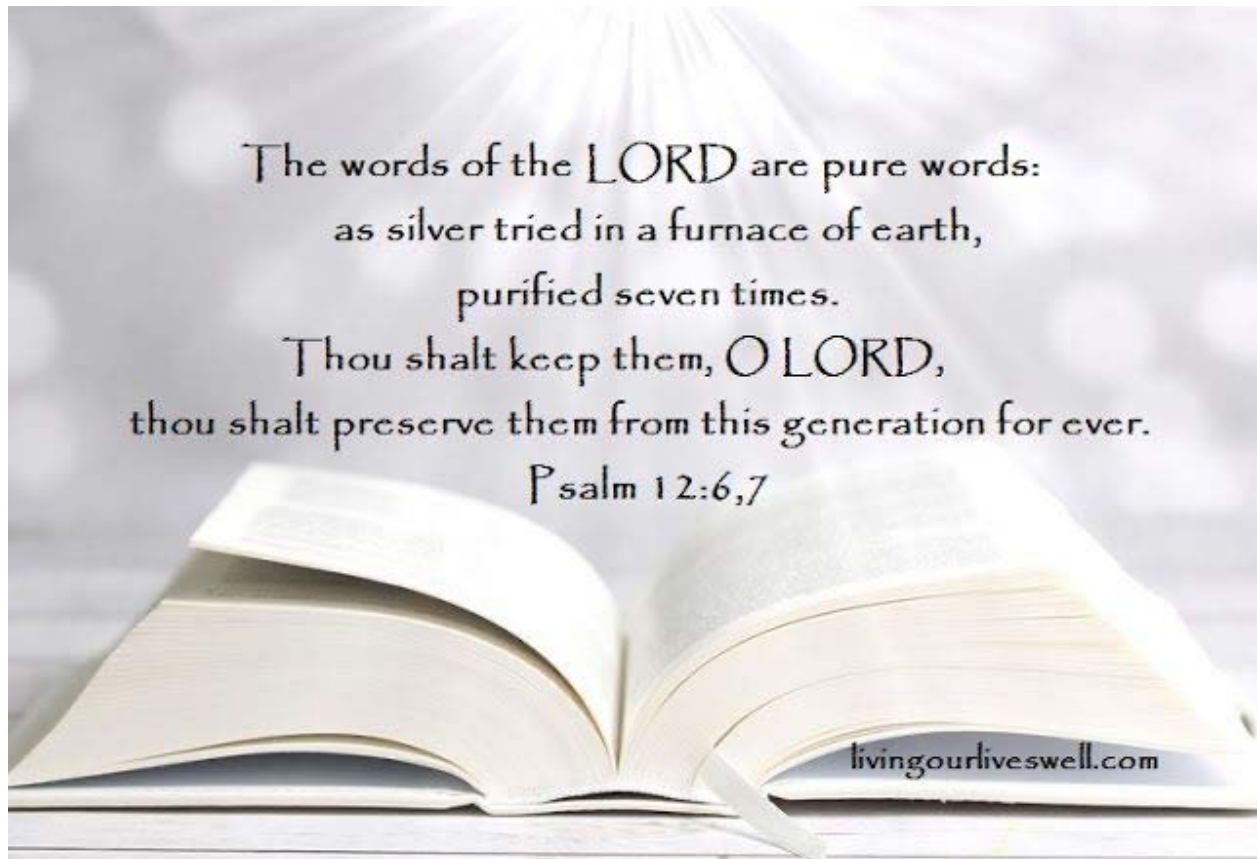


TO STOP THE LIE LET GOD BE TRUE (3)



God intends to stop the lie, and to use us in doing so.

T. M. MOORE

A ReVision Study from

The Fellowship of Ailbe

To Stop the Lie

To Stop the Lie
Let God Be True (3)
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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
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To Stop the Lie

Welcome to *To Stop the Lie*

God is not content to allow lies to destroy people's lives and the world He has created. He is determined to stop the mouths of liars and to clear space for truth to flourish.

And He intends to do that both *in* us and *through* us.

In stopping the lies of this world we must look first into our own soul and our own community. Only then will we be in position to confront the lies that are destroying the world.

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Thank you.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Lies and Liars

*But the king shall rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him shall glory;
But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.* Psalm 63.11

Lies and liars

It's surprising how often the Bible speaks of "lies" and "liars." It's enough to make you believe the Bible could have been written in our day, when lying is something nearly everyone does, and it isn't considered polite to suggest that people may be deliberately bending the truth or passing on untruths as part of their normal daily routine.

If there was ever a generation which, as Paul explained, "exchanged the truth of God for the lie" (Rom. 1.25), it certainly is ours.

As believers, we are a much more "tolerant" generation than folks were in the days when prophets and apostles were proclaiming the Word of the Lord. When it came to those who trafficked in lies, half-truths, and outright deceit, the Spirit of God called it like it was and those who were filled with Him didn't hold back.

In Biblical terms, all those who do not embrace, submit to, live for, and proclaim the truth of God, and all those who ignore, deny, or neglect the Gospel of the Kingdom, are living a lie, or, more specifically, as Paul indicates, *the* lie. Thus, at least to a certain extent, such people may properly be regarded as liars, and the Bible is not reluctant to describe them as such.

Not that they always lie all the time, or that when they do, they know they are lying. But when lies, doled out like a flood, generously and continuously by the father of lies, provide the framework and much of the substance of a person's approach to life, that person is a liar, whether they know it or not. Either we accept the language of Scripture or we don't; but if we don't, then we're making ourselves vulnerable to the lie simply by refusing to recognize it as such.

Judge with righteous judgment

Now I know this isn't going to sit well with some of us. Who does he think he is, calling people liars? Who made him judge and jury over what are lies and what is truth?

Well, the answer to the first question is, it's not me, but the Word of God calling people liars. And the answer to the second question is, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has called us to judge with righteous judgment (Jn. 7.24), and presumably that means being able to distinguish, by sound reason, truth from the lie in all aspects of human life.

We shouldn't be surprised by the straightforward way Biblical writers speak of lies and liars. After all, lying is a sin, and we live in a world of sinners, including us. We have all been guilty of lying at some point and, if we haven't yet faced up to that, well, now might be a good time to start.

Further, since the devil is the father of lies, and Jesus plainly taught that some people are ever under his sway (Jn. 8.44), it shouldn't surprise us to think that there are people in the world whose outlook and agenda are colored more by lies than by the truth of God.

Finally, the Scriptures teach that, at certain times in history, lies can become so much a part of everyday life that a whole generation can be led astray and not even realize it (cf. Pss. 12, 58; 1 Tim. 4.1-5; 2 Tim. 3.1-9). I

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submit that we are living in just such an age, an age in flight from God and His truth, an age steeped in and inebriated with the lies of wrong belief.

The hurtful effects of the lie

Every day we see the hurtful effects of the lie: shattered relationships, wasted fortunes, ruined lives, tyrants empowered while the needy and helpless are oppressed, trusting people duped, swindled, or robbed because the lie motivates the choices and behaviors of so many in our day.

The lie is transmitted by the mouths of liars, heard by the ears of those who have turned from the truth of God, and received by all whose basic orientation to spiritual matters is “Yea, hath God said...?” And in our day, in this age of secular materialism and rampant wrong belief, the lie provides the dominant framework for all thought and life.

But we need not despair in the face of such a situation. For, as the psalmist tells us, and Paul, echoing him, those who promulgate policies and actions based on lies will not make much more progress; rather, their lies will be exposed, and their mouths will be stopped (cf. 2 Tim. 3.9). We have God’s Word on it. The lie is running its course, and sooner or later its heyday will come to an end.

But how does that happen? How does God plan to stop the mouths of liars so that their ruinous schemes will be ended, and people will be free to live in the light of truth again?

This is where we come in – you and I.

As I mentioned, Jesus commands His followers to judge with righteous judgment everything that goes on around them (Jn. 7.24). We have the mind of Christ and the Word and Spirit of God, so we’re equipped for such a calling (1 Cor. 2.16; 2 Tim. 3.15-17; Jn. 15.26, 27). He means for us to represent His truth, seek His Kingdom, and take captive for His purposes every thought, idea, worldview, and foolish scheme that raises itself up against the knowledge of God (Matt. 5.13-16; Matt. 6.33; 2 Cor. 10.3-5). We who have been gifted with the mind of Christ are appointed to the task of *using* that mind, and the sound reason it engenders, to confront, expose, and stop the lie, wherever we encounter it.

We are agents of truth and enemies of the lie. God’s will is that the lie should be stopped so that the truth that is in Jesus can flourish. This is our calling, and the sooner we accept it, the sooner we’ll see the power of the lie beginning to wane and those who promulgate lies left with nothing to say.

For reflection

1. Paul says all who turn away from the knowledge of God become servants of “the lie” (Rom. 1.18-25). What evidence do you see that this is true in our day?
2. Scripture doesn’t balk or blanch at using the language of lies and liars. Should we? Why or why not?
3. How did Jesus respond to the Lie as He encountered it in His day?

Next steps – Preparation: What evidence would you cite to show how the lie – which says that man, not God, is sovereign – is widespread in our day? Have an extended season of prayer to talk with the Lord about this question.

2 The Lie and the Promises of God

And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Zechariah 3.2

An epidemic of lies

We know that both David and Paul saw the reign of the lie among humankind to be a short-lived, albeit recurring, phenomenon.

David insisted that, though all around people were living by lies (Ps. 12), all those who speak lies would be stopped (Ps. 63.11); and Paul, echoing that, promised that those who reject the truth of God will not continue to make progress (2 Tim. 3.9). We should take great encouragement in these words because the epidemic of lies with which our world is presently infected is wreaking havoc in the affairs of people and nations. To know that God intends to stop the lie should fill us with hope and courage.

We need to ask ourselves whether we believe this, whether we accept the teaching of Scripture about the stopping of lies, and if we're prepared to take our place in that great work.

The Word of God says it – and not just in these two passages. In various places the Scriptures indicate that those who traffic in lies will not be able to stand against the truth as it marches on through the ministries of the Church.

God has promised it.

The promises of God

Here is just a sample: God promises to bring the plans and schemes of the nations to naught (Ps. 33.10). His glory and the testimony of His children will still His enemies (Ps. 8.2). God will shut the mouths of all wicked people (Ps. 107.42) and all who practice injustice (Job 5.16). He puts to silence every sinful mouth before the testimony of His Law (Rom. 3.19). He raises up church leaders to stop the mouths of those who teach lies within the church (Titus 1.7, 8).

Clearly, God is not pleased that lies should continue to inundate the world (Rev. 12). He means business about this, and He calls His people to confront and bring to naught the various versions of the lie as these come to light in the social and cultural arenas of our lives.

What the Scriptures promise throughout is symbolized in Zechariah's vision. The prophet saw the High Priest and Ruler of God's people – named, "Joshua" or "Jesus" – being accused by Satan because He was dressed in filthy garments in the Presence of the Holy God (Zech. 3.1, 3).

Here is the persistent motif of the ages: the father of lies railing against the very embodiment of truth, seeking to put Him down and to reign in His place (cf. Matt. 4.1-11).

But those filthy garments are our sins, which Jesus bore in His own body before the Father. And Satan's accusation should rightly have been directed against us. Yet, Jesus' sacrifice accepted, He was clothed in proper garments of righteousness, and Satan was commanded to shut up and be on his way (Zech. 3.2, 4, 5).

The accusations of the father of lies cannot prevail against the truth of God. Jesus will stop the lies by His righteousness and truth, embodied and proclaimed in His people.

The ammunition we need

The righteousness and truth of Jesus Christ are the ammunition we need to stop the mouths of liars. As we

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read in Matthew 22.46, once Jesus established His deity, sovereignty, and coming Kingdom, on the authority of God's Word, all those who had to that point opposed him publicly and outspokenly were no longer able to answer Him and had nothing left to say.

From that point on they would turn to violence rather than words. How can such fury of lies and hostility be stopped? Only by the faithful witness of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was the testimony concerning Jesus and His power to make all things new that Peter and John proclaimed before the religious leaders of their day, leaving those enemies of Christ with nothing left to say (Acts 4). The salvation of Jesus Christ – His forgiveness, holiness, transforming grace and power – lived out and declared by His people, is the power of God for salvation, the power to stop the lie because it leads men into the light of truth.

Christians must take up the challenge, within their own spheres of influence, of confronting, exposing, and stopping the lie which ravages the lives and wellbeing of so many. Let our rebuke ring out in lives of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit coupled with words of testimony and truth. For if we will be faithful to our calling, the Lord will rebuke the father of lies and stop the flood of lies that even now threatens to destroy the world.

While we do not expect a complete vanquishing of the lie here and now, we *do* expect to see real progress of the truth, the truth that makes us free from lies and deceit and sanctifies us as a holy people unto the Lord. Moreover, we know that a day is coming, then and there, when all lies and liars will be eternally banished from the Presence of God and condemned to misery and woe.

It is toward that far horizon that we are called to strive against the lie with all our powers, in every situation, at every opportunity.

For reflection

1. Do you feel adequately equipped to take your place, in your own [Personal Mission Field](#), to expose, oppose, and stop the Lie? Why or why not?
2. Do you think it would make a difference in your daily life if you consciously arose, each day, determined to resist the lie, rebuke the devil, and work for the progress of truth? Why or why not?
3. When at last we arrive at that “far horizon” and see Him Who is the Truth face to face, what will you say to Him concerning how you worked to stop the Lie during your time on earth?

Next steps – Preparation: What fears or concerns do you have about taking up this challenge and calling to stop the Lie? Talk with the Lord about these and seek courage to live out His calling.

3 Begin in Yourself

*Thus I will bless You while I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.
My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* Psalm 63.4, 5

A day is coming...

A day is coming, the great Day of the Lord, when Jesus Christ will finally put to silence every mouth that today boasts against God and spreads lies in place of truth. We who believe in Jesus long for that day and rejoice to contemplate eternity with the Lord in a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells, and lies shall be no more.

For the time being, however, mindful of the fact that we live in an age of half-truths, deceit, wrong belief, and outright lies, the followers of Jesus Christ must accept our calling to imitate the Savior and the apostles by confronting those who live in lies, to interrupt and stop the lie, leaving those who lie with nothing left to say. Confronting, exposing, and stopping lies will give the world a foretaste of truth and of the freedom that comes from living in it.

How can we do this? How can we hope to make a solid contribution of truth to turn back the tide of lies that even now threatens to inundate the world?

Well, we must start where we can. Every day.

Begin with yourself

David's advice is to begin with ourselves, and our relationship with God.

Why do people accept the lies they hear on television, in the press, from politicians, neighbors, associates, and friends? Lies about what really matters in life, what our priorities should be, what's right for me to do, and so forth? Why do we so readily pass on lies to others – whether we know them to be lies or not? There must be something inwardly satisfying about embracing a lie and passing it along. We may not realize that what we're hearing or sharing is a lie; all we know is that it sounds right, feels OK, and seems to satisfy some inward longing to be "in the know."

Let's face it: It's just too easy to find ourselves participating in lies. And we who believe in Jesus and the truth of God are not immune from this tendency. We must be continually vigilant against the lie, lest it take root in and poison all our soul, leaving us ultimately withered within and unable to live or proclaim the truth that is in Jesus.

We must not be satisfied for lies to have any place in our thinking, affections, priorities, or values.

David says that we should rather seek to satisfy our souls in the Lord, blessing and praising Him, setting our minds on Him, feeding sumptuously on His Word, and communing continuously with Him in prayer. When our lives are defined by daily worship, prayer without ceasing, and a steady diet of the Word of God, we will develop such a taste for truth that anything less simply won't bring the satisfaction we desire.

And as we see that truth supremely manifested in Jesus Christ, exalted in glory, we will hurry to rid ourselves of any lies that might obscure that glorious vision or turn us away from it altogether.

Believers who steep themselves in God and His truth will not go looking for satisfaction in whatever tickles their ears or satisfies their unsanctified longings. They will know a lie when they hear it; they will recognize

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every lie as evil; and they will hate all lies and guard their soul against them (Ps. 97.10). And the place to begin in overthrowing the lie is in our own soul. As worship, prayer, reading and meditation, talking with other believers about God's truth, and living the truth out in our everyday lives – as these become the daily discipline and defining characteristics of our lives, the lies by which this world seeks to entice and mislead us will be less and less palatable.

When we hunger and thirst for the Lord and His righteousness, when we are feeding on the solid food of His Word, so that our soul grows fat in Him, and when we experience the fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore which come in the Presence of the Lord (Ps. 16.8), we will not be inclined to turn from the truth of God to ideas and practices that make us vulnerable to the devil's accusations.

No longer appealing

As that happens, we'll find that our desire to wallow in the lies of pop culture, join in the gossip and half-truths of frivolous or self-serving conversation, entertain sinful thoughts or affections, sit silently by while lies destroy lives and ruin culture, or give our time, resources, and strength to things that have no eternal value – all this is greatly diminished as our soul is fattened by the Word and Presence of the Lord.

Simply put, the lie, in all its forms, will no longer appeal to those who find all their satisfaction in the Lord.

So if we want to silence the lies of our generation, we need to begin within, by training the palate of our soul to prefer the glorious truth of God to the dangerous lies of the day. Every day, and all day long.

For reflection

1. What is it about a lie that makes it so appealing to people? How do you resist that appeal?
2. Meditate on Psalm 139.23, 24. What practice does the psalmist describe? How can this help in guarding your soul against lies?
3. Meditate on Hebrews 10.24. What responsibility do believers have toward one another when it comes to the Lie?

Next steps – Transformation: Spend an extended time in silent meditation, looking for ways the lie has established a foothold in your life. Confess any lingering affinities for the lie and repent of any sins. Let this become a daily practice, morning and evening.

4 Stopping Lies in the Church

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. Titus 1.10, 11

In the household of faith

The lie can too easily become established within the household of faith.

Paul's immediate focus in our text is local house churches – “households” – and the trouble, upset, and turmoil caused in them by those who promulgate lies, whether knowingly or unknowingly.

In Paul's day, not only on the island of Crete (the destination of his letter to Titus) but in every other place Paul went, those who peddled lies came in after the apostle, objecting to his teaching, offering their own views about salvation, and, in general, causing upheaval and tumult in the churches.

Paul deplored the division and dissension caused by the lies that were infecting the Lord's churches. He insisted it had to stop, and those who were the source of it must be silenced. Once we have begun to work on our own souls, so that we always prefer the truth of God to the lies of the world, the next place to turn in stopping the lie is to the Body of Christ, of which every believer is a member.

Winds of false doctrine blow across the sails of the Church continuously, bringing lies against the ship of truth to drive it off its Kingdom course. Wafting in from worldly thinking, these false doctrines downplay the Word of God, make the needs of people rather than the glory of God the focal point of religion, introduce alien practices to worship and church life, and becalm the Body of Christ into complacency. Such lies must be exposed, deconstructed, and stopped.

Blind to lies

This can be a difficult challenge, because those who are involved with lies don't always realize it and won't readily admit it. In the classic film, *Bridge on the River Kwai*, the British colonel, played by Alec Guinness, was blinded by pride to carry out a most excellent lie and build “a proper bridge” to show up his Japanese captors. What he could not see, and what William Holden tried to get him to understand, was that his pride had blinded him to the fact that he was aiding and abetting the enemy in his military objectives. Only too late did Colonel Nicholson realize his mistake and accomplish a partial redemption – but at the cost of his life.

Many in our churches are living the lie in ways they don't even recognize. They have bought into the materialistic values and lies of the day, and so they are deeply in debt and distracted by their pursuit of things. They don't give much to Christian endeavors, and they spend the bulk of their free time indulging their possessions and diversions. They lead undisciplined lives, care little for discipleship, and are content to be attenders rather than fruitful and serving members of the Body of Christ.

Others have embraced the lie which says that Christians don't need to learn and obey God's Law; all we need is love – and this despite the fact that Jesus *defined* love in terms of the Law, and He warned any who negate the Law that they can expect to know the displeasure of God.

Still other believers have embraced the lie which says that the Lord's Day is a kind of “free day” for whatever diversion we desire. Or that we don't have to reach out to our neighbors with the Gospel; the church will do it for us. Or that we can watch whatever we want, listen to whatever we like, ignore divine standards of everything and indulge our flesh as much as we can, and it will not affect our relationship with Jesus Christ.

These behaviors are forms of the great lie that says we can have Christianity on our terms rather than God's. And all this indulging in the lies of the world takes place with at least the tacit approval of church leaders.

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Speak up and speak out

As a result of such lies, people get hurt – relationships are upset, debt-ridden people lose sleep and fight with their spouses, children are victimized by the moral standards of their peers, church members squabble over doctrinal disagreements, the flock of the Lord is deprived of the full and abundant life Jesus promised, and the witness of the local church is compromised by people who do not live the truth of Jesus in their everyday lives.

Once we have begun to love the truth and stop the lie in our own lives, it's time to turn to our believing friends and our churches, and begin insisting, with great patience and love, that we must not allow the lies of our unbelieving age to shape the way we worship, live for, and serve the Lord.

We must be resolute here. Scripture calls us to teach, admonish, and correct one another, whenever such is appropriate. If we refuse to speak up and speak out whenever lies are being advanced in the church, we'll never have the courage or skill to do so in the everyday situations of our lives. And we'll end up not caring so much that lies keep finding their way into our own thinking.

We are enemies of the lie and agents of truth, and we must face up to and face down the lie as often as we encounter it, especially among our fellow Christians. Failure to do so only brings upset, upheaval, and turmoil to the church and its members.

It was true in Paul's day, and it is true in ours. But God intends to stop the lie in all its forms. Let's make sure that we're on His side of the truth.

For reflection

1. Why would it make sense to look into the Church as a logical place to discover, expose, and eradicate lies?
2. Who has the primary responsibility for stopping the lie in the church? How does that work in your congregation?
3. Meditate on Matthew 18.15-18. What is the role of church discipline in stopping the lie in the Church?

Next steps – Preparation: Meditate on Matthew 18.15-18. Suggest a way of dealing with lies in the church that is consistent with what Jesus teaches here. What should your role be in this?

5 Rebuking the Lie

This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith... Titus 1.13

Get ready

At some point in seeking to expose the lies of this wrong-believing age and to make new room for the truth of God to flourish and bear fruit, we're going to have to take on those who are promulgating the lie in its various forms, knowingly or not, and whether they are within the church or without. We mustn't back down from this, and we mustn't expect that someone else is better able to challenge the lie.

Just as Jesus fearlessly exposed the folly of His detractors (Matt. 12.22-29), and Paul instructed Timothy to correct those who were in the grip of the father of lies (2 Tim. 2.24-26), so we, too, must be ready and willing to stand up to the lie, expose its folly, and call its bluff.

This doesn't require a lot of shouting, finger-pointing, and name-calling. Rather, speaking the truth in love, and always for edification (Eph. 4.15, 29), we must patiently, lovingly, and persistently seek to help those who are caught up in lies to discern the errors of their thinking and look for more solid ground on which to stand.

But even that may require a kind of unbudging firmness that some may find offensive.

Paul instructed Titus to "rebuke sharply" those who, by trafficking in lies, were upsetting and doing harm to others and creating problems among the believers in Crete. We need to understand the idea behind this term. To rebuke someone sharply does not mean that we get angry and overheated or resort to *ad hominem* tactics. It simply means that we demonstrate a firmness regarding truth that leaves no place for the lie.

Defiled image-bearers

We must always remember that those who traffic in or are caught up in lies are image-bearers of God and objects of His love. But they are "defiled" – that's Paul's word (Tit. 1.15) – both in their thinking and their priorities and practices. The lie has made such an impression on some people that it has taken over their thinking, desires, values, and choices. Such people do not need our condemnation; instead, they need patience, gentleness, and probably a series of extended conversations if they're ever going to break out of the web of lies in which they have become ensnared.

A "sharp rebuke" therefore is not one that seeks to denigrate, condemn, or embarrass someone; it simply wants to cut to the chase concerning the particular form of the lie that may be manifesting itself at any time. We use a rebuke because we want to confront and correct; we make it sharp because it points at an issue or a view, and not a person. A sharp rebuke denies the validity of what is being said, or the propriety of an action, and points instead to the truth of God as that which is worthy of His image-bearers.

Just as when the LORD rebuked the lying accusations of Satan and sent him packing (Zech. 3.1-3).

Thus we need to make sure that our hearts are saturated with love for those we intend to confront, so that, while we may issue a sharp rebuke, hopefully, we may gain them for the faith of Christ.

Understanding the lie

But we also need to make sure that we understand the particular manifestation of the lie that seems to have them in snares. For this we will have to develop the art of being good listeners (Jms. 1.19).

In our day the lie takes two broad and general shapes: relativism and pragmatism. Relativists insist that truth is what *people* understand it to be, depending on their circumstances and the influences that have impacted their lives over time. A relativist cannot say definitively that this or that idea or perspective is true; the most

he can say is that it may be true for me, for now. The relativist view, in effect, allows each person to be a god, having the power to define experiences, establish truths, and make judgments based on those truths. Those who hold to such a view will only be inclined to seek escape from it when they are helped to see the utter folly of such thinking.

Pragmatists take a somewhat more solid view of truth in that they believe truth is *whatever works* to help me achieve or realize whatever goals I have set for myself. Pragmatists are only slightly more objective in their view of truth than relativists in that you are more likely to find a pragmatist poring over the “how to” literature in whatever field or activity to discover the best ways of making something work. Relativists may or may not have such concerns. Pragmatism is also a form of self-deification, for it allows the one who thinks in this manner to determine the proper ends and means for making some action “work”.

Both views have found their way into Christian teaching and the life of the Church, and, consequently, into the lives of believers as well. Whenever any believer or Christian leader gives as a justification for anything “this is what God led me to do” (relativism) or “this is what works for us” (pragmatism) as opposed to “this is what the Scriptures say”, there we see the influence of these cornerstones of the lie, and there we must be prepared to understand the peculiar ways these influences are being expressed so that we can confront them pointedly and lovingly with a sharp rebuke.

And wherever we encounter such thinking among the wrong-believers in our lives, we must be ready to question, converse, explore, and rebuke, having our speech at all times seasoned with grace and speaking the truth of God in love (Col. 4.6).

There is nothing loving about allowing people to live the lie unchallenged. Doing so will not help the Church fulfill its calling to the Kingdom and glory of God; and it will only allow wrong-believers to continue leading deluded and disappointing lives.

And there is no one better suited to challenge – and rebuke – the lie than those who are immersed in the truth of God.

For reflection

1. Why must you *not* be content to allow the lie to establish a beachhead in your soul? Your church?
2. How would you explain the idea of a “sharp rebuke” to a believing friend? What’s the purpose? The focus? What must we always keep in mind? What should our motive and demeanor be in issuing a sharp rebuke?

What obstacles can keep you from taking up this duty of working to stop the lie? How can believers help one another overcome these obstacles?

Next steps – Transformation: Begin with yourself. What would it sound like for you to rebuke your own soul for harboring some semblance of the lie? Carry out this exercise before the Lord in prayer.

6 Ready to Reason and Rebuke

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 1.19

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2.24-26

Listen and persuade

We who know the truth in Jesus Christ cannot simply stand by while the lie ravages churches, communities, families, individuals, and whole societies and cultures. Paul says we must be prepared to issue a sharp rebuke to those who are trapped in the strong grip of the lie and are leading others away from the truth into the death pit of lies, whether they are in the church or outside it. As we mentioned previously, a sharp rebuke does not mean an angry, nasty denunciation. It is instead a rather more careful, pointed, and effective way of rendering speechless those who promulgate lies, leaving them with nothing left to say.

Of course, the first line of approach in dealing with those who promote lies is patient listening coupled with gentle persuasion. We need to understand the versions of the lie that have taken our neighbors captive, so that we can patiently and persistently help them come to their senses and make a clean break with lies. At all times we need to treat people with respect, as human beings made in the image of God and, thus, always susceptible to the in-breaking of truth when it is offered in a firm, clear, and gracious manner by those whose hope in Jesus is manifest (1 Pet. 3.15; Col. 4.6). We must speak the truth in love and for the edification of others, not to denounce or demean.

We do not want to put anyone down or try to force our beliefs on those who feel comfortable in their wrong belief. We seek to persuade, not to belittle or condemn. And part of persuasion may require us to employ the sharp rebuke to help people wake up from their stupor of deceit.

The sharp rebuke

The goal of a sharp rebuke, as previously mentioned, is to reach the soul of a person and expose the lies and folly informing their worldview and motivating their behavior. We want them to see that their current beliefs – about the world, life, our greatest need, our final destination, and so forth – are *wrong* beliefs, for they will not come to embrace the truth until they have seen the lies in which they are ensnared.

Like those to whom Peter preached in Acts 2, our objective must be to prick the conscience, alarm the mind, and deliver a blow to the heart of those who are standing against the truth of Jesus Christ. Thus, we must not shy away from exposing folly, identifying sin, or calling people to repentance. I know, that doesn't sound like the kind of thing you get very excited about doing. But the household of lies is becoming engulfed in flames of divine judgment (Rom. 1.18-32), and we need to alert the people inside that it's time to flee to safety.

We must be bold to say to people that they are in danger before the Lord for rejecting His truth and preferring their own chosen path in life (Rom. 6.23). And we must shine the bright, warm light of truth on their soul with the precision of a surgeon's laser scalpel (Heb. 4.12).

At all times we will want to use sound reason so that those we're confronting can examine their views or practices rather more objectively than is their wont, and so that we can walk them through the teaching of Scripture in a way that can overcome previous prejudice. Our attitude in this effort is like that of God to the Israelites: "Come, let us reason together. Let's look at what you believe and see if this is really a reliable place to stand" (Is. 1.18-20).

To Stop the Lie

Reason is not the tool we hope will finally enable them to come to their senses and escape the grip of the father of lies; only grace can accomplish conversion to the truth of Jesus. Reason is the tool we use to *clear a path* for the teaching of Scripture, which is quite able on its own, thank you very much, to bring conviction, contrition, and silence to boasting mouths, and joy to converted souls.

Only the Holy Spirit can bring conviction and repentance. Reason may open the door, and a sharp rebuke may get their attention, but only revelation, in the mighty hand of the Spirit of grace and truth, will deliver the healing thrust.

Powerful to open the heart

Obviously, our ability to issue a sharp rebuke depends on growing maturity in God's Word. We must press on to know the Scriptures and to improve our use of them in discerning between good and evil, right and wrong, wisdom and folly (Heb. 5.12-14). Reason can engage the conversation; winsomeness can set an agreeable tone; patient listening can earn the right to be heard; and rebuke can help to clarify the lies that lead to wrong belief. But only divine revelation – the Gospel of Jesus Christ – is powerful to break the hold of the lie, shake a person free from its strong grip, and open their heart to the truth of God.

We should not expect everyone with whom we thus reason or whom we rebuke to receive our words gratefully. Let's face it: this way be dragons. Even Paul, as patient, persuasive, and to the point as he was, could not convince all who heard him to forsake the lie and cling to the truth of Christ (Acts 17.32-34). We should expect the same and give thanks to God for however He is pleased to use our witness.

But given what we know about the lie, that it is not only a source of harm to people but of offense to God, we cannot turn away when it comes to light before us. We must be ready with reason and rebuke to help those who are trapped in the lie consider the option of God's truth.

And the only effective tool for bringing the lie to silence is the living and powerful Word of God (Heb. 4.12), wielded by those who know and live it (Ps. 149.6-9), are patient to clear a path for it and bold to proclaim and teach it to those in the grip of the father of lies.

Get a grip on the fact that God has called you to this as a witness for Christ. And make yourself ready to reason and rebuke as the Lord opens doors of opportunity in your daily life.

For reflection

1. What is the role of reason in helping people face up to the lies in which they have become ensnared?
2. "Only the Holy Spirit can bring conviction and repentance. Reason may open the door, and a sharp rebuke may get someone's attention, but only revelation, in the mighty hand of the Spirit, will deliver the healing thrust." In the light of Acts 1.8, and our calling as witnesses to Christ, what role should Scripture play in helping others break free of the lie?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident do you feel explaining the Gospel to a lost person? What's one thing you might do to move that assessment one or two numbers closer to 10?

Next steps - Transformation: What could you do to improve your ability to recognize and confront the lie when you discover it in your own heart? Among your Christian friends? In the wrong-believing people in your Personal Mission Field?

7 The Gospel of the Kingdom

*But God shall shoot at them with an arrow;
Suddenly they shall be wounded.
So He will make them stumble over their own tongue;
All who see them shall flee away.
All men shall fear,
And shall declare the work of God;
For they shall wisely consider His doing. Psalm 64.7-9*

To stumble over their own tongue

Our desire in wanting to silence those who traffic in lies is not to put them down, show them up, or try to make them look bad in any way. Ours is a mission of rescue and recovery, not denunciation and belittling. Our motive for confronting them is love, and our desire is that they might be edified in the truth that is in Jesus. When a sharp rebuke is necessary, we will issue it in private, if we can, but in public if we must. We want those caught up in the lie to see the error of their ways so that they might consider the truth of God in a more objective and reasoned manner.

Nevertheless, for some people to get to this point, we will need to confront their worldview and expose their sinful behaviors by the Sword of the Spirit applied lovingly and with patient reasoning to their deepest beliefs and desires. We want them to see that their wrong-belief is inconsistent, unworkable, untenable, unreliable, and, in short, false, so that they will “stumble over their own tongue” in trying vainly to defend the lies that are keeping them from the truth of Jesus. We will show them that whatever of truth they may be clinging to comes not from their beliefs but from the truth of God, and that they have “borrowed” that truth either without knowing or acknowledging that this is so. And we will call them to repent of their folly and falsehood and give themselves to knowing God and Jesus Christ, which is true and eternal life (Jn. 17.3).

This is our appointed mission; Jesus calls us to judge with righteous judgment all that we see and hear as followers of Christ (Jn. 7.24) and not to back down from defending the truth when lies are in the air.

The goal

The goal in all this is to help others wisely consider and understand the work God has done for them and to receive His words as true and unfailing. This means that over, throughout, and underneath all we do in helping others break free of the snares of lies and deception must be the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Good News of what God has done and is doing through Jesus Christ. We must guard against letting our conversations degenerate into a combat of opinions or preferences – what we believe and how we live as opposed to the worldview and lifestyle of the one we’re seeking to persuade. The crucial issue is not between us and them; rather, it is between them and the Lord.

But if they’re going to understand that and consider the work of Christ and the demands and promises of the Gospel, we must be careful to keep these on the table throughout our conversations.

But what is the work of God? With respect to the Gospel it involves four things.

First, Jesus Christ has repaired the lost righteousness of men, and offers in Himself increasing renewal in God’s original created purpose for human beings. Jesus alone is the way to a right standing before the heavenly Father and an upright, wholesome, purposeful, joy-filled life. All have sinned, Paul explained, in that we have broken the commandments of God and proved ourselves to be unrighteous and unworthy of anything other than God’s wrath. Jesus came among us and lived a sinless life, thus fulfilling all the requirements of righteousness in Himself.

To Stop the Lie

Second, Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God against our sins so that, through His righteousness and sacrifice, we may plead for forgiveness with the Father and overcome both the burden of guilt and the fear of death. He has taken our sins upon Himself, and God has accepted His sacrifice for our redemption: “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). God accepted Jesus’ righteousness as a substitute for our unrighteousness; and He accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as a substitute for the death we deserve.

Third, by His resurrection from the dead Jesus has opened the way to full and eternal life for all who believe in Him as Savior and Lord. He is truly alive from the grave, and in His resurrection all who believe may hope in the glory of God. Death could not hold Jesus because He had lived a righteous life. Now He lives in the fullness of His glory, calling us to come to the Father and receive the gift of eternal life by believing in Him.

And, finally, from His throne at the Father’s right hand, Jesus is advancing, in and through His people, a Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy on earth as it is in heaven, where reconciliation to God and renewal in every area of life are the daily experience of all who seek Him eagerly. He gives those who believe in Him the gift of His indwelling Spirit so that they might become more like Jesus day by day as they devote themselves to seeking His Kingdom and righteousness as the defining priority of their lives. And one day Jesus will return in glory to gather to Himself all those – living and dead – who have entered His Kingdom and lived as citizens and ambassadors for the glory of God.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

This is the Gospel of the Kingdom; this is what we must hold out to those who are living the lie, as we call them to recognize and repent of their folly and turn to the Lord for the hope, joy, meaning, purpose, and fullness of life for which they earnestly long.

David promises that when we are faithful in thus confronting the lie, God may be pleased to use our efforts, not only to loose the captives from the snares of the devil, but to bring the lie to silence for many others as well, as they observe the work of God and ponder all that He has done for us in Jesus Christ.

As John Stuart Mill observed, stumbling across an acorn of truth, “Let not anyone pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.” If you and I fail to make the most of each opportunity for confronting, exposing, rebuking, and silencing the lie, then we can be sure that lies will continue to proliferate, with all their destructive and ruinous power.

On the other hand, if we believe God and His Word, and embrace the calling He has appointed for us, He may be pleased to use us to stop the lie and to help others discover the path of truth and life in Jesus Christ.

For reflection

1. “The crucial issue is not between us and them; rather, it is between them and the Lord.” Explain.
2. Apply Mill’s observation to your church’s calling to stop the Lie.
3. To stop the lie we’ll need to be good listeners, patient conversationalists, and careful reasoners. How would you rate yourself at this time in each of those disciplines?

Next steps – Transformation: Meditate on John 8:32. How do people come to “know” the truth? What is your role in that process? Talk with some Christian friends about this. How might you help and encourage one another as opponents of the lie and agents of truth?

To Stop the Lie

For reflection or discussion

1. What does Scripture mean by “the lie”? How does “the lie” contribute to people living more by lies than by the truth of God?
2. God promises to stop lying mouths. How does He do this?
3. What three disciplines will we employ in stopping the lie? What can you do to improve in each of these?
4. What is the Good News of the Kingdom of God?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

To Stop the Lie

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship to help us extend our ministry and resources to others. You can contribute to our ministry by using the Contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.

