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Day 1

The Lying Tongue

The LORD detests lying lips,
but he delights in men who are truthful.
PROVERBS 12:22

Everything we do and say must be based upon the truth; lies make a shaky foundation for any relationship. Lying comes in four primary forms: deceitfulness, half-truths, exaggerations, and flattery. We will look at flattery in a separate chapter.

Deceitfulness

When I opened my mailbox and saw the letter from the Internal Revenue Service, my heart did not skip a beat as it had in the past. I used to dread those audits of my tax returns! Having been a faithful tither since the age of eighteen, I had learned over the years to keep a good record of my charitable giving because it usually generated an audit. However, I tended to be rather creative in interpreting the tax law in other
aspects of the return. As I stood there fingering the envelope, I knew that, whatever the nature of the inquiry, all would be well, for I had support for all of the deductions taken. I couldn’t help remembering a particular audit several years back in which I feigned ignorance of the tax law to justify my claim of a nondeductible educational expense. While sitting before the auditor and trying to appear innocent, I kept thinking, God’s going to strike me dead for lying! All of my life, my Sunday school teachers had taught me that God had no tolerance for liars. Nevertheless, I had succumbed to the temptation of a larger tax refund. So there I sat, engaging in the most blatant form of lying—plain old deceitfulness. I decided then that life was too short to bear the anxiety and the remorse of being deceitful for a few extra dollars. Peter warns us, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech” (1 Peter 3:10).

Why do some people practice deception? Many do it for financial gain, for social advantage, to hide immoral acts, or to obtain other “benefits.” Jacob, whose name meant “trickster,” conspired with his mother and deceived his father into giving him the birthright blessing that belonged to his brother Esau (Genesis 27). When Esau discovered the deception,
he threatened to kill him. Jacob was forced to leave town and to live with his Uncle Laban. Notwithstanding, he had to reap the seeds of deceit that he had sown. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his daughter Leah, whom Jacob did not love. Laban further deceived Jacob by changing the terms of his employment agreement numerous times. Jacob was forced to work 14 years to marry Rachel, whom he did love. Eventually, because he abandoned his deceitful ways and became a tither, God blessed Jacob beyond his wildest imagination. He returned home after many years with a beautiful family, much abundance, and a new name: Israel.

Engaging in deceitfulness is a slap in God’s face and has dire consequences. When we make a choice not to trust Him to handle a situation, we, in essence, decide He is a liar and will renege on His promise to meet every need. We then proceed to make our own way by any means necessary—even being deceptive. In doing so we forfeit the good life God had planned for us.

**Half-Truths**

Joan Smith took the day off on Monday. She returned to work on Tuesday and explained to her boss that she had been absent because her elderly mother
had been hospitalized. The truth of the matter is that Joan had only spent two hours at the hospital and six hours shopping! Joan’s objective was to have her boss believe that she had spent the entire day at her mother’s bedside. She told a half-truth.

I was once the queen of half-truths and had convinced myself I was still walking in integrity. One of my favorite half-truths was blaming lost keys for my being late to an appointment. I seemed to always misplace my keys; however, I could usually locate them within a few minutes in one of several places I knew to look. The real reason for my tardiness was usually poor time management. When I would offer my excuse, I rationalized that the portion of my statement that I verbalized was true; I had indeed searched for the keys. But I ignored the fact that the undisclosed information, like the extra minutes I spent in the bed or my decision to complete an insignificant task, would have caused the hearer to draw a different conclusion about me. My husband finally impressed upon me the painful reality that any intent to deceive is a lie—period.

I find it interesting that the word “integrity” derives from “integer,” which is a mathematical term. An integer is a whole number as opposed to a fraction. When we walk in integrity, we tell the whole truth
and not just a fraction or part of it. Someone was well aware of the many ways there are to lie when he suggested that court oaths charge a person to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

**Exaggerating**

Do you often embellish a story in order to get more attention from your listener? Exaggerating may seem harmless, but it is another form of lying. The danger in exaggerating is that those who are familiar with a person's propensity to stretch the truth will discount everything he says. This is also the paradox of exaggerating; a person stretches the truth to make something sound more believable, but then he loses his credibility because he exaggerates. I know several truth-stretchers. Their favorite words include absolute terms like “everybody,” “nobody,” and “always.” Their friends jokingly warn, “Now, you know you should only believe about half of anything she says.” What a terrible indictment. Is this how you would like to be viewed?

When you relate a story or an incident, know that it is okay to tell it with enthusiasm; just avoid the exaggerations. Stick to the facts at face value and resist the urge to be the center of attention by engaging in this form of lying.
God has sealed the destiny of every liar: “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8 NKJV). Death means separation. The first death is the separation of the spirit from the body; the second death is eternal separation of the spirit from God. Eternal separation from my Father is too high a price to pay for any form of deceitfulness.

The psalmist knew the consequences of deceitfulness and constantly implored God to keep him out of this pit. Consider his plea. “Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue” (Psalm 120:2 KJV). Have you been trusting God by telling the truth and leaving the consequences to Him, or do you need to join the psalmist in his prayer for deliverance?

**Today’s Affirmation:**

“My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse” (Proverbs 8:7-8).