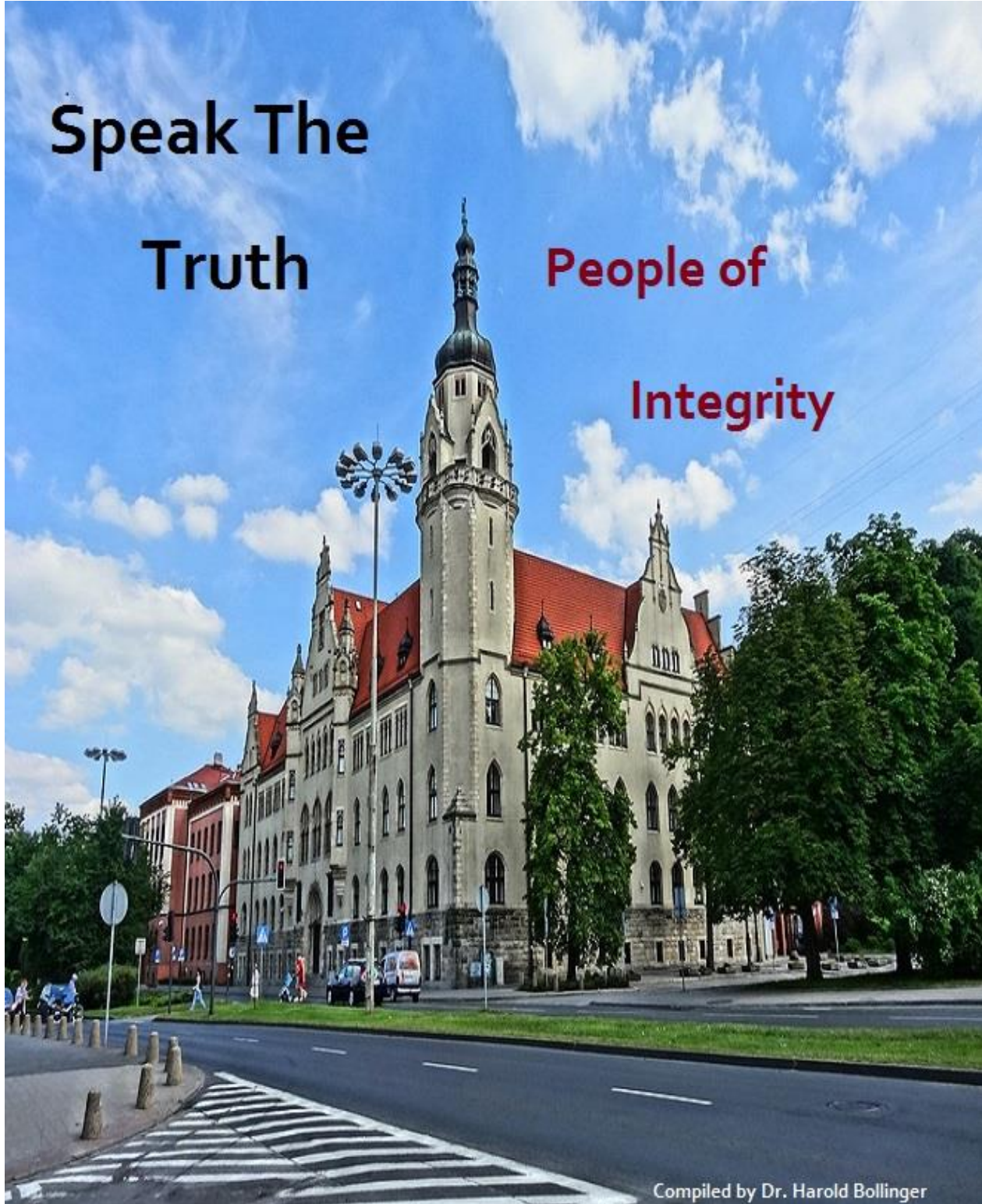


**Speak The
Truth**

**People of
Integrity**



Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

Proverbs 12:22

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

Prudent people have a quiet confidence. Insecure or uncertain people feel the need to prove themselves, but prudent people don't have to prove anything. They know they are capable, so they can get on with their work. Beware of showing off.

If you are modest, people may not notice you at first, but they will respect you later.

If you are facing difficult temptations, you will be less likely to give in if you remind yourself that God is watching. When faced with the opportunity to sin, remember that God sees everything.

Chapter 1

Keep your lips from speaking deceit.

Psalm 34:12-13

Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

The Bible often connects the fear of the Lord (love and reverence for him) with obedience. “Fear God and keep his commandments” (Eccles. 12:13); “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:23).

David said that a person who fears the Lord doesn’t lie, turns from evil, does good, and promotes peace. Reverence is much more than sitting quietly in church. It includes obeying God in the way we speak and the way we treat others.

Somehow we think that peace should come to us with no effort. But David explained that we are to seek and pursue peace. Paul echoed this thought in Romans 12:18. A person who wants peace cannot be argumentative and contentious. Because peaceful relationships come from our efforts at peacemaking, work hard at living in peace with others each day.

Speak truth with your neighbor.

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

Lying to each other disrupts unity by creating conflicts and destroying trust. It tears down relationships and leads to open warfare in a church.

Colossians 3:9-10

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

We must rid ourselves of all evil practices and immorality. Then we can commit ourselves to what Christ teaches. Paul was appealing to the commitment the believers had made and urging them to remain true to their confession of faith.

They were to rid themselves of the old life and “put on” the new way of living given by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. If you have made such a commitment to Christ, are you remaining true to it?

Lying to one another disrupts unity by destroying trust. It tears down relationships and may lead to serious conflict in a church. So don’t exaggerate statistics, pass on rumors or gossip, or say things to build up your own image. Be committed to telling the truth.

What does it mean to “put on the new self”? It means that your conduct should match your faith. If you are a Christian, you should act like it. To be a Christian means more than just making good resolutions and having good intentions; it means taking the right actions. This is a straightforward step that is as simple as putting on your clothes.

Every Christian is in a continuing education program. The more we know of Christ and his work, the more we are being changed to be like him. Because this process is lifelong, we must never stop learning and obeying.

There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in him. It takes practice, ongoing review, patience, and concentration to keep in line with his will.

Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Exodus 20:16

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Giving false testimony means lying in court. God knew that Israel could not survive unless its system of justice was incorruptible. We should be honest in our private dealings as well as in our public statements. In either situation, we “give false testimony” by leaving something out of a story, telling a half-truth, twisting the facts, or inventing a falsehood. God warns us against deception. Even though deception is a way of life for many people, God’s people must not give in to it!

Prophesying created lies.

Jeremiah 27:16

Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Behold, the vessels of the LORD'S house will now shortly be brought again from Babylon'; for they are prophesying a lie to you.

Zedekiah was in a tough spot. Jeremiah called on him to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar at a time when many of the other leaders wanted him to form an alliance and fight.

It would be disgraceful for a king to surrender, and he would look like a coward. This was a great opportunity for the false prophets, who kept saying that the Babylonians would not defeat the great city of Jerusalem and that God would never allow the magnificent, holy temple to be destroyed.

Do not bear False Witness.

Deuteronomy 5:20

'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

We are not to set our desires on anything that belongs to someone else. Not only can such desires make us miserable, they can also lead us to other sins such as adultery and stealing.

Envy of others is a useless exercise because God is able to provide everything we really need, even if he does not always give us everything we want. To stop coveting, we need to practice being content with what we have.

The apostle Paul emphasizes the significance of contentment in Phil. 4:11. It's a matter of perspective. Instead of thinking about what we don't have, we should thank God for what he has given and strive to be content. After all, our most important possession is free and available to everyone—eternal life through Christ.

Chapter 2

Do not swear falsely by the name of the Lord.

Leviticus 19:11-12

'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. 'You shall not swear falsely by my name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

This law was a protection for the poor and the alien (foreigner) and a reminder that God owned the land; the people were only caretakers. Laws such as this showed God's generosity and liberality.

As people of God, the Israelites were to reflect his nature and characteristics in their attitudes and actions. Ruth and Naomi were two people who benefited from this merciful law (Ruth 2:2).

God instructed the Hebrews to provide for those in need. He required that the people leave the edges of their fields unharvested, providing food for travelers and the poor. It is easy to ignore the poor or forget about those who have less than we do. But God desires generosity. In what ways can you leave the "edges of your field" for those in need?

There are seven things the Lord hates

Proverbs 6:16-17

There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

The Lord hates a lying tongue.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.

Proverbs 12:22

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

Prudent people have a quiet confidence. Insecure or uncertain people feel the need to prove themselves, but prudent people don't have to prove anything. They know they are capable, so they can get on with their work. Beware of showing off.

If you are modest, people may not notice you at first, but they will respect you later.

The Lord searches the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9-10

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

Jeremiah was also told not to participate in parties or other joyful events to show how seriously God took the nation's sins. In both cases (no public grief or joy), Jeremiah's life was to be an attention-getter and an illustration of God's truth.

Sometimes we think that the only way to communicate is through speaking or teaching, but God can use a wide variety of means to bring his message. Use your creativity.

The Serpent deceived the woman.

Genesis 3:4-5

The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Adam and Eve got what they wanted: an intimate knowledge of both good and evil. But they got it by doing evil, and the results were disastrous. Sometimes we have the illusion that freedom is doing anything we want. But God says that true

freedom comes from obedience and knowing what *not* to do. The restrictions he gives us are for our good, helping us avoid evil.

We have the freedom to walk in front of a speeding car, but we don't need to be hit to realize it would be foolish to do so. Don't listen to Satan's temptations. You don't have to do evil to gain more experience and learn more about life.

Satan used a sincere motive to tempt Eve—"you will be like God." It wasn't wrong of Eve to want to be like God. To become more like God is humanity's highest goal. It is what w

He told her that she could become more like God by defying God's authority, by taking God's place and deciding for herself what was best for her life. In effect, he told her to become her own god.

But to become like God is not the same as trying to become God. Rather, it is to reflect his characteristics and to recognize his authority over your life. Like Eve, we often have a worthy goal but try to achieve it in the wrong way. We act like a political candidate who pays off an election judge to be "voted" into office. When he does this, serving the people is no longer his highest goal.

Self-exaltation leads to rebellion against God. As soon as we begin to leave God out of our plans, we are placing ourselves above him. This is exactly what Satan wants us to do.

Cain lied to God about his brother.

Genesis 4:9

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Adam and Eve's disobedience brought sin into the human race. They may have thought their sin—eating a piece of fruit—wasn't very bad, but notice how quickly their sinful nature developed in their children.

Simple disobedience quickly degenerated into outright murder. Adam and Eve acted only against God, but Cain acted against both God and man. A small sin has a way of growing out of control. Let God help you with your "little" sins before they turn into tragedies.

Sarah lied about laughing.

Genesis 18:15

Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh.

Sarah thinks this too good news to be true; she laughed, and therefore cannot as yet find in her heart to believe it. Sarah laughed.

We might not have thought there was a difference between Sarah's laughter and Abraham's, Gen 17:17; but He who searches the heart, saw that the one sprung from unbelief, and the other from faith.

She denied that she had laughed. One sin commonly brings in another, and it is not likely we shall strictly keep to truth, when we question the Divine truth. But whom the Lord loves he will rebuke, convict, silence, and bring to repentance, and if they sin before him.

Isaac lied about his wife.

Genesis 26:6-7

So Isaac lived in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say, "My wife," thinking, "the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful."

Isaac was afraid that the men in Gerar would kill him to get his beautiful wife, Rebekah. So he lied, claiming that Rebekah was his sister. Where did he learn that trick? He may have known about the actions of his father, Abraham (see Genesis 12:10-14 and Genesis 20:1-4).

Parents help shape the world's future by the way they shape their children's values. The first step toward helping children live rightly is for the parents to live rightly. Your actions are often copied by those closest to you. What kind of example are you setting for your children?

Chapter 3

Jacob deceives his father.

Genesis 27:18-19

Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me."

Jacob hesitated when he heard Rebekah's deceitful plan. Although he questioned it for the wrong reason (fear of getting caught), he protested and thus gave her one last chance to reconsider.

But Rebekah had become so wrapped up in her plan that she no longer saw clearly what she was doing. Sin had trapped her and was degrading her character. Correcting yourself in the middle of doing wrong may bring hurt and disappointment, but it also will bring freedom from sin's control.

Gehazi lied about the gifts brought for Elijah.

2 Kings 5:22-27

He said, "All is well My master has sent me, saying, 'Behold, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.'" Naaman said, "Be pleased to take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried them before him. When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed.....

Gehazi saw a perfect opportunity to get rich by selfishly asking for the reward Elisha had refused. Unfortunately, there were three problems with his plan: (1) he willingly accepted money that had been offered to someone else; (2) he wrongly implied that money could be exchanged for God's free gift of healing and mercy; (3) he lied and tried to cover up his motives for accepting the money. Although Gehazi had been a helpful servant, personal gain had become more important to him than serving God.

This passage is not teaching that money is evil or that ministers should not get paid; instead, it is warning against greed and deceit. True service is motivated by love and devotion to God and seeks no personal gain. As you serve God, check your motives—you can't serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24).

Ananias and his wife lied about the land price.

Acts 5:1-10

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?

We see both internal and external problems facing the early church. Inside, there was dishonesty (Acts 5:1-11) and administrative headaches (Acts 6:1-7). Outside, the church was being pressured by persecution. While church leaders were careful and sensitive in dealing with the internal problems, there was not much they could do to prevent the external pressures. Through it all, the leaders kept their focus on what was most important—spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even after the Holy Spirit had come, the believers were not immune to Satan's temptations. Although Satan was defeated by Christ at the cross, he was still actively trying to make the believers stumble—as he does today (Ephes. 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8). Satan's overthrow is inevitable, but it will not occur until the last days, when Christ returns to judge the world (Rev. 20:10).

The sin Ananias and Sapphira committed was not stinginess or holding back part of the money—it was their choice whether or not to sell the land and how much to give. Their sin was lying to God and God's people—saying they gave the whole amount but holding back some for themselves and trying to make themselves appear more generous than they really were.

This act was judged harshly because dishonesty, greed, and covetousness are destructive in a church, preventing the Holy Spirit from working effectively. All lying is bad, but when we lie to try to deceive God and his people about our relationship with him, we destroy our testimony about Christ.

The men lied about Stephen.

Acts 6:11

Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

These men lied about Stephen, causing him to be arrested and brought before the Jewish council. The Sadducees, the dominant party in the council, accepted and studied only the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy).

In their view, to speak blasphemy against Moses was a crime. But from Stephen's speech (Acts 7), we learn that this accusation was false. Stephen based his review of Israel's history on Moses' writings.

A false witness will not go unpunished

Proverbs 19:9

A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will perish.

This proverb does not condone the self-centered person who loves and protects his or her selfish interests and will do anything to serve them. Instead it encourages those who really care about themselves to seek wisdom.

Chapter 4

The Lord abhors bloodshed and deceit.

Psalm 5:6

You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.

God cannot condone or excuse even the smallest sin. Therefore we cannot excuse ourselves for sinning only a little bit. As we grow spiritually, our sensitivity to sin increases. What is your reaction to sin in your life?

Are you insensitive, unconcerned, disappointed, or comfortable? As God makes us aware of sin, we must be intolerant toward it and be willing to change. All believers should strive to be more tolerant of people but less tolerant of the sin in others and in themselves.

The evil love lying rather than righteousness.

Psalm 52:2-5

Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. [5] God shall likewise destroy thee forever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

This psalm was written about Doeg, the Edomite who had betrayed Ahimelech and David and then killed God's priests (see 1 Samuel 21:7; 1 Samuel 22:9-23). Doeg thought he was a great hero—even boasting about his deed.

In reality, his deed was evil, an offense to God. It is easy to mistake “accomplishment” with goodness. Just because something is done well or thoroughly doesn't mean it is good (for example, someone may be a great gambler or a skillful liar). Measure all you do by the rule of God's Word, not by how proficiently you do it.

Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out their days.

Psalm 55:23

But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days But I will trust in you.

God wants us to cast our cares on him, but often we continue to bear them ourselves even when we say we are trusting in him. Trust the same strength that sustains you to carry your cares also.

Those who practices deceit shall not dwell in the house of the Lord.

Psalm 101:7

He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.

David said that he would keep his eyes “on the faithful in the land.” In other words, he would choose as models and as friends those who are godly and truthful. Our friends and associates can have a profound influence on our lives. Make sure to keep your eyes on those who are faithful to God and his Word.

Everyone is greedy for gain.

Jeremiah 6:13-15

"For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain, and from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. “They have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace.

"Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; they did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be cast down," says the LORD.

The northern kingdom, Israel, had fallen to Assyria, and its people had been taken into captivity. The tragic lesson of their fall should have caused the southern kingdom, Judah, to return to God, but Judah paid no attention. Jeremiah urged Judah to return to God to avoid certain disaster.

This message came between 627 and 621 B.C., during Josiah's reign. Although Josiah obeyed God's commands, his example apparently did not penetrate the hearts of the people. If the people refused to repent, God said he would destroy the nation because of the evils of Josiah's grandfather, King Manasseh (2 Kings 23:25-27).

The Lord's people go astray for their falsehoods.

Jeremiah 23:32

"Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the LORD, "and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the LORD.

People mocked Jeremiah by saying sarcastically, "What is the oracle of the LORD?" (*Oracle* meaning "utterance" or "burden"). The people mocked Jeremiah and God because it seemed that Jeremiah brought nothing but God's sad news of condemnation. But this sad news was the truth.

If they had accepted it, they would have had to repent and turn to God. Because they did not want to do this, they rejected Jeremiah's message. Have you ever rejected a message or made fun of it because it would require you to change your ways? Before dismissing someone who brings sad news, look carefully at your motives.

The law is for lawless and the rebellious.

1 Timothy 1:9-10

realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and

homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

Paul was writing against those who were engaging in philosophical speculation based on the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, written by Moses).

The false teachers wanted to become famous as teachers of God's law, but they didn't even understand the law's purpose. The law was not meant to give believers a list of commands for every occasion, but to show unbelievers their sin and bring them to God. For more of what Paul taught about our relationship to law, see Romans 5:20-21; Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 3:24-29.

"Perverts" may refer to homosexuals. There are those who attempt to legitimize homosexuality as an acceptable alternative life-style. Even some Christians say people have a right to choose their sexual preference.

But the Bible specifically calls homosexual behavior sin (see Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). We must be careful, however, to condemn only the practice, and not the people. Those who commit homosexual acts are not to be feared, ridiculed, or hated.

They can be forgiven and their lives can be transformed. The church should be a haven of forgiveness and healing for repentant homosexuals without compromising its stance against homosexual behavior. For more on this subject see the notes on +Romans 1:26-27.

Chapter 5

All liars will have part in the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The "cowardly" are not those who are fainthearted in their faith or who sometimes doubt or question, but those who turn back from following God. They are not brave enough to stand up for Christ; they are not humble enough to accept his authority over their lives.

They are put in the same list as the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the liars, the idolaters, the sexually immoral, and those practicing magic arts.

People who overcome "stand firm to the end" (Mark 13:13). They will receive the blessings that God promised:

- (1) Eating from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7),
- (2) Escaping from the lake of fire (the "second death," Rev. 2:11),
- (3) Receiving a special name (Rev. 2:17),
- (4) Having authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26),
- (5) Being included in the book of life (Rev. 3:5),
- (6) Being a pillar in God's spiritual temple (Rev. 3:12), and
- (7) Sitting with Christ on his throne (Rev. 3:21). Those who can endure the testing of evil and remain faithful will be rewarded by God.

Lying leaves one outside of God's blessings.

Revelation 22:15

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

My lips will not speak unjustly

Job 27:2-5

"As God lives, who has taken away my right, And the Almighty, who has embittered my soul, for as long as life is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils, My lips certainly will not speak unjustly, Nor will my tongue mutter deceit.....

In the midst of all the accusations, Job was able to declare that his conscience was clear. Only God's forgiveness and the determination to live rightly before God can bring a clear conscience.

How important Job's record became as he was being accused. Like Job, we can't claim sinless lives, but we *can* claim forgiven lives. When we confess our sins to God, he forgives us. Then we can live with clear consciences (1 John 1:9).

They recognized false prophets.

Revelation 2:2

'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

Over a long period of time, the church in Ephesus had steadfastly refused to tolerate sin among its members. This was not easy in a city noted for immoral sexual practices associated with the worship of the goddess Artemis. We also are living in times of widespread sin and sexual immorality.

It is popular to be open-minded toward many types of sin, calling them personal choices or alternative life-styles. But when the body of believers begins to tolerate sin in the church, it is lowering the standards and compromising the church's witness. Remember that God's approval is infinitely more important than the world's.

Christ commended the church at Ephesus for

- (1) Working hard,
- (2) Persevering,
- (3) Resisting sin,
- (4) Critically examining the claims of false apostles, and
- (5) Enduring hardships without becoming weary.

Every church should have these characteristics. But these good efforts should spring from our love for Jesus Christ. Both Jesus and John stressed love for one another as an authentic proof of the gospel (John 13:34; 1 John 3:18-19).

In the battle to maintain sound teaching and moral and doctrinal purity, it is possible to lose a charitable spirit. Prolonged conflict can weaken or destroy our patience and affection. In defending the faith, guard against any structure or rigidity that weakens love.

Those who lie, lay up deceit in the hearts.

Proverbs 26:24-28

He who hates disguises it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart. Though his hatred covers itself with guile, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly....

This proverb means that people with hate in their hearts may sound pleasant enough; don't believe what they say.

In the last days, many will fall away.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

False teachers were and still are a threat to the church. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned against them (see, for example, Mark 13:21-23; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thes. 2:1-12; 2 Peter 3:3-7).

The danger that Timothy faced in Ephesus seems to have come from certain people in the church who were following some Greek philosophers who taught that the body was evil and that only the soul mattered.

The false teachers refused to believe that the God of creation was good, because his very contact with the physical world would have soiled him. Though these Greek-influenced church members honored Jesus, they could not believe he was truly human. Paul knew that their teachings, if left unchecked, would greatly distort Christian truth.

It is not enough that a teacher appears to know what he is talking about, is disciplined and moral, or says that he is speaking for God. If his words contradict the Bible, his teaching is false. Like Timothy, we must guard against any teaching that causes believers to dilute or reject any aspect of their faith. Such false teaching can be very direct or extremely subtle.

False prophets received a lie for the king.

1 Kings 22:21-23

"Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' "The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.'

"Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

Micaiah related his vision. This matter is represented after the manner of men: we are not to imagine that God is ever put upon new counsels; or that he needs to consult with angels, or any creature, about the methods he should take; or that he is the author of sin, or the cause of any man's telling or believing a lie.

Micaiah returned not the blow of Zedekiah, yet, since he boasted of the Spirit, as those commonly do that know least of the Holy Spirit's operations, the true prophet left him to be convinced of his error by the event.

Those that will not have their mistakes set right in time, by the word of God, will be undeceived, when it is too late, by the judgments of God. We should be ashamed of what we call trials, were we to consider what the servants of God have endured.

Yet it will be well, if freedom from trouble prove not more hurtful to us; we are more easily allured and bribed into unfaithfulness and conformity to the world, than driven to them.

Chapter 6

A deceiving spirit was put in the mouths of the prophets.

2 Chronicles 18:20-22

"Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'How?' "He said, 'I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and prevail also. Go and do so.' "Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, for the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

God used the seductive influence of false prophets to judge Ahab. They were determined to tell Ahab what he wanted to hear. God confirmed their plans to lie as a means to remove Ahab from the throne.

These prophets, supported by Ahab, snared him in his sin. Because he listened to them instead of God, he was killed in battle. The lying spirit is a picture of the prophets' entire way of life—telling the king only what he wanted to hear, not what he needed to hear. Leaders will only find trouble if they surround themselves with advisers whose only thought is to please them.

Many follow their father, the devil.

John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The attitudes and actions of these leaders clearly identified them as followers of Satan. They may not have been conscious of this, but their hatred of truth, their lies, and their murderous intentions indicated how much control the devil had over them.

They were his tools in carrying out his plans; they spoke the very same language of lies. Satan still uses people to obstruct God's work (Genesis 4:8; Romans 5:12; 1 John 3:12).

He who denies Christ is a liar.

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

John is talking about the last days, the time between Christ's first and second comings. The first-century readers of 1 John lived in the last days, and so do we. During this time, antichrists (false teachers who pretend to be Christians and who lure weak members away from Christ) will appear. Finally, just before the world ends, one great antichrist will arise (Rev. 13; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10). We do not need to fear these evil people, however.

The Holy Spirit shows us their errors, so we will not be deceived. However, we must teach God's Word clearly and carefully to the peripheral, weak members among us so that they won't fall prey to these teachers who "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

Apparently the antichrists in John's day were claiming faith in God while denying and opposing Christ. To do so, John firmly states, is impossible. Because Jesus is God's Son and the Messiah, to deny Christ is to reject God's way of revealing himself to the world.

A person who accepts Christ as God's Son, however, accepts God the Father at the same time. The two are one and cannot be separated. Many cultists today call themselves Christians, but they deny that Jesus is divine. We must expose these heresies and oppose such teachings so that the weak believers among us do not succumb to their teachings.

The Devil deceives people on the earth.

Revelation 13:14

And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

Throughout the Bible we see miracles performed as proofs of God's power, love, and authority. But here we see counterfeit miracles performed to deceive. This is a reminder of Pharaoh's magicians, who duplicated Moses' signs in Egypt.

True signs and miracles point us to Jesus Christ, but miracles alone can be deceptive. That is why we must ask with respect to each miracle we see: Is this consistent with what God says in the Bible?

The second beast here gains influence through the signs and wonders that he can perform on behalf of the first beast. The second beast orders the people to worship an image in honor of the first beast—a direct flouting of the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6).

Allowing the Bible to guide our faith and practice will keep us from being deceived by false signs, however convincing they appear to be. Any teaching that contradicts God's Word is false.

Satan gathers God and Magog for battle.

Revelation 20:7-10

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.....

Gog and Magog symbolize all the forces of evil that band together to battle God. Noah's son, Japheth, had a son named Magog (Genesis 10:2). Ezekiel presents Gog as a leader of forces against Israel (Ezekiel 38-39).

This is not a typical battle where the outcome is in doubt during the heat of the conflict. Here there is no contest. Two mighty forces of evil—those of the beast (Rev. 19:19) and of Satan (Rev. 20:8)—unite to do battle against God. The Bible uses just two verses to describe each battle—the evil beast and his forces are captured and thrown into the fiery lake (Rev. 19:20-21), and fire from heaven devours Satan and his attacking armies (Rev. 20:9-10).

For God, it is as easy as that. There will be no doubt, no worry, and no second thoughts for believers about whether they have chosen the right side. If you are with God, you will experience this tremendous victory with Christ.

The truth is not in the one who does not keep the commandments.

1 John 2:4

The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

How can you be sure that you belong to Christ? This passage gives two ways to know: if you do what Christ says and live as Christ wants.

What does Christ tell us to do? John answers in 1 John 3:23: "to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another." True Christian faith results in loving behavior; that is why John says that the way we act can give us assurance that we belong to Christ.

Those who love God, love their fellow man.

1 John 4:20

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

It is easy to say we love God when that love doesn't cost us anything more than weekly attendance at religious services. But the real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us—our family members and fellow believers. We cannot truly love God while neglecting to love those who are created in his image.

Chapter 7

God's anointing will teach you all things that are true.

1 John 2:27

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Christ had promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach his followers and to remind them of all that Christ had taught (John 14:26).

As a result, Christians have the Holy Spirit within them (“the anointing”) to keep them from going astray. In addition, they have the God-inspired Scriptures, against which they can test questionable teachings. To stay true to Christ, we must follow his Word and his Spirit.

Let the Holy Spirit help you discern truth from error. For more about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does, see the notes on +John 3:6; +Acts 1:5; and +Ephes. 1:13-14.

Christ lives (remains) in us through the Holy Spirit, and we also live in Christ. This means that we place our total trust in him, rely on him for guidance and strength, and live as he wants us to live.

It implies a personal, life-giving relationship. John uses the same idea in John 15:5, where he speaks of Christ as the vine and his followers as the branches (see also 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:15).

Those who lie, go astray.

Psalm 58:3

The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth.

The Old Testament is filled with references to justice, and it is a key topic in the psalms. Unfortunately, many judges and rulers in ancient times took justice into their own hands.

They had complete authority with no accountability and the power to make their own laws. When earth's judges are corrupt, there is little hope of justice in this life. But God loves justice, and those who obey him will experience perfect justice in eternity.

A false witness utters lies.

Proverbs 14:5

A trustworthy witness will not lie, but a false witness utters lies.

When a farmer has no oxen for plowing, his food trough for the animals will be empty. The only way to keep your life free of people problems is to keep it free of other people.

But if your life is empty of people, it is useless; and if you live only for yourself, your life loses its meaning.

Instead of avoiding people, we should serve others, share the faith, and work for justice. Is your life clean, but empty? Or does it give evidence of your serving God wholeheartedly?

A test to validate a dream

Daniel 2:9

that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."

Dreams were considered to be messages from the gods, and the wise men were expected to interpret them. Usually the wise men could give some sort of interpretation as long as they knew what the dream was about.

This time, however, Nebuchadnezzar demanded to be told the dream also. God sent a series of dreams to Nebuchadnezzar with prophetic messages that could be revealed and understood only by a servant of God.

People from other time periods who received dreams from God include:

Jacob (Genesis 28:10-15),

Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11),

Pharaoh's cupbearer and his baker (Genesis 40),

Pharaoh (Genesis 41),

Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-15), and

Joseph (Matthew 1:20-24).

The king loved wickedness.

Hosea 7:3

With their wickedness they make the king glad, and the princes with their lies.

God sees and knows everything. Like Israel, we often forget this. Thoughts like "No one will ever know," or "No one is watching" may tempt us to try to get away with sin.

If you are facing difficult temptations, you will be less likely to give in if you remind yourself that God is watching. When faced with the opportunity to sin, remember that God sees everything.

Sorrowing for the people of Israel

Jeremiah 9:1-5

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord.

Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

And they will deceive everyone his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Jeremiah felt conflicting emotions concerning his people. Lying, deceit, treachery, adultery, and idolatry had become common sins. He was angered by their sin, but he had compassion too.

He was set apart from them by his mission for God, but he was also one of them. Jesus had similar feelings when he stood before Jerusalem, the city that would reject him (Matthew 23:37).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print