

Message Reflections

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Reflections accompany the [weekly message](#).

Have you ever been deceived? Who hasn't, right? Immediately I think of instances where I was deceived by others like being invited to a church service only to find out it was a pitch for a vacation pyramid scheme or buying concert tickets only to find out I bought them through a secondary vendor and that I could have bought the same tickets for about \$100 cheaper from the original seller. There is nothing that can make you feel quite as foolish or small as being duped.

The hurt and embarrassment I have felt from being deceived by others pales in comparison to the damage done by the lies I have told to myself and believed; like the times I convinced myself I wasn't good enough or thin enough or worthy enough; or the times I kept telling myself God's grace couldn't cover me, or worse, that I didn't need it; or the narratives I invented in my mind about another person's feelings, thoughts, or character that steered our relationship in the wrong direction. The latter was particularly damaging during a difficult time in my marriage.

2 John is all about truth. Verse 2 reads, "because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the father, in truth and love." Thankfully there is a definite and finite truth and that is Jesus. In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus IS truth. Once He ascended into heaven, He didn't leave us alone without His truth. He sent His Spirit to be in us and with us. In John 14:16-18, Jesus says, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you." We have the ability to discern truth from lies by the power of the Holy Spirit, living in us. We need the truth in us.

Lies often start as thoughts. God has given us commands regarding how we are to manage our thoughts. If He commands us to do something, it means it must be in our power to do so. In 2 Corinthians 10:5b, Paul writes, "...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Paul also writes (Phil 4:8), "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is *true*, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

I'll give you an example of how this wrestling match between truth and lies manifested itself in my marriage some years ago and I let the lies win over the truth. My husband would come home from work, take off his shoes in the doorway, drape his jacket over one of the kitchen chairs, and place his travel coffee mug on the counter next to the sink. You know, how normal people come home from work. He would then greet me and ask me how I had spent my day. Again, how normal husbands greet their wives. To his surprise, I would already have become irritated and resentful. Here's how the narrative went in my head: Sure, it "seemed" innocent enough to an outsider but I 'knew' that these actions were only a manifestation of his disrespect for me. If he had to ask how I had spent my day, he "obviously" didn't notice or appreciate that I had spent all day cleaning and straightening up the house. He "surely" had no idea what I did for our family and the amount of work it took to keep a household running smoothly. The way he "cluttered" up everything with his shoes, jacket, and cup only "proved" that he didn't value or appreciate my contributions to the family. Eventually an argument would ensue where we would discuss his lack of appreciation and respect for me.

I was not practicing the truth very well. I was not taking my thoughts captive to make them obedient to Christ. I was not thinking about things that were true. I was not living out the truth, in love. I was failing at the two commands given by Jesus to summarize the law: love God and love one another. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another." He also said, "If you love me you will keep my commands." So you see, truth, love, and obedience are closely related. I spent a lot of time alone with the Lord during that rough time in my marriage asking him to fix my husband. He wouldn't do it. Two years, this went on! When I couldn't do anything to fix things God told me to be silent, to obey him, to trust him, and to get the help of a Christian counselor. I practiced silence instead of accusing and confronting. I obeyed him by continuing to be a good wife out of obedience to him, not my husband. I trusted that his plans for us and our marriage were for good and not for evil; to prosper and not to harm us. The Lord taught me how to tell myself the truth and only the truth about other people, about a situation, about myself. I stopped filling in the blanks or reading between the lines. Instead, I allowed my husband to

explain and I would believe his words and not what I had convinced myself he must really be thinking. As hard as that time was for me, I cherish what I learned at the feet of the Lord and our time together. I had never depended on him so fully and I can testify that he is faithful. Our marriage is back on solid ground and I share all of this with his blessing.

Finally, John tells us, in 2 John:7-11, to protect the truth. If anyone twists the Gospel in any way, he is a deceiver and has no relationship with God. If they teach in our church and they don't teach the truth about Christ, we should not encourage them or invite them into our homes (our lives). If we do, we are as good as partners in their evil work. We have been given this valuable, life-saving, peace-giving truth to share with the world and we must protect it so that it can remain as such.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- 1) Have you ever been deceived? Share your experience.
- 2) Do you think it's ok to bend the truth, omit the truth, tell white lies? Why or why not?
- 3) Have you ever lied to yourself? What was the lie? Who or what set you straight?
- 4) Have you ever been through a difficult time in your life and felt God so fully that it made the hardship worth experiencing? What was the hardship? How did you experience God during that time?

