

Put Off Lying and Falsehood

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of honesty and truthfulness within the church community, highlighting the damaging effects of lies on relationships and unity. The speaker urges the congregation to put away falsehood, be transparent, and speak truth to one another, emphasizing that as members of one body, their actions impact the entire church. The message stresses the need to align with God's truth, reflecting His character of honesty and integrity.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25, Ephesians 4:15, Proverbs 12:22, Colossians 3:9, John 8:44

Topics: "Honesty in Community", "The Impact of Lies on Unity"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray. Father, we want You to march on. We want to be marching in stride, in rank, behind You.

We want to be about the Master's business. Father, I pray, we have a room full of people who are in another kingdom and transferred out of the kingdom of darkness. I pray, Lord, that You'd give us grace to run and run well and run with our eyes set upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I pray, Lord, You'd be transforming us more and more into that glorious image of Christ, because You have said in Your Word, we're predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. And I pray, Lord, that that would be happening, that Christ-like people would be transformed by the preaching of Your Word, the washing of Your Word, the power of Your Word, the application of Your Word by Your Spirit, Your Spirit moving, Your Spirit cleansing. We know the will of God is our sanctification, especially sexual immorality You talk about there in 1 Thessalonians.

Lord, You want us in all cases, in all ways, to be transformed into that glorious image of Christ. And I pray, Lord, You'd help us to put on Christ every one of Your children in this place. Give us grace.

Give us ears. Give us to hear the Word of God. Give us to be moved upon by this Word.

Don't leave us unchanged. Father, what I fear most is religion that is powerless, religion that is godless, religion that is a name only or a form of godliness that denies the power thereof. Lord, we need power.

We want power. We pray for power. The power of the Spirit to work at us and in us in the inner man.

Lord, don't leave us alone. That's what we pray. Lord, whatever it takes, whatever is necessary, help us to stay the course.

The first hour we heard about people like Hymenaeus and Alexander. There's Hymenaeus and Philetus. I don't know who Hymenaeus is, but his name manages to show up twice in Scripture and not in a good way.

And we pray that when all the annals of history are put together, our names would not be in that place where somebody like Hymenaeus is or Diotrephes or Demas. Lord, we want to be faithful. We want to be men of encouragement.

We want to be men of faith. We want to be men like those who bore the name of Paul or Timothy. Timothy! Paul said that all the others, they served themselves and not the things of Christ.

Genuinely concerned Timothy was. Barnabas. Lord, we want to be like these men.

Tychicus, Epaphras. Men who walked well. Even men like Peter who though weaknesses, but he made the journey well.

He made it to the end. He died for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That name.

Give us grace to live for that name in this hour when we live our lives this day 2,000 years removed from their lives. We need the power of the early church clothed with power from on high. Lord, don't just do that to them.

We plead with You, do that to us too. We ask for it in Christ's name, Amen. We're going to find ourselves back in Ephesians 4. The specific verse we're going to be looking at this morning is 4.25. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Now, just hold your finger there and go over to Colossians 3, which in your Bibles will just be, I don't know, five, six pages. Chapter 3 and verse 9. Now if you've got your finger still back at Ephesians, I want you to get a feel for the verb here. Therefore, the ESV says, having put away falsehood.

I know that the King James Version, the New King James, they say, therefore, or wherefore, putting away lying. Having makes it sound past. The KJV, the New KJV, they make it feel present in nature.

The New American Standard, therefore, laying aside falsehood. Again, present. Young's literal, therefore, putting away the lying.

Now, according to the Greek scholars and experts, this can be taken either way. This is an aorist participle that grammatically allows either view. The Holman Christian, the New English Translation, they follow the ESV in this.

The translations are divided on this. Now, in the original Greek, it can go both ways. It can either sound past or it can sound present.

But don't get too hung up there. I'm just saying this because I recognize that as I'm preaching, some of you have the ESV and some of you don't. But the reason I had you turn over to Colossians is this.

Even here in Colossians 3.9, do not lie to one another. That's an imperative. That's present.

Even if you take it past, having put away falsehood, over here, which is remotely similar language, do not lie to one another, seeing you have, past tense, put off the old self with its practices. Well, even back in Ephesians, you have this idea of putting or to put off your old man. And my point here is this.

Paul sometimes talks about the fact that you need to do this. And sometimes he talks about the fact that you have done this. And I don't think we need to get all bent out of shape over that.

There's no reason for confusion. The truth is what Paul is talking about is what we've been taught by Christ. And if you're a genuine Christian, back when you first came to Him, you were taught to put off falsehood.

And the reality is that if you were genuinely saved, you did put it off. Now did you put it off so perfectly that Paul doesn't have to come along later? You know what Paul's doing here. He's coming back to these Ephesians after they're already Christians for whatever amount of time, and he's dealing with them about not lying, but putting on truth.

Why? Because we're members of one another. He is arguing the way he's arguing because he's calling for present truthfulness and the putting away of falsehood in their lives. But nevertheless, he can appeal to the fact that when they first believed, they did put off the old man.

They did put off the old man-ish ways. But the reality is this is a fight and the work isn't done yet. And we don't want to be confused about that.

Paul sometimes talks about these things in the past tense. He sometimes talks about these things in the present tense. But whichever way he's talking, all you have to do is read and recognize he's writing to Christians who have already been saved and he's obviously exhorting them toward some type of conduct in their life right now.

And that's where we're at. And that's what I'm doing today. These verses are meant to deal with us where we live right now and no matter what has been done in the past.

No matter whether you want to put the having in there or the fact that it's present tense, the reality is this is something that we need to give ourselves to right now. Now let's come to the particulars here. You know what's been happening.

V. 22, 23, 24, you have the general instruction. Put off the old man. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Put on the new man. That's the general instruction. When you get to v. 25 and really all the way, this goes probably all the way to v. 6. We are now going to get Paul's very specific itemized list of things that he believes that we need to give attention to in our life as far as putting off and putting on.

What I think is interesting is this, that as he comes to particulars, he starts with falsehood and lying. Number one. And you want to remember how Paul starts this section.

This section really started in v. 17. This I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. You know what's true? Each of these Ephesian Christians had not always been Christian.

You must no longer walk. What does that imply? Well, they did. They did once.

This is precisely how they did walk as Gentiles. And so did each one of us. We come from Gentile stock.

And Gentile is basically a way of saying people who don't know God. They've been brought up in the heathen realm of Gentilian life. And they had formerly lived like Gentiles did.

And how do Gentiles live? What are good words to describe it? Lying? Cheating? Deception? Fraud? Dishonesty? Betrayal? Treachery? Corruption? You know what? When I visited Nepal, and I don't know if this struck any of the rest of you, but what I remember is John telling us, oh yeah, I have an arrangement with this guy that owns this bus. It's brand new. You guys remember that? John telling us? A brand new bus.

That thing was an old, rickety, broken down... yeah, it got us there. But it was not new. And you know what? They told John the same thing this time.

And it wasn't true again. And one of the things I came away from Nepal convinced of is that the Nepalese are notorious liars. If anything stood out, would you agree? Have you seen that? Paul was convinced the Cretans were liar.

You ever hear that? One of their own prophets. And you know, if you listen to Dan, have you listened to Dan talk about the Lebanese? Well, listen to Trevor talk about the Indonesians. And listen to Brother David.

Get him and ask him about the Chinese. Albert Barnes, the commentator, says this, he knew of a certain man who had spent much time in India. And this man said he would not believe a Hindu on his oath.

And Barnes goes on to say this, the same testimony is borne by almost all the missionaries of the character of pagans everywhere. No confidence can be placed in their statements. And where there is the slightest temptation to falsehood, they practice it without remorse.

And the thing is, if Americans are any better, I would say this, it is the result of two great awakenings. But the reality is Americans are little better. There's a book, I came across this somewhere.

But in a book called *The Day That America Told The Truth*, in this book, 91% of Americans polled confess they lie regularly. And what it made me think of is the other 9%. They're either even worse liars or they're Christians.

20,000 middle schoolers and high schoolers were surveyed. 92% admitted lying to their parents in the past year. Now what's interesting is those same 20,000 students were also asked to rate their own ethical character.

And 91% said that they're satisfied with their own ethics and character. I come from a family. It's a nominal Catholic family.

My family is full of liars, including me. Lying is a universal vice of the whole pagan world. And the thing is, you can get moral people, you can get nice people, but they still lie.

I remember being amazed after my stepdad died, just about all the lies that he told me began to come out then. Adam Clark, another commentator, some of you know that name. He gathered together some of the sayings of wise men and philosophers and writers from the ancient Greek and Roman world.

Listen to what these guys say. Plato, you know Plato, philosopher. This is what he said, he may lie who knows how to do it in a suitable time.

Menander, I understand he was a Roman writer. A lie is better than a hurtful truth. Proclus, good is better than truth.

That is such a worldly saying. Good is better than truth. When telling a lie will be profitable, let it be told.

So says Darius in Herodotus. What do our Bibles say? Doesn't Scripture itself affirm that lying... You think about lying. When it talks about the wicked being born, you know what the first thing Scripture says they do? Is they're liars.

They come forth from the womb, going astray from birth, and speaking lies. The psalmist in Psalm 144 says this of foreigners. Foreigners whose mouths... And foreigners is another way to say Gentiles.

Whose mouths speak lies. Whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. And we know what Romans 1 says.

Romans says one... You know, if you basically can compare Romans 1 with Romans 2, it's like the Gentile is being spoken about in Romans 1.18 and following. And then in chapter 2, Paul picks up with the Jew. Well, there in Romans 1, probably speaking mainly about the Gentiles, what characterizes them? They exchange the truth about God for what? A lie.

And you know what? That's what I did when I was lost. And even though it wasn't an idol, it wasn't a Hindu idol or a Buddhist idol or a Catholic idol, it was a distorted view of the biblical God. But it wasn't the biblical God because it was distorted.

It was something I created in my own imagination. And it's a lie. I mean, men start right at that level.

Their perspective of God is a lie. 2 Thessalonians 2.10, Paul's speaking of those who are perishing, the lost, the man in sin, the natural man. They refused to love the truth and so be saved.

You know why people perish? Because they hate the truth. Every single person in hell hated the truth. Every single person in heaven loved the truth.

That's what's being laid down. Here are these Ephesians. They lived this sort of life, but then what happened? They got saved.

Then they became Christians. Now they're fighting the good fight of faith. In line is the first foul, filthy garment that Paul says, put this off and put on truth.

This is where he goes. Right at the beginning. And does he simply exhort them to pray that God would deliver them from this tendency to lie? No.

What he says is this, stop lying. Put off falsehood. Put on truth.

Speak the truth with one another. That's what he says. He goes right, the aorist tense here, this putting away falsehood and speaking the truth, it's a once and for all definite concluding action.

The stripping off of falsehood is to be done once and forever for good. Not just momentarily, not just today, not just when you're involved in this job or work for this place. It's the rest of your life.

You're going to be people of truth. That's what he's calling us to. That's where he starts as he's going to itemize.

He's going to talk about all sorts of things. He's going to talk about how we sing. He's going to talk about your marriages.

He's going to talk about children, how they relate to their parents. He's going to go through this. He's going to talk about forgiving one another.

He's going to talk about anger, grieving the Spirit. Through these next chapters, he's going to talk about sexual purity. He's going to talk about covetousness.

He's going to talk about all sorts of things. And where he starts is right here, being people of truth. Being people who are honest.

What does he say? Once and for good. Once and for all. Aorist tense.

Let it be done. Let it be complete. Stop it.

Start telling the truth and don't just do it. Do it because something is true. You are members one of another.

Do it for a very specific reason. And did you get that? I mean, this is Paul's manner of teaching. This is such a common biblical form of teaching.

Put off. Put on. Appeal to the mind.

Renew the mind. What I wanted you to notice is the Apostle's method of teaching. This is very common in Scripture.

You know what he's doing here? You know what he's doing in verse 25? He's applying what you find in verses 23 to 24. Put off. Put on.

And renew the mind with truth. You need to be thinking a certain way. Do you see that? Put off the old mannish liar that you once were.

Put on the quality of the new man that's God-like, namely truth. And then let your mind be conditioned with some sort of substantial biblical truth for renewing the mind. You're members of one another.

Paul first puts a negative telling us what we must not do, then a positive telling us what we must do, and thirdly, he gives a reason that appeals to our minds. There's a reason for the required action here. And this is so characteristic.

Negative, positive, reason. Now I recognize, even in this immediate context, you don't always find it so neatly packaged. But I'll tell you this, generally that's what you find.

Let's just talk about sexual immorality. I mean, you go to one place where Paul deals with that, like a place like 1 Corinthians 6. That's what came to my mind. You know what he says there? Put off.

What does he say? What's the put off when it comes to sexual immorality? Flee from it! Put it off! Get away from it! Stop it! And then he says, the positive, glorify God with your body. And then he gives reasons. Here's the reasons.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body. There's one reason. The sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? There's another reason. You're not your own. There's another reason.

You were bought with a price. But you can see this. Put off.

Put on. And there's a reason. You and I are called upon to do certain things, but you know what's supposed to happen in the midst of all of it? Our minds are to be renewed, engaged at the same time.

We're always to know why we behave the way we do. That's being biblical. That's being a Christian.

You're thinking there are reasons why you do what you do and don't do what you don't do. We need to be able to give a reason for our conduct. You know, I remember those old lost friends.

It may be co-workers, your family members, whoever it is. But people recognize. I remember people that I worked with recognized that my life had changed, and my friends had recognized, and my family had recognized my life changed.

Well, when they come to you and they say, why don't you do the same things? I mean, I have one buddy say, you know, come on man, you used to drink hard liquor with me. I mean, you were one of the only ones. Now, you don't do that anymore.

Well, what are you going to do? What are you supposed to do? As a Christian, is our place just to say, I don't know why I don't do that anymore. That's not being Christian. That's not what Paul wants us to even think.

We need to know. You don't just sit there and say, I don't know. If we're going to be biblical Christians, we must be able to give a reason for our conduct.

Not only to them. You know what's important? Is that you are able to give yourself the reasons. It's not just enough to stand back and say to my old buddy, well, you know, the reason I don't do that is this, this, and this.

But you need to be able to preach to yourself, because if you don't know the reasons, then what's to stop you from doing it? Well, I don't know why I don't do that. Well, then go ahead and do it. I mean, what is it that really motivates us? What is it that really causes you? You see, Paul, and it's a very bizarre thing that he throws in there, because quite honestly, if you would have asked me reasons why you should not lie and why you should tell the truth, my first answer would not be because you're members one of another.

That would not be what I would say. I would have a lot of other reasons, but we're going to get to that in a little while. I mean, what's interesting to me is an inspired apostle, that's the very first reason he gives.

So we'll think a little more about that. But we need to be able to preach these reasons to our own selves. Now, I just want us to think for a moment.

An anatomy of lying. I want us to think about lies. I want us to break this down.

Kind of look into that whole mechanism of lying. What is it that happens? And here's one of the things that I want you to see. There is a correlation between verse 22 and verse 25.

I would say there's a correlation between verse 23 and 25 and 24 and 25, depending on which part of the verse of 25 you're in. But the very first part about putting off the falsehood, that correlates to verse 22. Look at 22.

To put off your old man, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires. Here's the thing, verse 25 starts with therefore. Ties it back.

There's a connection. Clearly, falsehood is a specific characteristic of the old man. Put off the old man, therefore put off falsehood.

And why is it helpful to make this connection? Well, because it helps us to see where lying comes from. It comes from somewhere. Verse 22 says that the old man is corrupt because of what? Because of what? Deceitful desires.

That's right. Old man corrupt because of deceitful desires. And the thing that makes these desires bad, is that they come from deceit.

The connection we want to make between verse 22 and 25 is this. When Paul says that the old man is corrupt, one thing he definitely means is that the old man is a liar. Which means that the corruption of lying comes from somewhere.

It comes from deceitful desires. Men lie because they themselves have bought into lies concerning desires. There's a desire in them.

They want something and they lie because they've believed a lie that's connected with the desires that they have. The reason we lie is because we ourselves are deceived by certain desires into believing something not true. So, what desire? I mean, why do people lie? You don't have to think too hard about it.

It's not rocket science here. If you want to boil it down, it comes down to this. It comes down to this desire.

Man loves himself. It's selfish what's behind lies. It's his own regard for himself.

It's man's desire to be God. Lying displays man's self-centeredness, his selfishness. Think about what goes behind lying.

It's his desire to be highly thought of, to be praised, to impress, to be important, to be thought well of, to shield himself from being thought negatively about. It's to get his way. It's to make himself appear the way he wants to appear.

You study the anatomy of lies for yourself. I mean, trace it out. You'll always find that the purpose of lies is to protect oneself, to get something for oneself, to improve one's self-importance.

That's where it comes from. You can always trace it back there. But, here's the thing, man's deceived.

Because the reality is, and here's the thing about telling a lie, Jesus said, everything done in secret is going to be shouted from the housetops. There is not a thing that is done that is not going to come out into the light. You see, man thinks he's doing well for himself, but he's not doing well.

Because every lie that's told, it's going to be exposed. And there's no hiding place. You may think that that lie is doing something favorable for yourself, and making you, giving you a certain image, making you feel a certain way, look a certain way, protecting yourself a certain way right now, but you're deceived.

Because it's only temporary. You know, the thing is, when you look at Scripture, lying is not a matter of indifference to God. Not in the least.

Just think about a few texts. Psalm 5, 6, God destroys those who speak lies. The Lord abhors the deceitful man.

You think of it, you just think about that. A world of liars, and God abhors them. This is the wrath of God, abiding upon man.

He abhors liars. There are six things that the Lord hates. You know that text? Seven that are an abomination to Him.

Haughty eyes, a lying tongue. Scripture says, Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. You see, the liar is but for a moment.

It is so short-lived. Because what's going to happen is, you're going to stand before God, every lie you told is going to be exposed, and then you are going to perish. God is going to damn you.

God hates liars. And He is going to destroy them. And it doesn't matter whether they hide in the church, or whether they're out in the world.

Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man right now, but afterward, his mouth will be full of gravel. You see, the lie is but for a moment, and then your mouth is full of gravel. What does that mean? Well, you can imagine eating sweet bread over against trying to eat gravel.

It means it's not going to turn out well. For the moment, it's sweet. But in the future, not good.

He who breathes out lies will perish. This is another proverb. Now listen to this.

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, again, fleeting vapor. You see, this is the thing about lying. It's so temporary.

It's so fleeting, just a vapor. Just like the steam that comes off the teapot. It's gone.

You protect yourself for a moment. You give yourself this image for a moment. You somehow defend yourself.

You shield yourself. You don't want somebody to know something that's true about you that's really ugly. So you tell the lie.

Or you try to get something. You're not honest in your business. Not honest with your tax.

I'm going to get some treasure from that. But it's gone. What's the advantage? It's just gone.

And what it says is getting treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death. You see, after that's death. And you know how the Bible ends.

All liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. And I don't doubt, some hearing my voice right now, you're living a lie and you know it.

You can't escape these and you don't want to run from these. Scripture says nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be made known. And David says of God in Psalm 51, he says, Behold, you delight in truth in the inward parts.

That's what God delights in and He abominates liars. Why men lie? The anatomy. I didn't think about this.

You know the story. Chief priests and elders. Jesus, by what authority are you doing this? All the things that you do.

He says, okay, I'll answer that question. But you answer me a question first. The baptism of John, where does it come from? Is it of God or is it of man? Now you know what? They got together.

They got in their little huddle over there. Well, if we say that it came from God, well, then He's got us. Then He's going to say, well, why didn't you believe Him? Why didn't you follow Him? Then we look like we're fools.

But if we say from man, oh, we fear the people because they took John to be a prophet. So what did they do? They lied. We don't know.

Well, the fact is, they did think they knew. They did think that it came from man. Now they were wrong, but that's what they thought.

But in the end, they said, we don't know. You see, they were lying. Why? Because the reality is that, well, we can't say of God because then we lose our reputation.

We can't say of man because we're afraid of the people. I mean, these people sometimes stone people and we don't like that. You see, so what they were saying is, we can't give either answer because any one of the answers exposes us to either shame or to some kind of fear of the crowd.

You see, protect ourselves. Irrelevant what actually is true. Why? Because their desire wasn't for truth.

Their desire is behind what's behind all the desires of liars. They desired something. They were after personal reputation, physical well-being.

Truth, irrelevant. What makes me look good, what protects me is all that matters. You know, there's a young lady that's under the discipline of our church and I met with her recently.

And we were talking about how people under discipline are restored to the church. And I was talking about repentance. And I said, you know, in some cases, we really have to base it on people's word.

And you know what she asked me? She said, what if they're lying? But, I said, what if they're lying? I said, what good is that? Why do you want to get back in the church by lying? God knows. Not everything is okay if you get back into the church that way. I mean, isn't the whole idea of repentance that everything is right with God, but you lie.

And I mean, I walk away from that and I think, why would somebody want to lie to get back in the church when they know they're a fake? God sees it. God abominates that. But you know, I do recognize that again, it comes back to selfishness and to self-serving.

Why would somebody lie because they want to get in the church? Because this is where their social life is. Outside of the church, they really don't have a whole lot of friends. And you know one thing about the church is, it doesn't matter what walk of life people come from.

It doesn't matter how broken their life is. It doesn't matter what their past is. It doesn't matter who they are.

If they come professing Christ, we receive them as brothers and sisters. And you know, out there in the world, they don't do that. But in here, there's relationships that people desire.

Would they be willing to lie? Yeah, I guess she asked that question because something was going on in her head. Ananias and Sapphira. You know, people will lie because of greed.

They want things. You know what they wanted? A reputation. Why do you even say we're going to sell this property and we're going to give it all to the church? All of it.

Well, the all of it is I lie because of reputation. Makes me look good. Boy, oh, Barnabas.

He got applauded when he did this. Let's do this. We're going to really look important.

We're going to really be touted as godly people. But then why do you hold part of that? Greed. You see, it's all so self-serving.

And they lied. And in order to show what a terrible thing this kind of sin is, especially in the church, God dropped them dead. And I just wonder, I just wonder, what if that happened today? I mean, what if every person harboring some kind of notorious deception in their life within these four walls? I mean, what if I had a button up here and it's like, brethren, you want me to push it? If I push it, everybody that's harboring such lies is going to fall over dead.

Would a few people run screaming for the door? God killed them. I mean, you need to remember this. God is real.

Boy, if God would break through like that, you talk about here's this situation in the church and all of a sudden God breaks through and you've got some dead people you're burying. Why? They were liars. And you say, well, were they Christians? Or weren't they Christians? Does it really matter? What you see is how God responded to this.

And which is more fearful? To think that God killed them because they were lost people in the church that were lying? Or God killed them because they were saved people and they were lying in the church? I'll tell you this, it means God takes lying very seriously. You can have your theories about that, but what you don't have to have any theory about is the fact that God killed them. And God killed them for lying.

And God has shown that early church and to the very end of all time, all the churches and all the people of God, the terrible character of that particular sin. We just read a proverb. The getting of treasures by lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.

Fleeting enjoyment. But how short it was for them. And they're dead.

And you tell me, what is a greater kindness if God drops you dead for your sin right now in the spot or He lets you live longer and live lying longer? I'll tell you this, whether God drops you dead now or later, if you're living this kind of life and this kind of deception, you're going to die and you're going to face this same God. What God is doing right here is He's showing the seriousness. There's a reality.

God is real and God is here and God knows and God is watching. And here's an example in our Bibles where God just broke out. Dead and fear came upon the church and everybody, you better believe it, dead.

People durst not join themselves. It's very close to deceitfulness in business. Men lie about taxes, customs declarations, lie to get the advantage financially.

It's the lie of greed. It's the lie of covetousness. Scripture speaks about the false weight.

I mean, you know what that was like. Things were measured out in a scale and people had two weights. They had one for when they were selling and one for when they were buying.

A light one for selling. A heavy one for buying. Dishonesty.

And God hates that. I often think about 2x4s. You go to Home Depot.

You buy a 2x4. But it's not a 2x4! It's a 1.5x3.5! How'd that ever happen? Who started whittling that thing away? Some honest merchant somewhere? I doubt that. Or the concealing of defects.

You know something's defective. You know the transmission on your vehicle has been giving you problems. No, there's no problem with it.

Or you know what the Proverbs says. It says, bad, bad, says the buyer. But afterward, what does he do? He boasts.

It's that kind of thing. You know, you're talking to the guy who's selling. You're pointing out all the defects.

And then you walk away thinking now you're boasting to everybody else. Oh, look at the deal I got! You're not doing the same thing. Yeah, but look at the defects over here.

Why? Because you're wanting everybody to be impressed by you. Oh, you're such a good purchaser. You've got the deal.

You know what Paul says? Let him put away his falsehood. That's what's being said. Or prayers.

I think of prayers. Brethren, I'll tell you this. You break up in small groups.

You know what a hypocrite is. It's acting like you're one thing when you're not. And the hypocrites pray.

That's one of the things they do. And I'll just say this, when we break up into small groups, or even when we stay together, when you pray, you need to pray what's true. Because if you're praying anything else, if you're being earnest, the reality is you've never had a burden about it.

You don't care about it. But oh, you're in this little group and now you're going to really impress people. Oh, you're going to pray about missions and about these souls over here in that ministry.

But you don't care. You never pray about it on your own. It's just hypocrisy.

That is being so dishonest. You know what? If all you pray for personally is God to give you a spouse, and then you come in here and you're praying like you're the next Hudson Taylor, it's just not real. Be real.

Why? We're members of one another. Don't put up a front. Don't be false.

Put away falsehood. Or singing. Singing.

We sing a song. My Jesus, I love Thee. You know the song.

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, tis now. And you sing that so heartily. All the people around you think, you know, look at him.

He's got his hands raised. He's got his eyes closed. He must be one of the most godly people in the church.

If ever I loved you, it's now. And it's just not true. Or I surrender all.

You know, you're so hearty. You're mouthing that. You know what? If those things are not true, you should stop.

Don't be false in prayer. Don't be false in singing. Don't be false in business or falsehoods concerning God.

God led me. God told me. A guy in the Austin church just comes to Tawfiq and says, he's just declaring.

He's not asking counsel like James was talking. He's just declaring. Rented an RV.

Going to take a girl with me that I'm not married to. Oh, but we don't have anything going. But we're going to both be in this RV.

We're going to travel all the way up the West Coast. And God told me to do it. I've been praying.

It's between me and Him. You know what? He's a liar. He's lying.

God did not tell him to do that. God told him to flee fornication. People talk about God in the church and they lie about Him.

They're not truthful about Him. Don't do that. God is listening.

God takes that personally. You make God out other than the Scripture does. You exchange the truth about God for a lie.

You get people in the church that they imagine God smiles on them even though they're living in some sin. It's just not true. I'm not saying you can't be saved, but I'm saying Scripture speaks about grieving the Spirit.

And that's a reality. God is not pleased. I mean, you think about David.

I was thinking about David. Seventy thousand people were killed. You know what you don't find about David? You don't find he got the plague.

God killed those people. God deals with sin even when it's among you. Boy, what a way to strike right at David's idol.

God can be severe even on His own people. And especially for lying. Who is the liar? But he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.

This is the Antichrist. He who denies the Father and the Son. If you deny the Scriptural Father, Scriptural Son, you're a liar.

That's a serious lie to be recreating God. You've got people all the time, well, God is love, God is love, God is love. And they don't want to attribute any wrath to Him.

That is a perversion and it's a lie. Or not believing God. Whoever does not believe God makes God a liar.

And here's the thing, God is not a liar. So if you make God a liar, you're a liar. Unbelief.

Unbelief doesn't believe God. If you don't believe God, you make Him a liar. If you make Him out to be something that He's not, you've denied the Father and the Son.

In some way. Or how about this? Lies of jesting. Joshua was just telling us that he's got this math lab professor.

And the guy says, I'm glad you don't ever believe the things that I say. And then he said something like, Joshua, I just can't stand you. Well, yeah, and we laugh.

But that's actually not telling the truth. How about exaggeration? Coloring narratives, embellishing, exaggeration. My wife just told me that I need to stop that.

She pointed it out. And it's true. It's true.

How about white lies? I'm not here. I'm not feeling well. You call into work.

The truth is, maybe you're not feeling well, but then you go out and mow the lawn. It's like the real reason you didn't go to work isn't because you weren't feeling well. You felt well enough to go mow the lawn.

You could have gone to work. It's these half-truths. Or this can be common.

It can be just the lies of salutation. How you doing, brother? I'm doing okay. When you're doing rotten, suppressing certain facts that are important to a right understanding.

Oh, half-truths. We get this, pastors. You know what? You get conflict in the church.

It can be between a husband and a wife or somebody in the church. And what happens is you hear their side of the story. And you know the proverb that says the one who states his case first seems right until the other comes.

Well, why does that happen? It happens because the first guy leaves facts out. It doesn't even necessarily mean that he's lying, but you know what? He comes across that way. Why? Because there were certain facts that he just so conveniently left out.

I have been in situations where I've heard both sides of the story. You would have thought it was two different things all together. Like there wasn't even anything remotely the same in the stories I got from these two people.

It's so colored. It's so distorted. It's so slanted.

I appreciate when you're talking to the person and they say, you know, I mean, to be fair, my wife does this and this and this, and so they're trying to bring some balance to it. Or silence when something untrue is said. You know, you're applauded in some way, but you know it's not true, but you don't correct it.

There's many ways we come across untrue just by remaining silent because we don't put something right when it gets said wrong. And it may be something that's said about somebody else. Or people that act like Christians when they're not.

You know what was said of one of the churches there in Asia Minor, Sardis. It was said that they had a reputation of being alive, but they were dead. And what Scripture says is, whosoever says that I know Him, but doesn't keep His commandments.

If you say I know God, but you don't keep His commandments, Scripture condemns you as a liar. You're a liar. And the truth is, we have liars here.

Everybody that claims to be a Christian in this place that isn't one is a liar. And that's basically how Scripture, if you say you love God and you don't love your brother, again, John, same apostle says, liar. Then there's this.

People who catch at flying rumors. Just in the last elders meeting, a family was visiting the church. They were talking to the elders about joining.

I said to them, you need to go talk to one of the other elders. They'd already talked to me. Go talk to one of the other elders.

And they didn't go talk to the other elder. They just left. And then they told one of the families in the church, one of the elders doesn't want them to be a member.

And then that family went and told it to another family in the church. That, people who catch at flying rumors, and I'll tell you, gossip and slander are very close relatives of this kind of lying sin. I'm talking about people who hear something, some rumor, and without trying to establish the facts, they circulate the story as undoubted truth.

And you know what Paul says? Put it away. Be done with that kind of thing. You hear a story through the grapevine, and you just propagate it, put it away.

Put it away. And if it really concerns you so much, and you're not interested in just being a gossip, or a slander, something about this really does concern you, go back to the source. You'll find that's always best.

And you know what you'll typically find? It's the stories other than what you thought at first. And we as elders, we find ourselves in this position all the time. We're kind of high profile, we're dealing with lots of people in the church, and things get said, and they get back around to you, and it's like, that just wasn't true.

And people are just propagating this. And I know this didn't just happen with us elders, it happens with others. Put it away, Paul says.

Put that away. Or you have this, people that make promises. You know, again, what Scripture says about promising a gift and not coming through? You tell somebody you're going to give somebody something? Or you sign your name.

People who sign their name, if you sign your name, you're giving your word, you're going to do what you're signing. You don't just sign your name on a contract for a cell phone contract, and just bail out and stop paying your bill. Or sign a lease, and then you just are going to walk away from it.

Be good to your word. I mean, you're being dishonest. Or you get workmen who promise that they're going to come over and they're going to fix something at your house on Tuesday, but then they never show up.

That's just dishonesty. Paul says put it away. Don't be like that.

The reason. Paul does not merely say that lying is a terrible thing. Of course it is.

But as Christians, the reality is we have far better reasons for putting away lying. And you see what it is. We're members one of another.

Now, at first sight, this seems strange. At least to me. As I said before, if you were just to arbitrarily ask me about reasons why you should put on falsehood and put on truth, this would not have been one of the reasons that I would have given you.

And why? Because I just, honestly, initially, I didn't feel the weight of this argument. And you know what that tells me? That tells me I need to renew my mind more. I need to think more about what Paul's saying here.

Out of all the reasons that he could have given, I mean, the very first thing he goes after is lying. And the very first reason he gives for why we should put it off and put on truth is this? We're members one of another? I mean, since this is the first reason that comes to the mind of an inspired apostle, I need to fight to feel this. And I don't think we adequately recognize.

Brethren, I don't think we adequately recognize the importance of the health of the rest of the church and how that influences each of us individually. Because I think this comes from that reality. And sometimes we can get... You know, we're Americans.

We like to be independent. We like to have our freedom. We like to live in our own home.

And this idea that we're so interrelated... You know, I think we get a glimpse when Paul talks about discipline and he talks about the fact that sin in the church is like leaven that can leaven the whole lump. I mean, he's showing us that there is this interaction in the church that affects and influences. I think just the imagery, when you start thinking about a body, you know, if you smash your finger with a hammer, the rest of your body isn't like... You can't just separate yourself from that.

Like, well, we're not going to feel that. You know, when I have a migraine, it's not like the rest of my body is all happy and goes about doing all this and my head just kind of lays there. The whole thing, the whole body lays on that bed because of the head.

I mean, the imagery of the members of a body kind of speak to this. But I just don't think we take this seriously enough. Listen to what Paul said right before this section of Scripture, back in v. 16.

He says, the whole body joined and held together. Here's the body. Here's the picture.

We're members in this body. This whole body is joined and it's held together by every joint with which it is equipped. When each part, that's the member, each part is working properly.

And when each part joined together like this is working properly, what happens? The whole thing grows. The reality is it causes the body to grow so that it builds itself up in love. Paul is saying we're connected.

And the reality is this, if you tell a lie to another member, you're really damaging yourself because you're connected to the body. Each part, each member makes the whole body grow. And one of the things that you need to see in there is the whole body joined and held together by every joint.

Now think about that. What are the joints? The joints aren't the members. The joints are what hold the members together.

But you think with me here. I can tell you this, as elders, if there's somebody in the church we are fairly convinced is lying to us, are we connected tightly? Are we joined tightly? Is our fellowship extraordinary? It's not. And it isn't with any of you.

If there's somebody in the church that you feel like has lied to you, look, you know this, fellowship is built on trust. Is it not? And trust is built on truth. And if you distrust others, if there are people in the church that I think that guy, that girl, she is lying to us.

They are not honest. I'll tell you what, if I'm having a fellowship, sitting across the table is very uncomfortable. It's not comfortable.

It's not like I look and it's like, you know, let's talk about the deep things of Christ. Because you know what happens? Suspicion arises. You're suspect.

I can't trust them. I don't believe them. You tell lies to one another when we're not honest.

You know what's not impressive? Is you catch somebody in a lie, but they only admit as much as you caught them in. But then later, you catch them in more lies. It's like, well, why didn't you admit this? Because they're not being truthful.

And now they're really suspect in your mind. You know what's very encouraging in the church? Is when people are truthful. When people confess sin.

When people are honest. You know what lying comes from? Protecting self-image. Love of self.

But when those barriers go away in the church and we're vulnerable and we're transparent and we show one another the dirt and the wrongs and we confess and we're open, well, that just nurtures a tightness. It pulls the members close. That's the reality.

I remember a pastor in another church. He eventually left. He came to our church and then CBC.

But he told me that when he was at the church that he was a pastor in, that he would actually hide a recorder in his jacket so that when he had conversations with people, he was recording the conversations. When you have that kind of suspicion and that kind of distrust, do you have unity? Do you have fellowship? And then what happens to the whole body? I'll tell you what, when you have people that are grieving the Spirit because of their lies, the power of God among the whole church is affected. And when you're supposed to stir me up to love and good works, you're hardly doing that if we're suspicious of each other.

There's not a tightness. There's not a closeness. We're not effectively exercising our spiritual gifts on one another.

Not if there's a separation. Because you can't have unity where there's distrust. We need to be honest with one another.

And I'll tell you, I mean, that elder that had something said about him and it was communicated through the church, do you think when he walked out of that elders meeting and he found out that that was a reality or maybe he knew about it before that, that all of a sudden, you know, his first thoughts are, oh, you know, I want to be really close to those people who were spreading that story. Probably he's fighting with other feelings because that's what happens. That's what happens when deception comes in the church.

And you know what Paul says? Paul says, quit it. Stop it. You don't need to continue to pray that God would take away the tendency to lying.

He says, quit it. Right now, stop it. Put off falsehood.

Stop saying to yourself, well, I'm forgiven. I'm a Christian. So it really doesn't matter if I'm truthful or not.

He says, stop it. Quit it. Stop with the sham.

Stop with the pretense. Stop with the play acting. Stop acting like the devil because that's what the devil does.

The devil is the arch liar and he's the father of lies. Stop acting like the devil. You realize the world is as it is right now because of a lie? You will not surely die.

We are where we are because man believed a lie. And your father is no longer the devil unless he is a Christian. Stop acting devilish.

The new man is created after the likeness of God. And what is God like? Paul tells Titus, God who never lies. We're back in Numbers.

God is not man that He should lie or a son of man that He should change His mind. Has He said and will He not do? Has He spoken and will He not fulfill it? And I love this text. This comes from James.

I often think of it. But not exactly in this sense, but this very much applies. We speak of God as being the Father of lights from Whom every good and perfect gift comes.

But you know what James says? There's no variableness in Him nor shadow of turning. I like that word. There's not even a shadow in God of not being true to His Word.

Not even a shadow. Not the slightest. Put on the new man created like this.

Put Him on. You don't need to pray any more about it. Just do it.

It's no use pretending. It's no use trying to hide anything. God sees it all and He desires truth in the inward parts.

God demands and insists on honesty. You can't even start to be right with God until you're honest. Nobody who covers up and won't admit their sin can even start to be right with God.

As I stressed last time, another way to phrase this is put on Christ. And you say, what's Christ like? Peter says, Christ committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in His mouth.

No deceit. I say to you, put that on. Putting away falsehood.

Let each of us speak truth to our neighbor. For we are members one another. Father, I pray for determination among the saints to be all-out honest.

I ask this in Christ's name, Amen.

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