

## I. Becoming A Truth-Teller

Eph 4:25

v.25 – *“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”*

The “first installment” of a renewed mind!

v. 21 – “Truth is in Jesus”

v. 24 – The new self has been created “in holiness of the truth”

One of the primary and clearest fruits of new life in Christ is an increasing desire to be honest—and a striving to become a more consistent truth-teller!

This has always been the path of God’s people...because THAT’S WHO GOD IS!!!

- Psa 86:11 – “Teach me Your way, O LORD that I may walk in Your truth...”
- Titus 1:1-2 – “...for the faith of those chosen of God...in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”
- Numbers 23:19 – “God is not a man that He should lie...”
- John 1:14 – Jesus is “*full of grace and truth*”
- John 14:6 – “*I am the way, the truth, the life*”
- 1 Kings 2:4 – David says, “...so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, *‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’*”
- Psa 15:1-2 – “*O Lord, who is allowed to abide in your tent? Who is allowed to dwell on Your holy*

mountain? *He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.*"

- Psa 51:6 – *"Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being..."* (a "faithful inner life")
- 1 Cor 13:6 – *"Love rejoices with the truth"*
- Eph 6:14 – *"Stand firm...having wrapped your waist with the belt of truth"* (integrity, truthfulness)
- 1 Tim 1:9-11 – (Among a list of evils) lying is said to be *"contrary to sound teaching according to the glorious gospel..."*
- 2 Tim 4:4 – Paul warns of a time when entire church congregations who profess Christ will *"turn away from the truth, and will turn aside to myths"*
- 1 John 2:4 – *"The one who says, 'I have come to know [God],' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."*
- Rev 21:8 – *"But for the self-preserving and unbelieving and detestable and murderers and immoral persons and occultists and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

An inner life that has gone from loving lies to loving the truth will begin to show up on the outside with fewer lies and more truth-telling!

Believers have begun to understand the full and profound truth of God...so that we see the world through a totally different frame of reference than the old life –

The lies of the world become clearer and we see the way those lies blind, deceive, and ultimately destroy the souls of men and women –

It used to be that our culture valued telling the truth!

Even though many of our nation's founding fathers were not born again evangelical Christians, their own writings are clear that they tried to set forth the moral framework of the Scriptures as absolutely central to a strong and healthy society.

The 10 Commandments became the basic moral foundation for how the early American culture functioned...

They obviously upheld Exod 20:16 – *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”*

- Jurisprudence was anchored to honesty in the courtroom (and not merely giving the truth lip-service) –
- Education demanded honesty in the classroom –
- The truth was essential to good and fair business in the marketplace –
- A good-faith handshake between neighbors was equal to offering your good name and integrity as collateral –
- Dishonesty was sharply rebuked and the truth highly praised in family life –

Even in politics, though imperfect from the beginning, dishonesty was always stigmatized...and it could literally end a representative's career –

As a culture, we've continued to deteriorate to the point where everyone from national leaders to business owners to media icons to those in authority...and all the way into the fabric of family life...dishonesty is excused if not celebrated!

We are a lot more like the Greco-Roman culture of 1<sup>st</sup> century Ephesus than we'd like to admit...

So as believers who've been made new in Christ, we understand where it all comes from and where it leads...

We've come to know that every lie in the human realm is traced back to the first lie (Gen 3:4 – *“You surely will not die”*)...and that lie is traced back to the evil, defiant nature of Satan himself (John 8:44 – *“...he 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”*) –

We now know by experience that the truth does, in fact, set captives free from slavery to sin!

So as our experience of the power of truth increases, our love of the truth becomes more intense...and our disdain for hypocrisy, lying, and deception also intensifies...

➤ What's happening?

Our conscience is being renewed and highly informed about the massive opposition between truth and lies!

And so, if we shave the truth a bit...or we're hiding behind a religious mask...or we practice deception...now our Spirit-cleansed conscience starts “lightin’ it up” and it lets us know in no uncertain terms that we're not truth-telling!

A moral transformation on the inside from loving lies to loving the truth **must result** in conviction, guilt, confession, and learning to be a greater truth-teller.

So how do we cultivate a truth-telling habit of life?

Back to Eph 4:

Paul says... “...*laying aside falsehood, speak truth,...*”

**a. Throw Deceit Away From You**

ψεῦδος –

CSB, NKJV – “lying”

It’s the word for “deceit”

How did this hit the Ephesian context?

Well, Ephesus was much like many ancient cultures in Asia Minor and the middle east...

Lying was a part of what you did to gain an advantage in your circumstances...or to hide and cover facts and reality...

It’s the same today –

And deceit comes in many forms:

We often narrow it down to a bald-faced lie when asked a direct question about something concrete and factual...

“Did such and such occur?”

“Were you involved in this or that?”

“Did you do or say this or that?”

But we often ignore more subtle forms of deceit...

Fabricating excuses for mistakes or failure –

“Well, I did such and such because of this person or that situation!”

But if your ‘excuses’ are fabrications in order to avoid personal responsibility...it’s dishonesty – It’s a form of lying.

Inflating your reputation (exaggeration) –

Taking credit for someone else’s hard work, skill, or talent...

Padding an employment application with accomplishments or education not your own (some head-hunting companies actually teach people to lie)...

Inventing a more impressive past to shape the perceptions of others...

Or the other side of it: exaggerating another’s faults to exalt yourself...

“You always...you never”

Putting ‘spin’ on narratives –

Attempting to sway someone’s perspective with only partial information...

- Evasion -- not really answering the question – changing the subject – getting someone off on a “minor” issue to avoid the real issue. (Gen. 4:9 – Cain)
- Disguising the real message; innuendo – hiding the real truth; dropping suggestive hints instead of saying what you are really thinking; “backdoor message”
- Contradiction between “non-verbal” communication and the content – saying one thing, but tone of voice, etc., says another. Which one should the person believe?

Pro 6:12-13 – **“A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a false mouth, who**

**winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers.”**

These are all forms of deceit...they are, in effect, what Paul is addressing here...

And we all, to some degree, are easily entangled by these habits of the old self!

We can get so that we don't even notice we're doing it...that's why it's crucial that you have a steady, daily intake and pondering of principles from God's word!

So...keep working to throw off those things, and:

**b. Honesty Is The Believer's Wardrobe**

*“speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor...”*

*“Speak truth”*

Jewish believers who knew their OT would've connected Paul's words to the prophet Zechariah when he told Israel how to treat one another in the kingdom!

Zech 8:16 – *“These are the things which you should do: speak truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.”*

Be honest...be fair and just...be full of integrity so that what comes out of your mouth is truthfulness!

1) For All Who Profess Christ

A command for everyone who names the name of Christ – *“each one, with his neighbor”*

**πλησίος, α, ον** (*near, close*); (1) as an adverb; (a) *near, close by*; (b) substantively **ὁ π.** *the*

*neighbor, the one near by, fellow man*; with the meaning supplied from the context;

*fellow believer* (Rom. 15:2 – “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification”);

## 2) To Prevent Self-Ruin

“...for we are members of one another”

Why does Paul include this statement?

Because he is driving home the point that what happens to one person happens to the entire body of Christ!

Where there is dishonesty toward one there is the weakening of everyone, especially the one who is injecting the dishonesty into the body’s spiritual bloodstream...

We belong to one another in Christ...we are in union with Him...and we are in union with one another...

John Chrysostom – well-known 4<sup>th</sup> century pastor:

*“Let not the eye...lie to the foot, nor the foot to the eye. For example, if there shall be a deep pit, and then by having reeds laid across upon the mouth of it upon the earth, and yet concealed under earth, it shall by its appearance furnish to the eye an expectation of solid ground, will not the eye use the foot, and discover whether it yields and is hollow underneath, or whether it is firm and resists?<sup>4</sup> Will the foot tell a lie, and not report the truth*

*as it is? And what again? If the eye were to spy a serpent or a wild beast, will it lie to the foot? Will it not at once inform it, and the foot thus informed by it refrain from going on? And what again, when neither the foot nor the eye shall know how to distinguish, but all shall depend upon the smelling, as, for example, whether a drug be deadly or not; will the smelling lie to the mouth? And why not? Because it will be destroying itself also. But it tells the truth as it appears to itself. And what again? Will the tongue lie to the stomach? Does it not, when a thing is bitter, reject it, and, if it is sweet, pass it on? Observe ministration, and interchange of service; observe a provident care arising from truth, and, as one might say, spontaneously from the heart. So surely should it be with us also; let us not lie, since we are ‘members one of another.’ This is a sure token of friendship<sup>1</sup>”*

### **Learn at the heart level to detest deception**

*“Listen as Wisdom calls out! Hear as understanding raises her voice!...<sup>6</sup>Everything I say is right,<sup>7</sup>for I speak the truth and detest every kind of deception.”*  
(Proverbs 8:1, 6-7)

### **Remember that Lying is the path of the fool**

*“Better to be poor and honest than to be dishonest and a fool...<sup>5</sup>A false witness will not go*

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<sup>1</sup> John Chrysostom. (1889). Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians. In P. Schaff (Ed.), W. J. Copeland & G. Alexander (Trans.), *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Vol. 13, p. 117). New York: Christian Literature Company.

*unpunished, and a liar will be destroyed.”*  
(Proverbs 19:1a, 5)

### **The Pleasure of Dishonesty is Temporary and Empty**

*“What you get by dishonesty you may enjoy like the finest food, but sooner or later it will be like a mouthful of sand.”* (Proverbs 20:17)

### **The Lord delights in and blesses Honesty**

*“There are those who speak like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals. <sup>19</sup>The lips of truth shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment... <sup>22</sup>Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truly are His delight.”* (Proverbs 12:17-19, 22)

### **Scripture gives us a discerning and wise mind**

*“Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, <sup>21</sup>To make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer him who sent you?”* (Proverbs 22:20 - 21)

### **Being honest about sin brings God’s compassion**

*“He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.”* (Proverbs 28:13)

**Contentment is key to an honest life**

*“Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. <sup>6</sup>Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar. <sup>7</sup>Two things I asked of You, Do not refuse me before I die: <sup>8</sup>Keep deception and lies far from me” (Proverbs 30:5 - 8)*