

Life on Life 201 April 25, 2021
Class 15 - Lying and Manipulation

Source material for this lesson was extracted from Lou Priolo's booklet, Manipulation and Deception, and John Morrison's Lesson Plan for Biblical Counseling Lab, October 2013.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight (Prov. 12:22)

I. Homework Discussion

From last week's class on co-dependency, discuss your homework:

1. Memorize Proverbs 29:25.
2. Discuss homework and instruction you want to take someone through from last week #4.

II. A Biblical View of Deception (Lying):

A. What does the Bible say about deception / manipulation?

- It is impossible for God to lie. Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17
- Lying is prohibited in the ten commandments. Exodus 20:16
- It is the nature of mankind. Psalm 58:3
- Lying is evidence of man's unrighteousness. Romans 3:13
- Lying is an abomination. Proverbs 12:22
- The Gospel of John describes Jesus as the truth and those of the truth hear His voice. John 1:14, 17; 8:32;14:6; 18:37
- Satan is a liar. John 8:44
- God judged Ananias and Sapphira for lying. Acts 5:1-11

III. Deception (Lying):

A. Lying involves deliberately communicating to another person something that one does not believe to be true. (The dictionary defines the verb lie as "to make an untrue statement with intent to deceive.") So, when you intentionally express something outwardly that contradicts that which you judge to be true inwardly, you are deceiving.

B. There are **two basic ways to deceive**: Deception can be accomplished by falsifying information or by concealing information.

- Falsification involves distorting the truth (changing the essential facts of a matter).
- Concealment involves withholding vital elements of the truth (omitting essential facts).
- This is why when American citizens are sworn in before taking the witness stand, they are enjoined to not only to tell the truth, but to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. These three pledges cover just about every form (and combination) of lying, except possibly inference or insinuation.

C. **Styles of Lying**: An Inventory of Favorite Deceitful Maneuvers

- Outright lie (direct untruth)
- Inference (insinuation)
- Concealment
- Blame-shifting
- The "I don't know" lie
- Making commitments with no intention of keeping them
- Slandering (tale-bearing)

- Hidden agenda
 - Fabrication
 - Verbalizing suspicions or false conclusions
 - Diversion
 - Partial truth
 - Exaggeration
 - Covering up past sins
 - Kidding, teasing, and joking
 - Claiming to be close to God while continuing in sin
 - Giving the appearance of one emotion to cover up a less acceptable emotion
 - Planting/fabricating evidence
- D. One type of deception we frequently see in counseling is the “**Hidden Agenda**” (Judges 3:16-23; Matt. 2:8). A hidden agenda is an ulterior motive (beyond the acceptable motive which has been expressed). Here are some of the hidden agendas people sometimes have:
- “I want you to fix my spouse or child”
 - “I want you to help me divorce my husband”
 - “I want custody of my children, and I want you to collect enough evidence to prove (in court) that my wife is an unfit mother”
 - “I want you to sympathize with my self-pity and confirm that I am, in fact, a victim of an illness or what others have done to me”
 - “I want you to convince my wife not to leave me”
 - “I want you to remove my pain and guilt without my having to change
- E. Another type of deception is “Claiming to be close to God while continuing in sin” (1 John 1:6; 1 John 2:4)
- “God understands that I have no choice but to divorce my husband. I still love God; I just don’t love my husband anymore”
 - “The Holy Spirit has not released me to forgive my mother for how she treated me as a child. God will let me know when it’s time”

IV. *The Goal is to Be a “Teller of the Truth”*

- A. It is not enough for liars to stop lying. They must make it their goal to speak the truth in every situation. From the biblical perspective, in addition to the internal process of change (dealing with the heart, rejecting truth and replacing it with truth) **the process of change always involves two external factors**: putting off the wrong behavior and putting on the correct behavior. It is not enough to simply stop sinning. We must make the goal to develop the corresponding positive biblical character trait as an alternative to the character deficiency we are trying to eradicate.

A liar will never truly stop lying if he only focuses on cutting out the lies he has been so accustomed to telling. He must focus on replacing lies with the truth (Ephesians 4:25).

V. **Manipulation: Lying in Action**

- A. Manipulation as we are using it is a hidden, indirect, and often deceitful way of influencing and controlling people by directing them away from what they see, feel, and think towards what the manipulative person wants them to see and think.
- B. The manipulative person does not merely say what they think and let the hearer do what they will. The manipulative person has agendas that (a) the one being manipulated does not consciously know yet feel “pulled/pushed” in a certain direction, and (b) emphasizes what they wish while at the same time intentionally and cleverly concealing other realities to lead the person in the desired direction.

- C. A manipulative person is aware what they want as an outcome but are often not aware of the subtle control which borders on deceit that they practice. There is a subtle and sometimes difficult line to distinguish between (open) persuasion and (hidden) manipulation.
- D. We see an example of manipulation when the Pharisees feign ignorance when Jesus asks, “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?” (Mark 11:27-33). Their response was manipulative because instead of answering a genuine question directly, they calculated what it would cost them. “If we say, heaven, he will wonder why we don’t believe. If we say men, the people will stone us because they are sure he was a prophet.” Their calculating response (“We do not know”) was not integrity.
It was a manipulative effort to make it seem that there really is no answer, when in reality there was only no answer if their desire is not the truth, but to find reason by which to accuse Jesus.
- E. Manipulation in counseling can take many forms. You might ask a pre-married couple, How are you doing at honoring the Lord in your physical relationship? They might answer, Well, we are doing pretty well. We have to be careful, but for the most part, we are handling it ok. What they may mean is, We have been sexually active but try to keep it to a minimum and only “mess up” every once in a while and just don’t want to talk about it or be held accountable. Are they lying? Well, they could argue, most days we are ok. In three months, we have only had actual sex 6-8 times (we think). They are deceiving, however, because the casual listener gets the idea that they are doing well when in reality they are sinning repeatedly with no real plan to stop (not just with intercourse but with all that leads up to it). This is a manipulative effort to get the spotlight off the more specific questions.
- F. A man could ask a buddy how he is doing at remaining pure, and he could say, Well, can’t say I haven’t been tempted, but in general I am doing better than I used to do and am really pleased. How about you? By that, he may really mean that he is only looking at internet pornography 1-2 times per week instead of five times a week. He avoids the real intent of the question and re-directs the spotlight of the questioner – appearing as though he is well and cares about his brother. The real answer is that he is still dishonoring God and his wife (if married) and opening the door for Satan’s direct influence in his life as he sins with his body.

VI. Helpful hints on dealing with manipulation (Lou Priolo)

9:45-10:00

- A. Assist manipulators in identifying their preferred methods of manipulation. (Sulking, snickering, guilt trips, tears, withholding affection, silence, playing the victim, intimidation, etc.)
 - Manipulator may not know they are manipulating.
 - Obligatory statements: “It is only reasonable for you to..., you ought to..., you should....”
 - They may deny culpability – play dumb.
 - They avoid discussing it and avoid giving attention to anything that may take them off their goal.
 - Divert from the topic – dodge by excuse or blame shift or by being emotional.
 - Intimidate by subtle threats – try to create anxiety in the other person, “Why are you saying that!” or implications of failure.
- B. Help them evaluate which relationships are likely affected by their manipulative efforts. Spouse, kids, church, in-laws, friendships, etc.?
- C. Help manipulator evaluate motives since that shows the heart issues.

- James 4:1-5
 - Idols are not only “controlling desire to have it” but “controlling fear of losing it.”
 - Remember we cannot judge their motives (1 Cor.4:5), but we can ask them to evaluate their desire.
 - Desired Controlling effect: Procrastinate, avoid obligations, change the mind of the other, change standards and decisions, maintain the upper hand, etc.
 - Desired Emotional Effect – e.g. Guilt, fear, duty, shame
- D. Help them see their controlling desire’s sinfulness (example of ecclesiastical manipulative control – Diotrophes 3 John 9-10)
- Diotropic personality – Love to have pre-eminence (chief place).
 - Desire to Dominate – Jesus calls us away from it (Matt. 20:26).
 - Elders commanded against this: 1 Peter 5:3 – Not lording it over those in your charge.

VII. Group Discussion

Following are three scenarios where lying or manipulation (or both) is being practiced. Using the “Helpful Hints on Dealing with Manipulation,” determine:

1. What Truth is being avoided?
2. What is the lie/manipulation?
3. What is the goal of the manipulator in each scenario?

Scenario # 1: Jake, age 29, buys a \$20 pre-paid credit card most every time he fills up. His wife Amy keeps the books, so when she enters the credit card purchases each month, she thinks he is spending about \$375 on gas. He actually uses nearly \$100 on the prepaid cards monthly on internet gambling.

Scenario #2: At 9:30 p.m. Monday, Mom asks her 15-year-old son, Chris, where he has been, since it is so much later than expected. He says, “Just studying geometry at Matt’s.” He was, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. But from 8:00-9:15 p.m., he, Matt and two other guys were driving around smashing mailboxes.

Scenario #3: Fifty-one year old Ben is an old car buff and spends most of his free time tinkering and shining his restored 1967 Corvette convertible. In his words, his wife Ann continues to “nag” him about the amount of time he spends in the garage and away from his family and church. He has told her she ought to get a hobby herself if that bothers her so much. It also bothers him that she spends so much time with the “church” women, who he suspects side with Ann on the car issue.

VIII. Homework

- A. Memorize Proverbs 12:22 (top of first page)
- B. Read the article by Henry Brandt *honesty vs. deceit*. Use a highlighter or a pen to underline or to emphasize particularly good points. Be ready to share one or two next week.

Biblical Counseling Insights from Dr. Henry Brandt

Deceit vs. Honesty

<https://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/attitudes-and-behaviors/deceit-vs-honesty/#.WvnQrG4vyUm>

Feeling guilty about that lie you told today? Or have you told so many that you have a hard time remembering what the truth is?

Perhaps you deceive subtly by pretending to be someone you're not. Are your relationships suffering for it?

Deceit's family of behaviors includes lying, fraud, hypocrisy, flattery, and cheating. These can be replaced by honesty.

Discover how to overcome deceit in its various forms through time-tested insights that really work!

Self-Test

Are You Deceitful?

The following self-evaluation quiz will help you determine whether you have a tendency toward being deceptive.

- Do you look on truth as something you can mold rather than as an unchanging reality?
- Do you bend—or break—the truth when speaking with others?
- Do you use slyness, trickery, underhandedness, guile, or invention as a tool to get ahead?
- Are you a different person when you are alone than when others are watching?
- Do you leave the impression with others that you are a better person than you actually are?
- Do you say good things about other people insincerely, hoping to get on their good side?
- Do you cheat people out of what is rightfully theirs?
- Do you break the rules you had agreed to abide by?

Deceit: Showing a False Face

Where is your biggest problem with deception? Do you tell falsehoods when it serves your purpose? Do you pretend to be what you are not? Do you tell people what they want to hear about themselves, even when it is not true? Do you cheat to gain an advantage in a contest? Do you trick others for profit?

It can be very tempting to shade the truth or present oneself in a false light for selfish reasons. Nevertheless, each of us must give up deception and learn the ways of honesty and integrity. When we lie, we are not motivated by God but rather by His enemy. The Devil is the sponsor of untruth. Jesus testified that Satan “has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

The truth wants to be free. It has a way of escaping into daylight despite every attempt to keep it trapped under a lid—ask any politician who has tried to prevent a scandal from reaching public notice. Benjamin Franklin said, “A lie stands on one leg, truth on two.”

In the plain words of Scripture, “Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed” (Proverbs 12:19). Just as God knows every time we counterfeit the truth, so other people usually find out as well.

We deceive because we are worried about what will happen to us if we choose to tell the truth. What we find, though, is that when we practice deceit we disappoint God, chip away at our own self-respect, and run the risk of a worse reaction from others when they find out the truth later. The proper response is to trust God to care for us as we honor His command to be truth tellers. There is, in fact, no peace to be had without truth.

A. W. Tozer said, “A guileless mind is a great treasure; it is worth any price.” Are you willing to pay the price? It means forgoing the easy payoffs that deceit can seem to bring, choosing instead the slow and steady dividends of making your word your bond.

Give up the too-easy and too-costly habit of deceit. Embrace instead the policy of honesty at all times.

Steps to Overcome Deceit

Are you struggling with being deceitful in some way? We have outlined a five-step process to help you change and heal in this area of your life. Take all the time you need with each of the steps included in this process.

Step 1: Adopt a Correct View of God

God is truth. To view Him in any other way will only serve to justify your deceitful behavior.

God is absolute truth. He cannot lie and He does not change His standards.

God is not a man, so He does not lie. (Numbers 23:19)

God is righteous, and He abhors dishonesty in every form.

Because what you say is false and your visions are a lie, I will stand against you, says the Sovereign LORD. (Ezekiel 13:8)

What is your view of God with respect to honesty and dishonesty? Go to Scripture and review every passage that talks about God’s truthfulness. Don’t fool yourself. God will not tolerate lies and deceitfulness.

Step 2: Revise Your False Beliefs

If you believe that your deceitfulness is justified or excusable for any reason, you are wrong. Perhaps mistaken views of yourself, other people, or how life works are making it harder for you to be truthful.

Do you believe your “little white lies” do no harm?

Telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow. (Proverbs 25:18)

Do you believe others are yours to “use”?

Do to others as you would like them to do to you. (Luke 6:31)

Do you believe the end justifies the means and thus makes your deceitfulness okay?

Stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. (Ephesians 4:25)

Use scriptural truth about deceitfulness and honesty to expose errors in your thinking. Ask the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, to help you first understand the truth and then speak the truth to others.

Step 3: Repent of Your Sin

In what way are you deceitful? Identify it specifically. Then if you are prepared to give up this sin, pray a prayer of confession. A model prayer is presented below for your use, or you can pray in your own words.

God of truth, I have been deceitful by _____. This was a sin against You, and I am sorry for it. Please forgive me. Make me clean again, and fill me with Your power to help me remain clean of deceitfulness from this point on. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray, amen.

If you have harmed others with your sin, apologize to them. Seek reconciliation and offer restitution where appropriate.

Step 4: Defend against Spiritual Attacks

Your spiritual enemies—the world, the flesh, and the Devil—would like nothing better than to see you backslide into a pattern of deceitfulness. Beware of their wiles!

- The world system does not value honesty the way God does. The world’s values would tell us to use deceitfulness if it will help us get ahead. We can overcome such an influence by immersing ourselves in God’s value system. Develop the importance He places on honesty.
- Your flesh, or sinful nature, will tempt you to enjoy that self-reliant feeling that comes with trying to manipulate events through deceit. Do not give in to the craving! Your flesh is dead. You are a spiritual being now, living according to the Holy Spirit.
- Satan will make it as easy and as appealing for you to deceive others as possible. Put on the “belt of truth” (Ephesians 6:14) to help you discern true from false and remain committed to truth telling. Be ever vigilant in defense against your spiritual foes. The attacks will not cease.

Step 5: Flee Temptation

You will never be able to completely avoid the temptation to return to your old deceitful ways. But there are specific steps you can take to reduce your exposure and susceptibility to temptation.

- **Focus** on your relationship with God.

Spend time regularly cultivating your relationship with God. In particular, make Bible study a consistent discipline in your life. Constant exposure to the truth will make you a more truthful person.

- **Latch** on to God's promises.

Identify assurances in Scripture that make you more confident of winning over your sin of deceitfulness. Store assurances away in your mind as ammunition when the battle with temptation comes.

God has given both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. (Hebrews 6:18)

- **Establish** safeguards.

Why not make holiness as easy for yourself as possible? Think of ways you can cut off common temptations. Here are examples of the kinds of changes you can make for the better:

- If you cheat on your taxes, hire a tax preparer next year and make all your records available to this person.
 - If you defraud your employer by falsifying your time sheet, ask a friend on your work team to verify its accuracy each week.
 - If you naturally resort to flattery, practice ahead of time what you can say in favor of a person without lying.
 - Ask a trusted Christian friend to hold you accountable in your commitment to not deceive others.
- **Expect** victory (2 Cor. 2:14).

You are a new person in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives in you. He wants to create an honest heart in you. Seek His help as you eliminate deceit and adopt honesty in your life. As long as you are cooperating with Him, you cannot lose! Praise God!