

C O N T E N T S

Acknowledgments / 11

Foreword / 13

Introduction / 15

SECTION ONE: FOUNDATIONS

Prologue / 27

CHAPTER ONE: **Truth . . . or Consequences / 29**

SECTION TWO: LIES WOMEN BELIEVE . . .

CHAPTER TWO: **About God / 45**

1. God is not really good.
2. God doesn't love me.
3. God is just like my father.
4. God is not really enough.
5. God's ways are too restrictive.
6. God should fix my problems.

CHAPTER THREE: **About Themselves / 63**

7. I'm not worth anything.
8. I need to learn to love myself.
9. I can't help the way I am.
10. I have my rights.
11. Physical beauty matters more than inner beauty.
12. I should not have to live with unfulfilled longings.

CHAPTER FOUR: *About Sin* / 91

13. I can sin and get away with it.
14. My sin isn't really that bad.
15. God can't forgive what I have done.
16. I am not fully responsible for my actions and reactions.
17. I cannot walk in consistent victory over sin.

CHAPTER FIVE: *About Priorities* / 115

18. I don't have time to do everything I'm supposed to do.
19. I can make it without consistent time in the Word and prayer.
20. A career outside the home is more valuable and fulfilling than being a wife and mother.

CHAPTER SIX: *About Marriage* / 135

21. I have to have a husband to be happy.
22. It is my responsibility to change my mate.
23. My husband is supposed to serve me.
24. If I submit to my husband, I'll be miserable.
25. If my husband is passive, I've got to take the initiative, or nothing will get done.
26. Sometimes divorce is a better option than staying in a bad marriage.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *About Children* / 167

27. It's up to us to determine the size of our family.
28. Children need to get exposed to the "real world" so that they can learn to function in it.
29. All children will go through a rebellious stage.
30. I know my child is a Christian because he prayed to receive Christ at an early age.
31. We are not responsible for how our children turn out.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *About Emotions* / 193

32. If I feel something, it must be true.
33. I can't control my emotions.
34. I can't help how I respond when my hormones are out of whack. (It's understandable to act like a shrew at certain times.)
35. The answer to depression must first be sought in medication and/or psychotherapy.

CHAPTER NINE: *About Circumstances* / 215

36. If my circumstances were different, I would be different.
37. I shouldn't have to suffer.
38. My circumstances will never change—this will go on forever.
39. I just can't take any more.
40. It's all about me.

SECTION THREE: WALKING IN THE TRUTH

CHAPTER TEN: *Countering Lies with the Truth* / 243

CHAPTER ELEVEN: *The Truth That Sets Us Free* / 253

Epilogue / 267

For Further Help / 269

Notes / 282



CHAPTER ONE

TRUTH . . . OR

CONSEQUENCES

“Become a World-Class Violinist Instantaneously.”

“How to Play the Piano...Instantly!”

“‘Instant Health’ at the Flip of a Switch!” (Ad for a kitchen appliance)

“Melt 10 lbs. in 10 minutes!...a workout so easy, you do it in your pajamas!”

“Delivers so much peace of mind it should be covered under your health plan.” (Ad for a popular car)

“Look Better and Feel Younger in Just Minutes a Day...The key to a healthier, happier life.” (Ad for an oxygen chamber. Price tag: \$3,999.95)

Our culture is riddled with deception. It is everywhere, as illustrated by these kinds of outlandish advertising claims. Sometimes it is easy to see through the falsehood (as in the claim that one can become a world-class violinist instantaneously). Unfortunately, however, most deception is not quite so easy to detect.

Deception in advertising appeals to our natural human longings. We *want* to believe that somehow, mysteriously, those unwanted pounds really could melt away in just ten minutes—no sweat, no discipline, no cost, no effort, no pain. That’s why we buy the pills, the diet drink powders, and the exercise equipment sold on infomercials.

A clever and cunning pitchman whose intention was to change Adam and Eve’s thinking about God and His ways designed the first advertising campaign. Satan’s objective was to drive a wedge between God and His creatures. He rightly assumed that the man and woman were not likely to support anything that appeared to be an all-out assault on God. He knew that, instead, he would have to subtly trick them, to deceive them, to seduce them by making an offer that appeared to be reasonable, desirable, and not entirely “anti-God.”

Satan deceived Eve through a clever combination of outright lies, half-truths, and falsehoods disguised as truth. He began by planting seeds of doubt in her mind about what God had actually said (“Did God really say . . . ?” [Genesis 3:1]).

Next he led her to be careless with the word of God and to suggest that God had said something that, in fact, He had not said. God had said, “Do not *eat* the fruit of the tree.” However, Eve quoted God as saying, “You must not *touch* it” (v. 3, italics added).

Satan deceived Eve by causing her to question the goodness, love, and motives of God. “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” he asked. The implication was: “Has God put restrictions on your freedom? Sounds like He doesn’t want you to be happy.”

The Truth is that God had said, “‘You are *free* to eat from any tree in the garden’ [2:16, italics added]—except one.”

The Truth is that God is a generous God.

In that entire, vast Garden, God had posted only one Keep Off sign: “Do not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” Furthermore, the one restriction God imposed was in the best interests of the couple and was intended to guarantee their long-term blessing and happiness. God knew that when they ate of that tree, they would die; their relationship with Him would be severed; they would become slaves—to Satan, sin, and self.

The Serpent further deceived Eve by lying to her about the consequences of choosing to disobey God. God had said, “When you eat of it you will surely die” (2:17). Satan countered: “You will not surely die” (3:4, italics added). He flatly contradicted what God had already said.

The devil seduced Eve by offering her all kinds of benefits if she would just eat the forbidden fruit (3:5). He promised that a whole world of knowledge and experience would open up to her (“Your eyes will be opened”). He assured her that she would be equal with God—that is, that she could be her own god (“You will be like God”).

Finally, he promised that she would be able to decide for herself what was right and wrong (“knowing good and evil”). God had already told Adam and Eve what was right and what was wrong. But Satan said, in essence, “That’s His opinion; you’re entitled to your own opinion—you can make your own decisions about what is right and wrong.”

Satan deceived Eve by causing her to make her decision based on what she could see and on what her emotions and her reason told her to be right, even when it was contrary to what God had already told the couple:

WHEN THE WOMAN SAW THAT THE FRUIT OF THE TREE WAS
GOOD FOR FOOD AND PLEASING TO THE EYE, AND ALSO
DESIRABLE FOR GAINING WISDOM, SHE TOOK SOME AND ATE IT.

GENESIS 3:6

Eve took the bite. But instead of the promised rewards, she found herself with a mouth full of worms—shame, guilt, fear, and alienation. She had been lied to—she had been deceived.

As Puritan pastor Thomas Brooks put it,

Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor, and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure, and pays with pain; he promises profit, and pays with loss; he promises life, and pays with death.¹

From that moment to this, Satan has used deception to win our

affections, influence our choices, and destroy our lives. In one way or another, every problem we have in this world is the fruit of deception—the result of believing something that simply isn't true.

Satan holds out the glittering promise of “real life”; he knows, however, that those who respond to his offer will certainly die (Proverbs 14:12).

So why do we fall for his deception? Why do we go for the lure? One reason is that Satan doesn't usually appear in the form of a serpent—instead, he comes disguised as a New York Times best seller, a popular magazine, or a movie, or a TV show, or a Top Ten hit song. He may also pose as a relative or friend giving sincere counsel, a therapist, or even a Christian writer, preacher, or counselor.

Regardless of the immediate source, anytime we receive input that is not consistent with the Word of God we can be sure Satan is trying to deceive and destroy us. What we read or hear may sound right, may feel right, may seem right—but if it is contrary to the Word of God, it *isn't* right. If we could only see that the forbidden fruit, fruit that looks so ripe and tastes so sweet in the first moment, always leads ultimately to death and destruction.

THE STRATEGY OF DECEPTION

Deception was—and still is—crucial to Satan's strategy. According to Jesus, it is the devil's very nature to deceive:

[THE DEVIL] WAS A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING,
NOT HOLDING TO THE TRUTH, FOR THERE IS NO TRUTH IN
HIM. WHEN HE LIES, HE SPEAKS HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE,
FOR HE IS A LIAR AND THE FATHER OF LIES.

JOHN 8:44

For reasons we cannot fully understand, Satan chose to target the woman for his strategy of deception. Twice in the New Testament the apostle Paul points out that it was the woman who was deceived: “The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (2 Corinthians 11:3 KJV); “Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived” (1 Timothy 2:14).

Some theologians believe there was something in the way Eve was created that made her more vulnerable to deception—that she was inherently more “temptable,” or “seducible.” Others suggest that because God had placed her under the headship of her husband, once she stepped out from under that spiritual covering and protection, she was more easily deceived.

Regardless, the point is that as fallen women, we are particularly prone to fall prey to Satan’s deception. Remember that he did not first approach the man; he deliberately approached and deceived the woman. It was the woman who led her husband into sin, and together they led the whole human race into sin (though Adam, as head, is held ultimately responsible). I believe there is something significant about that progression and that, to this day, there is a unique sense in which Satan targets women for deception. This is part of his strategy. He knows that if we as women buy into his deception, we will influence the men around us to sin, and our sinful choices will set a pattern for subsequent generations to follow.

Sometimes, as was the case with Eve, Satan deceives us directly. Sometimes, however, he uses other people as instruments of deception.

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul warns, “Let no one deceive you with empty words” (v. 6). Repeatedly, he challenges God’s people to speak Truth to one another. When we are not honest with each other, we actually do Satan’s work for him, acting as his agents, deceiving and destroying each other.

According to the Scripture, we can even be deceived by spiritual leaders—those who have been entrusted with the responsibility of shepherding God’s flock and communicating the Truth to His people. Sadly, many leaders abuse their calling and their followers by failing to

speak the Truth. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God addresses those leaders who deceive people:

WITH LIES YE HAVE MADE THE HEART OF THE
RIGHTEOUS SAD . . . ; AND STRENGTHENED THE HANDS
OF THE WICKED, THAT HE SHOULD NOT RETURN FROM HIS
WICKED WAY, BY PROMISING HIM LIFE.

EZEKIEL 13:22 KJV

I believe this is an accurate description of much of what is taking place in the Christian world today. Walk into almost any Christian bookstore, leaf through many Christian periodicals, tune in to many religious radio and television broadcasts, listen to many popular Christian mental health professionals, and you will find respected “Christian leaders” who are deceiving their followers. In most cases, I do not believe they intend to deceive people—in fact, they may not even realize they are being deceptive. However, that is exactly what is happening.

In many cases, they “strengthen the hands of the wicked” by suggesting they do not need to repent. They promise God’s blessing and grace to people who do not qualify because of their willful disobedience and unrepentant hearts. Their teachings help people justify . . .

- anger (“healthy expression of your true feelings”);
- selfishness (“You’ve got to place boundaries between you and demanding people”);
- irresponsibility (“You are dysfunctional because you have been deeply wounded by others”); and
- infidelity (“You are free to divorce your mate and marry someone else; God is the God of the second chance”).

At the same time, they make “the righteous” feel “sad” or guilty . . .

- for taking personal responsibility (“You’re codependent”);
- for demonstrating a servant’s heart (“You shouldn’t let others take advantage of you”); and
- for being faithful to their vows (“God does not expect you to stay in that marriage”).

OPEN YOUR EYES

Sadly, most people—even Christians—have unthinkingly exposed themselves to so much deception that they do not even realize they are being deceived. That is the very nature of deception—it blinds us to the fact that we have been deceived.

One of my goals in this book is to urge Christian women to open their eyes and begin to evaluate what is going on around them—to wake up to the deception that is so pervasive in both our secular and our Christian cultures. So much of our lifestyle is rooted in ways of thinking that simply are not true. The result is a house built on sinking sand. One lie leads to another and another and another.

Unfortunately, most people mindlessly accept whatever they hear and see. We listen to music, read books and magazines, watch movies, listen to advice, and respond to advertisements without asking ourselves important questions:

- “What is the message here?”
- “Is it really true?”
- “Am I being deceived by a way of thinking that is contrary to the Truth?”

Satan’s promise to Eve was tantalizing: “Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Who could resist such an extraordinary offer?

The forbidden fruit was “*good* for food and *pleasing* to the eye, and also *desirable* for gaining wisdom” (v. 6, italics added). If it hadn’t seemed so attractive, do you think Eve would have fallen for the offer? If that fruit had been rotten and crawling with worms, would she have considered disobeying God? Of course not. What makes Satan’s offers so alluring and so deceptive is that they look so right.

The problem is that Eve didn’t stop to evaluate what was really happening. She didn’t take time to discern truth from error. She didn’t stop to consider the cost and the consequences of what she was about to do. If Eve could have imagined the ugly, painful, deadly consequences of her choice—in her own life, in her relationship with God, in her marriage, in her children, in her children’s children, and (through the sin of her husband, who followed her) in every human being that would ever live on the planet—do you think she would have listened to Satan’s lie and disobeyed God? I doubt it.

But we have precisely the same problem. I have discovered that very few Christians seriously consider the consequences of their choices. We simply live our lives, responding to the people, circumstances, and influences around us—eating what we crave at the moment, buying the newest gadget advertised on TV, adopting the latest fads, and embracing the lifestyles, values, and priorities of our friends. It all looks so good; it feels so right; it seems so innocent. But we end up in abusive relationships, head over heels in debt, angry, frustrated, trapped, and overwhelmed. We have been deceived. We have fallen for a lie.

In an unforgettable example of this kind of deception, a young mother of seven children told me that she had become involved with a man she had met on the Internet; she was thinking of leaving her husband for this other man. As we met together one night, she acknowledged that what she was doing was wrong. “But,” she said, “he is so good to me and to my children.”

For two hours, I begged her to see that this man was not truly interested in her or her children—if he were, he would not be breaking up her marriage; if he really loved her, he would not be leading her to violate God’s law. I warned her that the road she was on, though it

seemed so appealing, would certainly lead to destruction. I tried to help her see that she had been deceived and that her only hope was to believe and embrace the Truth.

THE PROGRESSION FROM DECEPTION TO BONDAGE

In the chapters that follow, we will examine some of the most common and destructive lies women believe; but first, let's take a look at how we become deceived and how deception leads to bondage.

Generally speaking, people don't fall into bondage overnight. They don't just wake up one morning and discover that they are addicted to food or have a temper they can't control. There is a progression that leads to bondage, and it always begins when we . . .

LISTEN TO A LIE.

That's how it all began in the Garden of Eden. Eve *listened* to the lies told her by Satan. I am confident she had no idea where those lies would ultimately lead her and her family. Perhaps it didn't seem particularly dangerous just to *listen* to the Serpent—to hear him out, to see what he had to say. Listening in itself wasn't disobedience. But—and here's the key—listening to a viewpoint that was contrary to God's word put Eve on a slippery slope that led to disobedience, which led to physical and spiritual death.

Listening to things that are not true is the first step toward ultimate bondage and death. That is why I believe it is so important to carefully monitor the input we allow into our minds and hearts.

I am the oldest of seven children, and I thank the Lord for the conviction God gave my parents about controlling the kinds of influence that were allowed in our home as we were growing up.

My parents were first-generation Christians—they did not come to know the Lord until they were young adults. When they were raising our family, they did not have the advantage of many of the wonderful

resources and seminars that are available to parents today. However, God gave them the wisdom and courage to “grow” their children in a spiritual “greenhouse.” They made a conscious effort to protect us from influences that could be harmful and to surround us with influences that would spiritually nurture our lives. As a result, we grew up with well-protected hearts. At a young age, our hearts were sensitized to sin and we learned to discern between right and wrong.

This approach to child rearing did not always make sense to us when we were kids. But how I thank the Lord today that my parents had the courage to say, “We are not going to knowingly allow our children to be influenced by the lies promoted in this world.” They earnestly desired that we would grow up to love the Word and the ways of God, that our hearts would be quickened by the Truth, and that we would embrace it for ourselves. Once they released us from that greenhouse environment into the world, they wanted us to continue to walk in the Truth and to recognize and reject anything that was deceptive and untrue.

As an adult, I still find it is crucial to guard my mind—to carefully choose the input I allow into my life and to reject that which promotes ungodly thinking. The world’s deceptive way of thinking comes to us through so many avenues—television, magazines, movies, music, friends, malls, and catalogs, to name a few. A steady diet of these worldly influences will shape our view of what is valuable, what is beautiful, and what is important in life.

There are no harmless lies. We cannot expose ourselves to the world’s false, deceptive way of thinking and come out unscathed. Eve’s first mistake was not eating the fruit; her first mistake was listening to the Serpent.

Listening to counsel or ways of thinking that are not according to the Truth is the first step in developing wrong beliefs that will ultimately place us in bondage. Once we have listened to the lie, the next step toward bondage is that we . . .

DWELL ON THE LIE.

First we listen to it; then we dwell on it. We begin to consider what the Enemy has said. We mull it over in our minds. We engage the Enemy in conversation. We contemplate that he may be right, after all. The process can be likened to farming or gardening. First, the soil is cultivated—we open ourselves up to input that is contrary to God’s Word. Then, the seed is sown—we listen to the lie. Next, the seed is watered and fertilized—we dwell on the lie.

If we allow our minds and hearts to dwell on things that are not true, sooner or later, we will . . .

BELIEVE THE LIE.

At this point, the seed that has been sown begins to take root and starts to grow. First Eve listened to the Serpent’s sales pitch. Then she considered it and engaged him in further discussion about it. Before long, she believed that what he told her was true—in spite of the fact that it clearly contradicted the Truth of what God had already said. Once she believed the lie, the next step was a small one. Listen to the lie, dwell on it, believe it, and sooner or later you will . . .

ACT ON THE LIE.

Now the seed that has been sown, watered, and fertilized and has taken root begins to produce fruit—the fruit of deception. Beliefs produce behavior. Believing things that aren’t true produces sinful behavior. What we believe will be seen in the way we live. Conversely, the way we behave is invariably based on what we believe to be true—not what we say we believe, but what we actually believe. “As [a man] *thinketh* in his heart, so *is* he” (Proverbs 23:7 KJV, italics added).

The important thing to remember is that *every act of sin in our lives begins with a lie*. We listen to the lie; we dwell on it until we believe it; finally, we act on it.

Now watch what happens next. We reject the Truth and violate the Word of God one time in what seems to be just “a little matter.” However, the next time we are tempted, we find that it is easier to sin;

the next time, it is easier still. We don't just sin once; we sin again and again and again, until a "groove" has been worn in our hearts—a sinful pattern. Before we realize what has happened, we are in bondage. A sinful stronghold has been established. Satan threw out the bait, we took it, and now he has reeled us in and made us his catch.

Don't miss how the progression got started:

*EVERY AREA OF BONDAGE IN OUR LIVES
CAN BE TRACED BACK TO A LIE.*

A seed is sown; it is watered and fertilized; it takes root and produces fruit—not just a single piece of fruit, but a whole harvest—a harvest of bondage, destruction, and death.

MOVING FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

Most of us have areas of our lives where we are in bondage because we have listened to, believed, and acted on lies. How can we escape from bondage and begin to move toward freedom in those practical issues of our lives? Here are three steps to keep in mind as we begin to deal more specifically with the lies that put us in bondage and the Truth that sets us free.

1. *Identify the area(s) of bondage or sinful behavior.* Chances are, you already know what some of those bondages are. But there may be others that are not as obvious. Ask God to show you specific areas where you are not free. The Scripture says, "A man is a slave to whatever has mastered him" (2 Peter 2:19). What are the issues in your life where you are not living in freedom as a child of God?

Are there areas where you are in physical bondage (overeating, an eating disorder, substance abuse)? Are you in emotional bondage (anxiety, fear, depression, chronic emotional disorders), sexual bondage (masturbation, pornography, lust, fornication, homosexuality), or financial bondage (overspending, greed, stinginess)? Are there sinful habits that plague you (anger, lying)? Are you in bondage to the

need for approval, excessive shyness, talking too much, or an addiction to TV or romance novels? God may bring other areas of bondage to your mind.

Once you identify those areas, don't just try to eliminate them. In fact, you may have already tried to deal with these behaviors, failed, and been tempted to give up. If you want to get rid of poisonous berries growing on your property, it's not enough to go out and pick all the berries off the bush. More will just grow back in their place. The only way to permanently get rid of the poisonous fruit is to pull the bush out from the roots. That's why this next step is so important.

2. Identify the lie(s) at the root of that bondage or behavior. What lies have you listened to, believed, and acted on that have put you in bondage? The answer to that question may not be immediately apparent—roots are generally hidden beneath the surface, and lies, by their very nature, are deceptive. We need the Lord to help us see what we have been believing that is not true.

In the pages that follow, we will identify forty lies that many Christian women have allowed to take root and produce fruit in their lives. Ask God to show you which of the Enemy's lies you have bought into—whether the ones in this book or others He brings to mind—and to help you repent of believing those lies. Once you identify the specific lies you have believed, what next?

3. Replace the lie(s) with the Truth. Satan is a powerful enemy. His primary weapon is deception. His lies are powerful. But there is something even more powerful than Satan's lies—and that is the Truth. Once we identify the lies that have put us in bondage and repent of believing those lies, we have an effective weapon to overcome deception—the weapon of Truth.

Each lie must be countered with the corresponding Truth. Where we have listened to, dwelt on, believed, and acted on lies, we must begin to listen to, meditate on, believe, and act on the Truth. That is how we will move from bondage to freedom, by the power of the Spirit of God. As Jesus declared, it is the Truth that “will set you free” (John 8:32).