

Cutting Through Lies

Over the last several years it has been my unfortunate responsibility to assist in detangling the web of lies sewn by two pathological liars. I can state without hesitation or exaggeration that dealing with compulsive liars is one of the most frustrating experiences a church leader will ever have to go through. Yet, as painful as the process has been, the words of Paul have proven true over and over:

Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. (1 Timothy 5:24-25)

In the end, truth ALWAYS wins out – but the damage that is caused is tremendous and sometimes irreversible. Why do men and women lie? For at least one of five reasons given by the Wise Man who knew the nature of liars:

- Because their paths are wicked, crooked, and devious (Prov. 2:12-15)
- To get something they want but can't attain or do not want to attain through honest means. (Prov. 20:17)
- To destroy a righteous person or someone the liar hates. (Prov. 26:24, 26, 28)
- To cover up sinful behavior in an attempt to avoid the consequence of shame that accompanies sin. (Prov. 13:5)
- Because death is the goal. (Prov. 21:6)

To this the Lord adds that men lie because they are of their father the devil. (John 8:44) For this reason God hates liars just as he hates the devil and promises that all liars will be sent to hell in the final judgment. (Rev. 21:8)

Lies spring forth from wickedness and according to the Wise Man are told to accomplish one of three goals:

- Self-Preservation
- Self-Pleasure
- Hatred/Violence

The first two goals are easily recognized, but the final one deserves further reflection. When a person lies about another individual, the lie is a wicked act of violence, meant to harm or destroy its target, and is a hateful act to the core. The wickedness, chaos, and carnage left in

the wake of practiced liars is horrifyingly tragic, yet many are duped by their deceit for skilled in their craft.

Warning: To believe a liar, defend them, and help spread their lies, is to share in the hatred and violence they perpetrate.

So, how do you as a church leader (or a Christian generally) cut through the lies of a deceiver, stop the carnage, and defend the truth?

1. The defense of truth begins with the love of truth and hatred of lies. "Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. (Psalm 119:104) One who loves lies (Psalm 52:3), or refuses to acknowledge the truth (2 Timothy 3:7) are beyond help and will stand before God in judgment.
2. The defense of truth requires seeking the truth diligently, knowing that it can be found. (Proverbs 2:2-9; 1 Tim. 5:24-25) Patience and true diligence are **THE KEYS** to **discovery and justice**. Questioning and verifying are a MUST. Taking a liar or potential liar at their word is foolish.

A refusal to diligently investigate and observe the law of two or three witnesses (Matt. 18:16, 20; Deut. 19:15-19) is a perversion of justice and truth. When brethren refuse to hear the truth (2 Tim. 4:4), to consider the evidence (Prov. 12:17; 18:13), show partiality (Prov. 18:5), and justify the liar (Prov. 17:15), they pervert justice and share in the wickedness that results.

3. The defense of truth requires releasing the truth so that it can destroy the darkness of lies.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. (Eph. 5:11-13)

THE KEY to destroying darkness is the release of truth's light. Once we realize the power of truth's light, we will heed the admonition of Christ to set it on a candlestick so that it might "give light to all who are in the house" (Matt. 5:15-16) Lies are nothing more than the concealment of truth and they **CANNOT** stand against truth.

To quote Spurgeon, *"The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself."*

To Victims and the Falsely Accused:

If you are the victim of wicked and hateful lies, or if you have been falsely accused of lying, here are two words of advice and encouragement:

First, follow the Lord's example and become an open book:

Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. (John 18:20)

Jesus was falsely accused of many things, but his innocence was upheld because he made himself open and accountable to all. You didn't have to question what Jesus taught or practiced, nor was He offended when his critics asked for evidence. Witnesses were ever present, and evidence was freely offered. May we do nothing in secret and learn to make ourselves open and accountable to all.

Second, take comfort in these words from Scripture:

Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. (1 Tim. 5:25)

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt. 5:11-12)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. (2 Cor. 5:10-11)

...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ***to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*** (Romans 3:24-26)

A Helpful Tool For Cutting Through Lies:

The following chart is provided to help equip church leaders with the tools necessary for diligently seeking truth. The chart was produced by Paul Ekman and can be found in his book *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage*.

Lying Checklist

Questions about the lie	HARDER for the lie catcher	EASIER for the lie catcher
1. Can the liar anticipate exactly when they need to lie?	YES: line prepared and rehearsed	No: line not prepared
2. Does the lie involve concealment only, without any need to falsify?	YES	NO
3. Does the lie involve emotions felt at that moment?	NO	YES: especially difficult if... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Negative emotions such as anger, fear or distress must be concealed or falsified. b. Liar must appear emotionless and cannot use another emotion to mask felt emotions that have to be concealed.
4. Would there be amnesty if liar confesses to lying?	NO: enhances liar's motive to succeed	YES: chance to induce confession
5. Are the stakes in terms of either rewards or punishments very high?	Difficult to predict: while high stakes may increase detection apprehension, it should also motivate the liar to try hard.	
6. Are there severe punishments for being caught lying?	NO: low detection apprehension; but may produce carelessness	YES: enhances detection apprehension, but may also fear being disbelieved, producing false positive errors.
7. Are there severe punishments for the very act of having lied, apart from the losses incurred from the	NO	YES: enhances detection apprehension; person may be dissuaded from embarking on lie if they know that

deceit failing?		punishment for attempting to lie will be worse than the loss incurred by not lying.
8. Does the target suffer no loss, or even benefit from the lie? Is the lie altruistic - not benefiting the liar?	YES: less deception guilt if liar believes this to be so	NO: increases deception guilt
9. Is it a situation in which the target is likely to trust the liar, not suspecting that they may be misled?	YES	NO
10. Has the liar successfully deceived the target before?	YES: decreases detection apprehension; and if target would be ashamed or otherwise suffer by having to acknowledge having been fooled, they may become a willing victim.	NO
11. Do liar and target share values?	NO: decreases deception guilt	YES: increases deception guilt
12. Is the lie authorized?	YES: decreases deception guilt	NO: increases deception guilt
13. Is the target anonymous?	YES: decreases deception guilt	NO
14. Are target and liar personally acquainted?	NO	YES: lie catcher will be more able to avoid errors due to individual differences
15. Must lie catcher conceal their suspicions from the liar?	YES: lie catcher may become preoccupied with their own need to conceal and fail to be as alert to liar's behavior	NO
16. Does lie catcher have information that only a guilty not an innocent person would also have?	NO	YES: can try to use the guilty knowledge test if the suspect can be interrogated
17. Is there an audience who knows or suspects that the target is being deceived?	NO	YES: may enhance duping delight, detection apprehension, or deception guilt
18. Do liar and lie catcher	NO: more errors in judging	YES: better able to interpret

come from similar language, national, and/or cultural backgrounds?	clues to deceit	clues to deceit
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Questions about the liar	HARDER for the lie catcher	EASIER for the lie catcher
19. Is the liar practiced in lying?	YES: especially if practiced in this type of lie	NO
20. Is the liar inventive and clever in fabricating?	YES	NO
21. Does the liar have a good memory?	YES	NO
22. Is the liar a smooth talker, with a convincing manner?	YES	NO
23. Does the liar use the reliable facial muscle as conversational emphasizees?	YES: better able to conceal or falsify facial expressions	NO
24. Is the liar skilled as an actor, able to use the stanislavski method?	YES	NO
25. Is the liar likely to convince themselves of their lie - believing what they say is true?	YES	NO
26. Are they a "natural liar" or psychopath?	YES	NO
27. Does the liar's personality make them vulnerable either to fear, guilt, or duping delight?	NO	YES
28. Is the liar ashamed of what they are concealing?	Difficult to predict: while shame works to prevent confession, leakage of that shame may betray the lie	
29. Might suspected liar feel fear, guilt, shame, or duping delight even if suspect is innocent and not lying, or lying about something else?	YES: can't interpret emotion clues	NO: signs of these emotions are clues to deceit

Questions about the lie catcher	HARDER for lie catcher	EASIER for lie catcher
30. Does the lie catcher have a reputation of being tough to mislead?	NO: especially if liar has in the past been successful in fooling the lie catcher	YES: increases detection apprehension; may also increase duping delight
31. Does the lie catcher have a reputation of being distrustful?	Difficult to predict: such a reputation might decrease deception guilt, it may also increase detection apprehension	
32. Does the lie catcher have a reputation of being fair-minded?	NO: liar less likely to feel guilty about deceiving the lie catcher	YES: increases deception guilt
33. Is the lie catcher a denier, who avoids problems, and tends to always think the best of people?	YES: probably will overlook clues to deceit, vulnerable to false negative errors	NO
34. Is lie catcher unusually able to accurately interpret expressive behaviors?	NO	YES
35. Does the lie catcher have preconceptions which bias them against the liar?	NO	YES: although lie catcher will be alert to clues to deceit, they will be liable to false positive errors
36. Does the lie catcher obtain any benefits from not detecting the lie?	YES: lie catcher will ignore, deliberately or unwittingly, clues to deceit	NO
37. Is the lie catcher unable to tolerate uncertainty about whether they are being deceived?	Difficult to predict: may cause either false positive or false negative errors	
38. Is the lie catcher seized by an emotional wildfire?	NO	YES: liars will be caught, but innocents will be judged to be lying (false positive error)