

Chapter 3

Truth and Lies

A Lifestyle Clearing the Decks

As we pursue a strategically aligned life with our Creator, we embrace His grace and submit to His lordship; nevertheless, we get tripped up because we live in a war zone. Our lives are the prized battleground between epic combatants—God, the Author of Truth, and Satan, the father of lies. Consequently, our ability to discern both truth and lies is an essential *Prerequisite Principle* of our *Truventure*.

Most of us readily assert that God tells the truth, but it's not as easy to maintain in real life. As we press into God, our Logos, He points to attitudes and actions that reveal we do not take Him at His word. Although He is the One Who Cannot Lie,¹ few of us align every aspect of our lives to every truth He proclaims. I desperately want to be such a man, but I often walk out lies with a head full of doctrinal truth. I behave as if hurts, fears, and feelings trump God's clear and well-supported declarations. I get sucked into living by sight rather than by faith.² I must intentionally choose to believe the Author of Truth; otherwise I default into believing the father of lies, to my peril. *Peril* is a strong word, but appropriate because the root of each lie maligns and challenges the pristine nature of God.³ So it is essential that I follow Jesus in a lifestyle that clears the decks of lies in order to align with Truth.

Clearing the Decks

Throughout the ages seamen bellowed, "Clear the decks!" to prepare their vessel for unhindered action, primarily battle. Likewise, I must clear the

decks of my primary battleground, my mind, to stand free alongside my Commander. This is vital to my war strategy; I must enlist Him to vigilantly, ruthlessly address lies that contradict truths I claim to believe. Otherwise I am complicit with the enemy, intentionally or by default. Unless I want to be ambushed trying to do this alone, I must enlist the only One who can win. Recall our grace pact—everything by Christ living His life in and through me.

It is easier to leave the decks of a ship sloppy than to clear the decks. It is easier to believe lies than to walk out truth, but ease is not the priority. My Commander determinedly sacrificed everything for me,⁴ and keeps fighting for His design of my life in its purest form. How invaluable: I want to wholeheartedly cooperate! He wants to give me a quintessential life in return for cooperating with Him in a lifestyle of clearing the decks. No more settling for something less, no more under-targeting, no more shortchanging myself from all He designed. Clear of contradictions and lies, I can be me, unconstrained.

The Truth About Truth and Untruth

Considering how my Commander fights for me and the quintessential life He designed for me, I recommit myself to a lifestyle of clearing the decks in order to align with Him. To this end, I enter the war college eager to learn the strategic concepts of knowing truth and discerning lies.

Truth is pure. Adding the slightest impurity yields untruth. Our adversary uses this against us. He adds smidgeons of untruth to the truth we know. He adroitly nudges our perspective until we no longer focus clearly, and then we no longer center ourselves exclusively on Truth. Additionally, the laws of logic assert that something cannot be simultaneously true and untrue. Our adversary also uses this against us, inciting even the slightest inconsistency between what we believe and our behavior, knowing inconsistencies germinate. As I engage my Creator, He uses His consistent, true nature to expose and eradicate untruths in me.

Untruth follows the law of entropy, tendency toward disorder. Untruths progressively degrade perspective. I see things less accurately when I accept untruth. Consequently my decisions increasingly diverge from truth. I feel fuzzy, messy, and uncentered. This never reaches equilibrium. Like dark energy, untruth pulls me farther away from my True Center.

According to the law of entropy, energy must be put into the system to reduce disorder. Untruth is no exception. Truth Himself must expose and dispel untruth. I must receive His light and allow it to expose lies. It also requires me to expend the energy of repentance, to yield to Truth living His life in and through me. This is how I prove in my lifestyle, not merely in my theology, that I believe the One Who Cannot Lie.

God illuminates vital truths,⁵ and He desperately wants to be believed. Satan also wants to be believed, and he floats fatal lies.⁶ Truth points to the Truth; lies point away from it. In fact, lies don't care where they point; anywhere is fine as long as it is not the truth. But God cares intensely! God abhors our adversary's subtle lies that distort our perspective, blur our vision, muddle our mind, and hamstring our walk. Satan abhors our Savior's truths that straighten, illuminate, order, and unleash every aspect of us to follow God. Therefore, I never quit applying "The Truth about Truth and Untruth" because I want to be a skilled warrior, adept at listening to my Commander, discerning truth, and clearing the decks as I follow Him in this battle we call life.

Two Kinds of Wedges

Our war college manual illustrates how our ambidextrous adversary wields violence and subtlety with equal expertise. He clobbers with violent attacks and seduces with covert operations. Merciless attacks on Job exemplify Satan's ruthless desire to incite us to question God's character.⁷ Our adversary used subtle lies against Samson to hamstring the strongest man on earth, a judge and defender of Israel. Samson swallowed the succulent lie that his strong muscles and undefeated victories were about *him* and the power *he* possessed, rather than about God and God's power for Israel's deliverance. The unchecked lie, though covert, was sharp enough to gouge out his eyes—a scary warning.⁸ Each of us can relate to feeling knocked down by Satan's attacks.⁹ Likewise, each of us can relate to being seduced by his lies. More like Samson than I care to admit, my pride gets pricked, indicating I swallowed the lie that it is all about me. But I have the opportunity to turn the eyes of my heart to my centering truth, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."¹⁰

We are in the battle zone for life, and the battle is for our integrity. Our

relentless adversary, despising Truth, wields violent attacks and covert operations to drive wedges between us and Truth Himself. We are called to be alert and sober minded because our enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.¹¹ Since “someone” means you and me, and since everything out of his hellish mouth is a lie, let’s explore a lifestyle clearing the decks of lies.

Our Commander Clearing the Decks

Christ, my Commander, brilliantly demonstrated how to clear the decks of lies when admonished to forgo the cross: “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns, but man’s.”¹² Jesus quickly rejected the lie subverting His call; He decisively dealt with the lie denying His need to die. He vehemently nailed the jugular issue by asserting He could not fulfill God’s plan man’s way. Jesus emphatically doubled down on obedience, recommitted submission to His Authority Figure, and embraced crucifixion rather than let Satan’s lie take root.

Jesus’s response stands in stark contrast to mine. Jesus set His face like flint to the cross, but I squirm to avoid daily taking up my cross.¹³ Our Commander, ever vigilant, never had to deal with a lie He swallowed, but I do. His example compels me to more diligently reject lies that come crawling across my deck, long before they take root.

An Epic Life Well-lived

Covert lies trip up even long-time stalwarts of the faith, but their stories can show us how to perceive lies and stand on truth. This is the story of John, my friend and hero. John had enlisted for life with his Commander decades before this story begins. Together they dared and accomplished great things. This story begins with violent attacks *and* covert subterfuge. Outwardly, John faced cascading financial loss. Inwardly, he swallowed incognito lies. Eventually, our hero lost hope. The story reveals the Commander rescuing John, and five critical steps John took to walk victoriously in hope.

Act 1: An Incognito Lie

Fortified with a midwestern work ethic, it only takes a modicum of hope for John to bulldoze through obstacles. After a great career in corporate

America, an enviable executive pastor role, and entrepreneurial success, he found himself strapped for cash. Equally comfortable in the church and marketplace, this minister of God knew all the right answers, but an incipient lie came crawling onto his deck: *he needed to settle*. The lie was so innocuous that even today it is hard for him to definitively articulate what *settling* meant. It left a vague impression that God had passed him by. Perhaps he could help others dare great things for God, but the lie convinced John it was too late to dare great things for his own life.

The incognito lie—*you need to settle*—insinuated that financial constraints, especially this late in life, nullified God’s big dream for him. The root lie was a double whammy: *circumstances are bigger than God, therefore God can’t be trusted*. The father of lies rarely floats the root lie, but persistently passes off less objectionable versions tethered to the root. None of the versions announce themselves or overtly overthrow truth. Our enemy sows seeds of falsehood and doubt, then watches them grow alongside truth.

Act 2: An Avalanche

John wasn’t merely strapped for cash—he experienced an avalanche of financial disasters, followed by prolonged fiscal struggles. Being financially constrained is an amoral condition;¹⁴ allowing oneself to continue feeling that way is a slippery slope. The father of lies, ever ready to exploit slippery slopes, tossed John a subtle lie supported with indisputable data: vanishing income, growing expenses, unabated debt, and past the prime of life.¹⁵ The accuser embellishes lies with accusations, and for John they sounded something like this: “You’ve messed up too much. You have too much debt. God has passed you by.”

The accuser was slick enough to not overtly blame God, but pressed John’s history of mistakes. Of course this courageous man of God had made mistakes. He had dared great things with God, and whether we like it or not mistakes are a part of life. God uses our mistakes to teach; our enemy wields them as banderillas, sharp barbed sticks thrust in the flesh to weaken and distract. Likewise, our enemy did not overtly depict God as smaller than circumstances; he harped on John’s lack of finances. John allowed thoughts of financial constraint to fill up his bandwidth.

Even as I watched my friend diligently cooperate with God in every

aspect of life, we both missed his unwitting reception of the incognito lie that he had to settle for something less—a lie that implied financial constraints at his age trumped God’s plans, and the double-edged lie that neither John nor God could be trusted. Our enemy didn’t care what version of the lie was chosen, and he was equally happy to see John ping-pong between them.

This stalwart of the faith regarded circumstantial evidence and its inferences as factual. Bank balances and age are facts; God fears no facts. When we listen to lying inferences conflated with facts, we have a problem. An avalanche of financial constraints does not mean God is smaller, nor do prolonged financial struggles mean our Redeemer has passed us by, but the accuser insinuated these to squelch John’s freedom to dream.

Intellectually, our hero knew God’s plans for him were based on God, for whom nothing is impossible, not John’s bank balance or age. Any of us could answer that quiz correctly. John truly believed in God *Almighty*, and yet he lost hope. His lifestyle contradicted the truth he believed. It began innocuously when an incognito lie—*he needed to settle*—veiling a fundamental lie—*circumstances are bigger than God*—cloaking a secondary lie—*you can’t be trusted and neither can God*—wrapped in an accusation—*you’ve made too many mistakes*—came crawling across his deck. John did not recognize the Trojan horse, so Satan’s lies buried themselves deep in his psyche.

Act 3: A Penetrating Light

I cringe when I remember John sitting in his sunroom one afternoon saying, “I lost hope.” Crushed for him I exclaimed, “Why didn’t you tell me!” His response illustrates the impact of our enemy’s violent-covert combo strategy: “I didn’t realize the depths I had gone until I was coming out of it.” While avalanching finances distracted him, slithering lies stole John’s hope before he realized it was gone.

Satan relished driving our great hero to his knees, but then our Commander, Brilliance Himself, exposed the ungodly darkness of lost hope. Our Commander drew John’s attention to Himself, revealing that He, the God for whom nothing is impossible, had not passed John by. He revealed that John need not settle, and that He wanted John to dare great things again, despite his bank balance and age.

The vital turning point came when our hero intentionally acknowledged that God never dilutes truth to equilibrate circumstances.¹⁶ The tractive turning point came when our hero agreed with the One Who Cannot Lie, and subscribed to what God says about Himself, what He says about John, and what daring plans He had for John. Our hero *insisted* on these, enlisting the Spirit of Truth to eradicate lies and dispel untruth. In this way John aligned with truth, cleared his mind of lies and stood tall alongside his Commander.

Act 4: Five Steps

When John overcame, he employed five critical steps to cooperate with God to vigilantly, ruthlessly stand firm against lies intended to pull the rug out from under him.

Critical step #1: Soak in the truth. Our enemy favors the religiosity of reading God's Word as a task. It is essential to read God's Word *with God*, inviting Him to reveal truth and expose discrepancies between what we intellectually believe and what is evidenced by our attitudes and actions. It is essential to escape the clamor against our souls, diligently escaping external distractions and internal disquiet. John found it essential to simply ask God what *He* meant by each truth, and to listen as God revealed His answers.

Critical step #2: Become self-aware. I cannot clear the deck of lies I do not perceive. Sometimes I blissfully gloss over inconsistencies that contradict truths I believe. But ignorance is no excuse. I am called to be alert and self-aware.¹⁷ In John's case, being alert and self-aware meant watching his hope meter to see when hope *begins* to deflate, long before it goes to zero. Becoming more self-aware includes a) learning what kind of meter we need (e.g. hope, fear, joy, and pride), and b) upgrading the meter's sensitivity so awareness kicks in sooner. This is an example of engaging our mind with the mind of Christ and our spirit with His Spirit to intelligently obey His commands to be alert and self-aware.

Critical step #3: Identify triggers that make us susceptible to believing lies. John had two triggers, financial constraints and the feeling of failure. Now aware of these triggers, John quickly gets off these slippery slopes and leaps onto the Rock. John takes feelings of financial constraints and failure to his Promised Sufficiency, Full Provision, and Complete

Protection. We are in a battle zone. It is essential we proactively prepare for battle by knowing our personal triggers.

Critical step #4: Vehemently reject the lies. We are in the fog of war, where faulty inferences and false accusations cloud the issue, and it is hard to see clearly. Therefore we must have the mind of Christ to unambiguously reject enemy diversions and attacks—like Jesus,¹⁸ and like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego¹⁹—all of whom implacably refused to bow down to a lie. John now decisively turns away from subtle hints that he should settle, and actively turns toward daring exploits with God.

Critical step #5: Double down on truth. Jesus quickly rejected lies, emphatically doubled down on obedience, resubmitted Himself 100% to Father God, and embraced His own crucifixion. It is best to double down on truth by using the truth countervailing the root lie. In John's story, the root lie was that circumstances trump God, rendering both John and God untrustworthy. The countervailing truth is that God Almighty easily trumps circumstances; therefore we can trust God no matter what. John doubled down on truth by soaking in it, rejecting the accuser's lies, and resubmitting himself to the Father's daring plan for him.

Act 5: Heroic Hope

Our tried and true hero walked with God through three careers. Although he knew the truth, the time had come to viscerally learn truths at a deeper level. John learned the following verse deeper than ever: “For I know the plans I have for you, *John*—this is the LORD's declaration—‘plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you, *John*, a future and a hope.’”²⁰ Our hero once swallowed lies unknowingly, but now he sees them come crawling onto his deck. He upgraded his hope meter to be sensitive to micro deflations. He also upgraded his hope meter to have a higher upper range because now he advances with joy, confident in his Hope, *daring with God to change the world*.

John recently spent his 58th birthday strategizing with his Creator to understand the pure, highly concentrated essence of John being wildly successful, unconstrained. He would not let me close his epic tale without encouraging you to get alone with God and ask Him three vital questions: *What lies have I accepted? What truth am I to replace for each lie? What gift does God want to give me in return?* I can see John's

children and grandchildren gathered around as John says, “Let me tell you a story. It is the parable of our Gracious Father, His lavish response, and His desire to give us truth and gifts when we come home to Him.”²¹

Determining the Pace

Differentiating between truth and lies determines the pace of our *Truventure*; it gives us warrior cleats in our pursuit of a strategically aligned life with our Creator. Some Christ followers relentlessly wrestle *every* fact and feeling into congruity with God’s Word, and others—well, not so much. Some apply tenacious faith to see God All-wise untangle the complexities of life, and others—well, not so much. The former intentionally engage the One Who Cannot Lie to align their lifestyle with what they believe; the latter become comfortable with a lifestyle that contradicts truths they claim to believe.

We all experience avalanches, receive covert attacks, encounter complex problems, and find ourselves on slippery slopes. We all get tripped up; we live in a war zone where our integrity is the prized battleground between epic combatants—God, the Author of Truth, and Satan, the father of lies. *Truventure* is for those compelled to tractively align their life with Truth. The pace-determining step²² is clearing the decks to enter into truth. Only then do we find traction to *Truventure* with Him in the battle.

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Ask & Listen—Talk it over with the One Who Cannot Lie

Jesus answered, "... for this reason I was born, for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." John 18:37 (NIV) Read the word with God. Ask Him what He wants you to know today as you read this verse together. Record below the revelations that God unveils.

Invite Him to help you identify any areas where lies have crept in and made their way on the deck of your life. Make note of any lies exposed.

List 3 ways these lies are showing up in your attitudes or actions.

1.

2.

3.

Traction

Ask God to help you identify any triggers making you vulnerable to these lies. List them below. (For example, *financial hardship*)

Refuse to receive any whispers of condemnation that may be slithering nearby. Ask God to reveal the truth that annihilates each lie and record below what you hear Him say. (For example, *God promised to supply all my needs.**)

Vehemently reject the lies and double down on truth. Declare the truth over yourself and your situation. Record your declaration in the space below.

Essence

Living the lifestyle clearing the decks is how we *Truventure*. Picture God smiling in pride for your willingness to expose and clear the deck of lies! Ask Him to heighten your self-awareness and be quickly alerted to any lie that would threaten in the future. Talk with Him about a plan of action to expose and reject lies swiftly, decisively and vehemently. Summarize what you've learned in this chapter and imagine yourself and God trekking up the mountain of truth with warrior cleats, rejecting every lie


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* Philippians 4:19