
THE LIES WE BELIEVE

"The truth will set you free" -John 8:32

Did God Really Say?

Addressing religious lies for a healthier faith

Ken never made a conscious decision to leave church. It was more of a drift. It happened gradually over time. In college some of his classes seemed to contradict what he had been taught in Sunday School. Friends ridiculed Christianity, or their mischaracterization of Christians. As a young adult, abusing alcohol and engaging in casual sex were just part of his life. He knew what the Bible said about those things. So he kept running from God. Maybe it was more like hiding from God: not going to church, not reading his Bible, not praying, avoiding Christian friends, keeping his distance from Christians who were vocal about their faith.

How many people like Ken do you know?

In the most basic sense, people often keep God at arm's length because of their sin and persisting in rebellion and unbelief. But often, their failure to hear what God has to say or re-engage with God results from the lies they believe about God or the Christian faith.

Why are religious lies so tough?

- ◆ When were we taught them?
- ◆ Who taught these lies to us?
- ◆ What impression did they give us?

Lie # 1 - God's Love Must Be Earned

Predict the result of thinking you must earn God's love, but aren't able.

Propose the end result of thinking you have actually earned God's love.

Step #1: Confront your _____ with what the Bible actually _____.

Step #2: Become involved in a _____ of mature Christians.

Step #3: _____ how often God does loving things, even when you aren't living properly.

Which of the following Bible verses most powerfully defeats this lie for you? Can you think of others?

Romans 5:8 *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*

Ephesians 2:4,5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*

Ephesians 2:8,9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Other?

Lie # 2 - God Hates the Sin and the Sinner

"Shake it off. Just get the next one." That's the message when a batter swings and misses at a fastball right down the middle of the plate or a basketball player misses a crucial free throw. Would you recommend this attitude toward the following sins?

- ✦ Abortion
- ✦ Having a child out of wedlock
- ✦ Divorce
- ✦ Drunkenness
- ✦ Becoming addicted to pornography
- ✦ Getting caught embezzling
- ✦ Getting called out for gossiping about a close friend

Too often people face these kinds of sins by either convincing themselves it is no big deal or it is such a big deal that God could never love them.

Guilt and shame can be tools God uses for his good purposes. C.S. Lewis explains in the *The Problem of Pain* that “Christianity now has to preach the diagnosis – in itself very bad news – before it can win a hearing for the cure.”

For each of the above sins, propose what you would tell someone who feels God hates him or her because of that sin. Use the Bible verses below for help. Predict the results of holding onto guilt and shame after the sin has been addressed.

John 3:17 *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

Romans 5:8 *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*

John 8:1-11 (especially v.11) *“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.*

Lie # 3 - Because I'm a Christian, God Will Protect Me from Pain and Suffering

"Being a Christian always means joy, peace, and contentment." Why do you think we believe this obvious lie?

If anything, being a Christian means more troubles:

- 1) you are asked to _____ to you own _____ desires
- 2) you will be _____ for standing up for Christ in a world that rejects Him.

The ultimate comfort for Christians is:

- 1) The cross of Jesus allows us to call a thing what it is because...
- 2) Even if we suffer unjustly on earth...
- 3) Even in the middle of your pain, God is still...

On the other hand, if we demand that life be pain-free, we will almost automatically be bitter when it isn't. And we will take it out on God, the very person who wants to help us when we are hurting.

1 Peter 4:12-13 *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed"*

John 16:33 *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*

Philippians 1:29 *It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him*

Lie # 4 - All My Problems Are Caused by My Sins

Recall the Book of Job.

Suggest reasons why Job's friends reasoned that Job must have gotten what he deserved from God.

Determine why Job's main request was just to be able to defend himself before God.

The challenge we face here is to examine honestly the root of a given problem.

If the root is my own sin, then...

If a problem is the result of someone else's sin or no sin at all, then...

John 9:1–3 *As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.'*

Romans 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

What would have been the best thing for Job's friends to do or say during his suffering?

Lie # 5 - It Is My Christian Duty to Meet All the Needs of Others

When we convince ourselves "A good Christian never says no," we fail to be honest about our priorities and limitations.

Christ does not want any of us to be so preoccupied with doing that we fail at being. How does the episode with Mary and Martha illustrate this for you in a practical way?

There is no magic formula for when to say yes and when to say no in life.

So what guidance can you use?

What principles can you come up with?

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Romans 12:6-7 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Lie # 6 - A Good Christian Doesn't Feel Angry, Anxious, or Depressed

God made us emotional beings, and He gave us a broad range of emotions to feel.

Brainstorm a list of some "negative" emotions Jesus experienced.

Stuffing is taking what we feel and suppressing it so that we don't feel it.

Stuffing Result A:

Stuffing Result B:

Assessing whether feeling sad, angry, or anxious can be healthy or unhealthy:

- ◆ How often do I feel these emotions?
- ◆ How intense are these emotions when I feel them?
- ◆ How long do these emotions last in me?

John 11:33–35 *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in Spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept.*

Mark 14:32–34 *They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'"*

Mark 11:15–16 *On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.*

Ephesians 4:26 *In your anger do not sin.*

Lie # 7 - God Can't Use Me Unless I'm Spiritually Strong

Assess how often this lie surfaces in our reluctance to share our faith.

God could have used angels to do all his kingdom work. But he used people like St Paul.

What does that teach you about you?

What does that reveal to about God?

2 Corinthians 13:4 *To be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.*

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 *He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

1 Corinthians 1:27 *God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

1 Corinthians 9:22 *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak.*

Key # 1 - Know Your A-B-Cs

For your growthwork, I want you to participate in Track a Lie Week. Think back through all the lies we have covered, and pick one that troubles you the most. Once you have decided on one, I want you to keep an A-B-C journal for a week focused on that one lie. In your journal, write down any situation you were in that triggered that specific lie and what the emotional and behavioral consequences were for thinking it.