

COMMENTS

"Given a choice, most students prefer a true or false test over essay questions. Perhaps that's because with true or false questions there is at least a 50/50 chance of getting the right answer. However, guessing is risky. Far better to study the subject and know what is true.

Knowing what is true is never a matter of guessing; it's a matter of knowing. Solomon wrote 'Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding' (Proverbs 23:23 NASV). I can think of no better reason to encourage you to read Steve Gallagher's masterful essay on truth. Get it, read it, and I can assure you that you will get wisdom, and instruction and understanding on how to walk in the truth in a world of lies."

-DR. DENNIS FREY. PRESIDENT, MASTER'S INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF DIVINITY

"If God were to send a modern-day prophet to America, calling out against complacency and apostasy, I suspect he would sound a lot like Steve Gallagher. Walking in Truth in a World of Lies is a call of warning, but also of great mercy. Refreshingly clear, cogently reasoned, deeply researched, and compellingly presented; this book is like a drink of cold water in a desert for anyone who loves the truth. True believers will be strengthened to stand in the midst of a world of lies and compromise. The Church has needed a book like this for a long time! Thank God it's here."

-ISRAEL WAYNE, AUTHOR AND CONFERENCE SPEAKER

"I believe this book has come into the Kingdom for such a time as this. Never before has the enemy amassed such an arsenal of deception as today. Jesus warned us that in the last days the love of many would wax cold. Blow out any candle and the wax will remain hot momentarily but gradually it will return to its previously hardened state. Such is the state of multiplied millions of believers today; the fire has gone out and relationship has been replaced by ritual, love by legalism and devotion by duty.

I believe this is Gallagher's finest work as it broadens its scope beyond the sex addict to the believer who feels comfortable in his lukewarmness and mediocrity. My prayer is that this book will find its way into every believer's home and will serve to awaken us to the enemy's diabolical devices. Keep a copy for yourself and buy one for your pastor and friend. You may well help avert a major spiritual disaster."

-DAVID RAVENHILL. AUTHOR AND ITINERANT TEACHER

"In Walking in Truth in a World of Lies Steve Gallagher has provided a Biblical, powerful and penetrating resource for those struggling with sexual addiction. Carefully researched, thoroughly scriptural, and well documented the author exposes an alarming problem while providing solutions that are biblical and practical. Building his case, step by step, the author's thesis is made even more compelling by his insightful description of the historical backdrop of how modern technology and sales techniques have become tools of deception in the battle against sexual idolatry and immorality. An enormously useful book in addressing an out of control problem in the church, that pastors will want to distribute far and wide in helping needy souls break free from the bondage of this addiction."

-JOSEPH M. JACOWITZ, PRESIDENT, FIRSTLOVE MINISTRIES PASTOR, CHRIST BIBLE CHURCH

For books and other teaching resources please contact:

Pure Life Ministries 14 School Street Dry Ridge, KY 41035 (888) PURELIFE - to order www.purelifeministries.org

Walking in Truth in a World of Lies Copyright © 2020 by Pure Life Ministries.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form except for brief quotations, without written permission from the author.

ISBN/EAN 978-0-578-70764-8 eBook ISBN/EAN 978-0-578-70765-5

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE,
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

TO ED AND KARLA, TWO SINCERE LOVERS OF TRUTH:

CONTINUE TO GUARD THE TREASURE THAT

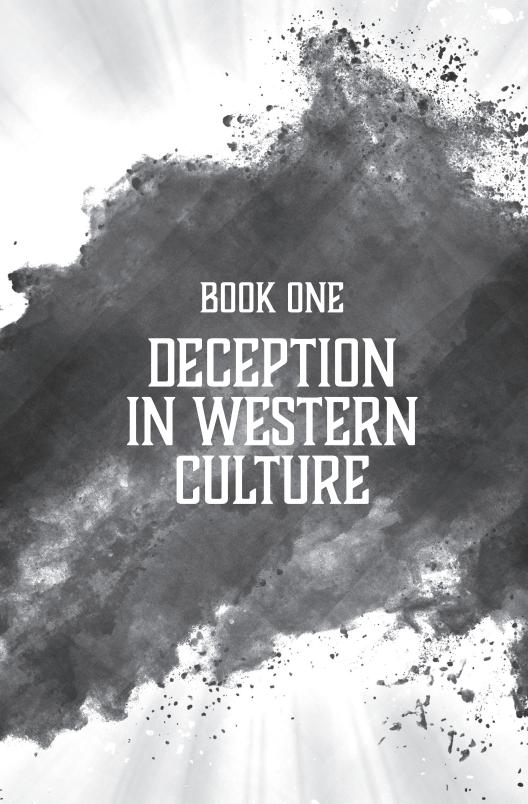
HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOU.

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE-DECEPTION IN WESTERN CULTURE		
Introduction: The Many Faces of Deception	13	
1. Walking in Truth in a Post-Truth Era		
2. Has the Academic System Been Lying to You?		
3. Has Big Business Been Lying to You?	51	
4. Has the Media Been Lying to You?	65	
5. Has the Internet Been Lying to You?	81	
6. Has the Political System Been Lying to You?	95	
7. Has the Pornography Industry Been Lying to You?	111	
BOOK TWO-DECEPTION IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM		
Introduction: Facing the Truth About Myself	127	
1. Satan is a Liar	133	
2. The Power Behind Satan's Lies	145	
3. The First Seduction	157	
4. The Tempter's Lies About Sin	171	
5. Hypocrisy and Playing the Part	187	
6. Eternal Word of Truth	199	
7. When the Truth Seems Too Painful		
8. God Desires Truth in the Innermost Being	225	
BOOK THREE-DECEPTION IN THE LAST DAYS		
Introduction: Before the Bar of God	239	
1. The Death of a Nation	245	
2. A Wholesale Rejection of Truth		
3. Spurious Teachers and False Prophets	275	
4. Satan's First Great Lie	293	
5. Satan's Second Great Lie	307	
6. Satan's Third Great Lie		

APPENDICES

1. Truth in the Bible	339
2. Deception in the Bible	351
3. False Prophets, Teachers, and Apostles	361
4. Persevering in the Truth	367



"You live in a world of deception. In their deception they refuse to know Me. This is the LORD'S declaration."

-THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK ONE: THE MANY FACES OF DECEPTION

You and I are being lied to on a regular basis. In fact, our entire culture is riddled with deception. Things have gotten so bad that we need a "Truth-O-Meter" to stay on top of what politicians tell us, a governmental agency (Food and Drug Administration) to oversee the preposterous claims made by advertisers, and a variety of independent websites to monitor the veracity of what we are being told by public figures—including Christian ministers!*

Satan uses every sort of duplicity to lead people away from Truth and into the tangled and confusing realm of Deception. Truth has been outrageously violated in every quarter. Book One will explore numerous aspects of American life that the enemy has infused with his falsehoods. But before we begin digging more deeply into the lies of our culture, let's take a better look at exactly what deceitfulness actually is.

DECEPTION IN HUMANKIND

The word deception could be defined as communication or behavior that is meant to leave others with a false impression. We encounter it in many forms in everyday life. Consider the following synonyms, each of which conveys a slightly different nuance of this concept:

^{*} Wikipedia lists over 70 fact-checking websites that make it their mission to expose lies that are masquerading as truth.

- Disinformation: "deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda."²
- Doublespeak: "evasive, ambiguous language that is intended to deceive or confuse." 3
- Duplicity: "deceitfulness in speech or conduct, as by speaking or acting in two different ways to different people concerning the same matter; double-dealing."⁴
- Fabrication: "to make up for the purpose of deception."5
- Falsehood: "Contrariety or inconformity to fact or truth."
- Fraud: "deceit [or] trickery... perpetrated for profit or to gain some unfair or dishonest advantage."
- Half-truth: "a statement that fails to divulge the whole truth..." or using a portion of truthful information to make a lie seem more trustworthy.
- Hypocrisy: "a concealment of one's real character or motives... a deceitful show of a good character, in morals or religion; a counterfeiting of religion."
- Lie: "a falsehood uttered for the purpose of deception; an intentional violation of truth."9
- Scam: "a confidence game or other fraudulent scheme, especially for making a quick profit; swindle." ¹⁰
- Subterfuge: "an artifice or expedient used to evade a rule, escape a consequence, hide something, etc." 11

These are some of the more common terms we are accustomed to encountering regarding deception, but there are actually quite a few others. The point is that deception is employed by others (or even by ourselves) in a wide variety of ways. I guess it could be said that there is a lie for every occasion.

THE MANY FACES OF DECEPTION

Sometimes falsehood comes through brazen assertions or mendacious whoppers. Duplicity can come in the form of indirect influences meant to lead to wrong conclusions, whereas enticements are intended to lead one astray from the path of honest and upright behavior. Bald-faced lies are uttered by product pitchmen and half-truths by compromising preachers. Cover-ups, fake news, and disinformation permeate the political landscape on every level. People tell outright lies to each other, witnesses perjure themselves, and adulterous spouses cover their secret behavior. We are surrounded by every form of deception, from little white lies to audacious falsehoods.

Apparently, most people lie fairly regularly—at least when they are concerned about what others think of them. This assertion comes from a study conducted at the University of Massachusetts. According to this report, 60 percent of people lied at least once during a ten minute conversation—with the average number hovering somewhere between two and three stated falsehoods. ¹²According to Robert S. Feldman, the psychologist who conducted the study:

People tell a considerable number of lies in everyday conversation. It was a very surprising result. We didn't expect lying to be such a common part of daily life... It's so easy to lie. We teach our children that honesty is the best policy, but we also tell them it's polite to pretend they like a birthday gift they've been given. Kids get a very mixed message regarding the practical aspects of lying, and it has an impact on how they behave as adults.¹³

The reality is that lying is fairly ubiquitous amongst humankind. "Little white lies" intended to protect someone's feelings—"Your

sermon was really powerful!"—are, perhaps, understandable.† However, other falsehoods are more serious, such as purposely misleading a prospective buyer about the defects of a used car or offering a disingenuous statement to a police officer.

When discussing people who lie, it is important to note that there is a huge difference between those who occasionally fudge on the truth and those who tell untruths on a regular basis.

Habitual liars are so accustomed to deceiving others that they actually get to where they can no longer differentiate truth from falsehood; or, at the very least, lose track of all of the lies they have told. Such people have been termed prolific liars, chronic liars, inveterate liars, and, at the extreme end, pathological liars. And who could forget New York Times columnist William Safire calling Hillary Clinton a "congenital liar"? "They delight in falsehood," observed David. (Psalm 62:4) In other words, habitual liars take great pleasure in propagating false narratives and perpetuating dishonest impressions.

People who practice telling lies to this extent have allowed a framework of deception to become established in their minds, distorting every encounter with reality into something foreign to the truth. These people tell falsehoods consistently and habitually, even when they have nothing to gain from such behavior. They are often quite adept at spinning colorful and convincing tales, invariably portraying themselves as either heroes or victims. Special agent John Douglas, who interviewed hundreds of

[†] Sometimes believers find themselves in situations where complete honesty would hurt another person. The Lord was the only one who ever maintained the perfect balance between truth and mercy. (John 1:14, 17) Mortals can only pray for discernment to know when and if less than full disclosure is appropriate. I will say that there have been many saints down through the ages who found it wise to be less than totally forthright in certain situations. Corrie Ten Boom (*The Hiding Place*) and Brother Andrew (*God's Smuggler*) are two who come to mind.

THE MANY FACES OF DECEPTION

serial killers for the FBI, noted: "Sociopaths often did well on polygraph tests. If you have no conscience and can lie to other people without a problem, lying to a box isn't any big deal." ¹⁴

AN UNEXPECTED DANGER

Let's face it; deception has become embedded in Western culture. The more a person is deceived, the less capacity he[‡] will have to discern truth. Many come to such a place of despair of being able to distinguish truth that they simply give up hope of ever really knowing what is genuine and what is false. Yet, there is a subtle peril that can be even more hazardous and harmful than the hopelessness of this mindset.

Being subjected to an unrelenting barrage of falsehood has a way of leaving people in a state of undetected cynicism. If a person's heart is spiritually unhealthy, he can become so distrustful of others that he disparages the intentions and motives of just about everyone. The more a person is deceived, the less trust he will have for others. Such a person can easily erect an imperceptible wall of mistrust in his heart toward everyone—including the Lord. Before long, Scripture comes under a cloud of suspicion; doubts about the veracity of God's statements become strengthened. An atmosphere of unbelief can hover over every aspect of the person's life. It is a very dangerous mindset to allow to fester because the Christian faith is built upon trust in and dependence upon the honest and upright character of God.

Cynicism has now become so rooted in American thought that even standards of honesty that have been established over

[‡] Throughout this book I regularly use masculine pronouns. This is not a slight against the female reader. I just find that vacillating back and forth between the masculine and feminine forms or attempting to use a neutral term (e.g. they, them, their) makes for awkward writing and cumbersome reading.

many decades in our society are held in contempt. So how can believers find their way through this maze of deception? It must begin by taking an honest inventory of what our culture is actually telling us.

THE MANY FACES OF DECEPTION

"Postmodernism really isn't about 'truth,' it's about doing whatever is right in our own eyes."
-SHANE IDLEMAN!

"The church in its effort to become relevant has become irrelevant. It has decided to redefine itself in such clearly cultural terms to appeal to the culture that it can't confront the culture."

-OS GUINNESS²

ONE: WALKING IN TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

uman beings are driven through life by appetite, desire, and lust. (Galatians 5:16, 24; 1 John 2:16) We pursue that which interests us—whether it is something as noble as knowing God, as innocuous as collecting stamps, or as evil as chasing sexual fantasies. Every human is propelled through the journey of life reaching for those things which he desires.

When considering the subject of truth, one must take into account the fact that a person's perspective about truth will be heavily clouded by what he wants it to be. The one who hungers for righteousness will tend to be very open and amenable to God's truth. On the other hand, a sex addict, for instance, would be very vulnerable to the falsehoods of antinomianism—the errant belief that grace frees the Christian from the gospel's demands for holy living.

It is this appetite for that next experience, possession, or attainment that creates the perfect breeding ground for deception. In large part, human beings are willing to believe anything, as long as it caters to what they want. The enemy, fully understanding this human tendency, has become very adept at creating belief systems with just enough plausibility to make them credible. These fabricated religious systems keep people by the millions from coming into a saving knowledge of God.

That's bad enough, but—perhaps worse—they also create so much confusion and uncertainty in the religious realm that, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, not even the stoutest seeker would have the wherewithal to ferret out the truth.

In this postmodern era, interest in the spiritual life is waning in favor of a secular viewpoint that seems much more reasonable and tolerant to young people than what they consider to be the self-righteous, narrow-minded, and even violent world of religion. Many take this idea even further than simply questioning the status quo.

In 2016 the Oxford Dictionaries named "Post-truth" as Word of the Year. "Post-truth" has been defined as the phenomenon in which "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." In this era, truth is being replaced with feelings and personal experiences. The bedrock of objective truth is eroding with each passing year. The media isn't helping truth's cause either, as Katharine Viner observes:

It seemed that journalists were no longer required to believe their own stories to be true, nor, apparently, did they need to provide evidence. Instead it was up to the reader – who does not even know the identity of the source – to make up their own mind. But based on what? Gut instinct, intuition, mood?⁴

The public is increasingly favoring the more tolerant philosophy of humanistic relativism. People think everyone's opinions and ideas should be considered "relative to differences in perception and consideration. There is no universal, objective truth according to relativism; rather each point of view has its own truth."

Much of this vein of thinking can be laid at the doorstep of Friedrich Nietzche who was convinced that a person's beliefs

WALKING IN TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

are neither right nor wrong. He dismissed the ethical system of Christianity as a "slave morality" followed by fearful and weak people. According to his thinking, an emotionally healthy person would reject the Christian ethic and create his own.

This perspective is becoming increasingly more popular in our day. The Christian community has not exactly been the beacon of integrity one would hope for in this deceptive atmosphere. Our weakened spiritual condition not only hinders us from presenting a convincing argument for the veracity of Scripture, but it has also fueled the skepticism of the world. The lack of love and godliness in the lives of professing Christians* leave unbelievers simply shaking their heads in self-righteous disgust.

There was a time when the world gave the Church a certain degree of begrudging admiration, but it seems that Christianity is quickly losing favor with unbelievers. In a 2019 article entitled, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," the Pew Research team shared the following:

In [our] telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.

This downward trend will undoubtedly continue as new generations come of age, creating a vacuum which the relativism of humanistic thinking is quickly filling. I could

^{*} I use the terms, "professing Christians" and "churchgoers" to describe people who claim to be believers but who probably do not actually know the Lord.

envision a typical Westerner going on a rant about the claims of Christianity that might sound something like this:

How can you Christians be so sure that what you believe has any kind of validity whatsoever? If I went to the Far East, there are some 375 million Buddhists who would swear they know the way. If I spent time in India, nearly a billion Hindus would claim that their religion is the right one. If I traveled to the Middle East or North Africa, 1.3 billion Muslims would assert that they are the guardians of truth. I don't see any reason to think that you know more than all of those people!

Who's to say which of these religions is right? I seriously doubt that truth is even discernible. There are so many different opinions about spiritual matters. Who can say what is real and what is fake? Let's face it: truth is relative.

And besides, your lives don't show that you really believe what you claim to believe. If you were really convinced you knew the truth, you would practice what you preach. Anymore, it's hard to tell the difference between Christians and non-Christians.

I think I would rather trust the wisdom of my college professor who once said that truth varies from individual to individual. He claims that one person's truth is not necessarily another person's truth. He believes people just shape their realities to suit themselves. We make truth to be what we want it to be. He would tell you that the world's greatest problem is all of these different religious groups claiming that they alone are right and everyone who disagrees with them is wrong. It is much better to think of truth as something that is relative to a particular situation or person than to speak of it in absolute terms.

WALKING IN TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

I just think that every human should have the right to decide for himself what his truth is and others shouldn't have the right to push their beliefs onto him. That arrogance only causes discord within humanity. In fact, I'm almost to the point of believing we would be a lot better off if we banned people from proselytizing others. If they want what you are offering them, they can show up at your church on a Sunday morning and check it out for themselves!

I think that diatribe is a fairly accurate picture of the quickly emerging mindset in the United States, Canada, and most of Europe. Isaiah could have been speaking about our culture when he lamented, "Truth has stumbled in the public square, and honesty cannot enter. Truth is missing..." (Isaiah 59:14b-15a CSB) Every time Truth has attempted to take a stand in the public forum of Western thought, it has been shouted down and overthrown. (cf. Romans 1:18) If Christianity is going to make a difference in this world, something radical must change in the Church.

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

Pilate could have been representing the masses of Western youth who are currently grappling with this very question. He actually asked his famous question ("What is truth?") in response to the most wonderful words he had ever heard. Jesus had just explained, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." (John 18:37) But Pilate did not have "ears to hear." His life had been characterized by a ruthless climb to the upper echelons of the Roman political world. Uninterested in this Jewish rabbi's version of truth, he, like so many today, chose to mold his concept of truth around his desires and ambitions.

Still, the question he posed at that historic moment is one which every thinking person should earnestly and solemnly ponder. The answer begins with the Hebrew word for truth: *emeth*. The root word from which *emeth* is derived is *aman*, a term that is often used to describe something firm and immoveable, such as the pillars of the Temple. (2 Kings 18:16) In the OT, the truth of God does not fluctuate with human whims but is considered to be fixed and secure. Because of this underlying root concept, *emeth* is frequently translated as faithful (or some derivative), revealing the necessity of comprehending its underlying meaning when considering the biblical view of truth.[†]

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* explains how vital it is to understand this double meaning:

This very important concept in biblical doctrine gives clear evidence of the biblical meaning of "faith" in contradistinction to the many popular concepts of the term. At the heart of the meaning of the root is the idea of certainty. And this is borne out by the NT definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1 ["Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."]. The basic root idea is firmness or certainty.⁷

This perception really comes out in the book of Psalms where "the God of truth" (Psalm 31:5) is called a "rock" by the various writers some twenty times. You get the sense of His "firmness" and "certainty" in their lives through verses such as this one: "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge... my stronghold." (Psalm 18:2) That is the God of truth a person can trust and depend upon!

⁺ See Appendix # 1 for a fascinating study of truth and its correlation with faith.

WALKING IN TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

Why are all these linguistic technicalities so important? It is necessary to grasp this because it refers to the determining factor involving our eternal destiny. Without biblical truth as its foundation, there can be no saving faith. God's truth is only granted to the utterly sincere person who seeks it and responds to it. There is only one narrow path that arrives in the celestial city while there are many deceptive roads which lead to hell. Those who put their trust in some past experience or a flimsy belief in a watered-down version of the gospel very well may find out to their horror on that great Day that they never really belonged to Christ. (Matthew 7:21-23)

Before we leave the OT concept of truth, I want to substantiate this sense of the firmness, stability, and trustworthiness conveyed by *emeth* by comparing it to its counterpart. There are actually twenty different word groups that describe various facets of deception in the OT.[‡] The term that heads the list is *sheqer*, which is "used of words or activities which are false in the sense that they are groundless, without basis in fact or reality." Thus, the psalmist exclaims, "You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes, for their deceitfulness is *sheqer* ["groundless, without basis in fact or reality."]." (Psalm 119:118)

Interestingly, the primary Greek word for truth is aletheia, which takes a different slant than that of emeth. It is derived from alethes, which is a compound of the Greek prefix "a" (corresponding to the English prefix "un") and the word lanthano, meaning concealed or hidden. So alethes literally means unconcealed. If you were describing a person of alethes you might say he was transparent, having no pretense, falseness, or duplicity. This sense is carried forth in the more common Greek term aletheia.

[‡] See Appendix # 2 for a deeper study of these terms.

Recall what Jesus told Pilate in John 18:37, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the *aletheia* [that which is utterly without pretense, falseness, or duplicity]. Everyone who is of the *aletheia* [who lives with this same quality of sincerity and genuineness] hears My voice." Pilate, steeped in the Roman system with all its false gods, could only come up with the lame response, "What is truth?" He was so full of deceit himself that he could not comprehend that the veritable Rock of truth from time immemorial was standing right in front of him. If his heart had been open to the truth, his life could have been radically and eternally changed.

Before we move on from this profound question ("What is truth?"), let's briefly consider the meaning of truth in the English language. One dictionary says that it is the "actual state of a matter: conformity with fact or reality."9 That is the sense Americans have of the word truth, but there is a vital issue lying behind this definition that few consider: Who is the arbiter of the "actual state of a matter"? The problem is that every human's version of reality is determined by the whims, lusts, and pride of his own fallen nature. In the end, truth can only be delineated by someone who is uncontaminated by sin; someone who has access to all of the facts—those both in the physical and spiritual realms; someone who is omniscient and omnipresent. The only person who can properly define truth is Jesus Christ. Therefore, truth is reality as Jesus sees it, and those who wish to understand it must immerse themselves in His thoughts, words, and teachings.

WALKING IN TRUTH

We might as well come to grips with the fact that, aside from a major revival, America has passed the point of no return. Our pleasure-laden culture has made people so self-

WALKING IN TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

indulgent that they have little interest in eternal values. No wonder Truth is so undervalued in the U.S.

When I consider the solidity inherent in the word *emeth*—as it relates to our culture of humanistic relativism—the picture that forms in my mind is an immense mountain called Truth standing immovable and unshakeable in the midst of a wildly churning sea of uncertainty.

In his book, *The Truth War*, John MacArthur writes about the western mindset of our day:

Postmodernism in general is marked by a tendency to dismiss the possibility of any sure and settled knowledge of the truth. Postmodernism suggests that if objective truth exists, it cannot be known objectively or with any degree of certainty. This is because (according to postmodernists), the subjectivity of the human mind makes knowledge of objective truth impossible. So it is useless to think of truth in objective terms. Objectivity is an illusion. Nothing is certain, and the thoughtful person will never speak with too much conviction about anything. Strong convictions about any point of truth are judged supremely arrogant and hopelessly naïve. Everyone is entitled to his own truth.¹⁰

I attest to the reality of his conclusion, but the battle which concerns me is not so much the cultural war—which has long since been lost. My concern is with the unseen yet very real battle raging within the sacred halls of Christianity. I see God's truth losing ground within two great bodies of professing Christians.

The first group is made up of those who are involved at some level with the movement known as the Emergent Church. Like the humanistic culture which it is married to, it is known for questioning the age old traditional understanding of the Christian life. I will address this in

greater detail later, but for now I want to mention it in passing because it has created an opening in the evangelical movement for deception to influence the minds of millions of church youth. Sacred truths that were held as unshakeable a few decades ago are all now up for discussion.

The prophet Jeremiah lived in a similar period during the demise of the nation of Israel.§ At that time, the Lord beckoned, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16) We desperately need the Lord to raise up a Jeremiah to speak this word in the fire of God today!

The second group is made up of those churchgoers who know and hold to all the traditional doctrines, faithfully attend church services, and identify themselves as Christians, but who do not really live out the truth in their daily lives. This group's apathy toward Christianity is just as concerning to me as those caught up in the Emergent movement. Even in the Fifties A.W. Tozer identified this growing trend: "Millions of professed believers talk as if [Christ] were real and act as if He were not. And always our actual position is to be discovered by the way we act, not by the way we talk." Or, as the Apostle Paul put it in his day: "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him..." (Titus 1:16)

If there is one thing I have learned for myself over the years it is that I must immerse myself in truth: think the truth, speak the truth, and, perhaps most important of all, live the truth. Truth must be something more tangible than an ethereal belief system. If the truth of Scripture is not a powerful force in my life, directing the way I think, speak, and act, then my witness for Christ will be meaningless and will even do damage to the name of the Lord and His kingdom.

[§] This period of Israel's history is examined in greater detail in Book Three, Chapter One.

WALKING IN TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

By the time the Apostle John wrote his three epistles and shared the great Revelation, the first century was drawing to a close. Deception had already made strong inroads into the Church—the institution that is supposed to be the depository of the Truth of God. Heretics and false teachers swarmed through the Christian community. Sincere but naïve believers, having been taught the importance of mercy and hospitality, were inviting these traveling apostates into their homes. (2 John 10) Church leaders were not standing up against their false teachings. In fact, Jesus had to rebuke the leadership of the churches in Pergamum and Thyatira for allowing such wolves to ravage their flocks. (Revelation 2:14, 20)

However, there *were* sincere believers who were committed to the Truth, no matter what it might cost them. One was a man living in Asia Minor named Gaius. In his third epistle, John encouraged him, "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." (3 John 2-4)

Art Katz once told his listeners that in this last statement John was actually expressing the heart of God. I absolutely agree that this describes the Lord's feelings about His children. However, it begs the question, "What does it mean to walk in the truth'?"

The concept of walking to describe life's journey is a fairly common metaphor in Scripture. The Lord used it to describe a person's daily behavior: the way he acts and the way he lives. In short, you could say that it is a way to illustrate a person's lifestyle.

This really comes out in John's first epistle when he wrote, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in

the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:6-7)

As I touched on earlier, I have a great concern about the millions of professing Christians who hold to traditional orthodoxy but whose lives are more closely attuned to the spirit of the world than to the Spirit of truth. What does truth mean if it does not describe the reality of something? In this passage from his first epistle, John is telling his readers that they can profess Christ, but if the reality of their lives is that they are united to the darkness of this world system, they are only deceiving themselves. He reiterated this in Revelation when he said that, "everyone who loves and practices lying" will be barred from the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 22:15) As Matthew Henry posited, "The best evidence of our having the truth is our walking in the truth."

This brings us full circle to the underlying premise of *emeth*: both truth and faith must be established in a person's heart for him to be saved. Or to say it negatively: a false-hearted Christian is not a genuine believer, whatever he may claim about himself. It is not possible to have faith in God and walk in deception. God is truth and we must be one with this Spirit of truth. If we are in fact united with the spirit of this world, we are deceived.

The Lord could have been speaking to us when He told Jeremiah, "You live in a world of deception..." (Jeremiah 9:6a CSB) and all those lies are affecting you and me far more than we realize. We must not—cannot—allow our hearts to be taken by the prevailing deceptions of our day. We must face the truth and live in the truth. However, to successfully accomplish this, we must first come to grips with some of the more blatant forms of deception coming forth from our culture.