

Dealing with the Damage of Deception

MESSAGE NOTES, March 19, 2017

John 8:42-45

“When [the devil] lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Deception is at the very heart of Satan’s strategy to “steal, kill, and destroy.” He distorts the truth and blatantly defies the Word of God. Beth Moore puts it well: “Deception is the glue that holds [his] strongholds together.” So much of our brokenness is rooted in deception. God wants to free us from these lies; this is an essential part of our growing in wholeness.

In Romans, God reveals how much of our battle for wholeness is in the mind. Paul’s intro in chapter 1 expresses the “downward spiral of sin,” in which the mind is a key player:

- Romans 1:18-22. Read this together and note all the references to mind, truth, knowing, etc.
- Romans 12:2. What is the remedy for our brokenness? That is, what transforms us?

Genesis 3:1-11 – A Case Study in Deception

- Satan casts doubt on God’s Word and character. Verse 1: “Did God *really* say ...?”
- Satan directly refutes the truth of God’s word. Verse 4: “You will not surely die.”
- Satan deceives by substituting his lie for God’s truth. Verse 5: “You will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When God finds Adam and Eve hiding in the garden “because I am naked,” what does he ask them? See verse 11 (paraphrased, “Whose voice are you listening to?”).

Satan’s deception moved Adam and Eve from joyous God-awareness to paralyzing self-awareness.

Four Broad Categories of Lies

These come from the father of lies, but they often come through people.

1. Lies about God

- He is not good.
- He is holding out on me.
- He is unpleasable.
- He is distant and uncaring.

God’s Word (the Bible) consistently refutes the lies of Satan and the world. For example, see Psalm 139. Read through this together and celebrate all the reassuring truths about God’s heart for us.

2. Lies about myself.

- God can’t/won’t forgive my sins.
- I am worthless. I don’t blame God or anyone else for not loving me.
- Compared to _____, I am a worthless mess.
- Compared to _____, I am doing alright.
- If I was just _____-er, I would be OK.
- I can never really change. My life is hopeless.

3. Lies about people.

- I can’t trust anyone. (Satan will grow his lies from a kernel of truth. In this instance, the truth that nobody is 100 percent trustworthy; all of us are flawed and will make mistakes. His lie is an all-or-nothing distortion: “You can never trust anyone.”)
- All men (or women) will _____ you. (Satan most often attaches his lies to hurt! Because of our pain, we embrace superlative distortions: “All. Never. Every. Always.” These are words of deception.)

- If I just had a spouse, I'd be OK.
 - If I say "no" to things, people won't like me. (This is an unhealthy people-pleasing distortion.)
 - If I tell anyone, I will be ruined. ("We are only as broken as our secrets." – *Celebrate Recovery*)
4. Lies about the Christian Life.
- I don't need anyone else but God. (The lie that the church is just a human organization.)
 - Now that I'm a Christian, I won't have to struggle or suffer.
 - I know what God's Word says, but this doesn't apply to my situation.
 - Now that I'm forgiven, I'll get it right. (The lie of performing and earning our way.)
 - If I could just _____, I'd be more spiritual (and thereby acceptable).

Battling Deception

1. Take every thought captive. See 2 Corinthians 10:5. As in a war, when captives are interrogated, they are asked three main questions: Who are you? Who sent you? What is your mission? This is a good model for us in taking thoughts captive:
 - What is this message?
 - Where (or who) does it come from?
 - What is its purpose?
2. Renounce the lie. Embrace the truth. (Replace the lie with the truth.)
 - What about when we don't recognize we are being deceived or we don't see the lie? How can we embrace the truth if we don't know it? We must:
3. Know God's Word. (What a gift that God has given us a tangible book that holds and reveals His truth).
 - Jesus battled Satan's temptations/deceptions in the desert with scripture.
 - American Christians have become the most biblically illiterate believers in the world. We have lost our confidence, trust and hunger for God's Word.
 - We are continually bombarded with messages and information, much of which is distortion and deception.
 - We desperately need the anchor of the truth of God! See Ephesians 4:14-15.
 - We will find the truth and power of God's word when we come to it, not with a legalistic sense of duty, but with a yearning hunger to connect with God, hear His voice, get His heart. Yes, the Bible is full of valuable truth/principles, but it is first and foremost a relational book.
 - Psalm 119 is all about the Word (the Law) of God. David the Psalmist is extolling the wonder, beauty and delight of God's Word. As you read it, note the expressions of joy David uses to describe his view of God's Word.
 - We must battle the many lies Satan stirs about the Word of God itself, such as: "It's too hard to understand" ... "You can make it say whatever you want" ... "There are so many interpretations"
4. Draw on the power of community.
 - People help me see my own blind spots.
 - We learn from each other.
 - We remind each other of the truth.
 - We encourage each other to hold to the truth.

Reflection Questions

1. Any confusion or questions about this message?
2. What one truth has most spoken to you from this message?
3. Is there a particular lie that is operating in your life that God has highlighted? What truth from this message is helpful to you in overcoming this deception?
4. Which of the four principles for "battling deception" is most challenging to you? What is one tangible step you can take to begin to practice/implement this principle?
5. How can you "draw on the power of community" in overcoming a specific deception you are battling?