

TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

"Liar, Liar...." Genesis 3:1-5

July 14, 2024

INTRO.: Good morning and welcome to our ongoing series **Trusting God's Plan, Purpose, and Design**, from the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. I begin with this question, "How many of us have lied about something in our lifetime?" Why do we lie? Maybe to keep ourselves out of trouble? As a child growing up did you ever break something and not want to get in trouble for it and so you lied? Possibly we lie to make ourselves look better or we don't want others to look down on us. Someone wrote an article some years ago listing the top 10 lies. Some of those in the list included:

- *This will be a short meeting
- *The check is in the mail
- *This hurts me more than it hurts you
- *Your money will be cheerfully refunded
- *I'll start exercising (dieting, forgiving, ...) tomorrow (#1 on the list)

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Possibly we overstated our case. Maybe we lie to impress people or make them feel a bit envious. How about this company:

Company Offers to 'Fake A Vacation' With Doctored Photos

You don't have to pack, deal with security lines, or face jet lag in order to show off your vacation pictures on social media. Just fake it! A business is offering to bolster social media pages with expertly faked photos of the user on vacations they never took. The company, Fake a Vacation, offers packages for a service to superimpose the photos of a social media user in front of famous landmarks including Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, Hawaii, and Walt Disney World.

The company's ad reads "Make your friends envious of where you were and have them thinking of being where you are. Fake vacation is a perfect Meme for bragging to your friends." The packages also include some facts about each destination to help the customer concoct the story of their fake vacation.

The company cited a study that suggests more than half of Millennials have lied about taking vacations for reasons ranging from last-minute cancellations, the high price of travel, and the desire for social media recognition. (Dubai, Paris, New York City)

Source: Ben Hooper, "Company Offers to 'Fake A Vacation' With Doctored Photos," UPI Odd News (4-25-19); Angie Sharp, "Forget 'Staycations' - You can now FAKE your next vacation!" WQAD8.com (4-24-19)

Where did lying originate? Who thought it would be a good idea? Our theme: **LIAR, LIAR**. If you grew up around my time you might finish the statement with, "Liar, liar, your pants are on fire." There is actually a song that was released in 2006 with the title, "Liar, liar, pants on fire." (Chuck Brodsky) Some of the words include:

Bend the rules, twist the facts
Make excuses, cover your tracks

In this opening book of the Bible, we have the first lie recorded. The character and strategy of this first liar has never changed. What he did then he still attempts to do today. As we read the first five verses of Genesis 3 together see if you can pick up on his character and strategy.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The first thing we're going to look at is his character: he **DECEIVES**. Then we will look at his strategy: He wants people to **DOUBT**, and to do this he **DISTORTS** and **DENIES**.

HE DECEIVES

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The first thing we need to do is to identify this creature. He is called a *serpent*. Who is this serpent? As Arnold Fruchtenbaum says, "This is a reference to both a literal serpent and to Satan, for Satan used a literal serpent for the purpose of communicating with the woman."

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Revelation 20:2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

We read in 2 Corinthians 11:14, concerning Satan, "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

Satan doesn't show himself as a person dressed in red with horns, a tail, holding a pitchfork. Look at how his character is described.

"more crafty than any of the wild animals God had created:" The word "crafty" has various meanings including "subtle," "crafty," "shrewd," "sensible," "prudent," and "cunning." (Arnold Fruchtenbaum) It actually is a word play with Genesis 2:25, where we read that Adam and Eve were both naked and they felt no shame. The word "naked" tells us they had nothing to hide because there had been no sin up to that point. There was no deceiving and the serpent comes along and he wants to destroy that by deceiving Eve. What was the first thing Adam and Eve did after they disobeyed God by eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

They covered up and sin causes us to cover up morally and spiritually, hiding from God and others. The word, "crafty" is used in both a good way and a bad way in the Bible.

Good way:

Proverbs 12:16 A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

Proverbs 13:16 Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.

Bad way:

Job 5:12 He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.

Job 15:5 Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty.

We don't know how much time elapsed from the end of Genesis 2 to the beginning of Genesis 3, but we know this describes actual events that happened.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

2 Corinthians 11:3–4 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **4** For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Satan was created by God as the most beautiful angel.

Ezekiel 28:12–15 "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: " 'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. **13** You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. **14** You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. **15** You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.

What happened to cause his fall?

Isaiah 14:12–14 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! **13** You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **14** I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

Five “*I wills*”:

**I will ascend to heaven*

**I will raise my throne above the stars of God*

**I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain*

**I will ascend above the tops of the clouds*

**I will make myself like the Most High*

Donald Grey Barnhouse (in commenting on Gen 14:18, 19), “Here is the key to the pride of Satan. God is revealed as *El Elyon*, the Most High God, and in this character he is ‘the possessor of heaven and earth.’ This is what Lucifer wanted to be. His rebellion was not a request for God to move over so that he might share God’s throne. It was a thrust at God himself. It was an attempt to put God out so that Satan might take his place as possessor of the heavens and the earth.”

Clearly, when Satan appears in Eden in the guise of the serpent to tempt Adam and Eve, it is a renewed attempt to further this ambition. Having failed to take heaven, he is nevertheless determined to consolidate his hold on earth through earth’s inhabitants.

Since he fell, he wants to drag as many people as possible down with him and he is very “crafty” in how he does that. So, what exactly is his strategy?

HE CAUSES DOUBT

“Did God really say?”

This the first question recorded in the Bible. He desires to get Eve to doubt the veracity, the truthfulness of God’s words. Satan wants to regain the authority that he lost in his fall from heaven. He wants to be the final authority that people will look to.

What is one of the things most attacked today? It is the truthfulness of the Word of God! It is even attacked in the pulpits of some churches today. Some say, “You can believe the Bible when it comes to matters of faith, but not when it comes to science and history.” Where do you stop when you begin discrediting any part of the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:14–17 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The following is the first article in the doctrinal statement for First Baptist Church: We believe that the Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the verbally inspired Word of God (II Tim. 3:16, II Peter 1:20, 21) written by men divinely and uniquely inspired, and is therefore inerrant in the original writings (Matt. 5:18), and that it is the supreme and final authority for faith and daily conduct (II Tim. 3:17).

There is a warning at the end of the book of Revelation:

Revelation 22:18–20 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. **19** And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. **20** He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

This is directly referring to the book of Revelation but as we look at other Scripture, we can see that it can be applied to all of the Bible.

Moses speaking:

Deuteronomy 4:2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

Deuteronomy 12:32 See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

Proverbs 30:5-6 “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. **6** Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

This should be our response to the Word of God:

Psalms 119:70 Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law.

Psalms 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

After he puts that seed of doubt in Eve’s mind:

HE DISTORTS

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

Is that what God said? Satan is trying to get Eve to doubt the goodness of God! What did God actually say to Adam, in giving direction to him?

Maybe we should read this together.

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

God said to Adam you can eat from any tree in the garden except one. Can you imagine how many trees God had blessed Adam and Eve within this garden? He has continued the strategy of misusing and misquoting Scripture to this day. He did it when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He continues to want us to doubt the goodness of God in God’s commands. Some people even say they believe God just wants to ruin their fun. Take for instance the topic we spoke about last week, “The two shall become one flesh.” Part of this command is that the physical part of the relationship is to begin after marriage. God isn’t against sex, He is the Creator of it and is very much in favor of it between a man and a woman who are married. God’s commands are meant to provide for us the most abundant life and protect us from damage done by not following His commands.

Matthew 4:5-7 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. **6** “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” **7** Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

LESSON: Just because somebody quotes the Bible doesn’t mean they are quoting it correctly or in the right context. You had better not walk out of here and say, “Well, the pastor said it, so it must be true.” You need to also examine the Scriptures.

Eve corrects the serpent in her reply, but she doesn’t get it quite right either.

Genesis 3:2-3 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

Even in her response she adds something to what God said. So, the serpent begins by putting doubt in Eve’s mind, then he distorts God’s Word bringing doubt on God’s goodness and finally:

HE DENIES

These last two verses are an outright rejection of the Word of God.

Genesis 3:4-5 “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

“*you will not surely die*” Notice the serpent doesn’t begin with this outright rejection of God’s Word. Eve may have been more hesitant if he started with this statement.

False teachers don’t begin with an outright denial of the Word of God for they are far more subtle than that. Satan isn’t going to begin with this statement, “I want you to believe a lie.”

Look what he tells her next:

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Isn't this what got Satan thrown out of heaven? He wanted to "be like God," to take God's place, to supplant God's rule and authority? What did that get Satan?

Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

God's desire for our lives is that we become more and more conformed to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we become God or that we attempt to take His place. We still struggle with sin but listen to this promise of God for every believer:

1 John 3:1-3 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **3** Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

SO WHAT???

Where did lying come from?

John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

He has a strategy.

1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

So, what am I to do?

*I need to know Christ as my Savior and Lord. Without this I am described as an enemy of God

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Many think, "Well, I haven't done anything really bad." What they don't realize is that every sin is rebellion against God, a rejection of God's truth.

John 3:16-18 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. **18** "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

*Understand and be aware that Satan has a strategy: deceive, doubt, distort, and deny

Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

"be strong in the Lord:" this is a present tense, passive, command. The strength comes from God.

"in his mighty power:" literally: "in the might, the power of Him (the Lord): this isn't our might or power

"put on the full armor of God:" this is also a command (Ephesians 6:12-20 describe the armor)

"devil's schemes:" "this carries the idea of craftiness, cunning, and deception. The term was often used of a wild animal who cunningly stalked and then unexpectedly pounced on its prey." (John MacArthur)

ILLUS.: Have you ever played "Capture the Flag?" There are two teams, and each team has a certain area that is their territory. The goal of the game is to infiltrate the other team's territory, find their flag and take it, and get back to your territory without being tagged. It is a game best played in the woods so people can sneak around. It is not much fun in an open field. Satan is sneaky.

*Don't be consumed with Satan

This isn't a battle against equal powers. God is far greater than Satan and the battle has been won through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Remember that Satan is not:

*Omniscient: all-knowing

*Omnipresent: everywhere present

*Omnipotent: all powerful

Nothing or no one can stand against God!

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

*We need one another

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

"encourage:" present tense command

Satan deceives, causes doubt, distorts and denies