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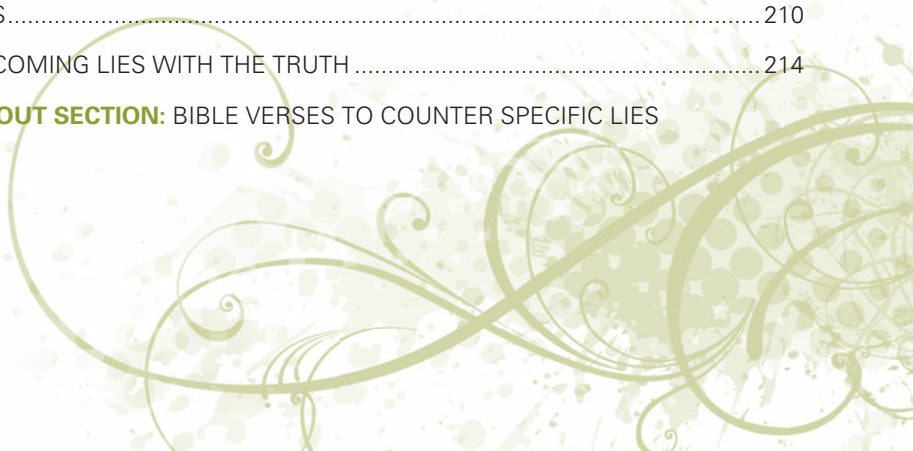
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The Deceiver

Where do lies come from?

Until that day, her life was almost a fairy tale—a paradise of sorts.

That all changed when Melanie was sixteen and she encountered her own personal “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” Her boyfriend was a Christian. He prayed with her. Texted her Bible verses. She’d thought she could trust him. They’d never gone that far physically. But now, he was asking for more. And she had to decide whether to give in or walk away.

He begged, “*Don’t you really love me?*” His question was really an ultimatum and she knew it: “*Prove your love to me or we’ll break up.*”

Her boyfriend wasn’t who she thought he was. That was clear, but why did she want so badly to keep him? Why was she willing to do almost anything not to lose him? Why was she even considering doing something she knew in her heart was wrong?

She found herself depressed. Stressed. Lonely. Finally, when the ache became unbearable, she reached out for advice. Her youth leader started by praying with her. After some time of talking to God, Melanie and her youth leader just sat and waited in silence.



A NOVEL IDEA

This book will talk a lot about Eve and how she believed the lie that took down humanity. Her story is probably familiar to you, but you’ll be lost if you’ve forgotten what in the world the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is or if you think Eve was made from Adam’s big toe. (Gotcha! Are you with us?)

We have a novel idea: we’d like you to read her story for yourself. Just open your Bible to Genesis 2:15 and read through the end of chapter three. Imagine you’re in the most beautiful garden ever created and sink into the drama of her story. We promise it’ll read like a . . . well, a novel!

Then tears began to stream down Melanie's face. "My whole life is one big fat lie," she said.

"Tell me how," the woman asked.

She opened her eyes and spoke with certainty: "The straight A's. All my soccer trophies. A perfectly organized bedroom. Never sleeping in. Never missing devotions. My obsession with a perfect SAT score. I do that for the same reason I'm considering doing this with my boyfriend."

"Can you explain the connection?" said the woman.

As only God can, He had shown Melanie the root of her emotional confusion and distress: "I've realized that I believe I have to perform to be loved." The temptation to have sex with her boyfriend was just the fruit of a lie she had been believing. God wanted to go down deep with Melanie to rip up the root.



When I stopped striving for a moment and finally sat still, I could hear God's Truth clearly. I understood. God loves me because I'm His, not because of what I can do or how much I can excel. That night, God showed me something I couldn't see before. I realized that almost everything I did was based on this lie about performance. Seeing the truth about my value was so freeing.




REALITY READING

This book is not fiction! And we didn't want any of the stories we used to be fiction either. Though the story in this chapter is true, we've chosen not to use "Melanie's" real name. We'd do the same for you! Throughout the book, if we use only a first name, you'll know that we've changed the name.

Melanie had been lied to. Parts of her story may sound familiar to you. Or your story may be quite different. Maybe yours is a pattern of on-again, off-again friendships marked by "mean girl" moments. Constant fighting with parents who seem over-controlling. Or an ache to have your parents acknowledge that you're even alive. Secret, shameful habits. Plummeting grades. Patterns and relationships that once bothered you have come to seem "normal." But the consequences of depression, confusion, and loneliness reveal that something isn't right.

I (Nancy) received a letter one day from a young woman who had grown up in a Christian home and had been home-schooled; she even had a sense that God had a specific call on her life to serve Him. However, as her letter revealed, something wasn't right. In fact, things were very, very wrong:

 *I'm having a very hard time right now. Deep depression and anger and lots of different things have changed in me. I want to end my life or hurt myself really bad, even though I feel the Lord has a special thing for me to do when I get older. I hate my life and my family. It feels like it will never end and I will have to live like this for the rest of my life. We have been to many doctors, and no one knows what is causing this.*

You'd never have guessed what was going on inside this girl by looking at her. As I read her letter, my heart ached, and I wondered how many more young women in our Christian homes and churches are experiencing similar turmoil.

If you've turned over every rock looking for physical causes to your situation, it may be that you've believed one or more lies that have become deeply embedded in your thinking and have placed you in bondage.

Let's look at how our struggle with bondage began in the first place, so we can get you on your way to freedom. To do that, let's turn our attention once again to the first woman to fall for a lie.



FEEL LIKE THERE'S NO HOPE?

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 24.¹ We shudder to think that you may be struggling with such emotional bondage. Oh, how we wish we were there to hug you and tell you that there is hope. We're not just saying that. We mean it.

If you are struggling with thoughts of suicide, please reach out for help right now.

➡ **Cry out to the Lord.** Ask Him to rescue you from any evil influences that are trying to destroy you.

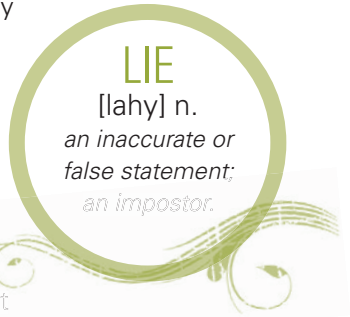
➡ **Talk to your parents, your pastor or youth pastor, or a godly Christian woman.** Ask them to pray for you and to help you get through this rough time.

➡ **Dial a help line and talk to a person live now.** We recommend calling Focus on the Family at 1-800-A-FAMILY.

THE DEFINITION OF LIES

A lie is “a false statement with deliberate intent to deceive; an inaccurate or false statement.”² Another definition is “an impostor.” A lie is an impostor of the Truth. We often don’t detect lies because they camouflage themselves so well.

Back in the garden, Eve met an impostor with a diabolical agenda. He wanted Eve to become his slave by rejecting God and His purposes for her life. The serpent craftily asked, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of *any* tree in the garden’?” (Genesis 3:1). That’s not exactly what God had said, but it sure sounded similar. God had told Adam (and Eve) they couldn’t eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan used a clever combination of half-truths and falsehoods *posing* as Truth.



He began by planting doubts in Eve’s mind about what God had actually said. When Eve told him that God had said they would die if they ate the fruit, he responded with a series of lies. He said, “*You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:4–5). He wanted her to turn her back on God, to reject His Truth, and to believe his carefully crafted lies . . . and she did.

And that’s exactly what the great Impostor wants you to do too.

THE ORIGIN & PURPOSE OF LIES

The Bible tells us that Satan poses as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Ezekiel 28 tells the story of how he asserted his claim to be like God. He is *the* Impostor. And his motives are malicious through and through, as Jesus Himself pointed out:

“The devil . . . was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

SATAN'S NATIVE LANGUAGE IS LYING.

He speaks through different mouthpieces, sometimes using evil rulers, false religions, social media, Netflix, popular songs, or even friends to deceive us.

Why does he lie to us? The verse above suggests that his ultimate goal is our destruction. The ultimate fruit of his lies is death. We begin to experience the results of this “death” before our hearts stop beating. Look at God’s words to the first man:

“OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE DAY THAT YOU EAT OF IT YOU SHALL SURELY DIE.”

(GENESIS 2:17)

What did God mean when He said they would die on the day they ate of the forbidden fruit? Eve clearly didn’t die *physically* the day she first sinned. However, the moment she took a bite of that fruit, she did die *spiritually*—she was separated from God, who is Life.

The Tree of Life was now off-limits, and she was banished from paradise. She would now be a slave to her own sinful, selfish desires and choices. She would bear the consequences of living in a fallen, broken world, rather than enjoying the eternal pleasure of life in Paradise. She and her husband would have to endure pain and hardship as they fulfilled their basic responsibilities related to family and work. With each passing year this hardship would take its toll on their bodies, and they would eventually experience physical death.

What a vivid picture this is for us.

The moment we believe and act on a lie, as Eve did, we begin to experience consequences. We become increasingly enslaved to false, destructive ways of thinking and living. Satan’s ultimate goal is our



THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD & EVIL

It was the tree in the dead center of the Garden of Eden, which God had told Adam (and indirectly Eve) not to eat. They could eat of every other tree, including the Tree of Life. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and eat from the one tree God said was off-limits, they lost their “freedom of choice.” They could no longer eat from the Tree of Life and were banned from the garden.

destruction and death. Not just physical death some day in the future. He'd like to make you a part of his walking dead on this earth, not free to enjoy God and life as He created you to live it. You see, zombies are more than the bad guys in scary movies or on Netflix. Walking around enslaved to fear and death is a very real lifestyle for many.

THE TARGET OF SATAN'S LIES

Satan targets women with his lies.

For reasons we cannot fully understand, Satan chose to target a woman for his first deception in the Garden of Eden. Twice in the New Testament the apostle Paul points out that it was the woman who was deceived: "The serpent deceived Eve by his cunning" (2 Corinthians 11:3). "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Timothy 2:14).

It may feel like a bad rap, but facts are facts. Satan obviously targeted Eve, perhaps thinking that if he could get her to buy into his deception, she would influence her husband to eat the forbidden fruit with her—which is exactly what happened.

And to this day, Satan continues to target women of every age for deception.



Your generation is bombarded with more messages (many of them untrue) than any past generation.

Netflix, Pinterest, texting, Instagram, Snapchat . . . The list goes on and on and is constantly changing. With so many media, the messages you are bombarded with are vastly more numerous than any previous generation has ever experienced. Never has a generation been exposed to so many messages through so many mediums.

The result is quite interesting. Social scientists have noticed that the younger generations who grew up with the Internet have responded to the information overload by becoming more careful.³ The information available concerning the consequences of some choices has resulted in a downward trend in smoking, drinking while driving, television viewing, and even sex. You're even more likely than older generations to drink water and understand that soft drinks aren't great for you.⁴

But along with all that strength of conviction exists some of the fuzziest moral thinking that any generation has ever known. There is no longer a

single source of prevailing influence or Truth. Instead, your generation tends to determine moral positions based on how a behavior makes you *feel* and whether it makes someone else *feel* good or bad. *If it makes me happy, it must be right.*

For example, 75 percent of college students admit to cheating on tests to get the grade they want. Once caught, they almost universally agree that cheating is wrong . . . unless they get away with it, in which case they believe it's OK to cheat. The technical term for this trend is "situational morality." Your generation is more likely than ours to determine right and wrong based on the context, rather than firm moral standards.⁵

The "Gender Revolution" of our day is an illustration of "morality" being impacted by how the outcome makes us feel. Your generation will be the first to mature into a gender fluid culture. That is to say, even the unmistakably clear biological distinction between male and female is no longer what people think determines gender. You can be born female, but if you identify more as male, then who's to say you're not really male?

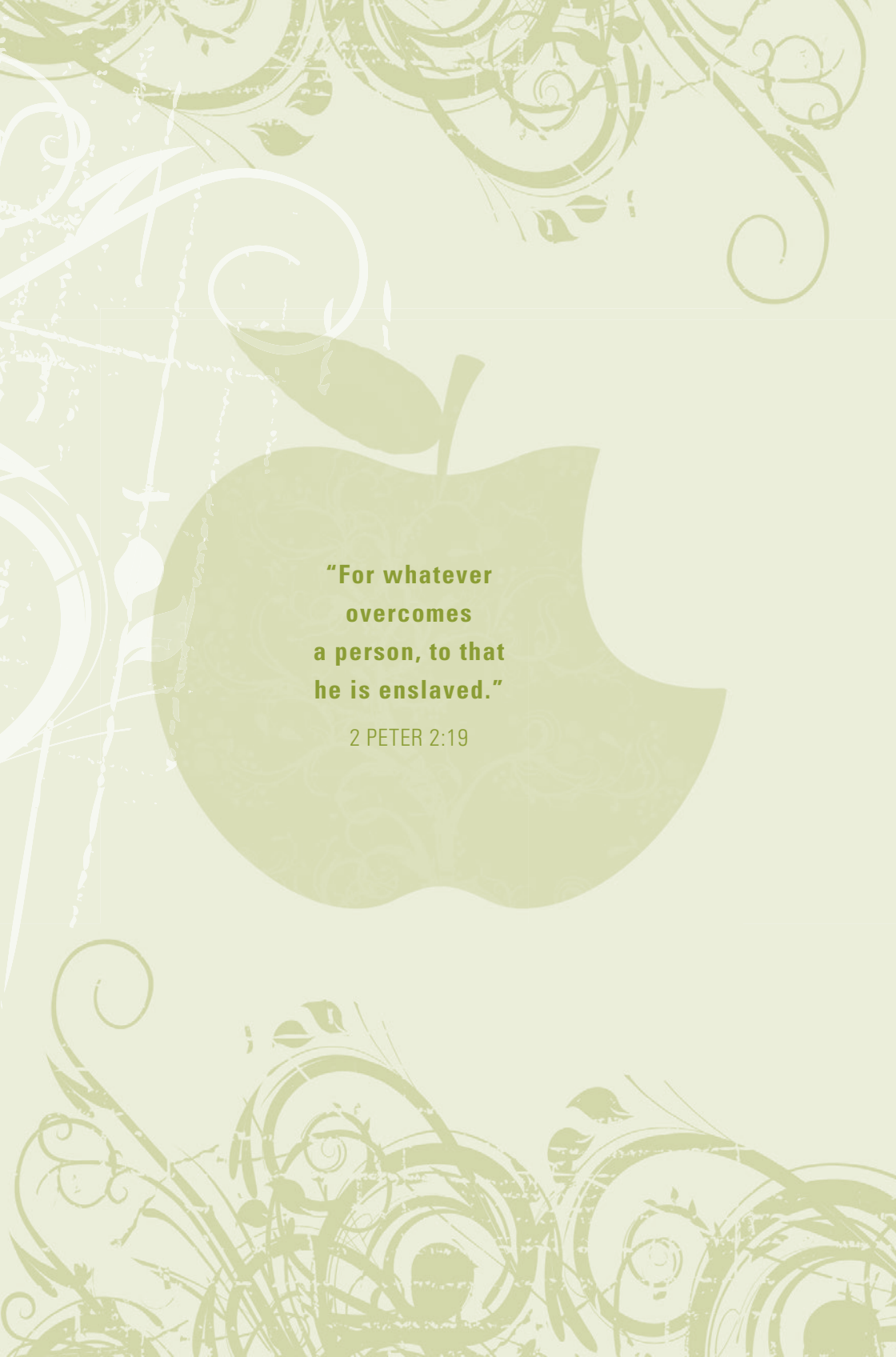
What has brought us to this place? Stories. The stories of individuals who feel one way or another have tugged at our emotions. We have allowed stories to become authoritative because of how they make us feel. Do you see a problem with that? We sure do.

We hope you do too! Let's start a movement that will buck and begin to change the current trend of untruth! Let's start looking to the One and only source of Truth.

And let's purpose to live lives that display the power and beauty of Truth to those around us.

We're here to spur you on in that movement, by fueling you with a passion to douse Satan's lies with the Truth. Before you start, there's something you should know about *your* role in these lies.

>>> **Check out the next chapter.**



**“For whatever
overcomes
a person, to that
he is enslaved.”**

2 PETER 2:19

The Deceived

Where do lies get the **power** to destroy our lives?

Caitlyn was never overweight.

Not for one single day of her life. In fact, she was especially thin. And, by most standards, she was beautiful.

But the world's standards are harsh. These days the average model weighs 23 percent less than the average woman on the streets.¹ This global standard of beauty is so dangerous that Spain, Italy, and Australia have established industry guidelines requiring that runway models have a certain body mass index so they're not too thin. This mentality hasn't hit America, though. We're still killing girls in the name of a standard of beauty that cannot be attained outside of drugs and starvation. This has led two-thirds of *underweight* twelve-year-old girls to consider themselves "fat."²

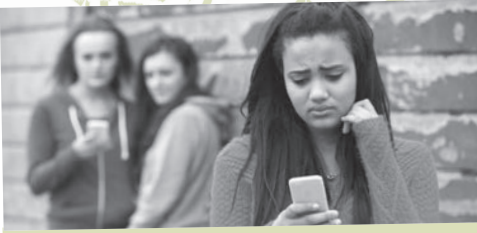
Caitlyn was twelve when she began to believe that. At fourteen she began to do something about it. Most days she just didn't eat. She scheduled her high school classes so she wouldn't have a lunch period. If she ever caved in and ate, she ate a lot. Then she felt forced to throw up . . . and to demand a four- or five-mile run of herself.

By the time she was in high school, she'd starved herself down to eighty pounds; her period had stopped, and doctors were concerned that she'd have a



A SNAPSHOT OF EVE

Eve's name, derived from the Hebrew word *chayah* ("to live"), means "source of life." God created her when Adam was without a companion by taking a rib from Adam's side and fashioning it into a woman. Though Eve plays a notable (and notorious) role in the human story, her name occurs only four times in the Bible.



DON'T TAKE THE BAIT

If you've ever gone fishing, you know that you won't catch anything if all you do is throw an empty hook in the water. Fish are smarter than that. If you want to catch a fish, you have to put some kind of bait on your hook.

Satan's lies are the bait he uses to catch us. James 1:14–15 exposes the tactics Satan uses to ensnare us. "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

Satan takes the things you desire and promises to fulfill those desires if you will simply reject God and ignore His Word. But he doesn't come right out and say, "Reject God and ignore His Word." Instead, he convinces you that doing something just once won't really hurt anything. Or that other people are finding happiness when they reject God. "And after all," he hisses, "doesn't God want you to be happy?"

When you take the bait, you've given birth to sin. Satan's goal is to use your own sin to destroy you (John 10:10). So the next time you're tempted to do something you know you shouldn't do, remember—there's a hook waiting for you. Don't take the bait.

heart attack. While she was getting treatment, she couldn't stand the weight she was gaining, though she was still considerably underweight. To punish herself, she stuck a rusty nail in her arm and left it there for days. By the time doctors discovered it, the infection had gotten so bad that they feared Caitlyn would lose her arm, if not her life.

That's not a pleasant story. But it illustrates something you need to understand: all Satan's lies are intended to destroy. This is easy to see when it comes to lies about our bodies and physical beauty. Many of them are an obvious invitation to self-destruction. And this brings us to an important and ironic Truth about his lies. They have no power. Not really. Not *without us*.

Sure, his lies are always tempting.

But that's where his power ends—*unless we cooperate*. You see, temptation can't burst into flames in your life unless you supply oxygen by believing and acting on Satan's lies. He can't take you down without your help.

Eve did a lot to help Satan in the garden. The Bible tells us that "the serpent was more crafty than any other

beast of the field that the LORD God had made” (Genesis 3:1). Eve was in a tough place, as you have undoubtedly found yourself at times when facing temptation. But she was not a helpless victim. Satan did not *make* her sin. She *chose* to cooperate with Satan in at least four ways.

EVE COOPERATED BY LISTENING TO SATAN’S LIES

The first mistake Eve made was one you and I are still prone to make. She stuck around long enough to listen to Satan’s sales pitch.

The progression to spiritual and emotional bondage begins by simply listening to something that’s not true. You don’t have to touch it, do it, agree with it, or even like it. You just have to be close enough to listen to the lie.

Caitlyn’s battle became more intense when she began to feast on fashion magazines. One day she was an athletic middle school student, and the next she was a fashion- and beauty-obsessed girl dying from an eating disorder.

Just as Eve began her progression toward destruction by listening to a lie, Caitlyn realized that the magazines contained food for thought about guys, friendships, and social issues that interested her. She used these articles to justify the sensual photographs of half-naked young women, pro-homosexual articles, and advice on sex. She thought, *It can’t hurt just to read them, right?* She cooperated with the Enemy by listening to what he had to say.

She should have run.

Eve should have run.

And you need to learn to run from anything that would send you in a direction that is contrary to God’s will for your life. In fact, God’s Word encourages us to do just that:

Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. (2 Timothy 2:22–23)

Flee. Get away from it. Run! Eve would have done well to simply stay away from the influence of the Serpent, just as you would do well to keep your distance from every cultural voice that seeks to tempt you. Eve *knew* she was not supposed to eat from the tree, so what was she doing hanging around it?


We know we're not supposed to lie, do drugs, have sex with multiple partners, or swear. So why do so many Christians binge on Netflix series that flaunt those themes? Why do they listen to and sing popular songs with unwholesome lyrics? Why do they flock to theatres to see a movie that has "just one little sex scene"?

We know we shouldn't have idols, spend excessive money, and be obsessed with physical beauty. So why spend hours envying celebrity fashion, obsess over putting together the perfect, Pinterest-worthy outfit, and spend an hour and a half working on your hair and face every morning?

Please, oh please, don't rub up against the temptation as Eve did. Don't cooperate with Satan by getting close enough to listen to his lies.

EVE COOPERATED BY DWELLING ON LIES

After Eve listened, she began to dwell on the lies Satan had planted in her mind. Rather than running, she struck up a conversation with the Serpent; she responded to his question:



**"We may eat of the fruit of the trees
in the garden, but God said,
You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree
that is in the midst of the garden,
neither shall you touch it, lest you die."**

(Genesis 3:2–3)

In the process, she not only distorted what God had said (we'll get to that), but she also began to dwell on what the Serpent had said.

In responding to the Serpent, Eve implied that God's restrictions were unreasonable, that He was withholding something good from them. That sounds awfully similar to what we imply when we dwell on lies rather than God's Truth. We begin to dwell on what God says we cannot have, rather than all the abundant gifts He's lavished on us.

What was the Truth?

The Truth was that God had said, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden" (Genesis 2:16)—except one.

The Truth is that God is a generous God.

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses stressed the importance of keeping God's commandments. Then he reminded the people that the heart behind those "rules" was not to be a burden or put them in a straitjacket. God intended His laws to be for their blessing and benefit: "The LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always" (v. 24)!

Do you believe that God is a generous God who has given His children “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3), by giving us the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ?

Or do you choose to dwell on the boundaries He has placed in your life, forgetting that those limits are for your protection?

Do you find yourself focusing on the forbidden rather than on God’s blessings?

It’s easy to do. The messages you are inundated with daily tell you that “you are worth it” and “you deserve it”—as if you’re not getting something you should. At the same time, they subconsciously tell you “you’re not beautiful” and “you’re not enough.” Is it any wonder that many of us struggle with the sense of entitlement that Eve found at the base of the tree, while at the same time being overwhelmed with a deep sense of self-loathing?

We cannot afford for a minute to lose focus on God’s goodness. Don’t cooperate with Satan by dwelling on his lies or on the limitations rather than the blessings God has put in your life.

EVE COOPERATED BY BELIEVING LIES RATHER THAN THE TRUTH OF GOD’S WORD

By *listening* to and *dwelling* on Satan’s lies, Eve began to *believe* the lies rather than what God had said. Satan led Eve to be careless with the words of God and to suggest that God had said something that He had not. God had said, “Do not *eat* the fruit of the tree.” However, Eve quoted God as saying, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you *touch* it” (Genesis 3:3 NKJV).

Clearly, Eve’s distortion of God’s Word was a weak link in her armor to stand against Satan’s enticement. After all, King David says, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). God’s Word is an essential part of our armor against Satan’s subtle attacks. Eve set herself up to sin when she dwelled on and started believing lies rather than the Truth of God’s Word.

Now, this one really makes us nervous. Why? Well, can we be frank? We’re concerned that a lot of you don’t even *know* Scripture.

Crunch!

Didn’t mean to step on your toes.

(Hey, we warned you that we were here to rescue you out of a burning house. Did you think we were going to talk about the weather?)

Most Christian teens today are too thoughtful to fall outright for alternative religions like Wicca, Buddhism, or Scientology. But many in

your generation fall for something equally dangerous called *syncretism*—the fusion of two or more belief systems. For example, a teen may be a practicing Christian who utilizes New Age meditation and ancient forms of meditative Sanskrit Yoga to find peace. This is a fusion of two incompatible belief systems.

More than any other generation, you are exposed to many different worldviews through social media and the Internet. The good news is that it makes you more understanding and compassionate. The bad news is that, in general, today's teens merge Christian beliefs with opposing worldviews, often without being aware of the conflict. This can lead to potentially deadly lies infiltrating your mind and emotions.

It's so important that you listen to what God is saying to you over what the world is saying. You don't have to search mystically for His voice. He wrote it down for you! You must constantly filter everything you hear and believe through God's Word, especially if you're being exposed to the many false worldviews promoted on social media.

If your generation is going to win the battle Satan is waging against it, it will begin with *you* hiding His Word in your heart and being able to speak it accurately to those who are parroting Satan's lies in our culture. If you aren't filling your mind and heart with God's Truth, you will end up believing Satan's lies. And what you believe (not what you *say* you believe, but what you *really* believe) will determine the way that you *live*. Eve found that out the hard way.

EVE COOPERATED BY ACTING ON SATAN'S LIES

She ate the fruit.

YOU MIGHT
YOU MIGHT
YOU MIGHT

find yourself skipping class or grumbling at your mom.
be prone to lying or looking at porn.
overeat or starve yourself.

Doesn't matter how you act out; every sin in our lives begins with a lie. First, we *listen* to the lie. Then we *dwell* on it. Then we begin to *believe* it, and before long we're *acting* on it. Eventually, those sinful behaviors become a pattern in our lives and we find ourselves in *bondage*—feeling trapped by things we thought would make us happy and free.

After almost a decade, Caitlyn is still in bondage—still acting out on the lies she believes about herself. Her battle with anorexia and bulimia hasn't ended, at least not how we'd like to see it end. She's tried physicians' recommendations, years of counseling, antidepressants, and even months



THE PROGRESSION OF **EVE'S LIE**

Eve listened to a lie.

She got close to the Serpent and entertained his suggestion.

Eve dwelled on the lie.

She conversed with him and considered what he said.

Eve believed the lie.

She believed the Serpent's promise was more trustworthy than what God had said.


Eve acted on the lie.

She ate the fruit.

of confinement in the psychiatric ward of a hospital. Nothing has helped. We believe she's missing one vital element.

TRUTH.

Kelly is another friend whose battle with anorexia has had a different outcome. One day she was seated in her counselor's office talking yet again about the depression that seemed to swallow her up on the days that she succumbed to not eating. The counselor told her she needed to stop cooperating with the lies and start choosing to saturate her mind with Truth. Kelly recalls how the light went on in her mind at that moment:

 *You mean I'm choosing this? I can choose to feel differently? If I spend some time retraining my mind with Truth, I might actually win this battle?*

Kelly took some actions that very day that enabled her to stop cooperating with Satan's lies and to start countering those lies with the Truth. She did not experience complete victory overnight. Far from it—she had to wage a tough and long battle. At times, she still feels a pull to be overly focused on food. But she has been experiencing freedom from her eating disorder for thirteen years now!

What did she do?

What can you do to overcome the lies that are putting you in bondage?



We'd like to show you in the next chapter.