

Fake news has been around for a long time. If you don't think so, then listen to this. June 24, 1899 was a slow news day in Denver. Four newspaper reporters were hanging around the railroad station hoping to see an incoming celebrity or hear something they could turn into a story for the Sunday papers. No luck. So they headed over to a local bar for a drink when Al Stevens, one of the reporters suggested that they invent a story and turn it in to be published.

They all agreed it would have to be a foreign story that couldn't be easily verified. So they wrote: "A group of American engineers stopped over in Denver last night in route to China to submit a bid on tearing down the Great Wall." Why? An act of good will to signify the new openness of China to the world. The wall would be replaced by a 1,500 mile highway. All four wrote up their own version of the story. The hoax was published on Sunday and spread to Europe and even China. People believed the U.S. was sending an envoy to dismantle the Great Wall.

We live in a world full of lies. Wouldn't it be great if every liar were like Pinocchio and their nose grew longer every time they told a lie. But that doesn't happen in real life. We are warned continuously to be aware of scams we receive on the internet or over the phone. I have no idea how many phone numbers or email addresses I have blocked in the last year or so, but there are a lot of them. Former IRS agent John Szilagyi did enough tax return audits to know that many Americans inflated the number of dependents so they would get a larger tax return. So he suggested that tax payers be required to list their children's Social Security numbers. When the policy was implemented in 1986, 7 million dependents disappeared.

In 1966 Time Magazine's cover asked "Is God Dead?" In 2017 Time asked "Is Truth Dead?" Not a big surprise, is it? As soon as we remove God from the picture, truth is going to follow God out the door. We are now living in a time when truth is considered relative. People tells us, "What's true for you may not be true for me." "You have your truth. I have mine." Even the so called fact checkers in our news media don't always tell the truth.

So how do we deal with or overcome lies? The Apostle Paul tells us, "Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness." (Ephesians 6:14 NLT) Paul tells Christians to put on the whole armor of God to resist the Devil and evil. Even though a belt is not a weapon, it held the weapons for a Roman soldier in Paul's Day. The belt was an essential for a soldier. They couldn't go into battle without their belt.

The Bible warns us about the danger of lies and deceptions. Satan deceived Eve and she disobeyed God by eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Proverbs tells us that God hates a lying tongue and a false witness who lies. (Proverbs 6:17,19) Jesus tells us this about the Devil. "He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44 NLT) People have certainly bought into Satan's lies. How many people believe that there is no God or that if

there is a God then He doesn't care about them and He is detached from their lives? How many people believe there are no moral absolutes and that each person decides for themselves what is right. When the people tried that at the time of the Judges in the Old Testament, there was total chaos in Israel.

Lies can be deceptive. (Play "Truth vs Deception" Sermon Spice video)

The only way to overcome lies is with the truth. So what is truth? God is called "The God of Truth" (Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16) in the Old Testament. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus is "full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). Jesus said that He is "The way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6) So truth is not a system or a philosophy. Truth is Jesus. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26) and guides God's people to the truth (John 16:13).

God gives us the belt of truth to combat deception. A belt doesn't do any good if we don't wear it. So what should we do?

1. First, we need to know and study God's Word. How are we every going to recognize the lies we hear unless we know the truth revealed to us in God's Word. Are you involved in regularly reading and studying God's Word? If not, why not? We can make time for many other things. It's a lie that we don't have enough time to read and study God's Word. Since Jesus knew and used God's Word to overcome temptations, and we are not Jesus, shouldn't we do the same thing.
2. Next, we need to act on the truth and live out the truth. We can't distort the truth and change God's Word so that we believe the lies that say God wants us to be rich or that God wants us to be happy. God wants us to be rich in His grace. He warns us that people who are rich in this life have a hard time trusting in Him for eternal life. God wants us to be filled with the joy that comes from knowing, loving and following Him. This life is not about happiness. It is about our relationship with God. God wants to change us to become more like Him. We can't make God to be more like us.
3. Knowing the truth and living in the truth leads us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We can't comprise God's Word or try to spin it to make it more acceptable. Speaking the truth in love means loving all people as people loved and given life by God. It means respecting them even when we don't agree with them. It means accepting them even when they disobey God's commands. But remember acceptance is not approval. Parents love their kids even when they do things that are wrong. That doesn't mean they approve of them.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor who sentence Jesus to death on a cross, didn't recognize the truth when Jesus was standing right in front of Him. So Pilate asked, "What is truth?"

Jesus is the truth and tells us, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32 NLT)