Let me just be completely honest and tell you that in my lifetime I’ve told my fair share of lies. This is hard for me to admit because I don’t consider myself a liar and yet I know that it is true. When I was fifteen, I heard there was a job opening for two people, driving an ice cream truck called the Jolly Roger. They not only sold ice cream bars but soft serve as well. I really wanted that job. The only problem was I didn’t have a driver’s license. I interviewed for the job and told the owner of the truck I didn’t have a license but that my cousin did, and he was also looking for a job. The owner said, “If your cousin wants the job, I will hire you both.” The only problem is that while Wes had a driver’s license, he didn’t know how to drive a manual 4-speed transmission. I didn’t have a license, but I knew how to drive a 4-speed stick shift. So I told Wes there was no way the owner would ever know it was me driving the truck so we took the job. But the first night of our shift the owner showed up to see us off. The truck was parked on a hill, so Wes got behind the wheel and pushed in the clutch, which allowed the truck to coast down to the bottom of the hill, out of the sight of our employer. Once we got to the bottom of the hill, I slid into the driver’s seat and drove the rest of the shift. We only had that job for about a month before the owner let us go (we kept eating all the profits), but he never had a clue that we had lied to him about who was driving. If we had the time, I could give you several other examples of times I’ve lied for my own selfish benefit. I’m not a compulsive liar or an embezzler or a thief, but there have certainly been times in the past I’ve been less than honest when I found it convenient. But before you judge me too harshly, I believe most people have told a lie of one type or another. Maybe you twisted the truth to keep from hurting someone or misled an individual to achieve something you wanted or exaggerated or embellished a story to look good. While you might not define yourself a liar, I would imagine we’ve all been guilty at one time or another. We are in a series of messages called Creatures of Habit based on my new book by the same name. Guys our lives are a culmination of habits, good or bad, and it’s important to understand those habits will become a part of our identity or reputation. If you always tell the truth people will think of you as a person of integrity, but if you are always complaining, then people will identify you as a complainer. When you invited Christ into your life, he set you free from sin’s hold which gave you the power to say no to sin. But you still have to take the necessary steps to break those bad habits. If you ignore them, they will keep you from God’s best and turn into addictions or strongholds. Of course some habits are worse than others but I feel like lying is near the top of the list. Unfortunately, in the world we live today most people don’t think of lying as that big of a deal. I mean come on it’s a part of life, right? Why get upset when someone exaggerates, fabricates, misrepresents, or tells a little white lie? I mean we live in a day where we’ve all been bombarded with falsified resumes, overstated ads, fake news, loopholes, and cover-ups. We see it everywhere from politics, to the internet to social media. Pamela Meyer, author of *Liespotting*, claimed in her TED Talk that we’re facing a pandemic of deception. She says we are lied to between 10 and 200 times a day. You might remember the movie ‘Something’s Gotta Give’, There’s a scene where Diane Keaton catches the man she loves, whose played by Jack Nicholson, out on a date with another woman. She runs out of the restaurant with Jack Nicholson chasing after her. When he finally stops her, he pleads, “I have never lied to you, I have always told you some version of the truth.” She replies, “The truth doesn’t have versions!” Guys… the truth doesn’t have versions! And yet it’s become so common for people to only mention the parts of the truth that they feel are acceptable or that they think people want to hear, leaving the full truth hidden away… which basically creates an untruth. Several years ago, the Leo Burnett advertising agency did a telephone survey on lying. The results were 91% percent of those interviewed said they regularly lied. 79% had given out false phone numbers or invented new identities when meeting strangers on airplanes. And 20% admitted they couldn’t get through 1 day without going along with a previously manufactured lie. And can you guess what we lie about the most? Our weight! And yet I find that ironic because your weight is the one thing that you can’t conceal! Years ago, I had a business partner who was extremely heavy. We were at an airline counter buying tickets for a short flight on a small prop plane. The ticket agent asked each of us how much we weighed. When my friend gave his weight, I knew it wasn’t true. I turned towards him and said, “Buddy, now is not the time to lie about your weight!” In that same survey it said that money is the second most common thing we lie about, and the third thing is our age. I read a story about a woman who introduced her 35-year-old daughter as 24. Later the girl asked her mother why she had lied about her age. The mother said, “I realized I had been lying about my own age for so long that I would have to lie about your age for it to make any sense!” Teachers expect to hear “My dog ate my homework.” Policemen expect to hear “My speedometer is off.” But Christians listen… God hates lying. In fact Proverbs 6 lists 7 things God hates. Proverbs 6:16-19NLT. Two of the 7 things refer to lying! Why is God so opposed to lying? Because it’s so contrary to his nature. Look at how Jesus described his character. John 14:6 NIV. He didn’t say, “I speak truth.” He said, “I *am* truth.” In other words, he didn’t conform to some standard of truth—he *is* the standard. It’s not that God has decided not to lie, he can’t lie because anything he says will come into being, even if it didn’t exist before he said it. And so as children of God we are called to exemplify Christ by making truth a priority. On the other hand, when it comes to the devil, Jesus said, John 8:44NLT. I’ve heard it said that “a man is never more like the Devil than when he’s telling a lie.” In Proverbs 12:22NIV. It’s important to understand that lying can come in many different forms. (Deception) Mark Twain was right when he said, (The difference between a person who tells the truth and tells a lie is that the liar has got to have a better memory.) Lies paint you into a corner because you now have to live in this false little world you’ve created. You have to keep track of every lie you told and who you told it to. Paul says, Ephesians 4:25NLT. Healthy relationships are built on trust. A husband lies to his wife when he tells her he’s working late but actually goes to the bar with his buddies. She finds out that he’s lied, and instantly that foundation of trust in their relationship has been damaged. She starts to wonder if she can trust anything, he has ever told her. And while they can work out their troubles, it may take months if not years to reestablish that same level of trust they once shared before this one lie crushed her spirit. What’s ironic about deception is that we will actually tell a lie because we want people to think the best of us. The check is in the mail, leave your resume and we will keep it on file, open wide it won’t hurt! Whenever or however, we distort the truth, it’s a lie. (Gossip) It’s become entertainment in our culture, we love to hear and spread gossip! You hear it in homes, around the office, at parties, on social media, and in the tabloids, we consider it innocent fun. But it’s not innocent fun to the one who is hurt by it. It used to be you could count on the press to fact check everything they printed… those days are gone. Accusations or hearsay are shared without any proof or evidence, often destroying people’s credibility and lives. You hear people say things like, “I probably shouldn’t tell you, but I know it won’t go any further . . .” Unfortunately, many Christians spread gossip packaged as a prayer request: “I’m only telling you this so you will pray . . .” Friends, no matter how spiritual you try to make it sound, when you repeat gossip it’s wrong. Years ago, there was a rumor in the newspaper that the Great American Writer Mark Twain had died. Twain responded back to the editor of the paper by saying, “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.” Most of us are like the guy who said, “I just want my friends to know it’s not me who starts all of those rumors . . . it’s the people I tell them to!” (The cheater) When a student cheats on a test, he is lying to his teacher. When a salesperson writes down more expenses than he incurred, he is lying to his employer. When someone falsifies expenses on his tax return, he is lying to the government. (Flattery) This is when you tell someone what you think will make him feel good to gain an advantage for yourself. Most people are wise to it, but it’s easy to fall for this type of deception. (Exaggeration) This is when you overstate the truth to look good or to convince someone to do something you want. Maybe you’re upset with a neighbor, so you say to him, “I think you need to know that all the neighbors are upset about this.” Or you overstate your experience on your resume or hyperbolize what someone has done to you. To exaggerate takes the truth and turns it into an untruth. (Silence) Maybe you hear something that you know is not true, but you remain silent. You argue, “I didn’t lie to you; I just didn’t tell you.” While you may not have told them an outright lie, but by purposely leaving out important information, you’ve misled them. To know the truth and not speak up is a form of lying; it’s complicity by passivity. “Why didn’t you tell me you were married?” “You didn’t ask!” In my case the owner of the ice cream truck believed Wes was driving, and I didn’t tell him otherwise. Since he didn’t ask, I didn’t tell. I remained silent and allowed him to believe an untruth. And I didn’t feel any guilt because I justified in my mind that I had not lied to him. But my failure to tell my employer that I was driving could have caused a serious problem. If I would have had an accident—or worse yet run over a child—my employer as well as my parents could have been held responsible for something they didn’t even know was going on. Leaving out significant facts starts a habit of silent deception. #8 Broken Promises Deut. 23:21NLT. We don’t think about breaking a promise as a lie, but it is. Whether it’s a promise to pay a debt, or a promise to take your kids to the zoo, or a promise to be faithful to your spouse, when you don’t keep your word, it’s a lie. I heard one person define integrity as doing what you say you’re going to do. God tells us not to bear false witness, to be people of truth, to be honest to the core, and to always do what you say you’re going to do. There’s an old saying I’m sure you’ve heard: honesty is the best policy. The reason everyone has heard it is because it’s a true statement. While some habits are worse than others, I believe lying is right up there at the top. If we ignore it, it will become a habit and begin to feel more comfortable than telling the truth. Lying is destructive and will eventually lead to painful consequences. It will hinder your personal as well as your spiritual development. And it will cause you to fall short of God’s plan for your life. Listen, every destructive habit leads to painful consequences. And yet I think out of all of the chapters if we don’t break this habit of lying… none of the others will matter. To have someone call you a liar feels very offensive. We quickly declare that we are not a liar, and we have several excuses as to why we had to tell that lie. And yet guys once we’re in the habit of telling lies, we will then become known as a liar. So the first thing you need to do is Own it, admit that lying has become a problem for you. Mark Twain once said, (A man is never more truthful than when he acknowledges himself a liar.) Let’s look at 6 steps you can take to break this habit in your life. Step 1: Do Damage Control. Once you take responsibility for lying, then you need to confess it to God. After all, he has heard every lie you’ve ever told. And I would start each day by asking God to give you the strength to always tell the truth. And then I would also ask God to show you if there has been someone you’ve misled lately or some deception that still needs to be addressed. If there is, then I would go to those people and make it right. Decide from this day forward if you ever tell a lie, you will go back and admit it to the person you deceived. “I just need to restate something I said to you earlier that was not exactly truthful.” “I need you to know that I misspoke when I explained that to you earlier.” I know this is hard and humbling but making this commitment will cause you to think twice before you tell another lie. Step 2: Tame the Tongue.Scripture has a lot to say about our speech, most of it about the need to control it. If you genuinely want God’s best in your life, honesty is not just the best policy—it’s the only policy that will honor God. 1 Peter 3:10 NLT. As I’ve already pointed out, your tongue is a significant player in your walk with the Lord. James 3:2-4NLT. We need to control our tongues. Step 3: Speak the truth lovingly. While some people are very honest, they are also insensitive to people’s feelings. Love has got to be our filter—love for God and love for others. It’s like the fourth-grade class that sent a card to the teacher, who had been absent recovering from a surgery. They said, “Dear Ms. Fisher, your fourth-grade class wishes you a speedy recovery by a vote of 15–14.” The problem with children is not that they are too honest, it’s that they just haven’t learned to speak the truth in love. Listen at the end of the day, people may not remember what you said, and they might forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel. Step 4: Develop Accountability. Listen if no one is holding you accountable, it’s easy to fall back into the same old pattern of deception. You see, accountability and execution are linked. Accountability provides you with guardrails to keep you on the road to recovery. So find a friend who is willing to hold you accountable, someone who is willing to ask you the tough questions, Have you lied to anyone this week, have you exaggerated? Have you misled anyone? Step 5: Understand the Pressure to lie. There are several things that can make us feel pressure to lie. So ask yourself, “Why is this situation so important to me that I’m willing to lie about it?” Addicts often feel the pressure to lie to cover their addiction. People afraid of not being liked, or not wanting to disappoint someone feel a pressure to lie. Regardless of what it is that’s causing you to lie, in the end it will bite you if you don’t stop. Step 6: Practice Integrity. Jesus told the parable of the shrewd manager and then said, Luke 16:10NLT. If you’re going to break this habit of lying, you have to be truthful in every area of your life. Decide that you’re going to be a person of integrity. Again guys, regardless what our culture thinks, lying is a problem and God hates it. So decide this bad habit stops today! Pray!