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Few things deliver a more destabilizing jolt to your consciousness than realizing you have been lied to. Moreover, you've been deceived. The more prolonged and more consequential the deception, the more unnerving the revelation becomes. When faced with this reality, people respond in various ways. Learning of deception often thrusts an individual into a myriad of emotions and psychological responses.

Being lied to incite feelings of betrayal and hurt. The emotional disorientation leaves the individual questioning their judgment and the authenticity of their interactions with those they unworthily trusted. This betrayal casts shadows of doubt not only on past interactions but may also lead to challenges in developing future healthy trust relationships. *"Can I trust the veracity of what this person is telling me?"* they wonder. To prevent the emotional embarrassment, psychological harm, and, in many cases, the financial consequences of their previous misplaced trust, an individual devastated by the discovery of a lie may retreat into reclusiveness, presuming that a life of solitude or isolation might be more tolerable than the risk of trusting once again.

For some, the psychological burden of acknowledging deception is too great a price to pay. Consequently, they find it easier to never acknowledge the reality. It is sometimes more palatable for them to continue with the bliss of

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deceit than to do the hard work of recovering from it. If the relationship with the trusted one who lied to them is significant enough and the benefits that the relationship offered are substantial enough, a person may choose to move forward as if the deceit never happened in the first place. Only the individual lied to can determine how they will proceed after the discovery. Once your eyes have been opened, you cannot unlearn what has been learned consciously. You'll either deny its existence or manage the consequences.

There are some things that God never wanted us to experience. Chief among them is the knowledge of evil. When He created Adam and Eve, He gave specific instructions saying, "*You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but 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*" (Gen. 2:16-17). Certainly, God wanted us to know good. In fact, after each thing that He created, the Bible says He acknowledged and established it as "good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). After creating mankind, God introduced man and woman to the good that He created. Of all the good God created, there was only one thing that man could not consume: fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

It wasn't that God didn't want man to know good; rather, He didn't want us to know evil. There is a certain bliss in ignorance. But an aspiration inherently resident within mankind compels him to be God, or at least god-like. The serpent in the Garden of Eden exploited this vulnerability to tempt the woman and the man, saying, "*God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*" (Gen. 3:5). You and I don't have an insatiable desire to know evil; most of us would rather close our eyes to it and deny its existence. However, the temptation to be like God was sufficient to compel the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

Since that day, humankind has sought to acquire the power and control that has always been and should permanently reside in the hands of the omnipotent God. Even if we've chosen not to aspire toward omnipotence, from childhood, we all want to maintain an element of control over ourselves

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and often others. Most are just not honest enough to admit it. Frequently, that power is either obtained or exhibited through the tool of deception.

Deceit is the concealment or misrepresentation of truth. John 8:32 reminds us that the truth is made available to us and that it has liberating power. It is the truth that sets us free. Therefore, the implication is that we will remain bound without the truth. Thus, it can be surmised that the one who conceals or misrepresents the truth seeks to oppress. Oppression is a tool of hatred used to acquire and maintain power or control. Make no mistake about it: one who deceives you does not seek your liberty, despite their claims to the contrary. Rather, they seek to subjugate you indefinitely. Or at least until the truth sets you free.

Over the past ten years, the scales of deceit have gradually been lifted from my eyes. Now that I see clearly the deception perpetrated against the people of God for centuries, it becomes my charge to share the message with all who will hear and receive the liberating truth of the Gospel.

The Call

For most of my adult life, I paid little attention, if any, to current political affairs. I believed that as a citizen of the Kingdom of God, the world's affairs had little application to me. More importantly, politics held no eternal consequence or benefit for me. So, I paid little attention until the 2004 presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry. I vividly recall watching one of the presidential debates in which Bush was asked a question similar to ***“What do you say to your critics who say that you are only interested in pandering to the rich and large corporations?”*** Bush remained silent about the question, shrugged his shoulders, and donned a look on his face, which seemed to reflect the sentiment, ***“I know which side my bread is buttered on.”***

Why that moment was so poignant to me at the time was not clear. However, it did strike me as curious that an individual who vociferously professed

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to be Christian would be blatantly biased toward the rich; in so doing, he'd forsake the poor. For the first time, I considered whether my faith should instruct my political position. This was obviously not a novel concept for many, as each year, one of the political parties seemed to strategically enlist the support of a group of religious leaders. In fact, it appeared that it didn't require much effort to secure their allegiance. Still, even recognizing this, I remained unenlightened about a ploy that evil spiritual forces devised to ensnare a gaggle of Christians.

It wouldn't be until the 2008 presidential election, Obama vs. McCain, that it would more substantively inform my vote. I listened intently to the two candidates' platform promises and evaluated which resonated most loudly with me. From that point forward, I determined that my vote would be given to the candidate who most closely matched my Christian values. What I didn't realize was that others did the same thing. However, their values were prioritized differently than mine. This realization kept me from becoming intolerant of those who professed the same faith in Jesus Christ that I did but who had political positions that varied from mine. It seemed innocent enough at that point. After the historic election of Barack Obama as the first African American president of the United States, I celebrated this feat that seemed up to that moment to be impossible. And into the recesses of my cerebrum went any consideration of political discourse until 2012.

The presidential primary season of 2012 was the first time I actually paid much attention to the primary candidates and how they differed. It was clear that Barack Obama would be the Democratic nominee, but who would the Republicans rally behind? For a period of time, I was stunned by the possibility that the nominee might be yet another African American man, Herman Cain. Imagine, a Black man born in Memphis, Tennessee, and reared in Georgia, who was a graduate of Morehouse College and the CEO of Godfather's Pizza, could actually be the Republican nominee for president running against the first Black president of the United States. That I loved Godfather's Pizza was simply icing on the cake. My mind was literally blown! Could this possibly be in

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America? Could it be that the glass ceiling for Black people in America had finally been irrevocably shattered?

My enthusiasm was soon quelled when Cain announced the suspension of his campaign amid sexual harassment allegations. Assuming the favored position and eventually clinching the nomination was a Mormon, a purportedly moral man named Mitt Romney. Reverberating around the Republican public sphere was the mantra, “Character Matters.” I agreed! The lack of moral turpitude should be disqualifying for any leader who seeks the highest office in the land. As much as I was disappointed by the suspension of the Cain campaign (admittedly, primarily for proud racial reasons), I understood the necessity of it.

Republicans proceeded to capitalize on the “Character Matters” campaign, shunning the Obama administration’s efforts to advance civil rights protections for homosexuals. Perhaps most offensive to many conservative Republicans was a decision Obama and the Attorney General made to no longer enforce the Defense of Marriage Act’s (DOMA) provision that defined the existence of marriage as only between a man and a woman. This eventually led to the Supreme Court’s landmark decisions holding the Act unconstitutional. Infuriated by this seeming attack on morality, as defined by conservatives, Republicans became even more allied to the “Character Matters” mantra. The campaigns and political discourses revolved around the “assault” that Obama and Democrats had allegedly launched on Christian values. Despite the valiant effort to defeat Obama, Romney and conservatives would succumb to the monumental task of persuading Americans that their way was the righteous way.

Again, I agreed that character and morality mattered. Much like my conservative brothers and sisters, I was personally displeased by some of President Obama’s and elected Democrats’ socially liberal policies. I remained pleased that Republicans had still held their ground, insisting that leaders should at least set the moral temperature for the country and, more importantly, reflect it. This optimism persisted until 2016 when it became apparent that Donald Trump would be the forerunner and eventual Republican nominee.

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While I had no consternation about most secular individuals pledging their support for him, I was confounded by White Evangelicals' overwhelming allegiance to Donald Trump. Only four years earlier, they were devoted to the "Character Matters" narrative. Their commitment was so resolute at that time that they abandoned their support for Herman Cain for sexual harassment allegations, which were fewer in number than Donald Trump's. Worse yet, Donald Trump's past and current moral turpitude became increasingly evident as the campaign progressed. It seemed that the worse he behaved, the greater support he gained. This fidelity was evident also to Donald Trump himself, who suggested that he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and not lose a single supporter, not even an Evangelical. This type of inscrutable loyalty seemed to embolden him to be even more offensive in his campaigning.

Several racially offensive comments were repeated and defended by Donald Trump, in addition to a barrage of accusations of sexual harassment, misogyny, and a long history of unscrupulous business practices. Still, none of it seemed to dampen the enthusiasm for his candidacy. *"How could this be?"* I thought to myself. How is it that a man as marred as Donald Trump could secure the endorsement of evangelicals – religious leaders, well-versed in scripture and well-established in their ministerial calling? How is it that this support could be unassuaged by even an admission by Trump that he had never asked God for forgiveness – a claim that he doubled down on in a subsequent interview when he was given a second bite at the apple? I was dumbfounded!

At this moment, God opened my eyes to see the appeal. The "Character Matters" approach in the past had failed them, and they perceived that the values they held dearly were severely threatened by the prospect of another four years of Democratic control of the Congress and/or White House. This was coupled with the promise by Donald Trump to appoint conservative judges to federal courts and, most importantly, the Supreme Court of the United States. He understood the colossal priority that evangelicals placed on overturning the *Roe vs. Wade* ruling. Finally, conservatives and evangelicals had someone who offered the promise of the golden egg conservatives have sought for decades. While others have promised in the past, their exercise of diplomacy and

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subscription to the “give a little to get a little” ideology rendered them a less reliable choice. In Trump, they found a bull in a china shop who was willing to do whatever was necessary to win.

It soon made perfect sense to me. Donald Trump's bravado was not repulsive, as one would have presumed. Instead, it seemed to attract even religious leaders who would never muster the courage to speak such profanities or vulgarities. Donald Trump became the mouthpiece and the muscle for conservative evangelicals. He had given voice and strength to a group of people who felt they had been ignored and bullied for decades.

At that time, I served as a worship leader and elder at a wonderfully diverse church. Unbeknownst to me, many evangelical pastors had determined that they would become much more affirmative in their support for Donald Trump's candidacy, even if it meant risking backlash from their congregations. In their minds, the stakes were too high, and the opportunity was too promising for them to allow this moment to pass. To reassure them of their passionate support for Trump, many referred to prophecies that either directly mentioned that Trump would become president, vaguely referenced him peripherally, or incompletely defined his character. Armed with this conviction, they threw their full-throated support to ensure Trump would become the 45th president of the United States. My pastor was one of them.

I recall a Facebook post my pastor made asserting that our vote in the 2016 presidential election would be a direct reflection of how our hearts and values aligned with God's. Although the assertion troubled me initially, I was reassured by the belief that each political party is imperfect but also has some platform goals that mirror Christian principles. I moved on and gave it no additional thought until election week.

On Sunday, two days before election day, my pastor made a bold proclamation from the pulpit. He said, ***“This year, there's only one Godly candidate. The guy I voted for would do well if he just keeps his mouth shut.”*** It became immediately evident to this diverse congregation who he thought was the “godly” candidate, as there was only one male: Donald

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Trump. The message was also heard loud and clear by other congregants of this diverse church. The message was unmistakable that my pastor thinks: 1) Donald Trump is either godly or a godly choice, 2) Hillary Clinton is an ungodly option, and if I vote for her, I am making an ungodly choice, and/or 3) If I vote for Clinton then my heart and values do not align with God's. Needless to say, this disrupted the peace within the congregation. As much as 40% of the congregation likely disagreed with his assessment and certainly disapproved of his public proclamation.

Over the ensuing days, and after Donald Trump won the election, I received numerous calls from congregants who were hurt by and angry at the accusation of their pastor. As an elder, I was charged with the duty of helping to maintain peace in the congregation. It became necessary that I speak with the pastor. During a very memorable and heated conversation with the pastor about his accusation, I finally realized just how passionate and committed to the cause of Pro-life policy many evangelicals are. With unyielding conviction, he shouted at me, "I cannot vote for someone who believes in killing babies!" At that moment, my eyes were opened. My confusion was resolved. I accepted that this noble, but still carnal (expounded upon later) cause is righteous to many, and to them, it was worthy of great sacrifice.

From that moment on, the Lord began revealing to me how a great deception that seeks to ensnare Christians and eventually help usher in the persecution Jesus foretold would befall Christians. By no means do I suggest that the deception is exclusive to evangelicals. It is a deception that seeks to entrap all Christians regardless of political persuasions. However, it has its strongest hold on the group of Christians who identify as "Evangelical."

From the time of Donald Trump's nomination as the Republican presidential candidate until this date, the Lord placed a prophetic burden on me to open the eyes of the blind. I knew that the fulfillment of this mandate would potentially cause friction with my pastor, especially if I remained in a leadership role as an elder and certainly in the visible role as a worship leader. I greatly respected my pastor for never asking me to refrain from the public

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rebuke, which I believe God charged me to make. While I personally felt he had no real authority to make such a demand, I knew it was his strong preference that I stopped. Consequently, I voluntarily stepped down from my positions and, to this day, continue to speak the word I believe God instructs.

Rebuke and Reprove

Admittedly, as my quest began, I saw a more political bent to my admonishments. But that was because of my perception. Our experiences and limited knowledge often influence perceptions. As more revelation comes, perception evolves. In hindsight, and as God revealed more of the deception to me, it became clear that politics was merely one tool of the deceiver. If permitted, he would use that tool to keep my eyes and the eyes of those who would otherwise hear closed. The more I matured, the less politically influenced my understanding became. Because of my transformation, I can clearly understand why those I pray would hear the message might initially reject it. Political persuasions have become so pervasive that they demand, in many cases, absolute allegiance and dismissal of anyone who does not align with its precepts. *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear”* (Matt. 11:15).

Since 2016, as the Lord provided revelation pertaining to the deception of Christians, I posted it on social media, most often on Facebook. There are many criticisms that can be offered for the dissemination of these truths through this media. Perhaps it is not the most effective mechanism, but it is the method I believe God instructed me to use – at least until the writing of this book. Often, the posts would be long and perhaps more appropriately referred to as a blog. It seemed that only a few people would bother to read it. At times, I wondered if and was even advised that it might be more palatable if they were recorded in a video. Certainly, I would reach more people this way. However, this method was not the instruction God gave me. At the time, I didn't understand why. It seemed that the more people that would see these warnings, the more they would likely heed them. But the Lord said, “No.”