

# ***Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life***

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## **Wrecking Ball**

What are the hard Truths that you are tempted to trade out for lies? (Can't think of one, start with love your enemies...)

What is the essential quality of that piece of Truth that you resist? (For example, my enemy is evil and I can't accept that...)

How does a redefinition of your life's purpose as the perfect expression of God in creation change how you approach that piece of truth? (Maybe, God created my enemy, He wants to bring out some good, what would accomplish that...)

**1 John 3:7-8** – <sup>7</sup>Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup>Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

### **I) Deny Deception...**

We know Jesus came to give life. It's easy to narrowly define this. Adventure, peace and prosperity, longevity. Each of these may be part of a full life, but they are unessential. The essence of life is knowledge of Truth. Everyone, no matter physical and mental ability, interests, or access to resources, can know and live according to Truth. But life is not inert, something passively happened upon. We must choose it, pursue it, actively live it in our hearts and minds. Once we have it, we defend it by denying deception. Being the person you want to be, your best self, begins by knowing who you are.

◆ **Do the work**: Our defense against deception is the Truth. Jesus revealed it to us through His life. God made us, loves us, is faithful to His promises, and is working to restore us into His image. Those of us attracted to this Truth, wanting to live our best lives, are instructed

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to “let no one deceive you (1 John 3:7).” This presumes that some will try to deceive us. There are two forms of deception. One is misleading someone ignorant of the Truth. An ignorant person may study a ruse and still be deceived because it does not violate any known Truth. That is not this. The second form is to convince one who knows the Truth to give it up. We are instructed to hold onto the Truth we have whatever may be offered in exchange. This requires knowing it sufficiently that we do not ignorantly give away a piece of it. Now that we have the Truth, it is ours to defend.

◆ **Be true to yourself:** Biblical knowledge is a lived experience rather than an intellectual grasp of things. An undeceived life is one that conforms to the will of God by exercising faith that He will do as He has promised. It necessitates faith because the obedient life is impossible without divine participation. In this way, we speak ourselves into being what we already are rather than something less. We become one of the righteous because “everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous (v7).” The act is impossible without belief in the deeper Truth that, like Jesus, we can live as children of God because **we are** children of God.

## II) Sins of Omission...

We tend to think about sin as doing wrong. Lying, cheating, stealing. Acts of commission in which we willingly do what we shouldn't. That overlooks the first sin, which is an act of omission. The text instructs us to “let no one deceive you (v7).” Only after we let Truth corrupt will we act according to the deception that we are not subject to the will of God. Every moral failing originates with some deception. We aren't strong enough, wrong is more satisfying than right, others are less than ourselves, God doesn't really care. All lies that originate with the devil. Our sin starts with believing him.

◆ **Be responsible:** Once deceived, we want to think of ourselves as victims cruelly harmed by a trickster. That would be the case if we had suffered the first form of deceit due to our ignorance. But that's not our situation. We have been shown the Truth through the Gospel of Jesus. We are not defenseless victims unable to distinguish Truth from lie. When we are deceived, we are responsible for choosing to give up the Truth. It is a choice. We give into the temptation to believe creation—either ourselves as created beings or some other created thing—is worthy of worship and glory independent of God. “Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil (v8),” because we choose to believe his word over that of the Heavenly Father.

◆ **Like father, like child:** We pattern our lives after our parents. When we believe we are children of God, we act like Jesus because He is the Son of God and calls us brothers and sisters. This is hard because the world does not know us as children of God. Day after day we are treated poorly and provoked to act unbecoming a child of God—contrary to His will. When we give in and corrupt our knowledge of Truth, we follow the pattern of Satan, “for the devil has been sinning from the beginning (v8).” The source of all our trouble is our refusal to defend Truth.

## III) Demolition Time...

Deception works by altering how we understand the world and our place in it. Everything we think, say, and do is oriented around that understanding and pursues its end. Emotional happiness, peace and prosperity, power and glory. Fickle, temporal achievements requiring further delusions like the relative worthiness of others. When we accept Truth, that life is godliness and its purpose is to be His expression in creation, suddenly everything we had thought, said, and did appear as they are: counterproductive. We start to tear them down and rebuild ourselves in the power of Jesus.

◆ **Jesus's mission:** Jesus's life, death, and resurrection reveal Truth perfectly. Knowing Him is to know ourselves as His Father does. Our full potential and fit within the cosmos. Out of this Truth flow knowledge of our sin, our desire to be forgiven, the path to restoration, our hope that we can yet become what we were made to be. Hope in our best self, the person we want to be. The Good News as we call it is that “the Son of God was revealed for this purpose (v8).” Our Heavenly Father gave us His Son so that we could see ourselves Truly for the first time. He knows that our faith in the unseen is too feeble for us to accept it as Truth in the presence of so many visible deceptions.

◆ **Tear it down:** Deception cannot bear the weight of close inspection by those who know Truth. Elaborate schemes fall apart in courtrooms when meticulously examined alongside Truthful evidence. So too the deceptions of Satan. Jesus and the devil are totally opposed to each other, one defending us from attempted murder by the other. Their weapons are the answers to the big questions of life upon which we build everything. Our lives and all societies have been built upon the devil's corruption. Jesus's mission, then, is “to destroy the works of the devil (v8).” He has given us His tools and the privilege to blow things up. We are His demolition team. It's time to examine our houses and tear down any fixture relying on a lie. Let's get to work.