Joining the church…encouraging one another on to perfection.

It’s what Paul meant in Ephesians 4:17-24. It’s what living into our relationship with Jesus meant as we surrendered our old life and accepted the new one he offers as part of a relationship with God.

Let’s look at it:

***Ephesians 4:17–24 (ESV) — 17*** *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* ***18*** *They are* ***darkened in their understanding****,* ***alienated from the life of God*** *because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* ***19*** *They have become* ***callous*** *and have given themselves up to sensuality,* ***greedy*** *to practice every kind of impurity.* ***20*** *But that is not the way you learned Christ!—* ***21*** *assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,* ***22******to put off your old self****, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,* ***23*** *and* ***to be renewed*** *in the spirit of your minds,* ***24*** *and* ***to put on the new self****, created after the likeness of God in true* ***righteousness*** *and* ***holiness****.*

It’s good to hear that Jesus makes us new. It is encouraging to hear that He makes us holy and righteous. Now, that all sounds good. But for those of you who have read ahead, you know that Paul changes the conversation here at vs 25.

***Ephesians 4:25 (ESV) — 25*** *Therefore, having* ***put away falsehood****, let each one of you* ***speak the truth*** *with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

He goes from preaching…telling us all these good, true, encouraging things, to meddling with us personally; Pointing out our personal issues. That’s what Paul does and that is what we are going to be doing these next few weeks as we look to live into this new life that we have been given in Christ, to live a surrendered life, we are going to call out areas of our life and listen to the bible challenge us to raise a White Flag on different parts of our life.

I listen to a podcast called This American Life, it’s a radio show on NPR I think. They tell stories of real American life. Usually they are pretty interesting. Last week I heard the story of Michael Leviton. Michael is a pretty normal guy, grew up pretty normal, but he had remarkable story. He remembered telling his first lie. He shared that he lied because he became aware of how people were affected by his words for the first time when he was 29. He had lived the first 29 years of his life without lying. When people asked him what he thought, he told them. When dates commented about how good a kisser he was, he felt the need to critique their style. When his friends asked him what he thought of their band, he told them exactly what he thought. When potential employers asked him his strengths and weaknesses in interviews, he told them his weaknesses in detail.

As I listened, I was struck by how odd this truth telling was and how normal lying is in our society. Today we begin this series talking about raising a white flag on telling lies.

What kind of lies am I talking about? There are several types of lies being told. The first and most prevalent is the little white lie.

We say things we don’t really mean, they are an attempt to be nice. You might say, Yall come back…when you know you don’t want them to, but it’s just a nice thing to say. Or “it’s so good to see you” when you could have gone without the visit and been just fine. It’s not bad to see them, but not good either. It’s just polite to tell someone that the food they served you was good, rather than the worst soup you had ever tasted. White lies are well intentioned. We learn this in marriage. When your wife asks, how do I look? Or what do you think about my friend \_\_\_\_\_?

Another sort of lie we tell often are broken promises. You promise to do something and are unable to deliver. You may have had full intention fo keeping the promise, but once it is broken, to the person who was counting on you, it’s a lie. Children are great at pointing out our broken promises, so are employers when we get fired or miss a promotion.

Another lie we tell are fabrications. When we simply make things up, when we add to the story in order to make it more believable or more unbelievable. Often these are embellishments to the stories we tell, like the old fishing stories about the Big one that got away. We add to the story, as if the story as it stands isn’t enough.

Then there is the simple bold faced lie. These are intentional lies. These lies are malicious attempts to avoid consequences. Surely you have been a party to them. Chocolate all over your face, mom asks if you ate the chocolate on the counter…no ma’am. It’s a Bald faced lie. An obvious attempt to deceive.

Then there are those other deceptions that are an attempt to save face, to make a situation or someone seem better than they really are. The doctor said everything was fine, I just need to lose 20 pounds, get more sleep, and start taking a blood thinner. Deceptions can be the way we tell things and it can be the way we leave things out. It’s the intent that matters. Now you may not tell everything and it not be deception. I don’t tell people I think they are unattractive, just because it’s my opinion. No, Deceptions are an attempt made by me to make myself more acceptable. Think of the job interview when they ask you what are your strengths and weaknesses. It’s deceptive to say one of my weaknesses is I am just too generous or I work too hard. I am too consistent.

If we all lie, why is it such a big deal?

***Ephesians 4:25 (ESV) — 25*** *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

When lies become known, regardless of how big they are, they undermine our integrity. Everything else we say becomes questionable. Think about the latest news of Rolling Stone Magazine. They used to be known for their brutal honesty…not any longer. Think of Lane Armstrong. He raised tons of money for charity, was honored all over the world, until it was clear that he was a liar.

It’s not just the lies that are known that hurt you, lies also have an effect in that they create a fear of being found out in us. Abraham Lincoln once said no man is smart enough to be a good liar; you simply can’t keep up with them all as one lie leads to another.

Lies are also a big deal because they destroy community too. Because there is a loss of trust, lies affect our relationship. It’s not just me that is affected, but others are no longer to trust me. This is what Paul was pointing out in the text that as we are members together in the family of God, I depend on you and you depend on me, and we depend on others. Anything that affects you then also affects me.

SO we shouldn’t lie…we know that. We have known that for a long time right. But how do we stop? How do we stop the very thing that is so normal in society?

If you realize lying is a problem, then the first step is to admit **you have a problem**

***Proverbs 28:13 (ESV) — 13*** *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*

When we confess our sin **To God** we certainly receive his forgiveness. Forgiveness is vital to our relationship with him.

***1 John 1:9 (ESV) — 9*** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

But we also receive mercy from others. So we should talk to a **To a trusted friend** about this. Do you have a friend who you can talk to about your tendency to sin? That is one of the reasons I am encouraging us to start getting together to talk about our faith. I know that there are many in our church who don’t value this sort of thing. But I want you to know that many people do, particularly people in my generation and younger. So be proactive, group up, talk about your tendency to lie…and do it truthfully.

Another group you should tell is **those you have lied to**. This makes sense. Part of reclaiming a new way of life will include telling the truth and that may mean a new story to those you have lied to in the past. Simply be honest. Explain that you are taking a bold step of faith to admit the lies you have told and connect the story with truth. This is a bold step, one that will focus attention on your faith as people begin to see transformation in you. Praise God for this.

For some of you this will be a very difficult step, one that you will need to Ask **for God’s help**.

But it’s not just admitting the problem in which we will need God’s help, Paul tells us in ***Ephesians 4:23 (ESV) — 23*** *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,* that we need a new way of thinking in order to change the way we live. We understand that just like our salvation is God’s work in us, so is his transforming our heart and mind.

So we need Gods help in order to **stop believing the lie more than the gospel**. What is the lie we believe when we tell a lie? When we lie, we are believing that the truth just isn’t good enough; in fact, we aren’t good enough. This message comes to us all the time as we watch TV, listen to music, spend time on social media, we compare ourselves to others and come up short. But the reality is, the truth is. If the world doesn’t accept me as I am, as I have been created by God, it’s not because I’m not good enough, it’s because the world has a problem. If you don’t like me because of the truth, then you have a problem, because God saw me worthy of allowing his son to die for me, he loved me that much and you don’t understand that.

So actually the truth is, people have a problem if they can’t accept you as you are. We need God’s help to own the truth, as I tell my kids, that “there is nothing you could do for God to love you more, and there is nothing you can do to make God to love you any less”. We need God’s help to understand this.

We also need God’s help to **see the consequences** of our lies. We need to see the damage it does to our integrity. How it damages community. We need to understand how it affects our children when they see us lie, when we break promises, when we laugh with our friends about the white lies we tell, when our coworkers see us deceive others, when our spouse finds out about our deceptions. Our actions affect others, we need to see that and because we tend to not see the consequences, we need God’s help to make us sensitive to the spiritual impact of our lies.

But we are talking about how to stop telling all these little lies. Change is not as simple as recognizing the lies we believe and seeing the consequences. Change is not a mental exercise. We have to actually surrender our need to save face, to make a good impression, we have to surrender the old way of living and take on a new one. And this new life takes some time to get used to, so we have to practice.

I was watching the Masters yesterday. One of the leaders yesterday, Charlie Hoffman, came to the course 5 hours early to practice before he played his 3rd round. I would have thought he should be eating a good meal, resting, relaxing, but no he knew he needed to practice. Do you know why I can’t go out and play golf like those guys? One reason is talent, but another is the amount of practice. Coaches and trainers tell us that if you want to become exceptional at anything, it requires 10,000 hours of repetition, practice. We too, as we seek to live into this new life we have been given in Christ, have to Practice **telling the truth**. We need to be truth tellers, and in the loving environment of the church is the best place to practice telling the truth.

I told you earlier about Michael Leviton, the guy who didn’t know how to lie. Yes he told the truth, but he did it without the grace that Christ has given us. We need to be truth tellers with grace.

***Proverbs 27:6 (ESV) — 6*** *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.*

Truth telling with grace means that we practice love. We don’t speak truth to hurt, and when a friend does, we hold them accountable. So tell a friend you trust what you are doing. Ask them to keep you in check, when you are stretching the truth or when you are speaking truth in an ungraceful manner. We can do this in person and we can do it in the place it is needed most. Social Media.

You know what I mean, your friend is going on a rant about what happened at work, instead of liking it, send them a private message of encouragement to share grace or to be more truthful

 Have friends hold you accountable

 Do it at church

 Careful online

Today as we begin a look at what it means to raise a white flag, to surrender our lives to Jesus, I just wanted to start with an easy message on truth telling, to encourage you and me to begin to live into this life in Christ. I wanted us to have some practical means to group up to talk about living this out.