

**Abundant Life—Today and Tomorrow #6;
Abundance Through Honesty**

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Well, I want to pick up today, brethren, this continuing theme for my messages to you on "Abundant Life—Today and Tomorrow." And I really just had to try and pick certain key principles to include in this foundational theme that support the concept of achieving abundant life, and as I told you already, there are so many different ones that could be included in this. The Bible is replete with principles that support and add to this concept of abundant living. And so I had to be selective, but it was hard to do. But I have picked out several principles that God gives us in the Bible that I thought would be very timely in and of themselves—and strung together in a collective foundation would be especially beneficial for all of us in achieving abundant life.

So we have already seen that the mission of Jesus Christ was to come that we might have, not only life, but that we might have it even more abundantly. It is a loving Heavenly Father's desire for us to be enriched and fulfilled and absolutely filled with an orientation of mind of satisfaction, peace and contentment. And, yet, we know that it is not going to happen in the midst of trial-free life. In fact, the key thing that makes it so unusual, and so miraculous, is that God promised that we are not going to live in this world in an environment of peace, physically. We are going to live in a hostile environment—because we do live in Satan's world. We are not now living in a kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ. We are here picturing the time when that thousand-year reign of Christ is going to be established—in the future—but it's not the world we live in today. We are here hoping for—desiring, wanting—that kingdom to come, and our participation in this Feast of Tabernacles is attesting to God that when we say, "Thy Kingdom Come" (which is one of the components that God commanded should be part of the prayers we are offering, and one of the things we should be thinking of consistently) that you want that Kingdom to come. That's

what we are celebrating here. But the truth, today, is that we don't live in a world without trial and difficulty, and in fact Jesus Christ promised us persecution and even ultimately martyrdom for some percentage of the faithful children of God.

So, He is going to allow all of these troubling things to occur, but the miracle is that in the midst of whatever trials we face, He said we should be living abundantly—we should absolutely feel enriched and fulfilled. How are we going to do that? Humanly, it is absolutely impossible—absolutely impossible. Because, to human beings, abundance and fulfillment must come with an environment of trouble-free circumstances. That's what they are trying to do—they are trying to generate for themselves trouble-free circumstances with no outside pressures that rob them of abundance. And, yet, as you have already received in the messages that I have provided for you, the difference in our orientation is that God says we have to learn how to live abundantly even in the midst of the trials and pressures and forces that are against us. And that has to do with your state of mind. How are we going to do that? It's going to take the power of God's Holy Spirit and nothing short of it.

So what is another key principle, now, in this overall theme of abundant living that we need to understand? If you want a title for today's message, let's call it, "Abundance Through Honesty"—abundance through honesty. Anyone who wants to enjoy truly abundant life must learn to be honest and forthright. Now, at face value, you might say, "Well, of course. Everybody knows that." But I think as we go through this you will find out that it is easier said than done. It's another one of those principles that all human beings favor and give lip service to—the idea of honesty and integrity. Don't they? I mean, you don't have to be a member of God's church—you don't have to be a professing Christian—to value those concepts. In fact, all religions, wherever you go on the face of the earth—I don't care whether it's Islam, or Buddhism, or some form of Christianity, or whatever it may be—they all value the principles of honesty and integrity, do they not? Every religion—I don't care whether it's some pagan religion or whatever practice it may be—values the concept and the idea of honesty, which, to me, just reinforces the fact that it is something that God gave within the minds of all human beings. We desire these good things. That's the problem. God gave—within the natural mind of man—the desire for things like honesty, integrity and love, but what He didn't give, inherently, was the ability to achieve them, which is what sets up the conflict within us all by nature. We have all of these elevated ideas that we seek to

achieve, individually and collectively, and so you see the writings and the recordings of civilizations over the last 6000 years. All civilizations put these ideas up on a pedestal—we all value them. So, why has humankind never been able to actually practice them? They love the idea but they can't make it happen. Why? Because those good things are all fruits of God's Holy Spirit, and separated from God and not having the missing piece in the human mind, we cannot achieve our hearts' desire. Honesty and integrity are two of these ideas—we all elevate them—but how many of us, as human beings, are able to actually practice them? 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 9. 1 Thessalonians 4:9:

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you [and then verse 12]; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

The apostle is reminding those in the church at Thessalonica what it means to manifest true Christian fruits—not just by what we say, but what we do in the sight of all of those around us in this world. And he is reminding them of the expression of legitimate Godly love and what an impact that has. That means outgoing service one toward another—not selfishness, which is the automatic, human tendency. He said again in verse 11:

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without.

He's saying that we should actually practice the things that Jesus Christ taught us by divine revelation and we should behave and act as He did. Now, that doesn't mean we stand on a street corner and preach a sermon or try to do some great work with our mouths. He is talking about letting our light shine through the actual practice of Godly principles—which means we manifest a good work ethic; we care for those who are in need; we take care of our personal responsibilities. It's called walking honestly—being forthright. It is really talking about practicing

what we preach, because the problem with human beings is that they profess belief and support for all kinds of magnanimous principles, but then they actually behave in a very hypocritical fashion. The fruits of their actions do not support the professed tenets that they elevate.

So we become very cynical, as human beings, because we are used to a world of hypocrisy, are we not? What do we expect from our politicians, for example? Are we not mostly very cynical because we know that when it is election season we are going to get all of these promises about how they are so different and how much integrity they have and how they are going to change the world if we just vote for them and put them in office? And how many of us really believe that is going to happen? We know that it is an exercise in hypocrisy and human beings have been repeating it over and over and over again the entire time that they have been ruling themselves upon this earth. So, we live in a world of hypocrisy and we expect our neighbors and those with whom we do business to seek to take advantage and to cheat us because we've had those experiences. We see it manifested more and more as we get closer to the return of Jesus Christ. And, yet, God says the true people who are led by His Holy Spirit should legitimately be practicing honesty and integrity, which will make a huge impact upon the people around us—not by doing anything that seems out of the ordinary, but by simply just doing what other people profess to value, being forthright and honest, being somebody who can be counted upon to keep our word. Because most people don't keep their word. Most people are not honest.

"That you may walk honestly toward them that are without and that you may have lack of nothing." Do you know what it means to have a lack of nothing? That means to have abundance. Another way of saying that is that it is an opportunity to live abundantly—just as Jesus Christ said it was His very purpose to provide to His people. So, here we find another mathematical formula that supports the equation on how to have abundant life: "Walk honestly toward them that are without, that you may have lack of nothing." If you do "x," the result will be "y." Walking honestly in our lives—in our personal dealings toward those within and without of the church—equals abundant life, which is why I selected this as one of those key tenets for my theme during this Feast.

Well, let's look at a few scriptures quickly that demonstrate the fact that, by nature, we are not honest. We are not forthright. Numbers 23 and verse 19.

Numbers 23 and beginning in verse 19: "God is not a man . . ." Here is a contrast, now, between the natural state of human beings and the orientation of God. "God is not a man, that he should lie." Well, that is a mouthful in one short sentence. What does it tell us? That God's orientation is totally different than ours. Man's is one of lying. Therefore, by contrast, God's orientation is one of honesty, and not lying. "God is not a man, that he should lie." Therefore, if God is not a liar, that means that all human beings are liars, none of us excluded. That's what it tells us. "Neither the son of man, that he should repent." You see, God never makes a mistake for which He has to repent. He is always right; He is always just; He is always true; He is always faithful; He never makes a mistake.

"Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Has God ever committed Himself—made a promise, a commitment—which He has ever failed to deliver upon? No way, because He is perfect; He is absolutely trustworthy; He is absolutely honest; you can always, invariably, count on Him to do the right thing, and He will never break a promise. The problem is, when we experience trials and difficulties in our lives—like Job experienced, for example—there are times when we come to doubt the character of God. Like Job, who never doubted the existence of God—the authority of God. He never doubted that God was like the 800 pound gorilla that could do whatever He wanted and that no one could resist. But, in the wake of his trial, he did come to have doubts about whether or not God was fair. But God *is* fair; He is perfect in love; He is the personification of love, compassion and mercy, so He is never wrong—and that is a concept that human minds can hardly grasp, if at all, because we are used to dealing with human beings, aren't we? Human beings are never that trustworthy and reliable, so we are used to interactions with beings that are not stable, not consistent, not trustworthy. And, therefore, we have a tendency to write upon God, in our minds, the same frailties and faults. And that is the thing, as God's children, that we must learn to overcome, because He is always true; He is always forthright, and He never, ever, breaks a promise. "Hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?" That is one of the very reasons for all of the prophecies that are written in the Holy Scriptures which God has preserved and brought down to us in these last days. One third of the Bible is prophecy—which was not written so that we could spend our time trying to figure out the answers in the back of the book, so that we might have advanced knowledge of who, what, where, when and how. The reason for those prophecies is to reveal what God intends to do—what He has bound himself to achieve in this master plan. Therefore, when they come to pass—which they

will—it will be a record of His faithfulness, that He did exactly, in totality, everything that He ever said He was going to do. He has fulfilled every promise today, and the ones that are yet unfulfilled are right on schedule and they are going to be fulfilled right at the perfect time. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" The answer to that is, never. He has and He will always be absolutely faithful and trustworthy and that, my dear brethren, is a huge contrast between God and all of humanity—including you and me. Romans 3 and verse 10. Romans 3 and verse 10. This is a description of what we are by nature and it is not a pretty sight. The apostle Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." That gets us all—we are all scooped up in the same net.

As it is written, There is *none* righteous, no, not one: There is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable; there is *none* that doeth good, no, not one [emphasis added].

How different from the concept of the world which exalts human capability as the solution and hope of the future—the idea that human beings are naturally evolving to a higher, peaceful, and more honorable state as every generation passes. So that we are so much better than our ancestors from several thousand years ago, who were barbarians. *Now* we are more enlightened and progressive and we are improving ourselves as a race—the human race—and getting better and better all the time. Do you believe it? Not if you look around and see the fruits of all that is happening in the world. The reality is exactly what God has said in the scriptures: that if He did not bring things to a close in this age, man would absolutely wipe himself off of the face of the earth—he would destroy himself. "There is none that doeth good; their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit." There is one of the specific attributes God revealed about human nature which is not good. They are liars. That's what it means to use your tongue for deceit. We tell lies. We manipulate facts for our benefit.

The poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

That is us. That is us, apart from and separated from God. That is humanity—every single one of us, brethren—without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to help us to change, squelch, stifle, that carnal nature and begin to live and walk according to a different example. That of the Son of God.

Notice next that it is Satan who is the father of lies and that God intentionally put that same spirit of rebellion—of Satan's lying nature—within us. John 8 and verse 44. John chapter 8 and verse 44. Jesus Christ said to those who were accosting Him and accusing Him falsely: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Notice how often Jesus Christ just called a spade a spade. He didn't mince words. Jesus Christ was not one for political correctness and that is why they killed Him ultimately. That is why they hated Him. He just, basically, told the truth and human beings don't like the raw, unadulterated, unvarnished truth—especially when it puts them in a bad light. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth." Well, what do you say about someone who will not abide in the truth? What is the antithesis of truth? Lies, right? It's either one or the other. It's either true or it's false. You either abide in the truth, support the truth, foster and tell the truth, or else you do what? You lie—you deceive—and that is what the character of Satan is. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

So, Christ revealed here that Satan is not only a liar, but that God has even given him the title, "the father of lies." He's the father of lying. So, what happens when you and I engage in lying and deception—whether it's a little "white lie" or a big black lie? What you are doing is bowing and scraping before a false god—Satan, who is the father of lies. "He is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."

Notice next Colossians 3 and verse 8. Colossians 3:8. Here is the admonition to the church regarding the responsibility that we all have to overcome: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Then verse 9: "Lie not one to another." Why? Because doing so is serving a false god and it is a violation of one of the Ten Commandments. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old

man with his deeds." So, this is a confirmation of what you and I are by nature—which God calls the old man, and just as we have already seen, we are liars. The old man in you and me is a liar.

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

And who is that new man? None other than God—Jesus Christ, our example. And what did we see is one of the attributes of God? "He is not a man, that he should lie." God never lies, and so what we are being told is to put off the old lying man and to become honest and forthright, because that is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit, and that is a manifestation which is not natural in the human state—it requires the power of the Holy Spirit in order to become honest. And I don't believe we think about that enough. I suspect we think human beings can and should be honest creatures if we are just taught correctly. But the reality, brethren, is that we cannot be truly honest without the indwelling presence of Christ in our minds, because it is God who is honest, not man. Therefore, that means you and I cannot be truly honest unless we have Christ living in us—which means the world is not honest.

Now, yes, there are human beings—and they are becoming fewer every day in this world—who do a pretty good job (I'll put that in quotes) of living uprightly and dealing honestly with their neighbors and in business transactions and things of that nature. But, by the end of this message, you are going to find out that is not the full context of honesty and integrity. It goes much deeper than that into spiritual areas which human beings cannot even begin to touch. But, yes, human beings can be more honest than the run-of-the-mill person in the world—it is possible. And there are families who have taught their children to be honest and upright, and those who have manifested better integrity than others. As Mr. Raymond Cole used to say so often, even without having the Holy Spirit, human beings do not have to live in the gutter. Even if you are not a member of God's church, you do not have to live in filth and degradation—you just don't. God did give humanity the capacity to do at least marginally well—even without a special relationship with Him—if they will hold to certain cardinal principles. The Apostle Paul said in Romans chapter 2 that those principles are available even to the Gentiles who, if they do by nature—meaning not by special revelation (they

are not begotten by God)—the things contained in the law, because they recognize certain valuable principles, they themselves become a law unto themselves. That means they actually receive the blessings that come by obedience to those principles that they can practice, physically. And so, even in the world, those who have valued being honest in dealing in business and in their personal relationships with some amount of integrity, they certainly have benefitted and are much better off than those who totally disregard those principles. But don't ever confuse that with being truly honest in the way that God is honest and forthright. That requires the miracle of God's Holy Spirit.

Now, at the same time, as I just read to you in verse 9, it says, "Lie not one to another." But let me give you a caution here. This does not mean that you have to reveal every little thing that you know—especially personal things about yourself—because there are those who think that in the name of honesty, if somebody asks you a personal question, you are obligated to answer it. Do you have a right to privacy? Yes, you do. If somebody asks you something that you prefer not to reveal, do you have a right to keep that to yourself? You had better believe you do. Being honest does not mean that you pour out all of your weaknesses and your knowledge of personal things that you would prefer other people didn't know. You do not have to do that in order to be honest. There is a principle that says, "Do not let the right hand know what the left hand is doing." So, do not confuse honesty with giving up privacy. And this may be the biggest challenge that we in the church face: To be honest and not to lie for the sake of protecting our privacy. We may be seriously tempted to shade the truth or to tell a falsehood in order to protect our privacy. We are not trying to hurt someone else, but there may be information that we don't want to go out. So, when somebody asks us a question that puts us on the spot, before we know it, we may find ourselves shading the truth—well, there is no such thing as shading the truth; you either lie or you tell the truth. We lie—even a "white lie"—in order to protect ourselves. And what I suggest, brethren, is that we learn and practice a diplomatic, non-offensive reply such as, "Well, I'm sorry, but that is a private question." We need to learn how to defend our privacy in a diplomatic way—without hurting someone's feelings—but letting them know, "Well, you know, I choose not to answer that question. That is personal." And then we need to be sensitive about trying to avoid asking those kinds of questions and putting other people on the spot. But the solution is never to lie. So I do suggest that we practice becoming comfortable with an automatic reply that will protect our

privacy without telling a falsehood—that is highly recommended. Let me read you a quote. This is from a May 19, 2006 article by Robin Lloyd entitled, "People Generally Lie to Preserve Self-esteem." The article uses excerpts to summarize the work of Robert Feldman who is a psychologist at the University of Massachusetts. Here is what the article says:

Many animals engage in deception, or deliberately mislead one another, but only humans are wired to deceive both themselves and others, researchers say.

So, they understand the truth. Yes, God gave animals a built-in mechanism—instinct—and there are some that camouflage themselves to hide from predators or engage in deceptions just to stay alive. Those are all God-given traits, so that is not a problem. But researchers recognize that human beings are the masters of deception. Continuing the quote:

People are so engaged in managing how others perceive them that they are often unable to separate truth from fiction in their own minds . . . For instance, in one experiment, Feldman put two strangers in a room together. They were videotaped while they conversed. Later, independently, each was asked to view the tape and identify anything they had said that was not entirely accurate. . . Initially, each subject said, "Oh, I was entirely accurate," . . . Upon watching themselves on video, subjects were genuinely surprised to discover they had said something inaccurate. The lies ranged from pretending to like someone they actually disliked to falsely claiming to be the star of a rock band [laughs]. The study, published in the journal *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, found that [get this] 60 percent of people had lied at least once during the 10-minute conversation, saying an average of 2.92 inaccurate things.

So, sixty percent of the people that were put in this situation and had a ten-minute conversation with a stranger, lied, and, on average, told almost 3 lies in a ten-minute period. And, yet, most of them were generally unaware that they even did it. Now, what does that say? That tells you that human beings are, by nature, liars. We learn it when we are young and we do it so automatically that we don't think about it. And only if we watch a videotape of ourselves, after-the-fact, do

we actually see ourselves for what we are. So, you see, we all think of ourselves as being so honest. The reality is, brethren, that you and I are not any better by nature than these experimental subjects.

What is the source of many of our lies? It is vanity and conceit. It really is. We are trying to convey an image of ourselves to other human beings. We have an agenda in our minds. We want a certain reputation—an image—we want others to think of us and view us in a certain way. And, therefore, we are programmed to say and do things that will perpetuate that image in the minds of other human beings—whether it is true or not. That's what we do, and that's why it is so automatic. That is why, subconsciously, you and I are actually acting in a deceitful way and we don't even realize it. We are on autopilot, basically running a political campaign to get people to vote for us. "Vote for me by showing that you like me." God did make us to be social creatures. We do crave the acceptance of others around us, and the source of many of our lies is an attempt to massage and to cultivate the acceptance and the approval of other human beings around us—and that is when many of our lies are revealed.

Romans 12 and verse 16. Romans 12:16: "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things." Here is one of the instructions to the church. And, really, when you take this advice, you help defeat the very drive that is the source of our falsehood and deception. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." God is saying that members of the true Church of God—as opposed to those in the world—should be walking after the example of Jesus Christ. We are supposed to be crucifying the self daily, are we not? Isn't that what we are called to do? What did you do in baptism? You went under the water entirely which symbolized the death of the old self—the lying self as we see here. And when we come up out of the water, now we are supposed to live with a different focus—putting on the mind and the behavior of Jesus Christ who is not a liar. That is what we are supposed to do. So we are supposed to kill this old self—which is the one that craves the acceptance, attention and approval of other people around us. That is the being that we are supposed to be killing. So we are not supposed to be feeding this conceit and this arrogance that drives us humanly. If we are really crucifying the self, then we are not putting ourselves nearly as much in the position to lie. "Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men." What is that old saying? You tell one lie and then you have to

tell another lie to cover the first one, and one lie begets another. You are building an entire edifice—a false environment—to support an initial false concept. And, really, the greatest false concept that we are trying to defend and support is the idea that we are good. "I'm a good person; I am worthy to be liked and to be appreciated—even to be revered by those around me." And so to perpetuate this idea—because it's not the truth—we have to create a web of deceit in the things that we say and do to try and keep the lie going.

So, now, what do you think is going to happen if we finally just stop and say, "I am not trying to make this old self look good. I'm trying to kill the self and instead I am going to be an edifice of Jesus Christ in order to manifest Him in my dealings with others." Jesus Christ doesn't need to lie—He doesn't lie. So, when we put aside the vanity—minding high things which are worthless—and we stop trying to play this political game of trying to make the self look good and we simply deal honestly and forthrightly, we can begin to put all that stuff aside. We are not nearly as tempted to engage in the deceit. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

Turn over one chapter to Romans 13 and verse 12. Romans 13:12. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." He's saying, the night is far spent—this time of the six-thousand-year reign of man over himself under the government of Satan is coming to a close—and it is a time of darkness, comparable to the night. The day is coming—which pictures the reign of Jesus Christ on this earth under His benevolent government, when the Law of God is going to rule on this earth. And it will be understood and known by the open minds of humanity—even as the waters cover the sea. That daytime—symbolically—is coming. It is going to be manifested in the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, but right now we are still in the night. But we are in the later portion of the night—the darkest time before the dawn. One of these days, symbolically, that sun is going to peak over the horizon—light is going to shine forth on this earth in a way that it has not for six thousand years. It's another way of saying, brethren, that time is short, and we are the people of the last days—likely the last generation of those who are preparing for the return of Jesus Christ. "The night is far spent." Almost six thousand years of it is coming to a close. "The day is at hand: Let us therefore [because of where we are in time and how close we are to the return of Christ] cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." And what is a key part of that?

Verse 13:

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness,
not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

What is a manifestation of our dishonesty? Again, it is an illicit orientation of making ourselves look good at the expense of others. We envy others for what they have because we wish we had it. That is very selfish. We have hard feelings toward others because we are jealous—we wish we had what they had. Envy and strife—it's all selfishness. "Not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." You see, if we are crucifying the old self—the flesh—then we are not engaging in all of this ridiculous effort to make the self look good, and we are not nearly as encouraged to enter into falsehood and lies.

Notice another byproduct of this human carnality—this envy, this selfishness, this strife: It is one who has an agenda to paint someone else in a negative light. I have already told you about trying to paint ourselves in a positive light to try and make people think that we are so good. But, what else do we often do at the same time? We pick out people that we like and they are incorporated into our image of self. We associate with them—we try and do the same things they do—and we protect them at any cost; we defend them whether or not they are doing wrong. Conversely, if we have made someone an enemy—we've decided we don't like this person (for "good" reasons or not)—we will not only support anything negative said about them, we will support it whether it is true or false. Do we not? Do you know where you observe this most often in its raw, unvarnished manifestation? Watch the television news. Watch all of these news commentators—these talking heads—who have political affiliations to either of what they call the "right" or "left." They go at one another constantly. And when something happens in the political world—and there is always something going on, some sort of scandal—and it involves one party, all of the commentators for that party rush to the aid of their politician and say, "What he did wasn't really that bad." And all of the commentators for the other party say, "Oh, it's the end of the world. He is so evil. Look what he did." And anybody who comes forward with some testimony to add to the debate which makes the politician look either good or bad, everyone comes down on the side that agrees with their political affiliation. Do they not? Is there really any honesty? Is there any balance, or objective

attempt to find out what really happened? No. It's all, "My side needs to win. Your side needs to lose. I will believe everything good said about us, and I will believe everything bad said about you." There is no honesty in that at all. They are just reflecting what you and I do on a smaller scale—in our own minds. Come on, don't we do that? If somebody—for whatever reason—has become your "enemy," and then you hear somebody else talking about something bad they did, or about a suspicion that they might have done something, don't you, by nature say, "YES! I always knew they were a bad person"? It is easy to believe that they would do that. Do we have the evidence that it's true? No, it's just a rumor. Do we care? No, because it supports our false reality—the way we want it to be. And when somebody that we love dearly—a close family member or a friend—is accused, we are more likely to take up their cause and to defend them before we even know whether or not it's true. Now, I am not saying that it's not right to defend someone. We should do that even when somebody makes a mistake. We are to forgive and to show mercy. But that doesn't mean that we cover lies with more lies. It's all falsehood and deception. So, one who has an agenda to paint someone else in a particular way—either good or bad—will listen to anything that supports their preconceived bias—whether or not it is true. Don't fall into that trap, brethren. We need to learn to value the truth above all else. But that doesn't mean that if somebody *is* guilty of something we are allowed to crucify them. No, there are fruits of God's Holy Spirit which show us how we are supposed to deal with one another—even when one is weak. But don't jump on anybody's bandwagon just because it supports a preconceived idea. Proverbs 17 and verse 4. Proverbs 17 and verse 4: "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips." There is the principle summarized by God. "A wicked doer [one who is not really interested in the truth] gives heed to false lips." They are willing to receive the testimony of a lying witness if it supports the outcome they want. "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue." What happens when you believe, automatically, the testimony of a liar? It makes you guilty of the same sin.

Okay, next. What effect might lying have on the human body? We know lying is wrong. We know it is a violation of one of the Ten Commandments—we understand that in principle. Most of us agree with the fact that cheaters never prosper. Well, sometimes cheaters *do* prosper for a short time, but eventually it all comes out in the judgment. We understand that, and yet we still lie—we still deceive—because we still feel somehow that somehow we will get away with it.

And, yet, when someone engages in the habit of lying, do not people find that out in time? Haven't you known people who you ultimately have figured out do not tell the truth? You might get burned once or twice, but after that you begin to say, "Hmm. I can't be sure that what this person is telling me is accurate because I've already verified several instances when he hasn't told the truth." People are smart enough to figure this out. So when we lie and we lie and we lie—even if we are good liars—we still get caught, and people come to the point where they do not trust us—it will come to the surface. If we engage in the practice of telling falsehoods—even small ones—people will begin to take us with a grain of salt because it becomes apparent. Yet, human beings continue to do it.

And so we understand that there is a penalty for lying which is, in essence, a built-in penalty that God has established physically. So if you engage in lying and deception, you are going to pay that penalty because people are not going to trust you—you will lose. Now, there are obviously other big penalties for lying but what about just the physical penalty? In that context, I found the following article very, very interesting. It's from an *Associated Press* report dated November 7, 2005. This article is entitled, "Stomach Sensors Can Catch Liars," and here is just a small excerpt:

A new study by the University of Texas measured electrical impulses in the stomachs of sixteen volunteers that were only associated with the act of lying. The heart rate went up for both lying and truth.

So, when people are answering questions, their heart rate tends to go up, and I think I have heard that said about lie detector tests—which measure the pulse among other things. They first establish a baseline by asking a whole bunch of questions which you answer truthfully like, "What is your name?" They first must measure how your body responds when you are telling the truth—that is the baseline. Even when we are telling the truth, our heart rates increase from just being under scrutiny—it makes us anxious. So this study confirms that: "The heart rate went up for both lying and truth, but the gastric electric activity only changed with lying." I found that very, very interesting, and it made me wonder. I don't know, but I suspect that when Jesus Christ does return, and we are given explanations for many of these cause and effect relationships that have been built into this universe, we are going to find that God built into our bodies all kinds of positive and negative results which accrue automatically when we either obey or

disobey His Law. It just made me wonder. What if this is an indication that when we lie, we secrete more stomach acid and it doesn't occur when we tell the truth? Is it possible that a perpetual liar is, therefore, setting up an environment within his body which is poisonous and damaging—something he cannot control? He might be a wonderful liar, but he cannot control the responses in the autoimmune system of his body which tell the tale. Are there curses that occur—even physiologically—when we break some of these laws? And we think, "Well, okay, the commandment says, 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor'—in other words, 'You shall not be a liar,' but if I do, what is really going to happen to me? I can get away with it if I sell it to people. If I am a really good liar—I convince everybody and no one ever finds out—I win. Right?" Maybe this is just one small evidence that there is an automatic curse in the body which robs you of your health and vitality if you choose to do those things. I am not saying that is absolutely the case, but when I read this article, it surely made me think. I am very sure that there are always automatic curses which go with breaking God's laws, even if we don't know what they are—even if we cannot figure them out ahead of time. We never get away with the violation of God's Law; there is always a curse. And it is not—as many people think—that God is sitting on His throne in heaven just waiting for you and me to do something wrong so that He can then zap us with a little bolt of lightning. Now, He can do that. There are times when He methodically imposes a penalty that may not be automatic, but He does it according to His volition. But, for the most part, He simply designed the universe—before He put man upon the earth—with all of these cause and effect relationships that work on auto-pilot. He can go on vacation and the penalties are still automatically going to come upon us when we break the Law—they work automatically.

Those are the kinds of things I try to keep in my own mind, because we are really good at trying to put on a front with other people, but then in private, we are really tempted to break some of those rules because we think we can get away with it. The only solution is that you and I come to recognize that we never get away with it. It is not a matter of other people applying the penalty. God's laws in this universe apply the penalties automatically, and we will suffer when we violate them.

Yes, God probably has built in physical penalties of which we are not even aware which will rob us of our health, our vitality, and our peace of mind. It is

one of the things we need to avoid, brethren, if we want to enjoy truly abundant living. Likewise, spiritually, liars will never have abundant life in the world tomorrow—that abundance that God promised, not only for today, but most importantly, in the Kingdom to come.

Notice Revelation 21 and verse 7. Revelation 21 and verse 7: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful . . ." Remember, I have already read this to you. This is a category of individuals who absolutely will not be in the Kingdom—those who are fearful. Being anxious and afraid is on the same level as being a whoremonger, or a sorcerer, or an idolater. So fear is our enemy. But what else? "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, AND ALL LIARS [all liars], shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death [emphasis added]." That doesn't mean, brethren, that if we make a mistake in weakness and we tell a falsehood that we have committed the unpardonable sin, but what this tells us is that we need to come to acknowledge our falsehoods—our deceptions. Unlike the rest of the people of the world—who lie and are not even aware that they are lying because they do it so automatically, routinely, habitually—the people of God must come to be able to diagnose that state in themselves, which is actually pictured in the Days of Unleavened Bread by the requirement to identify and to put out sin. We must actually create a monitor through the Holy Spirit that identifies the habit of telling falsehoods and then we must go to work in putting that out. No, a single lie will not be the unpardonable sin that will keep us out of the Kingdom, but, you see, habitually practicing the things listed here will absolutely disqualify us from eternal life. Being a liar—a practicing liar—will keep us out of the Kingdom. "All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Then skip down to verse 27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." God is simply not going to allow practicing liars to have a part in His Kingdom because the government of Jesus Christ on this earth during that thousand-year reign is going to be one of uprightness, faithfulness and truth. The people of the earth are finally going to be governed by a King and leaders who will not lie to them. They are finally—after six thousand years of being lied to, taken advantage of, and merchandised by their leaders and their governments—going to have a

truthful King. And anyone who is given eternal life—anyone who shares those offices of Kingship and Priesthood for the purpose of helping Jesus Christ rule over humanity in that Millennium—is likewise going to be truthful and forthright. They are not going to be practicing liars. Which is why you and I are commanded to stop doing it today. We are in training to be able to execute responsibilities in that Kingdom according to righteousness.

Honesty is indeed very, very scarce in this world. But as I said early on, brethren, it is one of the reasons that learning to be honest and forthright will make you stand out. I am not talking about trying to bring attention to yourself—which we are not supposed to be doing—but if you simply become an individual who is trustworthy, and people come to count on you, you will be absolutely exceptional in this world. Do you realize that? If you have ever witnessed someone who did something honest and forthright, did it not amaze you? Didn't it make you stop and say, "WOW, that was really phenomenal—I didn't expect that"? Why? Because you are used to being lied to. You are used to being deceived all of the time. So am I. So when someone actually deals straight up with you and tells you the truth and follows through and does exactly what they said they would do, it is unusual. But more than that, if something goes wrong, and this person, in order for them to fulfill their promise they must make an incredible personal sacrifice that costs them, and they do it anyway rather than trying to renegotiate the contract—if someone takes the hit because they made a promise, and they follow through and honor their commitment to you—do you not say, "WOW. That was significant. I really appreciate that. That stands out." Why? Because you don't get that very often. So, you see, you have an incredible opportunity to let your lights shine as true Christians if you will simply learn to deal honestly and forthrightly with all whom you come into contact—both within and without of the church—because it will make you stand out from the crowd. It will. People are not accustomed to being treated honestly. First Peter 2 and verse 11. I Peter 2 and verse 11:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation [or conduct] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers . . .

That means they think you are the craziest people they have ever seen based upon your beliefs and your practices religiously. "Who is that crazy group going to church in the middle of the week when everybody else is working? The Feast of Tabernacles, what is that? Going to church on Saturday? Eating unleavened bread in the spring? You people are bizarre. You are peculiar. You are nuts." So they do not understand—to them everything you are doing is foolishness, it is weird—it is even scary. But, "Having your [conduct] honest among the Gentiles [meaning those who do not understand—who are not called]: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers. . ." This simply means they are suspicious of you because you are weird—you are strange—and people are always afraid of things they do not understand. So they give you a wide berth. They are very, very careful around you.

Whereas they speak against you as evildoers [they are suspicious], they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Now, that is not to say that you will win their respect right away—although in many cases that happens as well—and, in fact, I just received notice that our group in Kandersteg, Switzerland this year under the benevolent leadership of Mr. Jean Aviolat, was just recognized by the local government there. This is the thirtieth year they—Church of God, The Eternal—have kept the Feast in Kandersteg, Switzerland. And that community basically gave them a special gift of free hall rental this year. Not only that, but the owner of a local hotel and restaurant where they enjoy many of their meals together collectively—and have for thirty years—planned a special outing for the whole group this year. Now, these are people in the world who do not understand or agree with what we do, but I guarantee you, that little group over there has been manifesting a light that has been very, very appreciated. And I guarantee you that they have been setting an example of being honest and forthright in the way that they have dealt with those landlords and merchants, and those people appreciate it very much. And now, in return, the brethren there have been highly honored. And I thought that was an absolutely tremendous result. But it fulfills exactly what we are talking about here: That "they may by your good works, which they shall behold . . ." When you are honest and forthright, when you behave in a way that people in the world do not—you simply keep your word—they are going to see those fruits. They are going to appreciate them. They may still think you are weird [laughs]—and they

will—but they are going to know that there is something different about you and they are going to remember it. "They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." You might even receive some positive feedback today.

Most importantly, by your behavior, you are witnessing to those who one day—at the return of Christ or in the second resurrection—are going to have *their* minds opened to understand for the first time the things that you have now. And when many of them come finally to recognize it—when Christ reveals the Truth to them—they are going to say:

Now I understand. And do you know what? *Now* I remember, because I knew them and transacted business with them, or had personal interactions with some of those I now see were part of the firstfruits. And, yes, they were different, and, in fact, most importantly, they were honest. They impressed me and I remember that they stood out because of their behavior as compared to other people with whom I was accustomed to dealing.

You are actually planting seeds now which are going to be germinating in the minds of those who will be called much later, and by your fruits—your behaviors and the lights that you shine in dealing honestly with people—you are going to help in their time of conversion when God is going to call them. That is how important it is.

How, brethren, might God consider us to be liars in ways of which we are not even aware? We have a tendency to paint ourselves with broad brush strokes and we miss a whole lot, and we say, "Well, okay, okay, I won't tell a lie. I always tell the truth." But what are some other subtle ways we can lie—in God's evaluation—that He may want us to keep in mind? Well, let's turn to I John 2 and verse 3. I John 2 and verse 3: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." So, what is the real proof of the true people of God? Are they the ones who use the name of Jesus Christ and say, "I love the Lord"? No, God is saying here that actions speak louder than words. It doesn't matter what we say, or proclaim, or profess to value. It's what we do. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." That's an absolute confirmation of what He said in the book of John when He told them, "If you love

me, keep my commandments." How simple can that be? Verse 4: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, *is a liar*, and the truth is not in him." So someone is making a profession—like you and I are doing—of loving Jesus Christ and valuing Him and wanting to serve Him, and yet, they are violating those laws in some way, fashion, or form. If we do that, God calls us liars, because we have committed to obedience. When we disobey, therefore, we are renegeing on our promise.

Now, I understand that is a legitimate reason some are afraid to get baptized. When you talk with them, you find out that they understand the Truth, but the idea is, "Well, I'm not sure that I'm called. I wonder if I'm called." They understand the Truth—they value it, they agree with it—but they are not sure they have been called. When the fact is, you cannot understand—you cannot value—that way of life unless God has opened your mind. If you really value it—if it is important to you—if you can't see a time in the future when you could run away and your conscience wouldn't bother you when you try to escape it, chances are you are called. Now, I understand that with 2nd generation ones like myself, who grew up in the church and have become young adults, you are making a transition. You are having a hard time because you are thinking, "Is this just my parents' religion, or am I really called?" And there is a hesitancy there—a resistance to getting baptized—because you have a healthy respect for the fact that, "This means I would really have to practice it." But the idea is, "Well, until I get baptized, when I sin, it doesn't really count." Yes, it does count, because sins bring curses—remember, we are talking about automatic cause and effect relationships. As long as you are sinning—breaking God's Law physically or spiritually—you are paying the price. You are being cursed—even if you do not feel it or see it every time, immediately. The only question is, how long do you want to be cursed? You are going to need God's Holy Spirit to help you put away the sin so that you can have more of the blessings of abundant life. If you are called, you are on the hook. God is holding you accountable, whether or not you choose to get baptized. The only question is, will you engage in the battle with the spiritual tools—like the sword of the Spirit—that you will need to be successful? Or are you going to go into battle naked? That's really the only question in this issue of, "Do I or do I not get baptized?" But I digress. The question is, brethren, if you are not baptized, does that mean you are not on the hook? No, you are. But I understand, because if you grow up in the church you know that if you put your hand to the plow and then turn back, it is a bad thing—and, yes, it is being a liar.

When we commit ourselves in baptism, and we say, "Yes, I am going to embrace Jesus Christ as my savior and live after His example, not after the flesh," if we fall—even in weakness—and make mistakes and sin, we are actually renegeing on the promise. And when we do that, God calls us a liar. Thankfully, we can come before His throne on our knees and ask for the shed blood of Jesus Christ to cover us and to forgive us, and we can get back up and start trudging on that path once again. We don't justify ourselves—we don't wallow in it. We receive the shed blood of Jesus Christ; and we continue to fight the battle; and we learn to be honest and to keep our promise to God; and we get back on the path of righteousness. " He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." So God is saying, "Put your money where your mouth is. Are you really one of mine? Prove it by obedience to the things that I value"—which are summarized in the Law, the statutes and the judgments.

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that SAITH he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked [emphasis added].

Jesus Christ was honest, wasn't He? He didn't tell a lie. And so He says, "If you are going to be in Christ, you have to learn to be honest and forthright like Christ was." Skip down to verse 22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" So people who are professing Christians do not think they are guilty of this because they all use the name of Christ, do they not? "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" So we all say, "Well, I don't deny that Jesus is the Christ. I believe He is the Christ—the savior of the world. Therefore, I am not guilty of lying." But what does it mean to deny Jesus Christ? That is a topic in and of itself. Well, we just read above that ones who use His name but do not obey His commandments are *LIARS*. So it all has to do with commandment-keeping—that which the Protestants and Catholics absolutely reject because they believe Christ did it for us so that we don't have to. What Bible are they reading? The Bible is pretty plain. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

"OH! The Anti-Christ—that's that real bad person." No, anti-Christ is simply anything that opposes Christ. You are either of Christ or you are not of

Christ—it is one or the other. If you are not of Christ—pursuing Christ, demonstrating by your fruits that you are obedient to His Commandments, which makes you a supporter and a disciple of Christ—if that is not your orientation, if you reject the Commandments and the Law, if you think you can violate the Sabbath, if you think you don't have to keep the annual Holy Days, that you can go off and do whatever you want, you are ANTI-Christ, because Christ said, "Keep my commandments." That's what anti-Christ is—that which opposes Christ.

He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

And what is the whole point of what John is saying here? Verse 24:

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

That is a confirmation of the faith once delivered—the cardinal doctrine that we have come to value in the wake of the apostasy of God's church in the last days—as opposed to those who are out there yet "keeping" Sabbaths and Holy Days, having Feast of Tabernacles services, and thinking they are fulfilling the laws of God. They have not held on to what Christ revealed—they have perverted it, they have polluted it with their own wisdom which came from the human minds of scholars who are deceived and who do not know the Truth. And so they are offering polluted sacrifices on altars—symbolically—before God, and He says, "I do not accept it. I do not know you because you are not doing it the way I commanded. Your offerings are an abomination to me, and you do not have my Holy Spirit as long as you rebel and refuse to keep the commandments as I gave them to you." And, in fact, they would castigate me, to hear that I am calling them anti-Christ. But what else can I do? As Jesus Christ said honestly and forthrightly: "You are of your father the Devil." Well, you either keep the Truth and practice the things that God said to do, the way He said to do it—which is how we define the faith once delivered—or, you rebel and do it the way man says to do it in opposition to Christ—anti-Christ. If you are not part of one you are part of the other. The fact that many are doing so ignorantly—I know in good conscience they think they are obeying God, and I give them credit for that—doesn't change

the state which they are in. They are on the road to destruction if they do not change.

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

Continuing in the Son and in the Father was defined above as avoiding the state of anti-Christ. And that means, simultaneously—as we have already seen in verses 3 and 4—not being a liar.

So, what are some other subtle manifestations of being considered by God to be honest and forthright and not being a liar? Holding the faith once delivered. And, yet, no-one even thinks of that: Holding on to what God revealed from the beginning. And if you are not doing that, God says that you hold the status of a liar—one who has perverted the Truth, who is not following the Son even though you are using the name. That makes you a hypocrite. If you use His name but you don't do what Christ did—and you don't fulfill what Christ commanded you to do, which are the teachings that we received through Mr. Herbert Armstrong from the beginning—you are a hypocrite. It makes us a liar when we pervert that Truth.

Also, brethren, if we claim to love God's Truth but at the same time harbor bitterness toward others, God says we are likewise liars. Notice James 3 and verse 13. In fact, I'm running out of time, so you will have to read the entire text on your own, but he said in verse 14, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." So, having ill feelings toward someone else—harboring those sorts of feelings—God said is lying against the Truth. Why? Because the Truth of God does not envy, as it says in I Corinthians 13—the love chapter. Real, godly love does not engage in all of this hypocrisy—this self-exaltation and defense of self at the expense of others and includes all of this drama. The true Christian crucifies the self, daily. So when you experience those feelings of envy, or jealousy, or animosity, you see that as your enemy and you say, "It is not Christ in me that is behaving in that way and I am not going to tolerate it." And you ask for the power of God's Holy Spirit and you root those feelings out and you renew your commitment to being a humble servant—not one who expects to be served. And that is how you defeat that spirit, brethren, and that is how you avoid being a liar—a hypocrite.

Those who learn true honesty will be happier, not only in the Kingdom when they will receive eternal life and offices of kingship and priesthood, but even today, brethren, they will be greatly blessed. Luke 8 and verse 15 says:

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

An honest and a good heart. And do you know how good it really makes us feel when we are not trying to shine people on—when we basically can relax and stop manipulating our image in the sight of other people? Be honest; guard your tongues. Many people in the name of "honesty" say anything and everything that comes to their minds. They make people angry, they are hurtful and harmful, and yet, do you know what they say? "Well, I'm just being honest." Well, that's being honestly stupid [laughs]—uncaring toward your neighbor. So let's be honest but still guard the tongue and make sure we are behaving in a way that helps and supports our neighbor—both within and without the church. And when we do that, brethren, boy, the pressure comes off. When we stop playing games and massaging our image, we will find ourselves much more relaxed, enriched, and we will be living that absolute abundance.

Are we experiencing truly abundant living and being honest and forthright? We can, and so let us make that a goal for the next year.