

The first lie you believed and how it messed you up

Written by Bill Perkins

The first lie is the most important lie.

Like the first dandelion seed blown into a yard.

Or, the first domino to fall in a row.

Or, the first shot fired in a war.

The first lie is the most important because it leads to other, bigger lies. Like this one: "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing Good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

The First I Remember

I don't suppose any of us remember the first lie we believed. Can we remember anything at such a young age? But there is a lie that's the first I remember believing. I was five and a small church was being built across the street from my home in New Mexico. One morning I wandered over to the construction site where I saw a carpenter using a flashlight to look around a storage room.

I had never seen a flashlight and coveted it with all my little-boy strength. I asked the carpenter if I could play with it. He smiled, showed me the on-off switch and handed it over. The next day I asked him where I could get a flashlight. He said he would buy me one if I'd pay for it.

I'd Steal the Money

That evening I asked mom for the money. She shook her head sideways and said, "No." I tried to persuade her by begging, whining and crying. But she stood her ground. Finally, I got an idea—I'd steal the money. I remember the fear and excitement as I rifled through her purse, took the money from her billfold, and stuffed it in my jeans pocket.

Looking back I know I stole, but what lie did I believe that enabled me to steal? Was it the lie that said I wouldn't get caught? I believed that lie, and without it I wouldn't have stolen, but it wasn't the most important lie. Was it the lie that said my mother wouldn't care? I didn't believe that. I think it was the third lie that said, "It's okay to lie to get what you want."

After paying for the flashlight and receiving delivery, I feared mom would notice the missing cash, but she didn't. Concluding I was home free, I made no effort to conceal my crime.

“Where'd You Get the Flashlight?”

I hadn't enjoyed checking out dark places long when mother asked, “Where'd you get the flashlight?”

This was a defining moment. My parents had taught me to always tell the truth. But how could I tell the truth? If I told the truth I'd get in trouble--big, painful trouble--and lose my flashlight.

“The carpenter across the street bought it for me as a gift,” I said. I figured that would end her inquiry and I could spend the rest of the day playing in the dark crawl space under our house.

“Really?” she said with an unbelieving smile as she grabbed my hand. “Let's go over there now. I want to thank him.”

Mom found the carpenter searching for something in his tool box. “Did you give this to my son?” she asked in her Southwestern twang, as she held up the flashlight. Terror grabbed my throat. My lies and theft would soon be exposed. In a few seconds mother would unleash her fury. Later, she would tell dad. I couldn't breathe.

I now realize in that moment a neural pathway formed on my brain that grew over time. Whenever I recalled that conversation I felt fear driving me to run away and hide. And even today, when I fear exposure, I feel the pent up fear caused by that first lie and the thousands that followed.

He Lied to Protect Me

The carpenter looked at the flashlight and then at me. “Yes, ma'am, I sure did.” I couldn't believe my luck. He'd lied to protect me. In less than a day, I had believed a lie, stolen, lied to my mother, joined a conspiracy and escaped without a trace of evidence to convict me.

A Small Room in the Soul

But I had changed. Within my soul a small room appeared that housed the lie, the theft, the cover-up and the shame. To make matters worse, did an invisible spirit move into the room and start a campaign of fear and control? Had a home for all future lies been established in my soul?

Pruned Branches Grow Back

I'm sure you can see that the first lie isn't the first one you believed. It's the first one you believed that resulted in bondage to whatever controls you. Finding the lie doesn't guarantee freedom. But without it you'll never be free. You may develop life-skills that will help you manage your issue. But like a pruned branch, it will keep growing back. That's why you live with an awareness that it's lurking within you, waiting for a chance to take over again.

It's also why you need God to show you the first lie and how it messed you up.