

## **GOD'S WORDS FOR LIVING WITH LIARS**

### **PSALM 120**

#### **Case Study:**

Gabe's father was a man that no one would trust. The adage, "You can't be a good addict without being a good liar," fit his old man quite well. Gabe grew up hearing his father rant that he hadn't been drinking as he staggered through the house (at least until his mother quit asking/accusing).

As Gabe grew older his father would occasionally take Gabe around town. When his father spent money or talked to women Gabe would always hear, "Don't tell your mother about this or *we'll* get in trouble" with a wink. At first it made him feel big for his father to trust him with a secret. As Gabe grew older and started connecting more dots, it made him angry.

Gabe's mother wasn't much better about living in reality. As she took Gabe to church or school events, she would always talk as if their life was great. She talked about how excited they were to go on their next trip or go on and on about her new clothes. Gabe could never figure out how she could be so bitter and isolated at home yet so "peppy" in public.

At home Gabe's mother fluctuated between talking to Gabe as a friend about all his father's failings and betrayal, and just letting her bitterness spew out in derogatory rants about whatever Gabe did. When Gabe would ask "What's wrong, Mama? Why are talking to me like that?" She would scold him "Nothing's wrong, if you would just do as you're told everything would be fine."

Gabe got the message both his parents were sending – if you don't like the way life is, just make up your own reality and force others to live in it (by deception, manipulation, or emotional force). Gabe mastered his lessons and was soon an adept liar himself.

In college, however, he met his now wife for whom he gained an authentic love. It scared him, because he knew that to truly love her he must let her actually know him. He would have to surrender his power to "create his own reality" and force her to live in it. But she was worth it. As he surrendered his power (later he realized it was repentance) he found that life was more enjoyable in the "real reality."

While Gabe was wrestling with this change, he read Psalm 120 in his daily Bible readings. It was shocking to read his testimony written thousands of years before he lived it. He used Psalm 120 as an outline for his prayer of surrender to truth and has turned to it frequently as an outline for prayer when the temptation to deceive returns to his mind.

#### **Pre-Questions:**

This case study is meant to challenge you to think biblically about the real struggles of life. These questions will not be answered completely in the sections below. But they do represent the kind of struggles that are being wrestled with in Psalm 120. Use the question to both stir application and to give you new insight into the psalm.

- How is lying a form of “creating your own reality”?
- How do bonds of family and friendship enable the liar to force others to live in their fictitious world?
- What type of influences would Gabe’s parent’s example have on his life?
- What could Gabe do to ground himself to live in the reality as God has created and providentially guided it?

**Read Psalm 120** in your preferred Bible translation. The “rewrite” of Psalm 120 below is an attempt to capture the words that God would give Gabe to pray (Romans 8:26-27). This would be something Gabe would need to pray many times as he struggled to overcome temptations to lie and celebrate God’s faithfulness to deliver him from his parent’s lifestyle.

### **A re-write of Psalm 120**

1. I remember when it first struck me that I was a son of liars. It broke my heart and I called to the Lord. I felt like everyone (much less God) would/should shun me, but He answered my prayer.
2. “God, pluck me from the life I am living,” I cried desperately. “I have lived a lie so long I am no longer sure what the Truth is. You must show me. Deliver me from the lying ways of my father and mother. Deliver me from the deceitful tongue I have skillfully trained in my own mouth.”
3. I have already given the first nineteen years of my life to lies. What more could my deceitful tongue want?
4. I know what it wanted. Like a savage warrior sent from the Father of Lies, it wanted to sink its deadly arrows into my heart and take my very life (every relationship, dream, and hope I have). It would kill my every dream and as I wept over the brokenness burn the carcasses to ashes. I have seen lies consume my parents. I know their end game.
5. Woe to me that I was raised by liars. That my examples were an addict, codependent, womanizer, enabler, swindler, and hypocrite.
6. Too long have I lived according to their example. I felt the pain of their empty words and pass the pain on. I hated peace because it cost truth, until You taught me to love truth and trust You for peace. Too long I lived there, but now I long to be a citizen of Your way.
7. I am for true peace now. I finally see that there is no other kind. Give me the strength to continue to speak truth only, because I know the light of truth will cause great hostility with my parent’s lies of darkness.

### **Passages for Further Study:**

Exodus 20:16; Psalm 58; Proverbs 13:5, 15:4, 19:9; Jeremiah 17:5-13; John 8:42-47; Romans 9:1; Ephesians 4:25; James 3:1-12

## **Post Questions:**

Now that you have read Psalm 120, examined how Gabe might rewrite it for his situation, and studied several other passages, consider the following questions:

- How should Gabe come to view his parents as he strives to become a person of integrity?
- How should Gabe manage the conflicts with his parents that will inevitable come as he commits to speak only truth?
- How would your answers to the “pre-questions” have changed as a result of reflecting on Psalm 120?
- For what instances of living amongst liars and the subsequent struggle to be a person of integrity do you need to re-write your own version of Psalm 120?