

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **DEALING WITH DECEPTION AND DECEIVERS – PART ONE**

*<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.  
Matthew 24:4 (ESV)*

*“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way.....”  
2 Thessalonians 2:3(a) (NIV)*

*<sup>26</sup> These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.  
1 John 2:26 (NASB)*

*On every side the wicked prowl,  
as vileness is exalted among the children of man.  
Psalm 12:8 (ESV)*

*<sup>4</sup> No one enters suit justly;  
no one goes to law honestly;  
they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies,  
they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.  
Isaiah 59:4 (ESV)*

**Recognise the possibility, or rather the likelihood, that people may be lying to you.**

One of the first steps in becoming a discerning person is to accept the fact that some people act in really devious ways. If you don't recognise the possibility, or rather the likelihood, of encountering such craftiness you will not be looking out for it. Then, what you don't expect you won't see, even if it is under your nose. So don't rule out the idea that a particular person, or people in general, could be lying to you. Keep an entirely open mind, not only when you first meet people, but on an ongoing basis thereafter, until you have learned enough to have a proper basis for trusting them.

**Do not assume that you are a good judge of character - most of us aren't.**

I've heard people boast of being a good judge of character, but I've never heard anybody, apart from me, admit to being a poor judge of character. There seems to be a stigma attached to being easily deceived. Therefore few will admit to it, even when it is obviously the case. However, it is actually the norm to lack discernment, at least amongst those who are not wicked themselves. Conversely, the wicked are usually accurate judges of character, partly because they know what to look for. It is also because they are well aware of how devious and false people can be.

They are also under no illusions to begin with, so nothing surprises them. At any rate, you should be absolutely frank and openly admit that you can be, and have been, deceived by people. Also accept that you need to be on the alert for this in the future. Even to admit those obvious things to yourself will be a major step forward. It will bring you within that small minority of people who admit the truth to themselves about their own current level of discernment. You can then begin the slow process of learning how to discern, which you can't even start doing until you realise that you *need to*.

**For various reasons, we all find lies much more believable than the truth. Recognise this fact and be even more vigilant.**

Our sinful nature, which finds lies appealing, plus the involvement of demons, means we believe lies more readily than truth. When faced with a choice between the truth and a lie, most of us will believe the lie. Moreover, lies are accepted quickly, whereas the truth is accepted slowly, if at all. One sees this with malicious rumours, false accusations and slander. These are accepted instantly, without any checking. Yet, if you tell the truth, people will reject what you say, or be slow to accept it. Basically, lies are much more appetising than truth, and they always have been:

*The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;  
they go down into the inner parts of the body.*  
**Proverbs 26:22 (RSV)**

When a lie is presented as a *secret*, or as something that has been *leaked*, it is even more readily accepted. The very fact that something is whispered to us appeals to our flesh and makes it all the more enticing. Such things are rarely scrutinised properly, or at all. Whenever the *truth* is told the demons speak into your mind to persuade you *not to believe* it. But when a *lie* is told to you those same demons will urge you to believe it and *not to check* it. That is why, when deciding whether a thing is true or false, we opt for the wrong answer far more than 50% of the time.

Demons don't often do spectacular things. Their preference, at least in the sceptical West, is not to be noticed at all. They whisper into our minds every day to lie to us themselves and also to get us to believe the lies told by people. The demons work hard to make all lies seem more convincing, while making the truth seem implausible. Their task is made easier by our flesh nature and by the fact that we live in a fallen world. Those two things mean we are already drawn towards lies, and away from truth, even without the demons' involvement.

**Develop the technique of checking, double-checking, and even triple checking, the things you are told.**

One of the most effective things you can do to become more discerning is to start, as a matter of *routine*, to check, double-check, and sometimes triple check, the things you are told. Make that your standard policy all the time, not just when you feel suspicious or think something can't be true. Get into the habit of automatically checking things, as a matter of course, even when you think the thing that has been said is true and you see no reason why it should be untrue. Never assume that a thing must be true just because someone says it. Nothing can be taken at face value.

What a person says could be true, but it could also be a lie, and it often is. Or they could be innocently repeating a lie which was told to them and which they did not check. It therefore needs to be your standard working assumption that the person speaking to you has not checked any of the facts themselves and that you must do so yourself. This is especially important if you are told something negative about another person, which diminishes them in your estimation. People have all sorts of reasons for making false, and even malicious, allegations.

I reached the point in my law firm where I told staff that they were welcome to report any concerns to me, but that I would never take any *action* on what they said about another person until I had checked, double-checked and even triple-checked whatever they alleged. Saying that, and making sure that everyone knows you mean it, acts as an important safeguard. It creates a disincentive against making false allegations in the first place. The people around you know that any lies they tell would probably be revealed, so they tell fewer lies.

Precautions like that are also necessary for your own sake to prevent you acting hastily, in reliance on false information or on an exaggerated, or even a mistaken, account. The fact that you have promised

others, and yourself, that you will always check everything has the effect of slowing *you* down and prevents you making rash decisions. Very few people adopt these safety measures to guard themselves against being lied to. Many of us believe things far too quickly and accept negative allegations about other people without question, even when they are based on only one person's word.

If people get to know that you *don't* check things you are virtually asking to be deceived. They will soon realise that they can easily get you to act hastily in reliance on whatever they tell you, especially if it sounds like a secret that is shared on a "confidential" basis. Therefore staff will deliberately tell you lies about other staff in the hope that you will rashly take unjustified action, based solely on what they say. Their intention is that you will react prematurely, without checking things, and then undermine, or even remove, someone whom they dislike or see as a rival.

However, if they know that you always check all the facts carefully before believing or acting on anything that anybody says, they will think twice before lying to you. Even if they still go ahead and tell lies, you are increasing your chances of exposing the lie and of catching the liars. Having said all that, it is also very important that you should always be willing to at least *listen* to any allegation, however unlikely it may sound, and even if it comes from only one person. My point is simply that you should not *believe it, or act upon it*, without first investigating it.

A Christian's desire to avoid listening to gossip, though well-intentioned, has the disadvantage that it can make him reluctant to listen to the very people he most needs to hear. Those people, if he had allowed them to speak to him, could have provided vital information which may have exposed a deceiver. However, those who try to warn us are often pushed away, and not listened to, on the basis that "*we don't engage in gossip*". I have myself ignored genuine warnings, without looking into them, because what was said seemed unlikely or surprising or had not been proved.

When I took that approach I made a big mistake. I should have looked into such things *every time*, though without acting upon them until they were proved. Never dismiss any allegations out of hand. Investigating an allegation is not the same as *believing gossip*. The sincere determination to avoid the sin of gossip has often led people to refuse to listen to vital information which they desperately needed to hear. We have to see the clear distinction between these things. Weighing everything, (*diakrino*) and checking whether it is true or false, *is not gossip*.

**Use the technique which the police use of looking at the suspect's eyes while he's talking. At the moments when he breaks eye contact he is probably lying.**

I was a police constable for three years in the mid-1980s and gained experience in interviewing suspects and witnesses and assessing whether their evidence was true or false. You can learn how to do that more effectively and there are practical methods which you can use to help you identify where the lies are in a story. One good technique, which is useful for all but the most accomplished liars, is to watch the person's eyes closely while they are speaking.

At each of the moments in their story when they are telling a lie, they tend to look down at the table or momentarily break eye contact in some way. That is true for most people, not all. In particular it doesn't apply to really hard-core liars, whose conscience has long since evaporated away. So it is a general guide, but not an absolutely reliable one. You also need to be careful to distinguish this from the way in which even innocent people may break eye contact when speaking of some trauma, such as a sexual assault, about which they feel a sense of *shame*.

Victims of such traumas, who feel violated or degraded, will also look away. But they do so due to shame, not guilt. For practised, habitual liars, lying has become so normal that it no longer makes them feel uncomfortable. Such people will look you straight in the eye and lie to your face, without blinking or flinching at all. Nevertheless, when you are dealing with an ordinary person who isn't traumatised,

and who isn't yet completely dishonest, this technique can help you to spot where the lies are in their story.

**Another technique is to ask the person to tell their story repeatedly. Liars will tell it slightly differently each time.**

Another technique which is slower and requires more effort is to ask the person the same questions repeatedly, preferably in slightly different ways. When interviewing him, go through the story again and again. Get him to tell it two or three times, or even more. A truthful witness will be consistent each time, but with a liar there will be little discrepancies because they can't remember all the tiny *details* of the lies they have told. You need not go through it again immediately the moment he finishes each telling of the story. A time delay can sometimes help you, as it makes it even harder for him to remember what he said before.

Also ask him additional questions about specific points of detail or draw him back to some other part of the story. That makes it more difficult for him because he has to deal with the story out of sequence. He will also struggle with the sudden changes of subject. Also ask him to tell particular parts of the story again or to clarify or expand on them. If the person is honest, and is talking about actual events or conversations which *really happened*, they will tell you the same story every time and will include the same small details.

They will also be able to expand and go into further detail, to the full extent of their knowledge. They will do all this no matter how many times you ask them to, and regardless of the sequence in which the story has to be told. Even if new or additional details are brought up by a truthful person they will be *consistent* with everything else he has said. That is because they are accessing their *real memory* which records actual events. Those kind of memories are retrievable at any time and they always come out the same way.

However, if a person is telling a false story which involves things which never really happened, or were never really said, the details will change slightly with each re-telling of the story. They can't help it unless they are a really skilled, professional confidence-trickster or spy who has done his homework and learned his cover-story meticulously. Such people make a great effort to memorise the whole story flawlessly. However, for the average person, if the things they are speaking of never really happened and are just made up, they have got to retrieve the small details from a different part of their memory.

That is the part that deals with short term recall of the things that he himself has merely *said*, rather than real events that actually *happened*. The person's own words, including the lies they tell, are much less deeply carved into their memory than real events are. Therefore they quickly fade, such that the liar finds it difficult to be absolutely consistent when they are telling the story for the second, third or fourth time. That is especially so if parts of the story are asked for individually, or out of chronological order, or where he is unexpectedly asked to zoom in and suddenly provide a lot of fine detail about one single aspect of the story.

That is because they are actually telling a new story each time and making it up as they go along, rather than retrieving actual facts from a database in the real memory, as when talking about genuine events that actually happened. Another feature of unskilled liars, as distinct from professionals, is that they can't resist adding little bits to the story each time, even where it hasn't been asked for. I call it 'embroidering' their account. They insert small and totally unnecessary details from their imagination because they think it adds authenticity to their story if they go into fine detail.

It's also because they are such habitual liars that extra lies pour out of them automatically, as they do from Hillary Clinton, even when they aren't needed. Be on the lookout for these tiny *additional* details on each re-telling of the story. Instead of thinking they don't matter, focus in on them and remember them. Ideally, make written notes or, better still, record the interview. Then your recollection of those

apparently unimportant details will be much better than theirs. Indeed, your recollection can be 100% verbatim, because you have got a full transcript on tape, or on paper, of exactly what they said.

You will then be able to compare each re-telling of the story with the previous ones. Then, instead of focusing on the obviously important issues or events, which they are better able to remember, focus on the tiniest details, which they won't be making as much effort to remember. It is in these areas that they are most likely to trip themselves up. By looking for these little discrepancies you will often find whether a person is lying and what about. When you point out the inconsistency they may then dig a deeper hole for themselves as they elaborate even further to try to explain it away.

In doing so they may create yet more contradictions with other things that they have said, but forgotten, or remembered wrongly. Of course, not everyone can interrogate people while taking notes and even recording them. Nevertheless, in a workplace investigation or disciplinary hearing, or even within a church, when dealing with complaints or allegations, you can use these methods up to a point. I would advise you to try to do so as much as you can and whenever possible as it will greatly increase your ability to identify and expose liars.

Truthful people also make errors, or have gaps in their evidence, or points on which they are hazy, but it sounds different. They openly admit that they are unsure of certain facts, or the precise sequence of events, and will just say what they do know, without pretence, bluster or embroidering. They will also freely say "*I don't know*" when they don't know, even when that harms their case, and they won't try to fill up the gaps. By contrast, when a liar tells his story slightly differently each time, he does so without realising it, while purporting to be confident of his facts, and without expressing any doubts.

**Look out for momentary panic in people's eyes when particular things are said or asked. That tells you to dig deeper to find what is bothering them, or what they are hiding.**

Another technique which you can use to alert you to problems is to take careful note whenever you see a sudden look of *fear or panic* in a person's eyes. This could arise when you are questioning them and you mention some sensitive issue or event. There ought not to be panic, or at least not without some reasonable cause. Therefore if you do see such a sudden look of fear, with no apparent explanation, you need to register it and remember it. Then take steps to find out what it signified. Sometimes the cause will be obvious, as where a person is given bad news.

If so their reaction is as you would expect, so there is nothing to investigate. However, that is not always the case. Sometimes there will be a sudden unexplained flash of fear or alarm when, so far as you can tell, nothing significant has been said. If that occurs the chances are something is happening that you don't yet know about, but which that person does know about, and which causes them alarm. That could be for any number of reasons, some of which may be entirely innocent. But there are times when it is not innocent.

If you take note you can gain a valuable insight as to how that person really feels about the issue, event or person, which made them feel afraid when it was mentioned. In chapter 12 below, I tell the story of 'Fergus' and 'Malcolm', who were ex-employees of mine. Malcolm had many problems and I had asked Fergus to mentor him. The point is Fergus was meant to be helping and supporting Malcolm. One day Malcolm was going through some severe difficulties and I advised him to spend more time with Fergus.

To my surprise, Malcolm's face suddenly froze with panic and it was evident that that idea alarmed him. I did not question him immediately but I took note of his reaction and asked him later how he was getting on with Fergus. Initially Malcolm acted as if all was well and said things were fine. But, because I had seen the panic in his eyes, I knew he was hiding something from me. So I kept pressing gently for more information and tried to be reassuring. Eventually Malcolm revealed that Fergus, his supposed mentor, was actually a real problem to him.

He dreaded having to spend even more time with him than he already was. Instead of helping Malcolm, Fergus was using and exploiting him. So the real situation was the exact opposite of what I had assumed it to be. But I only came to learn of that due to the momentary look of alarm in Malcolm's eyes. If I had ignored that flash of fear, or assumed it meant nothing, or that I was mistaken, I would not have learned of Malcolm's ordeal or of Fergus' real nature. Therefore make full use of this warning sign whenever the situation arises and don't dismiss it.

**I used the technique of watching closely for panic in people's eyes when I was in the police to catch a disproportionately high number of car drivers who were committing offences.**

Let me give another example which shows how useful this technique can be. When I was a police constable in the 1980s I discovered a useful way to identify guilty motorists before I had even stopped their cars. I stood in uniform by a 'zebra' crossing, just around a sharp corner in the road in the town centre. I then watched the drivers' eyes as they turned the corner, for which they had to slow right down. As they drove slowly towards me I could discern which of them I ought to stop and pull over, merely by watching carefully for any panic or fear in their eyes.

They would all make eye contact with me because I was staring directly at their faces as they turned the corner and approached me. Most of them remained calm and there was no reaction of panic. But if I did see that momentary flash of fear I immediately raised my arm to stop them. Then I spoke to them, taking care to smell for any alcohol on their breath, as well as asking for their driving licence, insurance, MOT certificate and checking their car for defects. I found that this simple method worked extraordinarily well. I could let twenty or thirty cars go by, because I saw no look of fear.

But I would then get a huge number of convictions from the one in twenty or one in thirty that I did stop. In fact, I gained a reputation for catching a disproportionate number of drunk drivers. I caught more than the rest of my shift put together. That ranged from 10-15 officers, depending on the numbers on duty, so it shows the scale. Admittedly, it was partly because I simply stopped more cars than anybody else, but the main reason was the technique I used. It really does work, not only in that very specific situation, but in your general dealings with people.

**Pay close attention to people's facial expressions and tone of voice, and place more reliance on those than on the literal words people say. If these don't match up, trust your impression, not their words.**

God designed the human body and face, and especially the eyes, to be a means of communicating what we feel and think. They are directly 'wired up' to our thoughts and, even more so, to our emotions. This linkage operates completely unconsciously and thus only a trained actor or a skilled fraudster can override it in order to 'lie with their face'. That being so, a person's face, tone of voice and body language are a more reliable guide to what they are really thinking and feeling than the actual words they say.

People lie with their words on a regular basis. The wicked find it easy to do so. But very few know how to lie with their *faces* or their *bodies* because the signals and indicators which those convey are all transmitted automatically. People have no conscious part to play in controlling the dozens of little muscles in their face as they speak. It is rather like the blinking instinct, which God has also programmed into our 'software'. Nobody needs to decide to blink or to put out their hand when they fall. You do such things without any conscious thought.

Accordingly, when a person is speaking to you they will give conscious thought to what *words* to use, including what lies to tell. But they have little or no control over their faces, eyes, posture, hand movements or other mannerisms. So if they are feeling embarrassed, happy, angry, resentful, envious, afraid, confused, hateful etc, or even if they are in love, their faces, eyes, bodies and hands will operate

automatically to convey their *real* feelings and thoughts. That signalling process continues, even when they are lying, and will contradict their words.

Tone of voice also helps us to interpret the real meaning of people's words and any underlying feelings and attitudes which they choose not to say, but which are nevertheless there. I once heard a piece on radio in which an actor spoke a short phrase in various tones of voice, each of which conveyed a radically different meaning, even though the words he said were exactly the same each time.

I am also reminded of something Churchill said. He was discussing how, unless there are special reasons, a soldier must instantly obey orders, whether he agrees with them or not. He then said that in the Grenadier Guards, with whom he served for a time, there is a tradition that all orders are to be responded to with the single word "*Sir*". However, he said that whereas the soldier has to obey, he does not necessarily have to express enthusiasm and that "*....all kinds of inflections may be given to this monosyllable*".

You will have found many times that you are picking up an impression or 'vibes' that a person is angry, anxious, reluctant etc, but when you ask them if that is how they are feeling, they immediately deny it, even emphatically. That can be bewildering if you choose to believe that person's express words rather than what you are reading on their face or picking up in their tone. Therefore do the opposite. Where there is a contradiction you should generally trust your instinct and believe your own impression, not what they say.

A person will lie to you with their words, but their face and body can't easily join in and be consistent with their words unless they have been trained as an actor or they are a professional confidence-trickster. When an ordinary person tries to pretend to be happy or friendly when they aren't really so, they will smile with their *mouth*, which they can control, but not with their *eyes*, which they can't. You may pick up this mismatch instinctively, and probably unconsciously. You will then be confused because you can sense that something doesn't fit, even if you can't quite put your finger on it.

You might even ask the person to clarify how they feel and they may repeat their words, but it still doesn't ring true. It is not only that our faces and eyes have been programmed by God to *express* our feelings. He has also given us the software to *interpret* other people's eyes, faces, tones, postures, and hand mannerisms etc. He programmed that ability into all of us in just the same way. This software for interpreting other people's faces is highly effective and works just as automatically as that which creates our own facial expressions. That is why it is more reliable than what people say.

God has done a similar thing with dogs. They 'read' other dogs by observing their postures and especially the position and movements of their tails. That is why a dog which has had its tail docked will tend to get into more fights. It is less able to communicate to other dogs that it is not being aggressive. The way God made humans is vastly more sophisticated. Yet, most people pay little or no attention to all of this as part of their overall discernment. In particular, they routinely accept what people say and ignore or override their own 'face-interpretation software'.

When we do that we are far more likely to be deceived and to misjudge people and situations. Therefore be on the lookout for any inconsistency between the express words and the instinctive impression you are picking up from their faces, tone of voice or body language. If these don't tally, you should generally trust your own impressions that you are picking up. Believe your own instinct, not what they say. At the very least, even if you don't make any final decision, let that inconsistency cause you to look into matters more closely and to make other enquiries.

No system is infallible and you can also make errors in interpreting people's faces or tones of voice. That is particularly so given that the demons will do all they can to get you to see things which aren't really there and to get the wrong end of the stick. For example, you might be correct in sensing that the person is angry, but it could be they are angry with someone else, not you. However, where such errors

or misinterpretations occur, it is usually due to some other intervening factor, rather than to any deficiency in the face/tone interpretation ‘software’ which God has put into us.

However, even if your instincts do guide you wrongly at times, such that you pick up ‘vibes’ which are not really there, you will still make fewer errors by taking your instinctive impressions into account than by refusing to do so. If you rely solely on the literal, plain meaning of the actual words people say you will be a sitting duck for deceivers because you have ‘switched off’ one of the God-given mechanisms which is designed to help us to discern. The point is it is meant to be used *alongside* other tests. God did not intend for us to rely *solely* on this mechanism. If we do that we may well misinterpret things. But neither does He want us to switch it off entirely and to refuse to use it as *one of* the tests we take account of.

**Don’t allow your wish to avoid engaging in gossip to prevent you from listening to people and then evaluating, and checking, what they allege.**

It is obviously right that we should avoid the sin of gossip, because the Bible clearly forbids us to gossip or to slander other people:

***Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.***

*James 4:11 (RSV)*

This prohibition against gossip presents no difficulties for the wicked as they pay no attention to it anyway. Therefore it does not limit their actions, even in churches. They just carry on regardless. It is only the sincere and godly people, who earnestly want to obey God, who pay any attention to the command to avoid *engaging in* gossip. I put those words in italics because it is important to distinguish the sin of gossip from merely *hearing and evaluating* what other people say. The former is obviously sin, but the latter is not, or at least not necessarily.

There are people, and I used to be one, who are so earnest about not gossiping that they will not even allow themselves to *hear* negative or accusing things being said. They fear that even to listen to such things may be gossip. That is a mistake and will prevent you hearing things that you really need to hear. For example, a friend of mine, ‘Martin’, once tried to warn me about a church leader called ‘Rick’ who had become corrupt and carnal in a number of ways. I describe some of the things Rick did in other books in this series, especially Book 1.

The point is that, about *five years* before I discovered for myself that Rick was a liar and a manipulator, Martin had tried to warn me of those very facts. But I refused even to let him finish what he wished to say. I felt, *at that time*, that even hearing him would be gossip. I gently corrected Martin and urged him not to make any accusations against Rick, or even to criticise him. I said we should do all we can to support Rick and to protect his reputation and that the Devil would dearly love to see us tearing Rick down, when we ought to be building him up.

That was how I spoke at the time and there was actually some truth, and sense, in what I said. But I had a wrong definition of gossip and was seriously misunderstanding what God did, and did not, want us to do. Martin didn’t argue with me. He just let the subject drop and it was not mentioned again between us for five years. By then I had had a number of eye-opening experiences of my own and had realised for myself that Rick was carnal and dishonest and was causing damage to God’s people. For about two years I tried to tackle Rick and to urge him to repent and change.

I had every right to do all of that because I was a member of that church and also the Chairman of the Trustees. However, I got nowhere and Rick blocked me at every turn. He also told blatant lies, to me and about me, to avoid being held accountable. It was only at this stage that I rang Martin and, very



belatedly, said to him “*Do you remember that time, five years ago, when you tried to warn me about ‘Rick’? Could you tell me now what it was that you were trying to tell me back then?*” He then told me about a long list of problems and wrongdoings, about which he too had tried to tackle Rick.

Like me, he got nowhere, which is why he left the church years before. I was struck by how remarkably similar his experiences were to my own. They showed that Rick was wicked, and had been so for years, without me realising it. I felt frustrated that, if only I had listened to Martin five years earlier, I could have avoided a lot of stress and conflict. Instead, for about two years, I had tried, forlornly, to tackle Rick, without realising he was wicked. I had naively treated Rick as if he simply needed help and advice whereas he actually needed to be exposed and resisted.

I had meant well and was sincere but I was mistaken. I also failed to see the difference between *engaging in gossip* and merely *listening to people*. Therefore I denied myself the chance to learn vital facts about Rick which I desperately needed. That was naïve and misguided. In refusing to hear Martin warning me about Rick I had not pleased God, except perhaps in the sincerity of my *motives*. My policy of refusing to listen to any accusation against a leader, before even knowing what it was about, was wrong and unwise. I would urge you not to make the same mistake.

**Pay attention to the smallest fragments of evidence about someone’s character. Open your eyes and ask many more questions as soon as you begin to sense something may be wrong.**

It is unlikely that you will ever be given any evidence about another person’s character that is totally clear, complete and unmistakable. At least you won’t get it all in one go, or all at the outset. Most of the time in real life evidence comes in small, incomplete, and even contradictory, fragments. That is regrettable but it is how it is and there is no use expecting it to be otherwise. Thus if you will only listen to people if they can give you absolute proof or comprehensive, unmistakable evidence you will never get anywhere. Most of the evidence you will ever get will be in the form of small clues and puzzling little inconsistencies.

The full picture will only emerge afterwards, when you have completed your enquiries, not while you are still doing them, and certainly not before you even begin. You can’t expect completeness, consistency and total clarity at the outset, when the first warning signs are being given to you. So it is essential that you take note of those small clues when they arise. Instead of ignoring them, just because they are confusing, inconsistent or incomplete, look diligently for other evidence to prove, or disprove, what you have heard so far. I liken it to pulling on a loose thread from a cardigan. If you see those little indicators then ‘pull on them’ by looking into the situation further.

It is surprising how much more information will then come to light. But it won’t materialise if you don’t actively look for it. Sometimes a person wants to warn you about some problem, of which they know you are unaware. That is difficult for them as they feel vulnerable and with good reason. It could cost them a lot if they go out on a limb by warning you, only to find that they are ignored, disbelieved, or even resented for doing so. Most people don’t like receiving bad news or being alerted to problems that they then have to deal with. A common response is to “shoot the messenger”.

The person raising the concern may also be left alone to deal with the reprisals from those wrongdoers, about whom he has given evidence or made allegations. It could involve bullying, victimisation or even the loss of their job if those people get to know what he has said about them. Realise therefore, if you are in a position of power, that people will not come straight out with a warning and tell you exactly what they know. They need to sound you out first, to find out what you already know about the wrongdoer and what you think of him.

They may start a conversation in which they raise a mild concern indirectly, or through little hints. It may even be done in a jocular tone, so they can back off if it isn’t well received and pretend they didn’t mean anything by it. It is done as a test. They need to find out whether you are open-minded or are

likely to be defensive, or even resentful, about what they are trying to say. They will fear that you could even be supportive of the wrongdoer. If you immediately defend the person about whom they are warning you, they will clam up.

Then you will never get to hear the rest of their story. You will have scared them off before they really got going, while they were still dropping hints and testing your allegiances. For example I once appointed a lady called Caroline to work as a secretary at my law firm. Then suddenly, within a week, she wanted to leave. I questioned her and she began, very tentatively, to raise some concerns. But she spoke in a nervous and cryptic way, as if she was dancing around to see how I would react. She said her concern was “*about someone close to you*”.

She skirted around the topic anxiously but wouldn't spell out what she was trying to say. I learned later that she was actually trying to warn me about my PA, Julie, whom I have described above. In less than a week Caroline had already seen through her and recognised her falseness. She was therefore dropping hints and hoping that I would pick them up. If I had been receptive, she would have opened up and been much more explicit. But Caroline saw that I had no idea what was going on or how sinister and manipulative Julie was.

She backed off and said no more because I immediately began to reassure her that Julie was a “very nice person”. Caroline gave up because she realised I was closed-minded and unable to see what she had already seen, even in her first week. Of course her vantage point, as a junior employee, was very different from mine. In some ways she had a much clearer view. She was looking at Julie from below, as a colleague, whereas I only ever saw her from above, as a boss. From that angle Julie looked very different. Caroline saw the reality but I only saw the illusions, as Julie acted out her part.

The problem is it can be difficult to know where the boundary is and how to achieve balance. It is wrong to be unwilling to hear any criticism at all of a person, because of a reluctance to engage in gossip. On the other hand, it is also wrong to believe and act upon every allegation that people make, such that innocent people's reputations are harmed. These are the two extreme ends of the spectrum and both need to be avoided.

The right approach is to be willing to *listen and investigate* from the outset, but not to *believe or act upon* anything until you have all the facts and have *verified* them. So when people raise complaints or make accusations pay attention and show empathy. Don't ignore or dismiss anything. Also hear them out fully, *right to the very end* and take all their comments seriously. Don't say anything to 'reassure' them or to defend or excuse the person about whom they are complaining. That is premature and inappropriate at this stage.

If you do any of those things before they have *completely finished* telling their story they will conclude that you aren't really listening. Even worse, they will think you don't believe them or that you are resistant to their point. Listen sympathetically to the very end and don't form any conclusions whatsoever at this stage. Also don't make any assumptions as to what the informant's motives might be. Find that out as you go along as part of the investigatory process. There is plenty of time later on to work out whether the complainant, and their complaint, are genuine.

Wait until the conversation is over, when you have fully heard them and proved that you really were listening open-mindedly. Only then should you even begin to answer them. It is probably still best not to give any response, even at that point, because your understanding of the real position can change dramatically during an investigation. In particular, don't say anything to defend the person being complained about. If you do it implies that you are prejudiced in their favour and even that you have a closed mind. If you give that impression it puts a witness off saying any more.

Remember they are already nervous and therefore likely to misunderstand and over-react to the things you say. Also saying such things can actually *create* a closed mind in you, even if you hadn't got one before. As you hear yourself defending the person you may start to be persuaded by your own words.

Then you will begin, unconsciously, to form conclusions prematurely, even before the enquiry has begun. If so your mind will tend to close automatically without you knowing that it has. Then you will not investigate matters with the requisite vigour or thoroughness.

It also increases the chances of you misconstruing the evidence. You will look at the case through the lens of your own words, by which you have already declared the person innocent, even before you investigated the complaint. You must also realise that people are so wary they will feed you information *in stages*, to see what you do with the first batch before telling you any more. So don't be quick to assume they have finished telling their story, *even if they say they have finished*. The chances are they are still holding back additional information, and perhaps the most crucial facts, until they are absolutely convinced that you can be trusted.

If the Caroline episode happened today, I would immediately reassure her that anything she said would be kept confidential and used as the basis to start a discreet investigation, in which she would not be named or exposed. At that time I was too insensitive, and naïve, to realise what was going on, or to pick up what Caroline was hinting at. My mistake was I expected her to come out into the open immediately and clearly say what she wanted to say. That might be a reasonable expectation when dealing with strong, confident, senior people, though probably not even then.

However, it certainly isn't realistic when one is dealing with weak, timid, junior staff, which is what most victims are. I therefore missed a helpful early warning about Julie which would have saved me, and my staff, a lot of grief. About a year later I found out for myself what Caroline had been concerned about and what she had been trying to say to me. However, I could have found out back then if only I had been alert enough, and sensitive enough, to have "*pulled on the woollen thread*" that Caroline was offering me and found out what emerged from it.

### **How to tell when a woman is genuinely crying or is just faking it, in order to manipulate you or to get you to back off when tackling her, or conducting an investigation**

This next point may sound like an odd piece of advice, but it can be very useful, and it arises quite often. You might be in a situation where you have got to interview a woman about her misconduct or incompetence. Or she could be making an allegation or complaint about someone else. Either way, you may have to question her, and perhaps even cross-examine her, either at church or at work. While you are dealing with her you may find the woman will begin to cry. If so you have to work out whether her sobbing is genuine or phoney.

If your assumption is that all such crying is obviously genuine, then think again. Fake sobbing is routinely used by deceitful women as a manipulative device. They may want to get you to stop a particular line of questioning as you are getting too close to the truth and they are finding it hard to think of convincing answers. Starting to cry at such a key moment may cause you to stop the questioning altogether, or at least to adjourn for a while. If so, they hope you will get distracted and forget what the unanswered question was, when the interview eventually resumes.

Or they may just want to manipulate you into feeling sorry for them so that you go easy on them and believe what they say. Or they hope you might abandon the investigation or let them off or give them some minor sanction such as a warning. Sometimes the reason they want you to adjourn the meeting is to gain more time to think of invented answers, tamper with documents, hide evidence or delete emails before the meeting resumes. They may also try to intimidate the witnesses to get them to amend or withdraw their evidence prior to the next meeting/hearing.

It could also be that they want you to adjourn for procedural or tactical purposes to get past some qualifying date at which they then have enough length of employment to go to a Tribunal. Or it could be to cause some previous verbal or written warning to become older than say 6 or 12 months and thus to 'expire', so it no longer counts against them. You might be blind to such tricks, but they aren't. Also

if they can get you to adjourn a meeting, they may then pretend to be sick. Then, even more time can be lost, during which they might be entitled to sick pay. This could be spun out for weeks or even months.

When I was dealing with 'Chloe' I suspended her from her job as a supervisor and began an investigatory process into her conduct. While I was interviewing her and asking some searching questions she played this very trick. She pretended to cry and got me to adjourn. Then she went off sick, saying she was suffering from "stress" and unable to come back to resume the investigatory meeting. This gap in the proceedings went on for exactly two months, during which she was on full pay.

Then on the very day when her contractual entitlement to sick pay ran out, and she was no longer going to receive any wages, she suddenly returned to work! Her stress-related illness had evidently gone away at the exact moment when the sick pay ended. We resumed the investigation and went into a disciplinary hearing and I dismissed her for gross misconduct. However, her devious manoeuvres got her three months of extra pay before she was eventually sacked. She was fully expecting dismissal because she had been made aware of how much evidence I'd got.

Indeed, that was the very reason why she resorted to those tactics. She knew it would have been futile to stand and fight. She knew I was going to win because I had told her how much I'd already found out about her conduct and what the other staff had revealed. So, moving back to the original point, sometimes (not always) a woman's crying is fake and is being contrived to deceive you. Therefore, if a woman does start crying, let me now give you a test, to see whether it is genuine. You will need to do the very opposite of what the woman (if she's false) is trying to get you to do.

Instead of stopping, even for a few seconds, force yourself to continue your line of questioning, *without any break*. It will go against all your instincts and upbringing, because you'll feel it's not gentlemanly to ignore a woman's tears. Even so, make yourself do it. Ask her another difficult question and do it in a calm, dispassionate tone of voice, as if you hadn't even noticed she is sobbing. At this point, the crying woman will probably do one of two very different things.

She might continue crying uncontrollably, being unable to stop, despite the provocation of your continued questioning and your failure to pay any attention to her tears. If she does this the chances are she is genuinely crying and is not faking it. Alternatively, she might suddenly stop crying and become hostile, or even abusive. If she does this you can be quite sure her tears were phoney from the outset. No woman who is genuinely upset is capable of bringing her crying to an immediate stop and displaying some other emotion instead, such as anger.

They simply can't do an 'emergency stop'. They are even less capable of suddenly becoming calm so as to answer your questions, or put their own questions to you, in a resentful tone. In addition to this, take a close look at the woman's *face*. Check to see whether any *actual tears*, in the literal liquid sense, are being produced by her eyes. If they are, that is an indicator that the crying is likely to be real. However, if her face is dry, and her eyes are not producing any actual tears, you can be even more certain she is a fake.

I first learned this lesson about how to test whether crying is real when I was in an investigatory hearing with 'Charlotte'. She wanted to become a solicitor (lawyer) and was doing a fully paid trial year with us first, as a legal clerk, to see how she performed. She was actually a Christian, or claimed to be, but I doubt whether she truly was saved because she was so thoroughly dishonest. Indeed it was because of her devious ways, her neglect of files, and the lies she'd told to cover it all up, that she was being investigated in the first place.

So I was not well-disposed towards her anyway and already considered her an unreliable and dishonest witness. I was part way through an interview in which I had been putting a series of probing questions to her about her neglect of various files. She was giving really feeble answers, which were plainly lies.

At this point, when she could see it wasn't going well, and that I wasn't believing her lies, she tried the crying trick. She suddenly started crying, from nowhere. Even the way in which she did it was odd.

It came while she was pausing, trying to think of yet another phoney answer. All of a sudden, away she went, sobbing and sobbing. Perhaps God prompted me, or maybe I just saw through her, but I decided to continue my questioning *as if nothing had happened* and as if she wasn't crying. When I did she instantly stopped crying, like a car going from 70 miles per hour to a complete halt in less than a yard. She also looked at me with an expression of surprise and then anger and resentment in her eyes. But the point is the crying had completely gone, all of a sudden.

Moreover, in a single second she was able to speak normally again and with a defiant tone and her face was quite dry. The 'tears' were only metaphorical, not literal liquid ones. That episode with Charlotte taught me a valuable lesson, which I have since used to good effect. The key point is that a woman who is genuinely crying *can't stop instantly* like a car doing an emergency stop on a dry road. Women aren't wired up that way. They are more like a car driving at 70 mph on a wet road and have an extremely long 'stopping-distance'.

Therefore, in a work context, or a church, and whether you're dealing with the accused or a witness, allow yourself to use this little test. It will help to improve your discernment and to identify deceivers and manipulators. By the way, you must also realise that if the woman is willing to deceive you in this way by pretending to cry, then she will already have been deceiving you *in other ways too* and for a long time. Therefore it is more significant than it may appear to be, just in itself.

**It is wrong to be sceptical about the Bible, but it is right to be sceptical about everything, and everyone, else until the facts are fully known.**

In Book 3 we looked at the danger of having a sceptical attitude when dealing with the Bible. However, in virtually every other context in life, healthy scepticism, and seeking clear evidence before taking any action, is essential. So being dubious about the Bible, creation, the supernatural, demons, healing etc. is the sin of unbelief, because we are dealing with God's Word.

That comes from God Himself, and we are commanded to believe Him and the Bible. By contrast, we are *not* commanded to believe *other people* or the things they allege or teach. Indeed, far from being under any duty to believe people, we are positively told *not to believe them* until what they say is verified by hard evidence, preferably from a number of other witnesses:

***If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses; but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness:***

*Numbers 35:30 (RSV)*

***Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.***

*1 Timothy 5:19 (RSV)*

***This is the third time I am coming to you. Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses.***

*2 Corinthians 13:1 (RSV)*

**The wicked will often appear to be sweetness and light, whereas honest people can seem to be prickly and difficult to handle.**

If we are to learn to recognise wicked people we must realise that they will not usually *appear* to be wicked, at least to begin with. On the contrary, to the untrained eye, the wicked will often appear to be sweetness and light, until you learn otherwise. Indeed, in my experience, the wicked have seemed nicer

at the outset than those whom I later discovered to be faithful and trustworthy. That is partly because the genuine people were not putting on any act, whereas the wicked were. Accordingly, you must *positively expect* there to be phoney people in your life who are not what they seem to be.

Don't view that possibility as a remote contingency, but as something that is to be fully expected. So, if you work with 50 people, don't ask yourself *whether* any of them might be phoney. The right question would be *which of them* are phoney? Also *positively expect* to be lied to and for it to happen regularly. Reconcile yourself to the fact that it is your duty to identify those lies and the liars who tell them. Your expectations are crucial, as they will either open your mind and assist you in your enquiries, or close your mind and make it harder to see what is going on.