

The Truth that Set Me Free

By Rae Lynn DeAngelis

God has a plan for each of our lives. Unfortunately, Satan also has a plan for us, a plan that includes keeping us held prisoner by his lies and deception. The world would have us believe we have no control over such things, that we are just helpless victims. I have come to believe, however, this is yet another lie—a lie that keeps us captive even longer.

I'm so thankful God has shown me the truth. Although we may become prisoners, the prison door is often locked from the inside. God is waiting for us to come to Him, so He can show us where the key is hidden and set us free.

Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell (James 3:5-6).

Is this Scripture ever true! Words were the very thing Satan used to draw me into his world of lies and deception.

At a very young age, the enemy began planting lies in my mind—lies that eventually produced a twenty-five year bondage to an eating disorder called bulimia. It saddens me to think that he would prey upon such innocence, but he is ruthless and evil. (The mind of a child is vulnerable and the enemy of our soul knows it.) Growing up he took advantage of certain circumstances in my life and began to bend my mind into believing that I could only be loved if I was thin.

One of my earliest childhood memories is from the age of three. Even at this young age, I can remember having negative feelings about my body image. I had two best friends in the neighborhood where I grew up. We were very close and did everything together. (As a matter of fact, we are still good friends to this day.) However, this was when I began to feel like I was (for lack of a better word) fat. At this point I wasn't at all overweight, but because my two friends—my realm of influence at the time—were tiny and petite, this is how I came to perceive myself.

As I got a bit older, I really did start to become chubby. Kids can be very cruel. Their hurtful words and comments took a toll on my self-esteem. My self-worth dwindled even more when people in my own family commented on my weight. My grandma would often remark on how fat I was getting. I don't believe she intentionally meant to hurt me. Maybe she thought I needed motivation to lose weight. Regardless of her reasons the result was that I felt awful about myself.

I remember one time my dad had bargained with me that if I lost weight, he would buy me a whole new wardrobe. I now realize he was only trying to help, but at the time I believed I wasn't acceptable to him as I was. I thought he would love me better if I was thin. Please know that I do not blame my dad in any way. He was simply a product of his own upbringing. He came from a family that never had to deal with weight issues and so he had no real understanding of how I felt.

The enemy took full advantage of the situation, however, and as a result, I believed his lie. I could not be loved as I was. I needed to be thin.

Age ten was a traumatic time in my life. I started my menstrual cycle, which made me even more self-conscious about my body. The physical changes I was experiencing caused me to feel even more isolated. Most of the kids at that age were not anywhere near puberty yet.

Not only did I feel fat, but I grew extremely self-conscious about my body. These factors alone were enough to cause my self-esteem to plummet. But there was more. At this same tender age of ten the most traumatic thing in my life occurred. A close relative molested me.

This was someone who was supposed to protect me, someone I loved and trusted.

If there was one day that I could completely clear from my past, this day would be it. That tragic event ripped something away from my inner-soul that I can never get back. Childhood sexual abuse, to any extent, is devastating and life altering. I was forever changed, and once again Satan was right there with his lies. He convinced me that it was somehow my fault. I hated my body for betraying me. I fell for Satan's lies hook, line, and sinker. I was an emotional mess. The sad part is I didn't get to be a child for very long.

This relative relentlessly apologized and begged me to not tell anyone, but after much urging from my mom when she sensed something was very wrong, I spilled the ugly truth but pleaded with her not to tell anyone. (The irony in the situation is that I was worried about betraying him.) Believing they were protecting me from further harm, my parents honored my plea for secrecy but made sure I was never left alone with this adult again.

I really felt awful about my body after this and tried to gain control by losing weight. I didn't do it the right way. I tried starving myself. I would lose a bit of weight only to gain it back later.

Then one day I overheard my parents talking about a friend's niece who had an eating disorder. (It was the first time I had heard about such a thing.) My parents said the girl would barely eat, and when she did eat, she would make herself throw up.

This is how warped my thinking was at that time. I actually thought to myself: *Wow, you can do that; you can eat and then get rid of it?*

This marked the beginning of an eating disorder. Bulimia followed me all the way through my teens, all the way through my twenties, and most of the way through my thirties. I can't tell you how many times I tried to stop, but my resolve never lasted long. I convinced myself that I had my eating disorder under control, but it literally controlled me. No one knew the lie I was living, and I did everything I could to keep it a secret. Deep down I knew that what I was doing was wrong, but my fear of gaining weight was too great.

The enemy had planted so many lies in my head. I believed I would not be loved if I gained weight. I also believed that I would never be able to eat like a normal person. I eventually decided that this was just something I was going to have to live with for the rest of my life.

Thankfully, that's not the end of my story.

By my mid-thirties, I thought my life was on the right track. God had brought me to a place where I had grown a lot as a Christian woman. I was very involved at my church, both in service and in studying His Word. Eventually, I got to a place where I wanted more from my relationship with God. I wanted to go deeper, but for some reason I just couldn't get there.

Then God revealed to me why. I still had this huge secret I was carrying around with my eating disorder and God made it very clear. If I wanted to get to the next level with Him, I needed to confront my eating disorder and make some changes in my life.

It seems like the closer I grow in my relationship with God, the more sin I discover in my life. I guess God reveals our sin when He knows we are strong enough to handle it. Little by little He reveals our sin so we can weed it from our lives.

The thought of trying to weed this sin out terrified me. It had been a part of my everyday life for so long; I honestly couldn't comprehend how to do it.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

I couldn't see how I would ever be free from bulimia and had no idea where to begin, but God's Word reassured me. "Do not be afraid. Stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today" (Exodus 14:13).

God had already laid the groundwork for my healing. I had been part of a Bible study with the same women for about two years and realized that if I was going to get better, I needed to tell someone about my problem. It needed to be someone I could trust and someone who would hold me accountable for my actions. I finally confided in one of my closest friends. She then encouraged me to talk with the six women in my bible study group. Eventually, I mustered up the courage to seek their help as well.

God placed these seven women in my life (God's perfect number I might add) to help me get better. They became pillars of strength and encouragement; they were God's audible voice and His loving arms that I so desperately needed.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

By no coincidence, my study group decided to work through a Bible study by Beth Moore called *Breaking Free*. The premise of the study is learning to break free from strongholds in your life through the renewed mind.

Romans 12:2 says "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Renewing the mind takes time and effort. It is a process that involves identifying the many lies we have believed about ourselves and replacing those lies with truth—God's truth.

My personal mind renewal process included writing out relevant Scriptures on index cards and reading through them every day.

I was making some progress but still clung to my eating disorder behavior at times. I couldn't completely break free, and I couldn't understand why.

After two and a half decades, I finally found the key that would unlock my prison door. It was found through a story in the Gospel of Mark where a man brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus to be healed.

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood, he answered. "It has often thrown him into the fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" Jesus said. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:21-24)!

At that moment it hit me! I realized that my biggest problem was unbelief. I wasn't fully convinced that God really could heal me. So I began praying every day. God help me overcome my unbelief.

Little by little, I began trusting God with my eating disorder. And after many months of prayer, mind renewal, and taking baby steps towards recovery, I was finally ready to let go.

I said, "All right God, I am going to take you at your Word and believe you can heal me." (God was always capable; He was just waiting for me to believe it.) Since that day bulimia has no longer been my burden to carry. I have completely given it over to God, the only one capable of taking it from me.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All of this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

I decided that I needed a visual reminder I was a changed person, so I colored my hair brown. That may seem silly to you, but it really did help. Every time I looked in the mirror, I was reminded of the healing God gave me. After a few years, I no longer needed that outward reminder of my inward change and went back to being a blonde.

Looking back, I realize how crucial God’s Word was to my recovery. I began to really think through the importance of replacing Satan’s lies with God’s truth.

Replacing lies with truth became a battle in my mind—a battle with the enemy himself. Ephesians chapter six explains that when we go into battle with Satan, we need to put on the full armor of God.

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around you waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:13-17).

All the parts of armor described in this passage are for our defense and protection. However, the Sword of the Spirit is unique. It provides more than protection. It is the means through which we can offensively attack the lies of Satan.

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

God enables us to wield the Sword with authority and power!

Our weapon of choice is the Sword of the Spirit. But how can we know for sure that Satan is lying to us?

I have found that the enemy always leaves visible fingerprints when he lies. Those fingerprints include secrecy, shame, distortion, deception, and fear. As I reflect back on my own experience, I can now see those fingerprints clearly. But thankfully, I have learned that for every lie Satan dishes out, God counters it with the truth in His Word.

I would like to share with you a few lies the enemy used to deceive me—along with the truths God has equipped me.

SECRECY - Satan's lie: *If anyone knew the truth about me, they would be disgusted; they wouldn't want anything to do with me.*

- **God's Truth:** "When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me"(Psalm 56:3-4)?

SHAME – Satan's lie: *How can I face people once they know the real me?*

- **God's Truth:** "As Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (Romans 10:11).

DECEPTION - Satan's lie: *Who am I kidding? Why would God want to waste his time on me of all people?*

- **God's Truth:** "Because [she] loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue [her]; I will protect [her], for [she] acknowledges my name. [She] will call upon me, and I will answer [her]; I will be with [her] in trouble, I will deliver [her] and honor [her]" (Psalm 91:14-15). [Gender emphasis mine]

DISTORTION – Satan's lie: *With a past like mine, I'll never be of any use to God.*

- **God's Truth:** "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst. But for that reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:15-16).

FEAR – Satan's lie: *I'll never be completely free from this; it's going to haunt me for the rest of my life.*

- **God's Truth:** "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:6-7).
"So do not throw away your confidence; you will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

I am completely awed by God's grace; He was so patient. He never gave up on me, even though I had given up on myself. It comforts me to know that throughout everything I had experienced God was right there with me. He knew exactly what went wrong and how I had become so broken. Jesus met me right where I was and had compassion on me. He was with me when the hurtful things were said. He was with me when the person I trusted stole my innocence. And He was there to set me free!

God continues to replace the enemy's lies with His unchanging truths. Thanks to Almighty God - I am free! The Lord saved me, and I am forever grateful.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As the founder and Executive Director of Living in Truth Ministries, RaeLynn DeAngelis, is passionate about helping women discover truth, find hope, and embrace freedom from worldly lies surrounding disordered eating and body-image. Her goal is to help every woman see her true beauty within. Rae Lynn’s captivating message of hope and healing through the Great Physician, Jesus Christ inspires hearts around the world.

Visit us at livingintruthministries.com for some great resources to support your own healing journey.