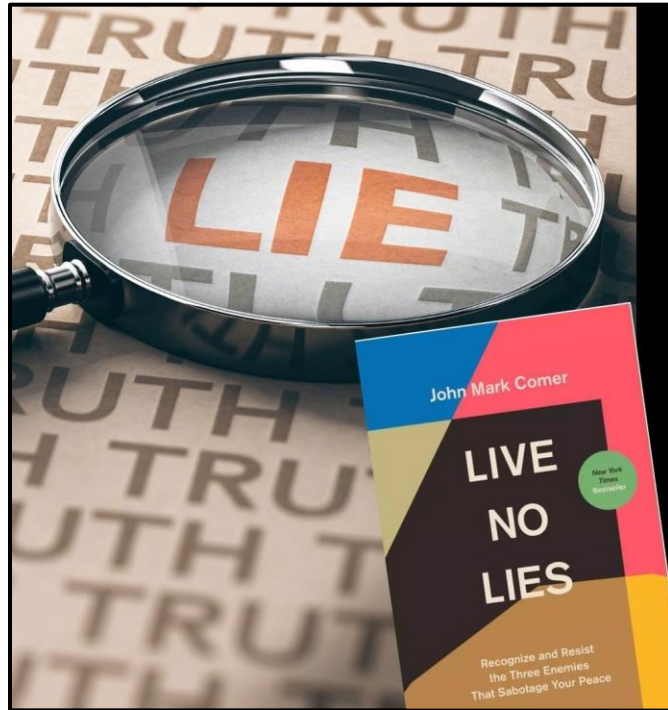


**Small Group Discussion Ideas**  
for Live No Lies  
by bestselling author Pastor John Mark Comer



The devil, the flesh and the World.  
How lies ruin lives.

Book and study guide available.  
Video series also available with the purchase of a study guide.

All quotes are taken from Live No Lies (book and/or study guide)

## Week 1: Introduction, The Truth about Lies; Ideas Weaponized

1. What picture or mental image comes to mind when you think or talk about the Christian life?
2. What usually comes to mind when you hear warfare language applied to faith and spirituality? Why do you suppose you have those associations?

“Many of us today are actually uncomfortable with viewing spirituality as a struggle or using any type of military metaphor to describe our journey of faith. But the writers of the New Testament had no such qualms. Again and again, we find them associating the act of following Christ to a kind of war for our soul. We see this particularly in the writings of the apostle Paul, who warned one group of believers that their struggle was ‘not against flesh and blood, but against...the spiritual forces of evil’ (Ephesians 6:12). He urged them to ‘suit up’ for the fight by putting on the armor of God so they could demolish the strongholds of evil.” Study guide p. 2

Read Ephesians 6: 10-18 aloud.

*<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.*

3. What image or description stands out to you in this passage? Why do you think that is?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the statement: The greatest struggles in life are spiritual struggles. Share your thoughts about your answer.

Comer shares that the desert fathers of our faith would agree with that statement. And that we have three basic enemies:

Our thoughts (the devil)

Our passions (the flesh)

Our world

**“These three enemies use deceptive ideas (the devil) to play to disordered desires (the flesh) that are normalized in a sinful society (the world).”** Study guide p. 7

5. Which of these three enemies troubles you the most right now? When and where do you struggle the most to follow Jesus, love others, and maintain faith in God?
6. Think back to the Ephesians passage you read aloud. Which of these pieces of armor could help you with your current struggles? What could you do to strengthen this piece or these pieces of armor to help with this struggle? Can you share that with your group and ask for the prayers of others to strengthen you as well?

As a group, you are encouraged to pray together for one another and support one another as you begin this journey of “recognizing and resisting the three enemies that sabotage your peace.” P.13

## Week 2: The devil & Dezinformatsiya; And having done all, to stand

“When we come to the New Testament, we see Jesus referring to the devil as a real entity and primary source of evil in this world. We find him pointing out the devil’s real presence on this earth in a direct and practical way—by calling out the people he encountered who were following the enemy and conversing in his native language of lies. In fact, Jesus recognized humanity’s primary war against the devil as a fight to believe truth over lies.” Study guide p. 24

1. How are we influenced to believe falsehoods about ourselves and our world?
2. How do you discern what is true and what is false?

“We all live from what psychologists call mental maps—reference points by which we navigate the world...When we believe truth...we show up to reality and live in such a way that we flourish and thrive. When we believe lies (ideas not congruent with the reality of God’s design), we allow the cancer of those lies to infect our soul and struggle to thrive.” Study guide p. 29

3. What are a few common lies that are present in our culture?
4. How have the enemy’s lies, perhaps during your childhood and upbringing, negatively followed you into adulthood? What lies about yourself do you struggle to dispel?

“Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, is credited with defining sin as ‘unwillingness to trust that what God wants for me is only my deepest happiness.’ This is why the devil’s primary target is our trust in God and his truth as it comes to us in Scripture. If he can get us to doubt God and instead trust in our own inner intuition as an accurate compass to the good life, he has us. In the ultimate irony, sin sabotages our capacity for happiness by appealing to our God-given desire for happiness via deceptive ideas.” P. 61

5. How does what we think about on a regular basis influence our attitudes and behaviors?

“Exposing Satan as the father of lies, Jesus also revealed his identity as a life-giving Savior whose divine language is truth. Christ’s words remind us that one of the best ways to counter the devil’s lies is by focusing on God’s truth.” Study guide p. 35

Read Philippians 4:4-9 together.

*<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

6. How does focusing on that which is lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy eradicate the lies of the enemy from your thinking?
7. What are you especially grateful for right now in your life?
8. What does it look like to rejoice in all things?

“Identifying the devil’s lies and countering them with God’s truth takes practice on our part and ongoing vigilance. It requires us to follow the apostle Paul’s instruction to focus on those things that reflect God’s love and the truth of Christ—those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.” Study guide p. 37

9. Is there a word or description in this study has challenged you to “think on these things”? Can you share one or more of these things with your group and pray together about them?

\*Personal practice: Define each of the words in this passage: true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

Spend time brainstorming what ideas/images/descriptions of each of these words to focus on.

True: How do you regard the Bible and its guidelines about how you are to live in order to follow Jesus’ example and please God?

Pure: How does focusing on what is pure keep you whole?

Lovely: What is the value in focusing your thoughts on what has been done for you “in love”?

Admirable: What does it mean to be admirable in your words and actions toward others?

Excellence: What changes in your current thinking would be required to think and act with excellence in your life?

Praiseworthy: What things in your life are present that will bring commendation to God?

Now think about such things. Philippians 4:8

(For a fuller description of these words and additional questions, see the study guide pp.35-43)

## Week 3: The Flesh—Part 1

“The poet Mary Oliver once said, ‘Attention is the beginning of devotion.’ The starting place of devotion to God and movement into his kingdom is simply to set our attention on his Spirit and truth.”  
P 94-95

1. Share with one another one way you have set your attention on God this past week. And if you haven't in the way that you would want, what gets in the way?

In this second section of the book, the author John Mark Comer, continues to build on this theme: **“These three enemies use deceptive ideas (the devil) to play to disordered desires (the flesh) that are normalized in a sinful society (the world).”**

This week we begin the focus on the flesh...the disordered desires. “You like to think of yourself as a good steward of all the blessings and resources you've been given...but you also feel the pull of.....competing desires. (study guide p.48-9)

Read Ephesians 2: 1-10 together.

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>[a]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

2. What comes to mind when you consider “the cravings of our flesh”? How does Paul describe your condition when you were ruled by the flesh?
3. Based on this passage, what is the reason that you are able to overcome the enemy of the flesh? What does Paul say is your condition now?
4. What difference does this condition make as we think about defeating our fleshly desires?
5. What is the source of the ability to live free from the cravings of our sinful nature?
6. How do these verses encourage you that it is possible to have victory over our fleshly desires?

“The ‘self’ that Jesus is calling us to deny and put to death isn’t our authentic self before God. It’s our flesh, which is actually keeping us from actualizing our true self in God. The more we give in to the cultural messaging to follow our heart, the more we devolved to the lowest common denominator. The solution to the problem of the flesh is not willpower but the Spirit’s power. It’s habituating your heart into obedience to Jesus through practice that enable you to yield and surrender all of your heart over to God.” Study guide p. 53

7. What spiritual habits have you cultivated to help you change destructive habits and selfish desires? Can you share an example that’s appropriate for your group?
8. What spiritual habits could you strengthen to continue to transform any destructive habits into God-honoring behavior? Can you share an example that’s appropriate for your group?

Pray together for one another as you grow in your desire to defeat the desires of the flesh.

Close the time together by reading Hebrews 10: 23-25.

*<sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Is there someone in your group that you could check in on before you meet again to encourage them?

\*Personal practice: Set aside all devices and set a timer for 5-10 minutes. Find a place where you can sit without anyone else disturbing you. Sit in silence in God’s presence. Simply be present to God with you in these moments. Once the time is complete, ask yourself these questions.

What thoughts passed through your mind? Did you get to a point when you felt more at peace and quiet within your spirit?

Did you gravitate toward a particular idea, image, word or phrase during this time? What relevance does it have in your life right now?

What desires surfaced during this time of reflection? Other than perhaps wanting the exercise to be over, what were you aware of wanting as you reached a place of quiet stillness within?

Is there anything from this time that you would like to talk more about with God?

## Week 4: Flesh: Part 2

1. When were you aware of God's presence, care and/or strength this past week?
2. Did you participate in any spiritual practice that helped you be strong in a time of fleshly desire? Can you share about the practice and how it strengthened you, as appropriate for your group?

"Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature... To be the one kind of creature is heaven; that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other. " C.S. Lewis Mere Christianity quoted on p. 158-9

"Of course, even when you want to put God first, you can find yourself falling back into old habits, thought patterns, and addictive behaviors. Breaking out of these ways of coping requires a clear understanding of what is true—about God, about who he made you to be, and what his purpose is for your life" study guide p. 61

Read Galatians 5: 13-17; 25.

*<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh<sup>[a]</sup>; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

*<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever<sup>[c]</sup> you want.*

*<sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

3. What is the caution that Paul offers about freedom? What does Paul offer as a way to combat this indulgence?
4. What is repeated at least three times in these verses? How do you do this?

"If you're trying to use willpower against your self-defeating behavior that's rooted in trauma or past pain and you feel like you're failing, don't beat yourself up; change your strategy. Willpower is not the answer to your problem.... To win, we need access to a power that is beyond us. We need an ally in the fight to come alongside us and turn the tide. That power is the Spirit of Jesus." P. 174-175



Comer's suggestion to invite the power of the Spirit into our lives is through spiritual practices.

"The key to spiritual formation is to change what we can control (our habits) to influence what we can't control (our flesh). P. 185

Comer suggests two spiritual practices that have been formative in his life.

1. Fasting
2. Confession

Fasting: denying our body what is wanted so we can learn to suffer with joy. P 179

5. Have you engaged with the spiritual practice of fasting? If so, what was the experience like? If no one in the group has had an experience with this spiritual practice, it might be helpful to read p. 179-80 for some perspective.

Confession: James 5:16 *"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

6. Notice the "to each other" in this verse. What does confession to each other look like? Is this a practice you have engaged in regularly? What effect has this practice had on your spiritual life? What is the potential of this practice in a person's life?

Of course, there are many spiritual practices that can enhance a person's ability to walk in the Spirit. When attempting to defeat our fleshly desires we must engage in the practices which will strengthen the Spirit's power in our lives.

"Therefore, we must run every habit, every thought, every relationship---everything---through this simple grid:

Does this sow to my flesh or my spirit?

Will this make me more enslaved or more free?" p. 185

7. What spiritual practice might you engage in this coming week to make a place for more of God's Spirit in your life? Can you share that with your group and invite them to pray with/for you?

In closing, read Galatians 6:9.

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* (This context is not necessarily about doing good deeds, but participating in good habits to combat the sin in our lives.)

## Week 5: The World Part 1

1. Check in with one another about how it's going with your spiritual practices. When and how did you experience God's Spirit in the last week? Any victories? Things you tried that didn't work well?

"We are human, living in time and space on this planet, but we are not to take part in the world's spirit, values, or habits. We are to remember that 'our citizenship is in heaven' (Philippians 3:20) and that we are 'children of God...(not) under the control of the evil one' (1 John 5:19). We are to remember that we 'are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit' (Romans 8:9). For this reason, as believers in God's truth, we should not 'conform to the pattern of this world.' (Romans 12:2) study guide p 68-69

Read John 17: 13-19 together.

*<sup>13</sup> "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by<sup>[a]</sup> the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

2. Why do you think Jesus prayed this prayer the night before his death on the cross?
3. How do you believe the truth of Christ protects you from the lies of this world? When have you experienced this kind of protection?
4. What does sanctify mean? (to be made holy; set apart for God's purposes)
5. What are we to be set apart from? To?

"The world can thus be defined as a system of ideas and values, morals, practices, and social norms that are integrated into the mainstream and eventually institutionalized in a culture that is corrupted by the twin sins of rebellion against God and the redefinition of good and evil." P. 205

6. How would you define the world as an enemy of your soul? How does the world work with the devil and the flesh to steal your peace and undermine your wholeness?

Read 1 John 2: 15-17 together.

*<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father<sup>[a]</sup> is not in them. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

7. What are some ways you have set yourself apart from the world in your lifestyle choices? How do these methods keep you anchored in truth and aware of the world's lies?
8. What spiritual practice can you begin or continue to practice to strengthen the voice of truth in your life? Can you share that with the group and invite others to pray for you as appropriate for your group?

Pray together for one another for the needs of one another and the Spirit's strength to continue making space for His presence in your lives.

\*Personal practice: 1 John 2: 15-17 would be a great source of verses to meditate on before God and ask Him to reveal if there is anything in the world defined by lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes or the pride of life that needs to be addressed in your personal life.

## Week 6: The World Part 2

1. As you begin this session, invite participants to share a moment or experience from their previous week when they have been aware of God's presence or something that they are grateful for from their last few days. This serves as a reminder that especially since we live in a world where we don't really belong, we can still be mindful of God's presence, care and perspective. His Kingdom is also among us!
2. Why do you think Jesus wouldn't ask the Father to take his children out of this world—especially since he knew they would suffer persecution?

Read together Matthew 28: 16-20 and Acts 1: 6-8.

*<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

*<sup>6</sup> Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

*<sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

3. What command did Jesus give his followers? What promise did he make to them as they remained in this world?

Jesus was talking to his followers in these verses. Plural. They couldn't do stand against the world or be His witnesses alone.

"There's a tremendous opportunity in our cultural moment for the church to come back to her roots as a counter-anti-culture....the word church itself...means those who are 'called out'. It's not a community of comfort but of calling. But what we mean when we talk about the practice of church is not just regular attendance of Sunday services in a religious building...we need the anchor of Sunday gatherings to recenter our minds on truth and open our hearts back to God for healing and renewal....But while church is not less than Sunday services, it is far more. It must be more to survive the Western spiritual apocalypse. Church must become a thick web of interdependent relationships between resilient disciples of Jesus deeply loyal to the Way." P. 230-31

Comer sites three concepts of community that the church can live into to make a difference in our culture. P. 232-235

- A community of deep relational ties in a culture of individualism and isolation.
- A community of holiness in a culture of hedonism.
- A community of order in a culture of chaos.

4. Do you see the need for deep relational ties, holiness, and order in our culture today? How?
5. How can a community of believers live into these three aspects to bring hope and healing to our culture?
6. How could Deerbrook grow in these areas? How could you more fully participate in the life of Deerbrook to help these aspects come to life?

Summary: "The devil's deceptive ideas get as far as they do because the appeal to our flesh's animal cravings. But these in turn find a home in our bodies through the echo chamber of the world, which allows us to assuage any guilt or shame and live as we please. As a result, evil is often labeled good, and good, evil; and the soul and society devolved into a reign of anarchy via the loss of a moral and spiritual true north. In such an exilic moment, the church as a counter-anti-culture has the potential to not only survive but also flourish as a creative minority, loving the host culture from the margins."

P. 243

7. What areas of transformation are you being called to because of this study to combat these three enemies? Is there a new/continued spiritual habit you are being called to because of this study? Or is there some way you are being called to be a deeper part of the community at Deerbrook? Or are you being called to love our culture in some way that our community can participate in as well?
8. Can you share your take-away with your group to pray with/for you to invite God's presence and Spirit to this growth?

Pray together with and for one another.