

Book Review: *Live No Lies*

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies* (WaterBrook, 2021). i-xxxix; 1-297

“What if Jesus knew the true nature of reality better than we do? What if his perception was even more acute than that of Steven Pinker? Or Sam Harris? Or Stephen Hawking? What if he was the most intelligent teacher to ever live and his insight into the problems (and solutions) of the human condition is the most piercing to date?”¹

As a Christian Minister, my involuntary reaction to those questions is a resounding, “Yes, of course Jesus knows best.” But Comer’s *Live No Lies* winsomely and persuasively challenged me to freshly integrate that conviction into my worldview. The book called me to war against lies and the father of lies, the devil. Comer’s core thesis is “the devil’s primary stratagem to drive the soul and society into ruin is deceptive ideas that play to disordered desires, which are normalized in a sinful society.”²

The book explained the devil and illustrated his strategies in such helpful ways. It provided me with a biblically sound paradigm to understand “spiritual warfare” without the sensational fictions of Frank Peretti or ecstatic speculations of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements. Instead, appreciate the power and effectiveness of both deception and truth. This is profound. When Jesus, through His Word, says there is a devil, then that is the way it is. Thus, this book accurately defines the reality of our context for ministry. I need to be aware of my own

¹ Comer, 15

² Comer, xvii, 57

susceptibility, even proclivity, toward deception. There's a battle in my heart and mind which I give body to in my words and deeds. If Truth reigns and thoughts are taken captive to Christ then I am winning and my life embodies Truth to the betterment of my family, church, and society. However, if I am deceived by lies, fine sounding arguments, so-called knowledge, and demonic wisdom, then only evil will come from my words and deeds. This book is some serious "red-pilling." I loved it.

At the risk of being undiscerning, there was little in the book with which I *disagreed*. I am generally cautious toward monasticism. Comer is very high on Evagrius and sees him as a good example to follow in spiritual warfare. But as it turns out, Evagrius was an influential Gnostic who eventually "reduced the incarnation to a vision of a great intellect that gave souls knowledge in order to return to God."³ Comer likewise emphasized Jesus as Teacher and Truth-teller. He modeled his own handbook against demons after Evagrius' writings.⁴ I did not understand Comer's emphasis on Jesus as Teacher to exclude Jesus as Lord and Savior, or the essentiality of the Cross. But there is a little irony in following Evagrius' tactics against demonic lies while he succumbed to the lie mentioned in 2 John 7. Likewise, spiritual disciplines of solitude and fasting, which Comer suggests, sound important to incorporate into my life. Yet, these have turned into Asceticism within various monastic orders. Comer rightly warned against the deception of worldly philosophy and cited Colossians 2:8.⁵ We must also heed the apostle's warnings against self-imposed religion and asceticism in Colossians 2:20-23.

³ Frederick W. Norris, "Evagrius of Pontus (345-399)," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, eds. Everett Ferguson, et al. (Garland Publishing, 1990) 329

⁴ Comer, 259-262

⁵ Comer, 55-56

Having said that, Comer's book is rich in application for my personal life. Honestly, it has felt like medicine to my soul. It has raised my awareness of the devil's schemes and how easily I fall for them. In fact, I have to make a quick confession. A couple of weeks ago I was reading *Live No Lies* and I came to these words:

“In the digital age, we make his [the Satan] job a breeze. Hurry, pathological busyness, distraction, smartphone addiction, the constant stream of alerts and interruptions – these all cut us off from community and feed our inordinate desire for autonomy. Cue the axiom, ‘When Satan cannot make you bad, he makes you busy.’”⁶

As I finished that last line, reading it for the first time, my smartphone buzzed. A news headline appeared on my locked screen. I immediately dropped the book to pick up the phone and look at it. It happened so fast. I began laughing at myself, quickly realizing I automatically and absentmindedly did the *very thing* I was warned about seconds earlier. That little episode, as much as anything, confirmed the weight and truth of Comer's analysis for me. I can do a better job at limiting my own exposure to screens and break that addiction. I can give God's Truth first access to my heart in the morning instead of all the other media, amusements, and devilish propaganda scrolling over screens. I can seek solitude for prayer and meditation, true spiritual preparation for a spiritual war of which I cannot escape – because the Truth/Lie battle rages in my own heart.

In my Ministry Context, I am applying the book in both public preaching and private interactions. The message of the book is so helpful that I want to share it. So (and I gave Comer credit) I have begun a three-part sermon series called, *The Devil You Don't Know* where I am

⁶ Comer, 80

taking Comer's framework and some of my own Bible study and material to consider *The Devil Who Lies, The Flesh Which Listens, and The World That Normalizes*.⁷ It has been well received so far.

There are lies at work. Likely, our own Flesh and the World-at-large may tend to be on his side and love those lies. Thus, we learn the importance of sorting out the Truth from the Lies using the authority of Jesus Christ our Lord and truth-telling Teacher. When we follow Him, we will *Live No Lies*.

⁷ <https://www.christiansmeethere.org/sermons/sermons/2023/01/15/the-devil-you-dont-know>