The Infallible Word

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Jeff was bored. The last hour of the school day seemed so much longer than the others. In Mr. Jefferson’s class especially. He looked toward the window, allowing himself the luxury of watching a lazy-looking fly, which seemed to be partially asleep or dozing. Did a fly ever doze? he wondered, feeling kind of silly and stupid for even wondering such a crazy thing. What did he care if flies dozed or didn’t doze; God made them the way they were and that was good enough for him. God had a purpose for everything He did, everything He created; that was satisfaction enough for Jeff Woodcock.

The fly flew languidly to a nearby window and settled on the window sill, seeming to enjoy the warmth of the late afternoon sunshine as it filtered through the window. Jeff’s eyes wandered quickly from the insignificant fly to the glories of the outside world. The leaves on the sugar maples had turned colors and the school ground looked like it was a fairyland of solid gold, flaming scarlet, tangerine-orange, and rose-red. Oh, it was beautiful.

Jeff sighed out loud, totally forgetful and oblivious of the classroom, his thoughts and his entire being outside among the beauties of the golden autumn and its accompanying woodsy, fall fragrances.

"Jeff Woodcock. Jeff!"
Mr. Jefferson's booming voice startling him. Immediately, he turned his attention from the window and faced the teacher.

Mr. Jefferson's eyes were a steel gray, like his hair, synonymous with his icy-cold personality, too, Jeff thought frequently, with no malice or ill will whatever toward his teacher. It was a mere fact, one which he never repeated to anyone, in keeping with the scriptural injunction to "Speak evil of no man."

Mr. Jefferson stood in front of his ever-cluttered desk, arms folded, facial lines severe and austere-looking, staring at Jeff.

Jeff lowered his eyes to the book lying open before him. "Jeff Woodcock, look this way!" It was a command; one no one ignored when issued in the tone of voice the teacher now used.

"Yes, Sir; I'm looking," Jeff replied, hearing a bit of muffled, amused tittering behind him.

"Stop that!" the teacher ordered. "You're next, Gregg. I'll have no snickering or inattention in my class. Now, Jeff, for the third time, I'll ask you the question, when is it right to lie and tell an untruth?"

Jeff's mouth gaped wide in astonishment. "Never, Sir. Never!"

Walking quickly around to the side of his desk, Mr. Jefferson lifted the sociology textbook high. "I asked you when it's right to lie--to tell an untruth." "Never!" Jeff affirmed positively again.

Mr. Jefferson threw the book on the desk with a loud thud. Then, walking to the front of the desk and glaring in Jeff's direction, he accused, "You haven't studied your assignment."

"Wrong," Jeff corrected kindly. "I studied it, but I disagree with it all the way. I've done my 'homework' in this Book too well to agree with what man has to say on the subject," the dark-haired young man added, pulling a New Testament out of his pocket.

"That doesn't count!" came the sharp, fiat rejoinder. "It may be all right for one to read the Bible the way we read the works of Shakespeare and Confucius, but that's all. Certainly, anyone with any intelligence whatever knows it is no longer accepted as the final word of authority. It's a mere work of good literature."

Jeff stood to his feet. Squaring his broad shoulders he said, "I dare to disagree. The Bible is now and has ever been, the infallible, inerrant, inspired word of God. In Ephesians 4, we read some of God's absolutes," he continued, turning quickly to the
book and chapter. " 'Wherefore putting away lying,' " he read, " 'speak every man truth with his neighbor; . . . Be ye angry, and sin not: . . . neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.' And in Revelation 21:8, it says, 'But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable . . . and a/l liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone . . .' So you can see that God hates lying, Mr. Jefferson."

"Keep God out of this!" the teacher bellowed, his face turning colors. "What does the textbook say about lying? That it's perfectly all right to tell a lie if someone is going to be hurt by the truth. That's what it says, and this is what I expect you to believe and practice when necessary."

"Never!" Jeff affirmed stoutly but kindly. "God's Word is the only true book to go by. I cannot, will not lie! I'm a Christian, Mr. Jefferson, and with all my soul, I delight to please and obey my wonderful Lord and my God. Our sociology book is in error."

The teacher's anger flared. "How dare you say that!" he exclaimed hotly. "You... you... go to the principal's office immediately. I'll give you an F for being so... so impudent. Now out!" he ordered, pointing toward the door and following Jeff as he started down the long hallway toward Mr. Ascott's office.

The principal welcomed Jeff with a broad smile. Motioning him to a chair across from his desk, he said, "What brings you here?"

"I'll tell you what brings him here," Mr. Jefferson blared, glaring at Jeff; "I ordered him here. He's impudent and defiant."

Jeff sat in stunned silence.

Mr. Hague, the principal, rolled a pen methodically between the palms of his hands, his face a study of disbelief and surprise. Lifting his eyes, he said kindly, "Jeff, let's hear your side. What do you have to say?"

Jeff sat forward on his seat. "I'm shocked to hear Mr. Jefferson's description of myself. I never meant to sound either impudent or defiant, Mr. Hague. It's a matter of biblical commands versus the sociology's book's absolute and positive error regarding lying, to cite but one instance in which the textbook is leading the students astray... away from the precepts and teachings of the Bible. Mr. Jefferson told the class that the Bible is 'a mere work of good literature' and is no longer 'accepted as the final word of authority.' This is false, Sir, a lie. The Bible is as much the infallible Word of God today as it has ever been. This I said, Mr. Hague, and this I believe. It is just as sinful and as wicked today to tell a lie as it has always been. God does not change; neither does His Word."
"I'll have no contradicting in my class," the sociology teacher said flatly and authoritatively.

A look of grave concern spread over the principal's face. "Bring me the textbook, please, Mr. Jefferson. I want to see for myself what is in the book before I make any decision or do anything about the matter."

"Do anything about the matter!" the teacher exploded in a violent fit of anger. "The book is right; lying's perfectly all right and is in order when, and if, telling the truth will hurt someone."

Mr. Hague stood quickly to his feet. "Is this why you sent Jeff to my office?" he questioned, his own anger matching that of the teacher's.

"Precisely. Yes."

Squaring his already broad shoulders, making them look more athletic than ever, the principal said, "If this is what the book says, then I take sides with Jeff, who has never lived any way other than a truly exemplary Christian life. I may not be a Christian, Mr. Jefferson, but lying is wrong. Sinful. Under no circumstances or provocation is it right to lie. God hates it, the Bible condemns it, and I reaffirm my original, recently-made statement that lying is wrong. It's evil. Bring me the book, please. Immediately."

Blowing through his nostrils like an angry bull, the teacher declared suddenly, "I'll resign. I'm not of the fanatical, religious school that hangs an evil tag on what man does or believes. Times have changed, Mr. Hague. It's all too obvious that you have not kept abreast with the changes, which are for the betterment of the human race."

"Or the worse, Mr. Jefferson? Bring me the book, please."

"I resign! Let the goody-goody boy bring the principal the sociology book. Good-day."

Mr. Hague waited until the teacher's footsteps died away. Then he said, "I'm sorry you were made the scapegoat in this matter, Jeff. But I'm glad it's out in the open now. This whole matter calls for a total and complete review of every new textbook we received this year. We had a committee appointed who were to have screened each book carefully. Apparently they did a poor job of screening or else we had several on the committee who agreed with Mr. Jefferson's point of view. At any rate, it will be taken care of. I promise that. And Jeff, thanks for taking your stand. I'm proud of you. I know the better way. I had praying, God-fearing parents who believed the Bible from cover to cover and who taught all their children to espouse and cling to its precepts, commands and admonitions. Mine is the case of the backslider. But I'm not happy, Jeff. No one is who has once tasted of God's good way and then forsaken Him. Perhaps, when you think of me, you'll call my name in prayer?"
It was put in the form of a question and Jeff, realizing that it came from the principal's inmost being, replied quickly, "Oh, I'd be delighted to do so, Mr. Hague. In fact, we'll put you on our prayer list at home."

Slapping Jeff on his shoulders in a friendly way, the principal said, "Thanks Jeff; thanks much. I need prayer badly. Now, and in the days to come. Beginning with me, things are going to change . . . in my heart and in this school. Now come, we must get back to the classroom. Mr. Jefferson's footsteps went opposite of his class; he could have been serious when he said he was resigning."

Jeff walked beside Mr. Hague to the room and to his seat.

"It seems we are having a bit of a problem over things in this textbook," the principal told the class, standing behind Mr. Jefferson's desk and lifting the sociology book high for all to see. "Jeff, I'd like for you to read from the page over which the apparent controversy has stemmed, please."

Jeff forgot about the languid fly on the windowsill --about the beautiful fall leaves, too. Standing to his feet, he said, "It begins on page 52, Mr. Hague." Then in a clear and distinct voice, he read the assignment. When he had finished, the principal spoke.

"You may close your books, class," he said quickly, looking at the students. "Jerry and Harold, I'd like for you to collect the sociology books and bring them up front. We'll not be using them again. I'll see that we get a new shipment of the books we used in other years. Jeff is right; lying is always wrong. The Bible is man's never-changing, always-the-same book. It is God's voice to us. We had better begin to obey it. I, as your principal, certainly do not wish to lead you down the road of error and perdition by having and allowing textbooks in this great high school which teach things contrary to the infallible Word of God. You may use the remainder of this period as a study hall..."

Jeff bowed his head for a silent prayer of praise and thanksgiving. He was thankful indeed that God had given Lankford High a principal who wasn't afraid of taking his stand for God's Holy Word.

When he opened his eyes, he caught Carl Obett's nod and his wink of victory. He heard the happy sighs of relief, too, from many a lip. (Almost everyone in the class had felt that Mr. Jefferson was "too far out" in his ideas and his way of living.

Suddenly Jeff felt like shouting: God's Word would live forever. It was infallible. Yes, regardless of what was written in the textbooks, and regardless of what the Mr. Jeffersons in the world thought and believed, God's Word was still the one unchanged book --the divinely-inspired infallible Book of books.