



The Journey of Thomas

Honesty

By John J. Smid

John 8:32

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Truth? What is truth anyway? At a core level, Jesus is Truth. In this passage of scripture, I am certain that the core meaning implies that if we know Jesus Christ, He will set us free from the laws of sin and death. Knowing Truth in this very personal and redemptive way is the foundation of our lives and the avenue to living life eternally with our Creator; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the Grace Rivers' Core Values we begin with Honesty. This kind of honesty stems first of all from a willingness to be honest with yourself. It is important to develop the skill of self evaluation. Why do I do what I do? Where do my reactions come from? What were the motives that underlie my actions today? Why did I shut down yesterday when I was talking with my wife? Why did I walk away from my husband when he began to discuss our daughter?

When I was a young Christian I read a little pamphlet titled "Your Reactions Are Showing." I'll never forget the wisdom and challenge I read in the words compiled in that little life changing booklet. It challenged me to look deeper into my life to find out what was underneath my unhealthy attitudes and thoughts. This was the beginning of my own pursuit to know my heart. I stumbled through life making many mistakes and allowing poor judgment to enter into many relationships, now is the time for truth.

When I began to evaluate my own motives and unhealthy reactions I saw marked improvement in my own decision making. I found a dramatic decrease in my own anxiety and a much improved process of developing healthier relationships. I also found peace to be the outcome of my own personal honesty.

When I was driving on the Interstate a man in a light blue pick-up truck cut right in front of me to go around the car in the middle lane. My first "reaction" was to feel angry and to wonder why he would do such a stupid thing – I mean didn't he see me? My heart immediately went to a personal honesty. I had to be honest with myself about having done the very same thing many times. I am sure others had responded the same way when I cut them off. Knowing this brought me to an almost immediate forgiveness in my heart and a release of the frustration and judgment I had been experiencing.

On another occasion I was driving to a Bible study with a few other people in my car. We entered a subdivision of homes and we needed to go down a street that was immediately on our left after the entrance. I looked up and saw a "no left turn" sign and feeling inconvenienced by this seemingly ridiculous sign I decided to ignore its' instruction and turn left anyway. I didn't want to have to go any further out of my way since our study was starting very soon.

Well, you guessed it. A police car came immediately up behind me motioning me to stop. I felt so embarrassed in front of my friends. When he took my information back to his car I was drawn to personal honesty. I turned to my friends and said, "I deserve a ticket, I was wrong". I had accepted my potential consequences admitting my error. The policeman came back to our car and told me he was giving me a warning. In my thankfulness I turned once again to my friends and said, "That was grace".

In both of these situations, personal honesty gave me freedom; a freedom from the attempt to circumvent truth and live a lie. First, a lie that somehow I was more perfect than the man in the light blue pick-up which ended up in my highly critical reaction to the situation. Second, I was attempting live out a lie that somehow I was privileged to go around the law because I wanted to.

I can go on and on in examples where personal honesty brought freedom to my life. I can mention many times where personal honesty was very uncomfortable and on the surface brought about challenges that I didn't want to have to face. But, in the end, the truth wins out and honesty really is the best policy.

Some other great scriptures for internal honesty are:

Prov. 14:8

The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.

I find this scripture particularly interesting since covers two very important sides of this point. Giving through to our ways is exactly what I am trying to bring forth here. Personal evaluation is so important in living an honest life. The last part of this scripture speaks to living in deception and that will lead to folly.

Prov. 14:10

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy

I see in this passage the reality that somewhere in our own hearts lays bitterness as well as joy. Both are important to know and understand if we are going to live an honest life. I also find that it moves us to see that if we are honest with ourselves, we will see the truth. We do know our own bitterness and yet, without understanding, others will not relate to it by osmosis, rather we need to share it with them.

Prov. 14: 13

Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.

Are we tempted to hide our aches underneath laughter? Living dishonestly is at times hiding our pain in fear of someone else seeing it and putting ourselves as a perception of risk if we open up. I believe it is important to see if we can't learn to trust more freely in the Spirit of Christ to rise up in His people. Can we trust in people? Not always. But we can trust Christ in people.

For further reading on personal honesty I highly recommend the book, "Telling Yourself the Truth" by Backus and Chapian. This book has laid the foundation for personal evaluation of my internal process. I have never been the same since reading that book.

Prayer for today: Lord, today, filter my mind through Your truth. Help me to be more honest and less defensive in my reactions toward others. I desire your truth in my inmost parts. In your sovereign grace, help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me.

Practical Application:

During the next week, ask yourself regularly if you are being honest with yourself. When you encountered a difficult conversation or situation with someone else, can you own any personal responsibility for the conflict?

Were you honest in your reaction with regards to personal motives such as just wanting to be right vs. what “is” right?

When you may have not wanted to do something but you said you would any way, were you being honest in making a decision to do it?

Did you fail to meet an obligation because you were negligent to pay attention to the timing or details? Can you be honest with yourself about the outcome being your own responsibility?

Write three feeling statements regarding the concept of personal honesty:

“I feel _____

About being more honest with myself

Because _____”

“I feel _____

About having to own up to my mistakes quickly

Because _____”

“I feel _____

About potentially evaluating my past with the filter of honesty

Because _____”

