

VIRTUE 16

# TRUTH

I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws. I hold fast to your statutes, O LORD. Do not let me be put to shame. I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

—Psalm 119:30-32

Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites; I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O LORD.

—Psalm 26:2-6

**B**eing truthful means being real and honest with the facts, but it also means living in a way where what you know to be true influences your daily actions. A knight who has not yet fully resolved that he will speak only the truth will stumble. Somewhere, sometime, somehow, part of his life will crumble without holding to the virtue of truth. Consider the following Scriptures:

A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies (Proverbs 12:17).

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful (Proverbs 12:22).

A truthful witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies (Proverbs 14:5).

A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful (Proverbs 14:25).

When describing spiritual armor, the apostle Paul uses the warrior's belt to signify truth: "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist" (Ephesians 6:14). Think about the significance of the belt as part of a knight's armor. If you are in the middle of a sword battle and your belt falls down, three things can happen: (1) you lose your backup weapons (most knights strapped daggers to their weapon belt); (2) you lose focus as your clothing flies to the wind; and (3) you cannot move as fast and be as agile as you could be if your belt and clothing are secure. Just like in real life, if we stop telling the truth, we do not have a clear conscience to use all of our battle weapons, we become distracted as we get tangled in a massive web of lies, and we cannot move forth with clarity of mind and purpose.

Being truthful also includes being sincere and candid with friends and loved ones. A true knight values truth over friendship; he will tell a friend when he is in trouble or going astray, having more concern for the long-term wellbeing of his friend than the short-term friendship. At times, we must be ready to wound a friend and risk a friendship by confronting someone when we are convinced it is our time to act. In doing this, we may suffer short-term discontent in exchange for long-term favor from the person later (Proverbs 28:23). Biblical confrontation should be done gently, with sincerity and without hypocrisy. Consider these guidelines:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch

yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2).

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:3-5).

To truly express Christ's love, we must be sincere. In fact, the apostle Paul says that sincerity and true love must go hand in hand. "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" (Romans 10:9). Yes, certainly it helps to be tactful, but we need to pull the trigger when God puts the target opportunity before us. Consider the passage below regarding Ezekiel being a watchman for God:

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them,

that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.’ Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself” (Ezekiel 33:1-9).

This story sums up the principle well. If it is your time and your job to be honest with someone about an issue for their own long-term good or for the good of others and you do not do it, you may be held accountable by God. That is quite a burden to bear. The easy way out of these difficult situations is to confront them tactfully with the truth. Ultimately, you should let your concern regarding your own accountability to God govern your actions more than your fear of the person’s negative response.

### *REFLECT*

“At all times speak the truth.”

—Charlemagne’s Code of Chivalry

Always tell the truth; that way you will never have to remember what you’ve said.

### *RESPOND*

1. When have you had the opportunity to confront someone about an issue but chose not to? What was the outcome?

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2. How can we share the truth *in love* with someone?
3. When are “white lies” okay to tell?
4. How has someone’s lack of truthfulness hurt you in the past?
5. Why are we still tempted to lie when we know that God sees our hearts?