

*“Holiness is not a condition into which we drift.”*

**John Stott**

## **Spiritual Discipline – Truth Telling**

**Desire:** To live an authentically truthful life.

**Definition:** Truth telling involves speaking in a way that does not exaggerate, minimise, deny, rationalize or manage the truth.

**Scripture:** Simply let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” be “No”; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:37)

Like Adam and Eve ( Genesis 2:16-17) before us, we are truth spinners who want to define our own realities. We pad expense accounts with rationalisations and denials. We back out of commitments with blame and deceit. Advertisers, corporations, non-government agencies, educational and religious institutions spin the truth. Everything from ruining the environment to insider trading gets the spin. It’s not hard to understand why people don’t know who or what to believe. But lies that substitute for reality don’t last forever.

Truth alone has staying power. Jesus says telling the truth begins with small things. Don’t say yes when you intend to back out of it: “simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37). Begin to reclaim the truth about yourself and your words by honouring the Creator and reality as he defines it.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How do you live out God’s reality about the goodness of telling the truth?
2. When do you use a sliding scale of honesty, exaggeration or partial truths to get what you want?
3. How has someone’s honesty or lack of it affected you?
4. When has it cost you to be honest? What was that like for you?

### **Spiritual Exercises**

1. Take some uninterrupted time to assess your honesty. Think back over the past week. Where have you been tempted to stretch the truth, take advantage of a privilege, break a commitment or gossip? What do you see about

- yourself? Where is it hardest for you to tell the truth? Write a prayer of confession in your journal. Or confess your sin to a trusted friend. Ask him or her to pray for you.
2. Practice one of these habits for the coming week:
    - a. Not exaggerating
    - b. Not gossiping
    - c. Not rationalizingWhat is it like for you to do this?
  3. What lies do you tend to tell yourself? What tapes do you play in your head that make you feel worthless, inadequate and unloved? Talk to God about what it is like to give space in your head and heart for these lies.
    - Turn to Psalm 139. What sorts of thoughts does God have about you? Replace the lies you listen to with the truth of what God says about you.
  4. When you become aware of having told a lie, apologise and make amends. This sort of attention to confession softens the heart to the reality of truth

### **Resources for Truth Telling**

**HILL, Alexander** *Just Business: Christian Ethics of the Marketplace* (IVP Academic; Revised edition (February 10, 2008))

**MULHOLLAND, Robert** *Invitation to Journey* (IVP Books, Illinois 1993)

**ROHR Richard** *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* (Crossroad Publishing Co, USA 2003)

### **Reference**

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (IVP Books, Illinois 2005) page 228-230