

TRUTH

“. . . Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

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FEELINGS VERSUS FACTS

When we walk with the Lord of heaven and earth, we have a peace that passes understanding and a sense of contentment (Philippians 4:7,11). We also have a joy that is overflowing (1 John 1:4).

While such emotions/feelings are wonderful for a child of God, we need to understand that a person having peace, contentment, and joy does not prove that he is in good standing with the Lord. You see, feelings are not a safe standard for judging what is pleasing in God’s sight and what is not.

When Jacob saw the beautiful tunic of his beloved son, Joseph, with blood on it, he concluded, “*Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces*” (Genesis 37:33). Jacob *felt* certain that his son had passed. In fact, the lad was still alive. Jacob’s feeling contradicted the truth.

When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the disciples of Jesus, how did he feel about his course of action? When he later looked back on how he made havoc of God’s church, he stated, “*Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*” (Acts 26:9). Yes, Saul/Paul *felt* that terrorizing Christians was the right thing to do. The man *felt* good about his relationship with God, but his *feeling* was wrong. Feelings do not guarantee that a person or group is doing what pleases the Lord.

Feeling: “I just feel that God knows a person’s heart and is not really concerned about whether a person obeys His commands or not.” Fact: Jesus is “*the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*” (Hebrews 5:9).

Feeling: “I feel that if the majority of people are in favor of doing something, it must not be all that bad.” Fact: Jesus said few are taking the path that leads to life while many are following the way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13,14).

Feeling: “I feel like God will not allow anyone to go to hell.” Fact: Jesus said some are going into everlasting destruction (Matthew 25:46), which He also called “hell” (Mark 9:43-48).

Feeling: “If you really love a person, I feel like it is okay to have bed relations with them even if you are not married to each other.” Facts: Having sexual relations with a person who is not one’s spouse is called “fornication.” “*Marriage is honorable among*

all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

Feeling: “I feel like it is a good thing that there are a lot of different churches, because that gives people more options from which they can choose.” Facts: The church is the Christ’s body, and He has only one body (Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:4).

Feeling: “I feel like the Lord saved me when I cried out to Him in prayer and asked Him to forgive me.” Fact: God’s promise to forgive the sins of those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9) is for those who *already* are His children (1 John 2:12; 5:13).

Feeling: “What my heart tells me is this: baptism is a good thing, but being baptized has nothing to do with being saved from sin. That is how I feel about it.” Fact: Jesus said, “*He . . . will be saved.*” His full statement about salvation was, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mark 16:16).

Feeling: “In my heart, I feel that it is wrong to eat pork.” Facts: In the biblical record, the only ones whom Jehovah forbid to eat pork were the Israelites living under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:1,2,7,8). Under the new covenant of the Christ, “. . . *every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving*” (1 Timothy 4:4).

Feeling: “In my heart, I know that women are just as talented and capable as males are, so I personally do not feel like there is anything wrong with women serving as elders/overseers in the church.” Fact: “*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife . . .*” (1 Timothy 3:2).

Feeling: “It seems to me that the Lord does not really care about *how* we worship Him. As long as we worship Him and not some false deity, I feel like He will accept our worship.” Facts: Cain worshipped the right God, but God did not accept his worship (Genesis 4). Neither did He accept the worship of Abihu and Nadab (Leviticus 10) or Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26). Jesus said, “. . . *true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*” (John 4:23).

Feelings are feelings and facts are facts. We must not confuse the two. Our service to God needs to be based on His revelation, not our personal feelings.

– Roger D. Campbell

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF KING DAVID

Every person who has ever lived has had parts of their life that are both good and bad. No one is able to completely avoid disappointment, discouragement, or death. And yet life brings about some enjoyment and happiness as well. If one person from the Bible had to be selected to embody this thought, most would agree it is King David.

Serving as the second earthly king of Israel, we benefit from reading of the highs and lows of the life of King David. He was truly a man of triumph and tragedy, victories and failures. There are more pages in the Bible that tell about David than any other person, save Jesus Christ. Let us examine some lessons we can learn from King David.

From the moment we meet David, we begin to learn lessons that apply to us. The first one is: God looks on the heart. As Samuel is sent to anoint the second king of Israel, God instructs him not to look at appearance, because, "... *the Lord looks at the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7). David would not have been the first choice to be king based on his outward looks. However, David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) who was able to lead God's people in the right way. For us, it does not matter our body type, eye color, length of hair, or any other outward appearance, but only that we are faithful to God and His word.

You only turn one chapter in the Bible to see a second lesson from David: with God, all things are possible. Probably everyone in the world knows the story of David and Goliath. The lesson the world takes from the account is that small people can still do big things. And, yes, David was much smaller than the giant and did defeat Goliath. But multiple times in this account, David references the power of Jehovah God.

Two times (1 Samuel 17:26, 36) David notes that Goliath is not offending the people, but "*the armies of the living God*." When Saul attempted to stop him because of his young age, David informed Saul that he would continue on because, "*The Lord . . . He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine*" (17:37). And David even tells Goliath to his face, "*This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand . . .*" (17:46). We must remember that our strength is not in our own might, but in the power of God.

The life of King David also shows us a great lesson in humility. Even though he had been anointed (1 Samuel 16:13), David did not immediately become king. His patience and humility is seen during this period of time.

David shows respect for King Saul as he continues to reign. Even though Saul becomes angry and vengeful, David stays humble. David has multiple opportunities to kill Saul (1 Samuel 24:4; 26:12), but does not because he recognizes Saul's place as God's anointed (1 Samuel 24:6). He even laments the death of Saul and writes a poem to honor his memory (2 Samuel 1:11,12,19-27). Today, we can be reminded that we should remain humble in all situations we face.

King David left behind many positive lessons, but we can also learn from his mistakes. David's sin reminds us: sin often brings more than it promises. In short order in 2 Samuel 11, David commits adultery with Bathsheba (11:4) and arranges the death of her husband (11:15). Because of his sin, David faced many other difficulties in his life, including the death of his child. We often attempt to minimize our sins, but even one sin can bring a lifetime of consequences.

Yet even through David's sinfulness, we learn another lesson: repentance is available and necessary. When the Lord sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, David does not attempt to hide his sin or deny it. Instead, he confesses, "*I have sinned against the Lord*" (2 Samuel 12:13). The emotion behind his guilt, repentance, and restoration still encourages us today as we read Psalm 51.

Closer to the end of his reign as king, David leaves us one final lesson that can encourage us. As he took rest after many battles, King David wanted to build God a beautiful temple. However, it was not God's will that David do this. Because of those battles and the bloodshed (1 Chronicles 28:3), David would not build the temple, but his son, Solomon, would do so after David's death.

The human, or natural, reaction might be to get angry, pout, or even refuse to help. However David helps us see that we should: keep a positive attitude, even in disappointment. King David spent much time and effort making sure that the materials needed to build the temple would be ready when the time arrived (1 Chronicles 22:5; 29:1-5).

The truth is, we could spend countless hours reading about King David and learning many more lessons that we can apply to our lives today. Some would consider David complicated or complex. We can see that he was human, just like us. And, like him, we will have both triumph and tragedy. May we strive to remain faithful to the Lord God of heaven and earth, as King David did.

-- Joel Danley

Jesus — the Messiah

The word “Messiah” is from a Hebrew word which means “anointed.” In the New Testament, the word “Christ,” transliterated from the Greek language, is the equivalent of “Messiah.” So, the words “Messiah” and “Christ” have the same meaning, as we see in John 1:41: “*We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ).*” Again, in John 4:25 we read that a Samaritan woman acknowledged, “*I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes He will tell us all things.*”

Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah/Christ on at least two occasions (John 6:69; Matthew 16:16). An African eunuch confessed Jesus as the Christ (Acts 8:37). In fact, it is God’s will that “*every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” (Philippians 2:11). When the Jewish high priest pressed Jesus with the question, “*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed,*” our Lord’s response was, “*I am*” (Mark 14:62). For Jesus, what was the consequence of Him confessing that He was the Messiah? It cost Him His life.

John’s record of Jesus’ life sets forth proof that He was the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30,31). Jesus’ miracles confirmed His claims that He came down from heaven, that the Father sent Him, and that He was the promised Messiah (John 5:36).

In the Jewish community, “Jesus” was a common name for males. However, there was, and is, only one Christ. Paul, Apollos, and others preached Jesus as *the* Christ (Acts 17:2,3; 18:28). How did they present that message to Jewish audiences? They referred to Old Testament prophecies which pointed to the coming Messiah, then showed from the life and teaching of Jesus that those prophecies (there were hundreds of Messianic prophecies) all were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said that the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament writings pointed to Him (Luke 24:44-46). Indeed, they did!

Again, what is the significance of Jesus’ fulfillment of those prophecies? It clearly showed that He was the promised Messiah. “But, did not many of His fellow Jews reject Him?” They did (John 1:11). That should not surprise us, though. Why not? Their widespread rejection of Jesus as the Messiah actually fulfilled a pointed prophecy found in Isaiah 53:1-3.

During the Old Testament era, which people were anointed in the nation of Israel? Kings, priests, and prophets. Jesus the Messiah is all three: King, Priest, and Prophet. In the case of Jesus, instead of being anointed with literal oil, the Father anointed Him “*with the Holy Spirit and with power*” (Acts 10:38).

-- Roger D. Campbell

Lessons from 1 John 1:5-2:2

In our previous study, which was taken from 1 John 1:1-4, we looked at the Word, fellowship, and joy. We move on to the next section: 1 John 1:5-2:2.

- Light versus darkness – “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*” (1:5). All that God is and all that comes from Him, including His word, is light. Anything that does not align with God is darkness. What if a person walks in darkness but claims to have fellowship with God? One who says such is lying. This undeniable fact never changes: when folks do not practice the truth, they are in spiritual darkness (1:6).

- Continued cleansing (1:7) – God longs for each of His children to “*walk in the light as He is in the light*” (1:7). If *not practicing the truth* describes one who is walking in darkness, then what would be the meaning of walking in the light? One who walks “in the light” *does* practice the truth, that is, he obeys God’s will. As a saint continues to walk in the light, he continues to have double blessings: (1) ongoing fellowship with other members of the Lord’s body who also walk in the light and (2) continued cleansing of his sins by the blood of Jesus.

- A way for a follower of Jesus to be forgiven (1:8-10) – A brother or sister in the Lord who denies that they commit sin deceives themselves and the truth is not in them: yes, Christians do violate God’s law from time to time (1:8). What does a member of the church need to do when he sins against God? Confess his sins, and God’s promise is that the sin will be forgiven (1:9). Of course, repentance in the heart must accompany the confession of the lips (Acts 8:21,22).

- Another purpose of this epistle – do not sin (2:1). God’s message via John for saints of his day included an exhortation not to sin. Why is sin so bad? Only sin can separate a person from God (Isaiah 59:2).

- Jesus — our Advocate with the Father (2:2) – If a child of God lapses into sin, God has provided an Advocate. “Advocate” is from a Greek word (“*παράκλητος/paraklētos*”) that in four Bible instances refers to the Holy Spirit (“Comforter/Helper” in John 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7), but in 1 John 2:2 it refers to Jesus. An “Advocate” is “one who pleads another’s cause with one, an intercessor” [Thayer, no. 3875 via e-Sword]. It is comforting to have Jesus on our side!

- Jesus — the propitiation for sins (2:2) – By the sacrifice of His blood, Jesus provided a way for our sins to be covered and God’s wrath to be appeased (4:10). His atoning sacrifice was not for us only, “*but also for the whole world*” (2:2). How shall lost folks know about such good news if we do not tell them?!

-- Roger D. Campbell

THE CHALLENGE NOT TO WORRY

God's people are specifically told not to worry. In His "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus says citizens of the heavenly kingdom are not to worry about life—especially the daily necessities (Matthew 6:25-34). Matthew 6:33,34 sum this up—"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Though we are told to trust God and not to worry, humans living in a fallen world will quite often struggle with worry. Just what is worry, though? The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines worry as, "mental distress or agitation resulting from concern, usually for something impending or anticipated" (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worry). Often, concern is mistaken for worry (and vice versa). One striving to be free from worry need not strive to be free from concern. What is the difference? Locking the doors of my house when leaving to go on a trip is an example of concern, while worry is an inability to enjoy the trip due to constant thoughts and/or fears of someone trying to break into my house. Concern is not only *not wrong*; it is a *good* thing! When concern becomes worry, however, that is a problem.

Nearly all humans—even Christians—will struggle with worry at times. Our goal as Christians is to strive to do better and better every day and, when it comes to challenges that face us literally on a daily basis, we should strive to be like the proverbial man who said, "Yes, I do worry sometimes, but it is not my hometown . . . I just pass through!"

How do we overcome worry? While there are no "fast and easy answers" to this question, there are helpful guidelines to help minimize worry and anxiety in our lives. The foremost principle to help anyone overcome worry is to be a faithful Christian. Being a Christian will not remove all problems, but it will provide great peace of mind, knowing God ultimately works all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Jesus' point in Matthew 6:33 is to keep God first in life, and He will ultimately take care of the rest. There simply is no substitute for the peace of mind resulting from knowing one's life is right with God and secure in His hand. What are some other tips for dealing with worry and anxiety?

- ✓ **Analyze.** When tempted to worry, examine the situation and realize that not each problem is a major catastrophe. Especially for faithful Christians, there is the fact that God is far bigger and stronger than any and all problems.

- ✓ **Ask.** Do not underestimate the power of prayer. When Hezekiah was facing imminent death, he immediately went to God in prayer (2 Kings 20:1-3). When Hannah was worrying over not having a child, she asked God for help (1 Samuel 1:1-11). Asking God is no guarantee a problem will be solved or taken away, as Paul found out when asking God to remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), but the Christian's privilege of taking that problem to the Lord is itself helpful in dealing with the problem.
- ✓ **Act.** Sometimes we can take action to help a problem, and sometimes there is simply nothing we can do. Christians always have prayer available (Luke 18:1), but sometimes we must contribute also. An old saying is, "If you are sitting on a tack, why worry? Remove it!" If a problem requires making changes, instead of worrying, start making changes. If a problem requires action, then act!
- ✓ **Accept.** Realize there are some things we simply cannot change. Paul had to live with his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Paul and Silas did not enjoy being imprisoned (Acts 16:23-24), but there was nothing they could do about it. So, they made the most of it, praying and singing to God (Acts 16:25).
- ✓ **Assist.** Help others (Philippians 2:4). Worry often looks inward, while service looks outward. Spending more time serving others, we likely will forget many of our worries.

Ultimately, there are only three things anyone can do about a problem, however big or small it may be: (a) talk about it, (b) pray about it, or (c) do something about it. Talking to someone about a problem is typically helpful in formulating a sound plan of action, for "*in the multitude of counselors there is safety*" (Proverbs 11:14). But we sometimes can do nothing at all, save casting that burden on the Lord; after all, He tells us to do so (1 Peter 5:7), and He can handle it! "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6,7).

-- Chad Dollahite

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