KIRBSTONES
ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kûrb'stōn') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed, and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served [1]to hold the material in the roadbed, [2]to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and [3]to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

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13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." - Matthew 7:13-14 - NIV

Have you ever considered just how exhausting it must be to live a lie? One lie requires another to protect it. Then another to explain it. Eventually, the person who began with one seemingly harmless deception finds himself managing a complete collection of falsehoods, desperately trying to remember what he said, to whom he said it, and what he must say next. The tragedy is that he cannot rest.

We are living in a post-Christian culture that is increasingly comfortable with deception. We see it in our government, where political convenience sometimes takes precedence over honesty. We see it in business, where appearances can become more important than integrity. We even see it in churches, where protecting reputations sometimes matters more than acknowledging sin and speaking the truth. But deception is not just an institutional problem. It is also a problem of the human heart. Scripture offers a better way.

<u>*Lies enslave us to the burden of maintaining them*</u>. Jesus confronted the religious leaders with an uncomfortable truth about the source of deception. Speaking of the devil, he declared: *"When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* - John 8:44.

Jesus was identifying something far more serious than an occasional lapse in honesty. He teaches us that deception reflects the character of the enemy, not the character of God. Every lie creates an obligation to defend something that is not true. Every deception requires another layer of protection. And every attempt to conceal the truth further increases the burden of maintaining the original falsehood.

Think about the energy we waste protecting appearances, defending questionable decisions, or justifying behavior that we know is wrong. There is no lasting peace in such living. The person committed to deception must always look backward, protecting yesterday's lies from discovery.

<u>*Truth liberates us from a bondage of pretending*</u>. Jesus made one of the most liberating promises ever spoken: *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* - John 8:32. Jesus did not promise freedom through knowing what we prefer to believe. He promised freedom through knowing the truth. In its strict biblical context, freedom comes through our faithfulness to his teaching.

Truth is not something we manufacture to accommodate our circumstances. Truth is something we learn, embrace, and obey because it comes from God. When we always speak truthfully, we do not need to remember competing versions of our story. When we conduct our affairs with integrity, we do not need elaborate explanations to conceal questionable motives. And, when we acknowledge our sins, confess our failures, and seek forgiveness, we no longer have the need to defend the indefensible.

There is extraordinary freedom in simply being honest before God and others. But that freedom requires courage.

Sometimes the truth exposes what we would rather keep hidden. Sometimes it demands repentance, restitution, or an uncomfortable conversation. Nevertheless, the temporary discomfort of confronting truth is infinitely preferable to the continuing bondage of defending a lie.

<u>*Living in the truth allows our souls to rest*</u>. Jesus extends an invitation that speaks directly to our exhausted culture: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* - Matthew 11:28. What a remarkable promise!

Jesus does not offer rest by helping us become more skillful at hiding our failures. Instead, he offers rest by inviting us into a relationship with himself, where grace meets repentance and obedience replaces pretense.

We must understand that living truthfully does not eliminate life's difficulties. Indeed, standing for truth may bring opposition, rejection, or personal sacrifice. There is a profound difference between suffering because we stand for truth and suffering because we are desperately trying to conceal it. One burden comes from faithfulness, while the other comes from deception. Only one allows us to rest with a clear conscience.

As we approach another Christmas season, remember that Jesus Christ did not enter this world to help us become comfortable with our falsehoods. He came to save us from sin and reconcile us to God.

The greatest gift we can give ourselves, our families, our churches, and our communities this Christmas is a brand new commitment to knowing, speaking, and living the truth. Lies demand constant maintenance, but truth allows us to rest. The deepest rest comes not merely from telling the truth, but from belonging to Jesus Christ, who is Truth.

Consider the cultural impact we can make. As we witness to what Christ has done in our lives, it is tied directly to the truth of Scripture. *That is a message worth sharing*!

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