

STRAIGHT TALK

Kent Keith wrote a pithy little book titled *Anyway* in which he laid down ten paradoxical commandments as a way of finding personal meaning in a crazy world. The book was not intended to be a religious book per se, but most of his paradoxical commandments, in fact, do reflect Biblical concepts. The fifth paradoxical commandment reads, "Honesty and frankness makes you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway."

Several verses from Scripture relate to this commandment. In Ephesians 4:14, we are told not to be deceived by men who 'spin the truth', and then in the next verse, *but, speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things unto Him who is the head-Christ*. In Matthew 5:37 Jesus said ...*let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No'*. Let us look at two examples where this concept of honesty and frankness apply in our effort to be Christ-like.

First, when we see our brother or sister in Christ doing something wrong, what should be our response? Tell a friend? Tell the minister or elders? We are told in II Thessalonians 3:15 to ...*admonish him as a brother*. Admonish is defined as "reprove or warn in a mild manner." Doesn't admonish sound a lot like 'speaking the truth in love'? We need to go to the person and admonish him/her to do the right thing or stop doing wrong, in a spirit of love. Is this an easy thing to do, to go to a brother or sister and tell him/her face-to-face, he/she is doing wrong or has done wrong? No, it makes us vulnerable to counter charges such as 'who are you to correct me' or 'you've got things you should work on also'. Confronting members when they are not living according to God's word is the elder's responsibility and, we too find this difficult to do. Still, all of us, elders and members, must do this anyway!

Another one of life's situations that requires us to be honest and frank is when brothers and sisters fail to discipline themselves in financial matters. When hard times come upon members of our family, we want to help. It is a blessing to be able to help people when the need is genuine. But sometimes the financial difficult times come as a result of a lack of self-discipline. When these instances of lack of self-discipline are repeated over and over, it calls for their brothers and sisters in Christ to be honest and frank with them. Our brother Bob Leake, the

deacon responsible for benevolence, and occasionally the elders, have to ask questions about self-discipline regarding needs and wants. Again, this is a situation where being honest and frank makes us vulnerable.

In Jesus' spoken words recorded in Scripture, He was honest and direct in his conversations with people. To be Christ-like we must be like Him in word and deed (Col. 3:17). As Jesus said, *For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you* (John 13:15).

-- For the elders (Don Denton)