

Daily View

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13

July 1, 2020



The Reichsburg Castle, Cochem, Germany. The original castle is over 1,000 years old.

Integrity

I may have left the impression on Monday that Helen Greiwe was still alive but, sadly, Helen passed away several years ago. However, I was fortunate to see her and introduce her to Christie a few months before she died. She was just as sweet as ever.

The story that Helen told Carolyn, Allison's mom, was that her son Stanley stole some small item from a store when I was with him and I told on him and his mother made him take it back. I vaguely remember this but it reminded me of a similar incident that happened to me a year or two before, when I was about 7 years old, and it may explain why I told on Stanley.

I was walking on the sidewalk across the street from our house in Costa Mesa and saw a shiny new toy truck lying on the front lawn of the neighbor's house, almost, but not quite, on the sidewalk. I picked it up and ran back to my house and almost bumped into my mom when I came through the front door. Of course, my mom asked me where I got the truck. I stammered and stuttered and finally confessed. Then my mom did the unthinkable; she made me take the truck back but not to where I found it on the front lawn. I was told to knock on the door and when the neighbor answered I was to confess that I stole the truck, and apologize.

I was genuinely terrified. I envisioned all kinds of horrifying responses to my confession. "They'll probably call the police," I thought. I was going to get arrested. I think I cried and pleaded with my mom to let me just put it back on the lawn. I said, "he shouldn't have left it on the lawn." But my mom stood firm.

My heart was beating and my legs felt like rubber as I walked the 40 yards or so to the neighbor's house. For a 7 year old, this was like to walking to the electric chair. I tried to lift my arm to knock on the door but my arm was made of iron. When I did knock, it was as light as could be; I was hoping against hope that nobody was home. But, in those days the lady of the house was almost always home. She answered the

door, saw my red face and my tear-filled eyes and before I could finish my confession said something like "well thank you, young man, that's very good of you..." I was relieved, of course.

As I thought about the story that Helen told Carolyn, I'm thinking that the reason I snitched on Stanley wasn't that I was so holy and righteous myself; I probably just wanted to see him suffer like I suffered.

Why did our mothers make us take the item back and confess our sin? The answer is that they were training our consciences. They wanted us to learn that it is wrong to steal not just because you might get in trouble for it but because you are depriving someone else of their property. The toy truck belonged to a kid who would be sad if he didn't have it.

As I got older, I realized that the lesson went even deeper. It was about building *integrity*. In Ephesians 4:28, Paul warns against stealing, but he wanted his brethren to be people of integrity. He wrote,

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Notice how he starts with something that should be obvious: *don't steal*. But he doesn't stop there. He knows that we can agree never to steal anything again but that doesn't mean we have integrity. So he continues, "doing honest work." OK, but why? So you can get more stuff for yourself? No, but so that you'll "have something to share with anyone in need."

Paul was persuading takers (thieves) to become givers. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" — and definitely more blessed than stealing!

Stanley and I were a couple of little thieves for a short while. Our moms didn't want us to stay that way. They wanted something better for us... and for others.