

The Truth will set you Free

By: Jen Vortriede, Follow Your Heart Life Coaching

Before Pilate condemned Jesus to death, he asked Jesus the question, “What is truth?” Jesus gave no answer, and people have been trying to define “the truth” ever since. As Shakespeare said, “To thine own self be true.” That’s a nice statement, but what does that really mean? From early on in our existence, we are not true to ourselves. We lie to others and ourselves. We are conditioned to project to others what “they” expect of us.

I’ve never been “popular,” although I have many people in my life who support and love me. When I was a child, it really bothered me that I wasn’t popular. Because I was shy, I had only a few close friends. I wasn’t athletic, so I was often picked last for teams. I felt ashamed and figured there must be something wrong with me. I thought I “should” fit in. I look back and realize my past was just the way it was supposed to be.

During my first marriage, I was continually molding myself into what my ex-husband said I “should” be like. By the time my marriage was over, I had to figure out who I was as an individual. Doing so was no easy task. It required stripping away layer upon layer that had been built up over the years. In the process of stripping off my ex-husband’s expectations, I found myself stripping off those of others as well. I began to look inward and ask myself, “What kind of a person do I really want to be?” instead of “How does so and so think I **should** be?”

The “shoulds” are very dangerous. We usually either apply them to others and our expectations of them, or we use them when we’re guilt-tripping ourselves. If we catch ourselves using the word “should” in our heads or in conversation, let it be a trigger that some additional questions may need to be asked before we make judgments on others or ourselves about the “truth” of our statement.

I just finished reading an extremely powerful book called “Loving What Is” by Byron Katie. In her book, the author suggests four questions be asked when we’re upset at others (or ourselves) and are making judgments. First, ask yourself if your statement, which you made in your head or out loud, is “true.” Next, ask yourself if you’re absolutely certain that your statement is true. Sometimes the answer to both of those questions may be “yes,” but more often than not, upon asking ourselves whether we know something for certain, we realize that we really don’t know—we’ve just made an assumption. The third step is to ask yourself how you feel and act when you have such a thought. Feeling discomfort is a clue that something is not right, and it often means that we’re thinking about someone else’s business. Byron Katie says we should mind our own business, and leave the rest up to others and/or God. The fourth question to ask ourselves is who we would be without such thoughts. The answer is often something like “I’d be a lot less stressed” or “I’d feel more at peace.” The solution may be completely letting the thought go, unless you can help the person in a positive way, which includes the use of prayer.

By using inquiries of ourselves, such as the above, we can get down to who we really are. It can be a bit scary when you realize that so much of what goes on in your head concerns other people. It also can be very freeing so you can focus on your own business and let others, including God, mind theirs.

I want to be true to myself, and I wouldn't be surprised if you do too. It takes courage, but the peace and freedom being true to yourself bring are worth it. So, once you've figured out who you are, love yourself, love others as they are, and love life as it is. It's all good.