

## **You Can Declare Your Independence Day Today**

Today is a special day and so I'd like to share a special message entitled, "You can Declare Your Own Independence Day Today".

There was this guy named Dave who's carrying his own big suitcase full of stuff. I wish you could meet him because you would really like him. He's a great guy. A winsome personality, articulate. Good looking. A lot of personal charisma. Dave grew up on a farm as part of a large family. One day he went off to war as kind of a nobody but when he came back he was a national hero. When he came back he went into politics and his rise to the top was quick and fast. He was wealthy, well respected and known to be a godly person.

But all is not well in Dave's world. In fact, for the past twelve months he's been carrying around a secret that's eating him alive. He's been spending a lot of time trying to make sure that nobody knows. But he knows. And he carries the weight with him pretty much all the time.

You see, Dave's secret is he had a one-night stand. A moral failure. To make matters worse he was soon informed by this woman that she was pregnant. Dave panics. Everything's on the line. He feels the sense of, "If I blow it here, if the word gets out, my life will be a shambles, my career is gone. I've got to keep this quiet." So Dave goes into damage control mode and ultimately arranges for the murder of this woman's husband. Little does Dave know that the lid is about to blow on his whole secret. One of his friends has discovered the truth and he is about to confront Dave with what's going on.

I'm sure that on a day like this there could be some of us carrying our own heavy baggage. We've been carrying our own secret. Like a ball and chain that drags around with us it seems to be ever present. We can't seem to get away from it. It may not be some big secret like in Dave's suitcase.

It might be some kind of addiction. It might be just an out-of-control anger. It might be a relational problem. It could be a wide variety of things that we have hidden inside our baggage. And the one thread that ties them all together is...nobody knows. Nobody knows. Right now, for some of us as I even begin to talk about this topic there's sort of that pit in your stomach, that nervousness. Even right now that very thing is coming to the surface in your emotions. The very thing that you try so hard to keep stuffed down is right now coming to the surface.

The result for some of us who are here is we live with our own kind of slavery. Slavery to a secret. A set of issues or problems that keep our emotions chained up and our insides stirred up. But I have incredible news for you this morning. The incredible news is that there's hope. And based on the authority of God and the authority of His word you don't have to live in slavery to those things anymore. God wants to and it is His plan to set you free. It may not be easy and it may not happen all at once. But the good news is you can be set free. God specializes in liberating people. On this weekend as we look back over the history of our adopted land and we celebrate the fact that we are a free people, that we are liberated, it's also a time to celebrate that we serve a God who loves to liberate people from the things that hold them in chains.

I want to begin our time together this morning by going to a passage of scripture that some of you probably know by heart, **John 8:32. "And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."**

What I want to do in our time together this morning is to try to unpack the question, how does truth set me free? What does that look like in practical ways? What does it look like for truth to set me free?

We can spend all day talking about this and come up with a long list. But I want to at least give you three keys that I believe come out of the Bible, are keys that unlock us and give us freedom.

## 1. We must learn to submit to the truth in God's Word.

Let me explain. Probably some of you probably have inferred that the story of Dave I've narrated earlier is none other than the story of King David of Israel set in a modern setting. King David was one of the great men of the Bible, who even after his moral failure the Bible would say that he was a man after God's own heart. But if you were to read the account of that story, of his moral failure, and the confrontation in 2 Samuel 12 you'd really get the sequence of events. Not much emotion. Not much of really what's going on in the heart and mind of David. But if you would go to Psalm 51:3-4 you would discover that we have there David sharing with us what's going on inside of him in light of this.

*“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.”*

David knew inside that what he had done was wrong and evil. He knew it because God had hard wired into every one of us, into our DNA something called a conscience. It's what sets us apart from the rest of creation. God put this thing in us called a conscience which is a way for us to have a moral sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. He put it inside of us.

I remember 20 years ago, I was only 20, just graduated from college. Okay, okay, my conscience is bothering me, that was more than 20 years ago. Maybe add another 20. So, I was 20 and my first job was as a researcher at the NEDA in the Phils. You remember NEDA? A government agency but I believe it's got a different name now. Anyway, my grandpa was so proud of me and he called me one day to his house and said to me, “Rolly, I have a minica. I want to lend it to you.” The Minica was made by Mistubishi. Quite popular in the Phils during those days. Getting nostalgic here. **Here's how it looked like.**

So, my grandpa said, “You can drive that everyday because I’m not using it anyway. Just take care of it. Do you know how to drive, btw?” Well, I wanted to lie because I didn’t want to pass up the chance. But my conscience bothered me and so I told him the truth and at the same time I worried he would withdraw his offer. But to my delight, he said, “Find someone who can teach you.” I went home feeling great. But at home, I realized that enrolling in a driving school was expensive and so I thought I’d ask our company driver to teach me. The next day, I mentioned it to Mario, our company driver, and he was more than happy to teach me.

That weekend, Mario and I went to an empty lot near the Meralco Theater in Pasig, and with me on the wheels as Mario guided me, we went round and round until I felt a loud thud. I hit the curb and we found out there was a big dent on the right side of the car. If it was a bigger car, it would be just a scratch on the wheel and maybe on the hubcap but it was a really small car that has a very low ground clearance. That was my first day. There was no second day because I was so traumatized, I didn’t want to come back. My grandpa asked, “How was it?” I just said, “It was good” and hurriedly said goodbye. I think that was the time I became so prayerful. “God, please don’t make him discover the dent. Please make someone borrow his car and for the car to hit the curb.” Of course, he discovered it a few days afterwards and was disappointed with me. I knew, of course, that what I did was wrong. It was my conscience telling me. As a consequence, my grandpa gave me an SUV instead. Just kidding. I never saw the minica again.

But it’s not only our conscience that makes us aware of our sins. Because the truth is, some people ignore their conscience. That’s why crimes are being committed. That’s why people turn against each other. That’s why young girls who get pregnant “accidentally” get an abortion. They say it is their choice. But they have a choice whether to have sex or not in the first place.

Are they so foolish to think that they won't get pregnant? Then, they discard like garbage the product of their sin? Some people don't listen to their conscience.

You know, not only through our conscience that God communicates to us. God speaks to us too through his Word, the Bible, which speaks louder than our conscience. Through the Bible, God tells us what is right and wrong, what is moral or not. He tells us the way we should live. He tells us in **Joshua 1:8**, *"This Book of the Law must never depart from your mouth, and you are to meditate on it day and night, so that you will act faithfully according to everything written in it, because then you will prosper in everything you do, and you will succeed."* God says, "Make it a part of your life and you'll never go wrong." It's our instruction manual. Problem is we treat life like we treat our furniture or gadgets.

You know, we never look at instruction manuals, right? We buy something and use it right away and figure things out along the way. One time when Bel and I were newly married, I bought a kitchen cabinet that I had to assemble myself. I thought the manual was complicated and besides it was several pages long and I was impatient and I thought I had the skill and knowhow and proceeded to set it up myself. In the end, I realized it didn't look nice like one side was showing an ugly part which was meant to be hidden. But I couldn't put it right anymore because it meant disassembling the whole thing.

Life's like that. Sometimes it's too late when you discover you did something awfully wrong and you couldn't put it back. You couldn't correct it. The ugly part of your life was showing. And you suffer the consequence. You know why, you ignored Life's Manual, the Bible. God gave us the Bible to make things easy for us. But we'd rather do it the hard way.

You know how to avoid the pitfalls of life? Do what the psalmist did as he says in **Psalm 119:11-12**, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

So let me challenge you, have you really taken the time to study this book for yourself? Really study it? I know it's really a challenge nowadays because there's a lot of apps on the phone that compete for our attention. Even at night when we're lying on the bed, we're busy with our phones, swiping here and there, looking at this and that. I'm talking about myself. Maybe about you, too. But one time I decided to just discipline myself. Since I have a phone anyway on my bed, I would buy a good Christian book and started reading it on Kindle until I get sleepy. One book I'm going through right now is by R.C. Sproul called "What is Reformed Theology?" Sounds deep but it's not. It's basic and written in a very simple style. Very interesting and informative. It can save your life. 😊 It can make you sleepy, too. 😊 😊

Now, my view of truth will determine how I value truth. If I believe the Bible to be the Word of God, then I'll take it seriously. But if I look at this book and regard it as just pure literature – then I'll not take it very seriously.

So the question is, how does this truth of God's Word set me free? I think, in a couple of ways. First, I don't have to go around trying to search for the truth. God has already revealed it to me. There's a lot of freedom in that and a lot of security to know that when I wake up tomorrow, what was true yesterday is true today and it will be true tomorrow. I don't have to wonder about that.

But I also know that this book has the power to change my life. The first few words of Hebrews 4:12 in the New Living translation say this "*The word of God is alive and powerful.*" As I absorb it and take it into my life it has the power to change me. So, if I'm going to be free, I've got to first accept the truth of God's Word then submit myself to it.

And here's a second key to freedom...

2. I've got to show up with the truth in my own life.

This point is all about being honest. It's about facing the truth. It's about bringing the truth out in the light. It's about unpacking the suitcase you've been carrying around.

That's exactly what happens in this story with King David. After his moral failure, Nathan his friend comes to him. When Nathan confronts him with this issue the very next words out of David's mouth are these, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" That's amazing to me. No excuses, no rationalizing. He just says, I sinned.

You almost sense in the passage there's a little bit of relief in David's voice. He doesn't have to carry this around any longer. He doesn't have to work hard to keep it under wraps any longer. There's a scary but kind of amazing verse in James 5 that I want you to zero in on for a moment. **James 5:16 "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."** You say, "Are you really suggesting that I need to unpack my suitcase, I need to show up with the truth. But not only just with God, and not only be honest with myself but even with people around me? That's exactly what this verse says.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer who wrote a book called Life Together many years ago said this **"In confession, the breakthrough to community takes place. Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive would be the power of sin over him. And the more deeply he becomes involved in it the more disastrous his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person."**

I think he's right on. Sin, the secret of sin, keeps us isolated. Notice in James 5:16 that he says we are to confess our sins to each other. Some commentaries say that it's talking about confessing to someone we sinned against in order to make it right with that person,

but other commentaries say it's confessing our secret sins to someone or some people we trust for healing. I think it's both. In both instances we can pray for each other and find physical and spiritual healing.

You see, as the Bible says, God is the one who forgives but I also experience healing when I not only confess it to God but also to the other people around me. When others empathize and understand what I'm going through and maybe even cry with me, there's a sense of relief, a sense that I'm accepted and I'm one with the community again. They represent God's forgiveness to me. You see, God uses other Christians to express his love and forgiveness for me. It's interesting to me that as soon as David steps forward and says, You're right. I have sinned. Nathan's immediate response is, "Yes David, you did but God has forgiven you and you will not die because of this." That must have truly brought relief to David's soul.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "*Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*" This verse contains both a promise and a warning. The warning is you hide your sins, you won't succeed. The promise is you show up with the truth, you put it out there, and God's promise is you get mercy. Both from Him and I think from people around you.

Here's why this is so important. Confession reduces the power of a secret. It sets us free from trying to hide and it sets us free from trying to manage the secret all on our own. Let me tell you one truth: **The beginning of healing is revealing.** It's showing up with the truth and being honest about where you are and who you are. There is something cleansing and liberating about coming clean through confession.

But I want you to be really clear about this. **The purpose of confession is not disgrace. It's grace. The purpose of confession is not about humiliation, it's about restoration.** The organization "Alcoholics Anonymous" recognize this.



Every time they meet, each person begins with, “Hello, I’m Rolly. And I am an alcoholic” or “I am a recovering alcoholic”. Maybe we should start something like that in our church for our healing. Like when we start meeting again in our home groups, we say, “Hi, I’m Rolly. And I am a Facebook addict”. Or “Hi, I’m Rolly. And I am a big eater”. Guess no one will invite you again.

Here’s the truth. We’re all messed up. Confession allows me to not live in denial about my humanity and the fact that we all struggle. That’s okay.

So first you’ve got to submit to the truth, the truth that God says is truth. Then you’ve got to show up with the truth. Let the secret out. That’s the first step toward healing. Here’s the third thing...

### 3. You’ve got to speak out with the truth in your friend’s life.

The fact is, all of us have blind spots in our life, things that we just don’t see. The question is do you have somebody in your life, somebody in your world, who loves you enough to tell you what everybody else sees but that you don’t see? When I have people in my life like that it allows me to no longer live in self-defeat and self-destruction.

My kids know that I unconditionally love them. I would die for them. They know that. But they also know that I love them enough that I’m going to speak the truth to them. I love them too much to be silent when I see them doing something or making decisions that will be harmful to them and will hurt them and will be destructive for them.

But I want you to hear something. It’s not just about showing up with the truth. It’s also about how you do that. **Ephesians 4:15 “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”** It’s not just about speaking the truth. It’s about doing it in the right attitude. That’s why we must always hold in balance and in tandem the two great qualities called truth and grace. Truth and grace.

Jesus is the supreme example of this. Regularly in the New Testament you see Him rebuking, correcting, straightening out the disciples over and over again. Yet they never doubted His love. When a woman was caught in the act of adultery and brought before Jesus so that hopefully He would condemn her, Jesus did not tiptoe around the fact that she had done was wrong and sinful. But at the same time, He demonstrated grace to her.

If you want to see truth and grace at its very best look at the cross. Because the truth is we are all sinful people who cannot get to God and get to heaven on our own. The Bible says that Jesus came to address that sin and while He was here He made no bones about the fact that He had come to die for our sin. He spoke the truth but He also demonstrated grace by going to the cross and for six hours willingly laying down His life on the cross and paying for your sin and for mine. That is the picture of truth and grace.

Relationship is everything when it comes to correction and speaking the truth. David already knew Nathan. They were already in relationship. **The deeper the relationship the greater the capacity to handle a hard conversation.** Proverbs 27:5, *“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”*

You know, it’s a blessing when you have a friend like Nathan. Don’t get offended when they tell the truth. They love you and want to see you grow.

**Proverbs 28:23 says, “Whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favor rather than one who has a flattering tongue.”** That doesn’t mean we don’t need kind words but every now and then we need just some honest statement.

Years ago, I was still a seminary student, I was in Kentucky and I was invited to preach in a multi-cultural church. So, I did and after the message, a Korean lady came to me and said, “Your message is good but it’s wrong.” Then, she left. What did she mean by that? Did she appreciate my message or not?

If she said it was good why was it wrong? Until I realized that Koreans like the Japanese pronounce their “ls” like “rs”. So, what she really said was “Your message is good but it’s long”. Now, that’s speaking the truth in love. Since that time, I limited my messages to 30 minutes. I don’t want to be wrong again.

Now, let me share with you some **practical steps when you want to speak the truth in love to a friend.**

**1. Get clear about the issue.** What is it you’re really going after in your friend’s life. Here’s a question to ask yourself, “Is it unbiblical? Is what they’re doing wrong morally? Is it unwise? Is it a direction that will not be healthy for them? Or is it just unimportant and trivial I’m just making a big issue out of it?”

**2. Ask God if you are really the one to address this issue.** Interestingly, God didn’t come to David in a dream, He didn’t come with an angel, He came to him in a friend. He encouraged Nathan to go to David. So, wait until you’re convinced that God wants you to be the one to speak to your friend.

**3. Address the issue in person and in private.** Never humiliate or embarrass.

**4. Be gentle but honest.** This is what Nathan did. He started out by telling David a story. A story of a rich man who had a lot of flocks of sheep and who went to one poor man who had one prized, treasured sheep and how he stole that sheep from that poor man.

**5. Finally, follow up.** Don’t unload and abandon. Often this is where the ball gets dropped. We have the initial conversation, we walk away feeling a little awkward, maybe like the relationship is a little bit strained. But it’s absolutely critical for you to go back and follow up and make sure that relationally things are good. That you express love and compassion and forgiveness in that person’s life.

Now, if you go back to John 8:32, Jesus says, “*You’ll know the truth and the truth will set you free.*” If you look at the context of that passage, what Jesus is really saying is “I’m the beginning place of truth.”

Until you know Me, you can't really live in freedom and truth." Some of you are here and you've never taken that first step to receive Christ. In John 14 Jesus said, "*I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life.*" Not, I'll point you to the way, not I'll show you the truth, not I'll help you discover the life. He said I am those things. So the first step is coming to Christ.

Maybe you're here and you've never taken that step. We'd love to offer you the opportunity to know Christ today. It's really a matter of believing and receiving. Believing that Jesus died on the cross. Believing He is who He claimed to be and believing that you need a savior. And then receiving that free gift that He offers and dedicating yourself to become a Christ follower the rest of your life.

If you would do that today, right where you are, you don't have to pray out loud, but right now you could just express that to God. The Bible says He will come into your life and He will change you and set you on a course to heaven. If you'd like to do that I'd like to ask us all to bow together and pray right now. If you'd like to do that, just follow me in a simple prayer.

Prayer:

Lord, I know that I need You. I believe the truth is that You love me and You sent Jesus to die for my sin and right now I ask You to come into my life. I acknowledge I'm a sinner. I confess my sins. Please forgive me. Lord, I thank You that You love me enough to speak the truth to me but also to show me grace. I give You my life today. In Jesus' name. Amen.